

**THE AUGUSTINIAN CANONS OF PLYMPTON PRIORY AND THEIR PLACE IN
ENGLISH CHURCH AND SOCIETY, 1121-C. 1400**

By

Allison Dawn Fizzard

**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Centre for Medieval Studies
University of Toronto**

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Ph. D. Dissertation Abstract

**“The Augustinian Canons of Plympton Priory
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1999

In the twelfth century, the religious order known as the Augustinian canons flourished in England. Despite the fact that over two hundred Augustinian houses were founded in England, this order has received relatively little attention from scholars of English monasticism. The present dissertation contributes to the knowledge of the Augustinian canons through a study of the wealthiest house of this order in the South-West of England, Plympton Priory. It explores the links which connected the canons of Plympton with the laity, clergy, and episcopacy of the Diocese of Exeter.

The dissertation begins with a discussion of the background and context of the foundations of Augustinian houses in England in the twelfth century. Chapter One questions the view that patrons founded these houses with the expectation that the canons would engage in pastoral care. It is suggested here that a significant factor in the popularity of the order amongst patrons and benefactors--especially bishops--was the dedication of the canons to divine worship and celibacy.

Chapters Two and Three discuss how Plympton Priory built up and maintained its endowment. The Priory not only received generous donations from its patrons, the Bishops of Exeter, but also from the chief barons of Devon and their tenants. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Plympton effectively “managed” its inheritance in the face of usually unsuccessful challenges to its possessions by heirs of its benefactors and

by Bishop Walter Bronescombe of Exeter. Chapters Four and Five explore the implications of the Priory's rights over churches on its relations with parishioners and its involvement with secular clergy.

This dissertation challenges some of the assumptions scholars have had about the roles and activities of the Augustinian canons as well as the motives and status of their patrons and benefactors. The sources used for this research--unpublished and published charters, episcopal registers, and judicial and chancery records--have provided a wealth of information on an important Priory and on the intersection of religious and social history in medieval Devon and Cornwall.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people without whose help this dissertation would never have attained completion. I would especially like to thank my supervisor, Professor Michael Gervers, for his encouragement, patience, and unfailing good humour. My sincere thanks must also go to the other members of my committee: Professor Joseph Goering, whose wise counsel helped me avoid numerous pitfalls; Professor A. G. Rigg, for his careful scrutiny of my Latin transcriptions and translations; and Professor Malcolm Thurlby, for saying, "Why don't you work on those Augustinian canons?" I would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Professor Nicholas Orme, Dr. Keith Ray, Mr. Paul Gibbons, and Dr. Oliver Padel, who provided much helpful information about Plympton, Devon, and Cornwall. I must thank, too, my friends Robert and Vera Jones of Dawlish: their willingness to show me the beauties of Devon inspired the love of the region that bore fruit with this work.

I should like to thank, too, the following institutions for providing microfilms, photographs, and photocopies: the Bodleian Library, the British Library, and the Devon Record Office.

I would also like to express my deepest thanks to my family, and especially my parents, Garfield and Elva Fizzard, whose love and support made this dissertation possible. I owe a particular debt to my father for his invaluable assistance in the creation of the maps. My gratitude must also be expressed to many dear friends in Canada, the United States, and Europe. Their friendship helped sustain me during the course of this project.

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Abbreviations

Bearman	Bearman, R. "Introduction," <u>Charters of the Redvers Family and the Earldom of Devon 1090-1217</u>. Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, vol. 37. 1994.
<u>BF</u>	<u>The Book of Fees, commonly called the Testa de Nevill, reformed from the Earliest MSS. by the Keeper of the Records, 1198-1293.</u> 1920-31.
<u>CCR</u>	<u>Calendar of Close Rolls.</u> 1900-63.
<u>CFR</u>	<u>Calendar of Fine Rolls.</u> 1911-62
<u>CIM</u>	<u>Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous.</u> 1916-37.
<u>CIPM</u>	<u>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem.</u>
<u>CPL</u>	<u>Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters.</u> 1893-in progress.
<u>CPMR</u>	<u>Worth, R.N. Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records.</u> 1893.
<u>CPP</u>	<u>Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Petitions to the Pope,</u> vol. 1, A.D. 1342-1419. 1896.
<u>CPR</u>	<u>Calendar of Patent Rolls.</u> 1891-1916.
<u>CRR</u>	<u>Curia Regis Rolls.</u> 1922-in progress.
<u>CS I</u>	<u>Councils and Synods, with other Documents relating to the English Church, I 871-1204.</u> Eds. Dorothy Whitelock, Martin Brett, C. N. L. Brooke. 1981.
<u>CS II</u>	<u>Councils and Synods, with other Documents relating to the English Church, II 1205-1313.</u> Eds. F. M. Powicke and C. R. Cheney. 1964
<u>DB: C</u>	<u>Domesday Book: Cornwall.</u> Eds. Caroline and Frank Thorn. 1979.
<u>DB: D</u>	<u>Domesday Book: Devon.</u> Eds. Caroline and Frank Thorn. 1985.
<u>DFE</u>	<u>Devon Feet of Fines, vol. 1: 1196- 1272.</u> Ed. O. Reichel. 1912.

DRO	Devon Record Office, Exeter
<u>EEAE</u>	<u>English Episcopal Acta XI: Exeter 1046-1184 and XII: Exeter 1186-1257.</u> Ed. Frank Barlow. 1996.
<u>FA</u>	<u>Inquisitions and Assessments relating to Feudal Aids, with other Analogous Documents...1284-1431.</u> 1899-1921.
<u>MA</u>	Dugdale, Sir William. <u>Monasticon Anglicanum.</u> Eds. J. Caley, H. Ellis, and B. Bandinel. 1817-30.
<u>MDE</u>	Oliver, George. <u>Monasticon Diocesis Exoniensis.</u> 1846.
<u>MRH</u>	Knowles, Dom David and R. N. Hadcock. <u>Medieval Religious Houses, England and Wales.</u> 2nd edition. 1971.
<u>PND</u>	Gover, J.E.B., A. Mawer, F.M. Stenton eds. <u>Place-Names of Devon.</u> 1931-2. Rpt. 1969, 1973.
<u>PRS</u>	<u>Pipe Roll Society Publications.</u> London, 1884-in progress.
<u>RBE</u>	<u>Red Book of the Exchequer.</u> Rolls Series, vols. 99-101. 1896.
<u>RC</u>	<u>Charters of the Redvers Family and the Earldom of Devon 1090-1217.</u> Ed. R. Bearman. Devon and Cornwall Record Society. 1994.
<u>Reg. Brantyngham</u>	<u>Register of Thomas Brantyngham, Bishop of Exeter (1370-1394).</u> Ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph. 1901-6.
<u>Reg. Bronescombe,</u> ed. O. Robinson	<u>The Register of Bishop Walter Bronescombe,</u> vol. 1. Ed. O. F. Robinson. 1995.
<u>Reg. Bronescombe</u>	<u>The Registers of Bishop Walter Bronescombe (A.D. 1257-1280), and Peter Quivel (A.D. 1280-1291), Bishops of Exeter, with some Records of the Episcopate of Bishop Thomas de Bytton (A.D. 1292-1307) also the Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV A.D. 1291 (Diocese of Exeter).</u> Ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph. 1889.
<u>Reg. Grandisson</u>	<u>Register of John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter (1327-65).</u> Ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, 1894-99.
<u>Reg. Lacy</u>	<u>Register of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter, 1420-55: Registrum Commune.</u> Ed. G. R. Dunstan. Canterbury and York Society, vols.

60-3, 66. 1963-72.

- Reg. Stapledon Register of Walter de Stapledon, Bishop of Exeter (1395-1419).
Ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph. 1892.
- Sanders, Baronies I. Sanders. English Baronies: A Study of their Origins and Descent
1086-1327. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960.
- TDA Transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement
of Science, Literature, and Art
- Valor Ecclesiasticus Entries for Plympton Priory printed as item #28 in the Monasticon
Diocesis Exoniensis. This material is derived from the printed
edition of the Valor Ecclesiasticus, eds. J. Caley, J. Hunter. 1810-
34.

Introduction

“[The Priory] was happy at least in this respect of having no history until it was overwhelmed in the wholesale dissolution and destruction of religious houses in the reign of Henry VIII.”

J. Mercer Cox, *Plympton St. Mary: The Priory, the Church, and the Parish*

I beg to differ with the late Reverend Cox, whose statement I hope this dissertation will disprove. The Augustinian priory of Saints Peter and Paul in Plympton, Devon, England, did indeed have a history, the study of which reveals a great deal about the characteristics of this religious order and its place in medieval religion and society. From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, Plympton Priory was an integral part of the social fabric of the counties of Devon and Cornwall, attracting benefactions, holding extensive lands, possessing the rights of presentation to numerous churches, receiving tithes, and exercising considerable control over economic activity in the town of Plymouth. The Augustinian canons who resided at the Priory over the centuries, whether they always desired to be or not, were intimately connected with a range of groups in the medieval West Country. An exploration of the foundation, endowment, and administration of Plympton Priory from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries increases our knowledge of the links between institutions and society in the diocese of Exeter in this period. Such an analysis also contributes to current scholarly discussions about the roles, obligations, and spiritual goals of the Augustinian canons.

The Augustinian canons were a religious order that came into being in the eleventh century when groups of priests known as canons began to express an interest in practicing

the “full common life.”¹ In this mode of living, private property was forbidden and the possessions of the community were held in common. The canons also shared dormitories and refectories and committed themselves to celibacy. The aim of pursuing this “full common life” was to emulate the way of life of the apostles, the *vita apostolica*, which has long served as an ideal for those seeking perfection in their earthly existence.² The main scriptural authority for the view that the apostles lived communally and shared their goods were the passages in Acts, chapter 4, verses 32-37. For a fuller guide to the practice of this life, many groups of canons eventually adopted several documents attributed to St. Augustine for guidance on the proper mode of pursuing the *vita apostolica*.³ These documents, collectively known as the Rule of St. Augustine, grew in popularity with canons all over Europe, who generally became known as Augustinian canons.⁴

From the second half of the eleventh century onwards, communities of regular canons began to appear all over Europe, after having originally been concentrated in southern

¹ A very helpful survey of the development of the canonical order up to the thirteenth century is Charles Dereine’s “Chanoines: Des origines au XIIIe s.”, in Dictionnaire d’histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques, t. XII (1953), cols. 353-405. The first two chapters of J. C. Dickinson’s The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England (London: S. P. C. K., 1950) discuss the early history of the regular canons on the Continent, as well.

² For a discussion of the interpretation of this ideal by monks, canons, and friars, see M.-H. Vicaire, L’Imitation des apôtres: moines, chanoines, mendiants (IV-XIIIe siècles), (Paris: Les éditions du cerf, 1963).

³ George Lawless, Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) provides an edition and translation of the Rule of St. Augustine, as well as a survey on the opinions of scholars on the complex textual history and authorship of these documents. The many works of Luc Verheijen, especially La Règle de saint Augustin I: Tradition manuscrite; II: Recherches historiques (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1967), are also invaluable for a clearer understanding of these very muddy waters.

⁴ However, some groups of regular canons--such as the Premonstratensians, who adapted the Rule of St. Augustine to reflect the spirit of the Cistercians--came to form their own

France and Italy. These early Continental houses might be either new foundations, or collegiate churches or cathedral chapters which had been regularized. The history of these houses of Augustinian canons has long attracted attention from French, German, and Italian scholars, although still rather less than other religious orders such as the Benedictines and the Cistercians. An important collection of the contributions of predominantly Continental scholars to this field is the two-volume publication of conference proceedings from 1959 entitled La vita comune dei clero nei secoli XI e XII.⁵ Particular congregations of Augustinian canons--such as those of Arrouaise,⁶ St. Victor,⁷ and S. Frediano, S. Maria in Reno, and S. Maria in Porto⁸--have been the subjects of a number of studies, as have canons in particular regions such as Limousin⁹ and

congregations, and consequently are not usually referred to as Augustinian canons but by their own names. English scholars often use the term "Austin" rather than "Augustinian."

⁵ Atti della settimana di studio: Mendola, 1959, eds. C. Violante and C. Fonseca. Pubblicazioni dell'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore 3.2 and 3, Miscellanea del Centro di Studi Medioevali 3 (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1962).

⁶ See Ludovicus Milis, L'Ordre des chanoines réguliers d'Arrouaise: son histoire et son organisation, de la fondation de l'abbaye-mère (vers 1090) à la fin des chapitres annuels (1471) (Bruges: De Tempel, 1969). For a discussion of the small number of houses of the Arrouaisian and Victorine congregations in England, see J. C. Dickinson, "English Regular Canons and the Continent in the Twelfth Century," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th series, 1 (1951): pp. 71- 89.

⁷ See Fourier Bonnard, Histoire de l'abbaye royale et de l'ordre des chanoines réguliers de St. Victor de Paris... (Paris: A. Savaete, 1904-8); Jean-Pierre Willesme, "Saint-Victor et la famille victorine (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)," in Naissance et fonctionnement des réseaux monastiques et canoniaux: Actes du premier colloque international du CERCOR (Saint-Étienne: Publications Jean Monnet, 1991) and "Saint-Victor au temps d'Abélard," in Abélard en son temps: Actes du colloque international organisés du 9e centenaire de la naissance de Pierre Abélard, 14-19 mai 1979 (Paris: Belles lettres, 1981).

⁸ Wolf Gehrt, Die Verbände der Regularkanonikerstifte S. Frediano in Lucca, S. Maria in Reno bei Bologna, S. Maria in Porto bei Ravenna und die cura animarum im 12. Jahrhundert (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1984).

⁹ The articles of Jean Becquet on the canons of the Limousin have been collected into one volume, Vie canoniale en France aux Xe-XIIe siècles (London: Variorum Reprints, 1985).

Languedoc.¹⁰ The German scholars Karl Bosl and Stefan Weinfurter have also published important studies, respectively, on the involvement of the regular canons in the cure of souls and the patronage of the regular canons by Archbishop Conrad I of Salzburg.¹¹

In the twentieth century some scholars have also sought to address the contributions of the Augustinian canons to the realm of medieval spirituality.¹² Caroline Walker Bynum investigated canonical spirituality in her doctoral dissertation, later published as *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality*, as well as in an essay in her book *Jesus as Mother*.¹³ Bynum concluded that the lives of monks and canons differed little in terms of the activities they engaged in, but that the regular canons did display in their writings of spiritual instruction a commitment to the “edification” by word and example (*docere verbo et exemplo*) of other human beings.¹⁴ While this view

¹⁰ *Le Monde des chanoines (XIe-XIVe siècles)*, ed. M.-H. Vicaire (Toulouse: Privat, 1989).

¹¹ Karl Bosl, *Regularkanoniker (Augustinerchorherren) und Seelsorge in Kirche und Gesellschaft des europäischen 12. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979); Stefan Weinfurter, *Salzburger Bistumsreform und Bischofspolitik im 12. Jahrhundert: Der Erzbischof Konrad I. von Salzburg (1106-1147) und die Regularkanoniker* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1975).

¹² For a brief overview of this subject, with particular emphasis on the writings of Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, see Grover A. Zinn, “The Regular Canons” in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century*, eds. B. McGinn and J. Meyendorff (New York: Crossroad, 1985), pp. 218-228; see also J. Leclercq, “La spiritualité des chanoines réguliers,” in *La vita comune del clero*, pp. 117-141.

¹³ *Docere Verbo et Exemplo: An Aspect of Twelfth-Century Spirituality*, Harvard Theological Studies 31 (Missoula, Montana: Scholars Press, 1979); “The Spirituality of the Regular Canons in the Twelfth Century,” in *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

¹⁴ “Spirituality of Regular Canons,” in *Jesus as Mother*, pp. 36-58.

has not won full approval,¹⁵ Bynum's work has helped bring attention to the body of spiritual writings produced by regular canons in the twelfth century.

Despite the interest of certain scholars in the Continental Augustinian canons and in the spirituality of the canons, the order has been relatively neglected by scholars of English monasticism in comparison to other religious orders. This is surprising, given that there were over two hundred houses of this order in England during the Middle Ages. Indeed, the magisterial works of Dom David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England and The Religious Orders in England,¹⁶ contain fairly brief treatments of the Augustinian canons. Lack of scholarly interest in this order may have been due to the ambiguity over the status of the canons: if they were priestly in character rather than monastic, ought they really to be studied by historians of English monasticism? The existence of twelfth-century controversialist writings written by monks and canons regarding the status and nature of the canonical order demonstrates that even at the time of their expansion, the regular canons suffered from uncertainty as to their religious identity.¹⁷

Another factor resulting in scholarly neglect may be the fact that most Augustinian houses in England were small, poor, and undistinguished, even though the order boasted some wealthy and prominent houses such as Cirencester Abbey, Waltham Abbey, and

¹⁵ See, for example, the remarks of Christopher N. L. Brooke, "Monk and Canon: Some Patterns in the Religious Life of the Twelfth Century," in Monks, Hermits, and the Ascetic Tradition, vol. 22 of Studies in Church History (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. 127-29.

¹⁶ The Monastic Order in England, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 139-42; The Religious Orders in England (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948-1959), vol. 1, pp. 28-31, 316-17; vol. 2, pp. 289, 292-3, 361.

¹⁷ For discussion of these polemical writings, see chapter five of J. C. Dickinson, The Origins of the Austin Canons; C. W. Bynum, "Spirituality of Regular Canons," in Jesus as Mother, pp. 22-58; C. N. L. Brooke, "Monk and Canon," pp. 109-129.

Walsingham Priory. As well, relative to the Cistercians and the Benedictines, the Augustinian canons in England did not produce a great number of shining lights in the realms of literature, theology, and philosophy, although there are some notable exceptions such as Alexander Neckham, Peter of Cornwall, Alexander of Canons Ashby, and Andrew of Wigmore in the twelfth century and Walter Hilton, author of the Scale of Perfection, in the fourteenth.¹⁸

The most important contributions to our knowledge of the English Augustinians were made by J.C. Dickinson. In addition to his many articles on the canons, Dickinson published in 1950 The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England. This book is invaluable for its insights into the varied facets of the early history of this order in England. Dickinson's balanced and sound approach, based on a thorough familiarity with published and unpublished sources, remains the standard against which all other studies of the English Augustinian canons must be measured. Unfortunately, this book covers the history of the order only up to the year 1215, and as a consequence the story of the English canons in the thirteenth to sixteenth centuries remains relatively neglected.¹⁹ The only other substantial work on the canons in England is David

¹⁸ For the works of the two Alexanders and Peter of Cornwall, see A. G. Rigg, A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066-1422 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 117-22, 127-28, 131-33; see also R. W. Hunt, "English Learning in the Late Twelfth Century," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Fourth series, 29 (1936): pp. 19-35; Beryl Smalley, "Andrew of St. Victor, Abbot of Wigmore," Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale, t. X (1938): pp. 358-73.

¹⁹ This situation is ameliorated somewhat by the publication of the surviving records of the general chapters of the English Augustinian canons which began in the thirteenth century and survived into the sixteenth (Chapters of the Augustinian Canons, ed. H. E. Salter, vol 29 of the Canterbury and York Society Publications [London, 1922]).

Robinson's The Geography of Augustinian Settlement in Medieval England and Wales.²⁰

The title of this work belies the range of its contents: Robinson's book is an extensive analysis of the growth, endowment, and economies of Augustinian houses. Robinson's careful and critical approach to the assessments of the income of religious houses--such as the Valor Ecclesiasticus and the Taxatio of Pope Nicholas IV--and his attention to archaeological evidence are particularly instructive.

In recent years, other scholars have considered the English canons in discussions of ecclesiastical or monastic history. Janet Burton, for example, devotes a chapter of her recent survey of the history of the religious orders in England in the High Middle Ages to the canons.²¹ Such discussions are often not fully satisfying, however, because their authors have not actually conducted research into the canons themselves, and they end up repeating commonly-believed but questionable assumptions about the Augustinian canons. One such assumption is that the canons, unlike cloistered monks, were very involved in attending to the spiritual needs of the people. As priests, it would have made sense, some contend, for the canons to have been responsible for the cure of souls of those who attended the churches over which the canons had rights.²² The troubling paucity of evidence for this point of view has not hindered its popularity.²³ One

²⁰ David Robinson, The Geography of Augustinian Settlement in Medieval England and Wales (Oxford: BAR, 1980), 2 vols.

²¹ Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 43-62.

²² Caroline Walker Bynum has noted that "clerical status in the twelfth century did not necessarily involve pastoral care or preaching" ("Spirituality of Regular Canons," p. 54).

²³ For example, Peter Heath admitted in regard to the renewed interest of the Augustinian canons in obtaining benefices in the later Middle Ages (an issue addressed in this dissertation in Chapter Four) that "evidence of their residence [in their benefices] is hard to find, but that they commonly served the livings they acquired seems probable from the

commonly encounters characterizations of the regular canons as dutiful parish priests who just happened to live in priories and abbeys.²⁴ Some writers have even maintained that the Augustinian canons in England were missionaries to the people,²⁵ and even a preaching order.²⁶ One writer claimed not only that the Augustinian canons acted as ministers to the people, but that they were responsible for the diocesan and parochial organization of England.²⁷ The warnings expressed by Dickinson and Dereine²⁸ about exaggerating the

nature of their order" (The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969], p. 178).

²⁴ For example, L. E. Elliott-Binns, while describing the Augustinian canons as "semi-monastic" by nature, claims that they "regularly undertook parochial duties" without offering any evidence to support this assertion (Medieval Cornwall [London: Methuen, 1955], p. 328n).

²⁵ David Postles, "The Austin Canons in English Towns, c. 1100-1350," Historical Research, 66 (1993): 1-20. Postles' characterization of the Augustinian canons as an almost proto-mendicant, "proselytizing order," sent out by the Lateran synods of 1059 and 1063 to engage in "missionary work" in towns, simply does not accord with the facts (this point will be discussed in more depth in Chapter One). Further, his accusation that the early canons formed an "advance guard, small in number and short on enthusiasm for the job in hand," some of whom "quickly retreated to the contemplative life in the countryside," is hardly a fair explanation of the site changes which are normal characteristics of the early years of many religious houses (p. 4). To depict the canons as shirkers who were too lazy to pursue their mission as an order reflects a misunderstanding of the history, organization, and nature of the canonical order.

²⁶ C. Gill, Plymouth: A New History, vol. 1 (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971), p. 60. Regarding Plympton Priory, this author states that "the Augustinians were a preaching order of canons who ministered to the people in the parishes round the priory, and whose churches came under priory control." He goes on to say that the canons either "lived in parishes as normal priests" or appointed vicars.

²⁷ T. Scott Holmes, "The Austin Canons in England in the Twelfth Century," Journal of Theological Studies 5 (1904): 343-56. A critique of the thesis of this article--the sources of which are mysterious, as there are no footnotes--was published in 1923: Egerton Beck, "Regulars and the Parochial System in Mediaeval England," Dublin Review, 172 (1923): 235-51. Both of these articles were addressed in depth by J. C. Dickinson in chapter six of The Origins of the Austin Canons. Dickinson agreed with Beck that the assumption that donors gave parish churches to the canons hoping that they would serve in them personally is "somewhat anachronistic" (p. 227). However, Dickinson felt that Beck went rather too far in rejecting the possibility that the canons served in any more than a "minute fraction" of their churches (p. 225). Dickinson did conclude "that, so far as the

participation by the regular canons in the cure of souls ought to be taken into consideration by anyone seeking to understand the nature of the canonical order.

Indeed, those who wish to assert that the regular canons and the monks fulfilled quite different roles in medieval religion must confront the substantial evidence of similarities of functions and lifestyles of the two. The main original distinction between the canons and their monastic brethren--the clerical status of the canons--began to break down over the course of the twelfth century as more and more monks were ordained. As Caroline Walker Bynum has said, "despite repeated assertions by scholars that regular canons combined monastic practice with a new orientation towards the cure of souls, no evidence has as yet been presented to demonstrate that the actual life lived in most canonical houses in the twelfth century differed generally from the life in most monastic cloisters."²⁹ This view is supported by the findings of those who have studied the architectural remains of Augustinian priories and abbeys. They have found that there were no substantial differences in the plans of Augustinian and Benedictine houses.³⁰ It is to be hoped that greater appreciation of the largely monastic nature of most Augustinian houses will lead to a better understanding of their role in English religion and society.

vast majority of houses at least were concerned, there was never any intention that the early inmates should undertake the care of most or all of the parishes given to them" (p. 239).

²⁸ "Chanoines," Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques, cols. 391-95. Dereine found that although in certain instances regular canons had the opportunity to engage in the cure of souls at parish churches, it was not an essential characteristic of the order.

²⁹ C. W. Bynum, "Spirituality of Regular Canons," in Jesus as Mother, p. 28.

³⁰ J. C. Dickinson, "Les constructions des premiers chanoines réguliers en Angleterre," Cahiers de civilisation médiévale, 10 (1967), p. 184; G. H. Cook, English Monasteries in the Middle Ages (London: Phoenix House, 1961), p. 180.

Certain scholarly assumptions have also existed about the motivations of those who founded and made gifts to Augustinian houses. Because many patrons (the actual founders or their heirs) and benefactors gave parish churches to the new Augustinian houses of the twelfth century, scholars have traditionally believed that these people made these gifts thinking that the canons would personally serve them. However, there has been little exploration into other possible motives of the benefactors and patrons. This dissertation will place the growth of the Augustinian order in England within the context of the program of the Gregorian Reform and will address the reasons for the popularity of the regular canons amongst Reform-minded laypeople and bishops.

In the last few decades, scholarly interest has increased in the relationships between patrons and benefactors and the religious houses they founded, assisted, or endowed. Scholars have paid particular attention to the familial and social networks which existed around religious houses as support mechanisms.³¹ Such studies have shed a great deal of light on lay piety and on the involvement of the royal family, the episcopacy, and the magnates in the patronage of houses of the various orders. However, due to the aforementioned relative neglect by scholars of the subject of the Augustinian canons in

³¹ Some notable studies have been Susan Wood, English Monasteries and their Patrons in the Thirteenth Century (London: Oxford University Press, 1955); J. C. Ward, "Foundations in Monastic Endowment: The Foundations of the Clare Family, 1066-1314," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 32 (1981): 427-51; Christopher N. L. Brooke, "Princes and Kings as Patrons of Monasteries, Normandy and England," in Il monachesimo e la riforma ecclesiastica (1049-1122), Miscellanea del centro di studi medioevali 6 (1971): 125-52; Elizabeth Hallam's "Henry II as a Founder of Monasteries," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 28 (1977): 113-32; Emma Cownie, "Gloucester Abbey, 1066-1135: An Illustration of Religious Patronage in Anglo-Norman England," in D. Bates and A. Curry, England and Normandy in the Middle Ages (1994); Christopher Holdsworth The Piper and the Tune: Medieval Patrons and Monks (Reading: University of Reading, 1991).

medieval England, not a great deal of research has been published on the “networks of patronage” which surrounded Augustinian priories and abbeys. It was evident that more information was needed on who was founding and making gifts to Augustinian houses, how they were connected to each other, why they supported particular houses, what they expected from the canons, and the extent to which their support affected the material success of the Augustinian foundations.

Another field which has been expanding lately is the study of late medieval religion and society, with a particular focus on popular religion. The most important surveys of these subjects have been published by R. N. Swanson,³² who has addressed the workings of the medieval Church in the lives of ordinary people. Of particular interest have been his analyses of the tensions which flared up from time to time in the later medieval period between parishioners and the parochial clergy. As a consequence of their rights to many parish churches, the Augustinian canons were in a position to be more involved in such disputes than other orders, but again, this issue seems rarely to have been investigated.

In order to achieve a fuller, more accurate view of the activities of the Augustinian canons in medieval English society, a greater number of case studies of individual priories and abbeys is required. Relatively few scholarly studies have been undertaken of English Augustinian houses, however. Generally, the most helpful extended discussions of individual Augustinian houses can be found in the introductions of editions of

³² See especially Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215-c. 1515 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Church and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989). For surveys which emphasize Church-State relations and the clergy, see two books by Peter Heath, Church and Realm, 1272-1461 (London: Fontana Press, 1988) and The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

cartularies of Augustinian houses.³³ An important recent contribution to this field is the doctoral dissertation of Ann M. Geddes, “The Priory of Lanthony by Gloucester: An Augustinian House in an English Town, 1136-1401.”³⁴ Geddes, working with the richest surviving collection of documents of any Augustinian house in England, examines a variety of aspects of the existence of the Priory, with the foci being on the economic history of the house and its relations with the townspeople of Gloucester.

The subject of the present dissertation is the Augustinian Priory of Saints Peter and Paul at Plympton, in the county of Devon, England. This Priory was founded in 1121 by William Warelwast, Bishop of Exeter and became one of the richest Augustinian houses in England.³⁵ Plympton Priory was extraordinary, too, for the proportion of its income which it derived from the parish churches and chapels it controlled: the income from its *spiritualia* was £454 in 1535,³⁶ slightly more than its income from lands and rents, £443. In 1535, Plympton Priory received the income from nine appropriated churches (in addition to its conventual church and cells) and eight chapels, pensions from eight other churches, and half the tithes of a church in Cornwall. The Priory also held the right to present clerics (a right known as the advowson) to fourteen churches. The possession of such a large spiritual income obviously would have a significant impact on the history of

³³ Such as those of Waltham Abbey, Cirencester Abbey, Holy Trinity Aldgate Priory, and Launceston Priory.

³⁴ Submitted to Johns Hopkins University in 1997.

³⁵ The valuation of the total income of Plympton Priory in 1535 came to just over £898 (not, as in MRH, £912; Knowles and Hadcock missed an error in calculation in the printed edition of the Valor Ecclesiasticus). By comparison, Cirencester Abbey had an income in 1535 of £1071, Merton Priory £960, Leicester Abbey £951, and Waltham Abbey £900.

the Priory, and raised a host of questions: what were the implications of having rights to so many parish churches and of being the mother-church to so many chapels? How did the *spiritualia* link the canons with the secular clergy and the laity? How did the Priory exploit the income from its spiritual sources, and how did it defend its entitlement to them when challenged? Was there any evidence that the canons of Plympton Priory ever exercised the cure of souls in the benefices over which they held the right of presentation?

An analysis of the benefactions of *spiritualia*, as well as *temporalia*, also reveals a great deal about the identities of the benefactors of Plympton Priory and their motivations in making gifts to this house. The search for “networks of patronage” surrounding this Augustinian house has borne fruit, and groupings of patrons and benefactors, such as the bishops of Exeter and their circles and the magnates of Devon and their vassals, have been identified. Examination of the surviving records of donation from Plympton has also served to highlight the importance of generosity and support on the part of donors in the early years after the foundation of a house. The later experiences of Plympton Priory paralleled those of so many other religious houses founded in the twelfth century: connections with descendants of the original benefactors tended to weaken over time as the initial enthusiasm surrounding the foundation of a new house diminished. The exception to this scenario in the case of Plympton Priory is its relations with its patrons, the bishops of Exeter, which continued to be of great importance to the house throughout its history.

³⁶ This was the date of valuation of ecclesiastical wealth in England known as the Valor Ecclesiasticus. This was a precursor to the dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 and 1539-40. Plympton was dissolved in 1539.

Despite the wealth of Plympton Priory and its status as an important religious house in the south-west of England, surprisingly little research has been done into its history. Some local antiquarians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have expressed an interest in the town of Plympton: the aforementioned Reverend Cox, who concluded there was little to be known or said of the history of the Priory; John Stevens, who took notes on a variety of documents relating to the Priory³⁷; and J. Brooking Rowe, author of a history of the borough of Plympton Erle.³⁸ Other writers have discussed Plympton Priory to varying degrees in studies with larger canvasses: J. C. Dickinson related the events of the house's founding in The Origins of the Austin Canons; R. N. Worth, in his history of Plymouth, recounted the tensions between the citizens of the town and Plympton Priory, which exercised considerable rights there³⁹; R. J. E. Boggis mentioned the Priory a number of times in his history of the diocese of Exeter,⁴⁰ as did Christopher Holdsworth and Nicholas Orme in their chapters in a recent book on the church history of Devon and Cornwall⁴¹; Oswald Reichel, in his section on the hundred of Plympton in the Hundreds

³⁷ These are now located in the West Devon Record Office in Plymouth and the Local Studies Room of the Plymouth Central Library.

³⁸ A History of the Borough of Plympton Erle, the Castle and Manor of Plympton, and of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Plympton St. Thomas (Exeter: James G. Commin, 1906). Plympton Priory was situated in the neighbouring town and parish of Plympton St. Mary, and consequently appears infrequently in Brooking Rowe's study.

³⁹ A History of Plymouth from the Earliest Period to the Present Time (Plymouth: Brendon and Son, 1890). See also the same author's article "Some Notes on the Earlier Municipal History of Plymouth," TDA 16 (1884): 723-48.

⁴⁰ A History of the Diocese of Exeter (Exeter: William Pollard, 1922).

⁴¹ These were published in Unity and Variety: A History of the Church in Devon and Cornwall, ed. N. Orme (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991). Nicholas Orme contributed "From the Beginnings to 1050" and "The Later Middle Ages and the Reformation." Christopher Holdsworth wrote "From 1050 to 1307."

of Devon, translated Henry II's inspeximus charter of c.1158 and commented upon it.⁴²

However, no study has explored in depth the place and significance of Plympton Priory in the clerical and social contexts of the region in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries.

A variety of primary sources were consulted for this dissertation. Some charters and other documents from Plympton Priory exist at the Devon Record Office in Exeter and the British Library. The cartulary of the Priory has unfortunately been lost, but extracts from this "Registrum de Plympton" (Oxford, Bodleian MS James 23, pp. 151-70) were copied by Richard James in the early seventeenth century.⁴³ Further selections from the cartulary were copied later in the century by Thomas Tanner (Oxford, Bodleian MS Tanner 342, ff. 177r-178v, and London, British Library, Harley 6974, ff. 28r-30r).

Another reason for the choice of Plympton Priory as a subject of study was its location in the richly-documented diocese of Exeter. The registers of the Bishops of Exeter survive from the mid-thirteenth century onwards and contain a treasure trove of information on the religious houses of the diocese and their relations with the Bishops. The registers of the Bishops of Exeter from 1257 to 1455 have been published. The editor of most of these volumes, F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, made available a vast amount of material, but his editorial methods can lead to frustration amongst those who consult these printed registers. Hingeston-Randolph arranged entries not according to their appearance in the manuscript versions, but alphabetically; institutions to benefices appear

⁴² "The Hundreds of Plympton and Ermington in Early Times," TDA: Special Supplement, The Hundreds of Devon, vol. 6, 1933. Reichel's observations must be treated with some caution, however, as a number of errors have been detected among them.

in their own category, and may be arranged either alphabetically or chronologically. The edition of one register, that of Edmund Stafford, is only an index of the contents with some “abstracts” of various entries.⁴⁴ The “*registrum commune*” of Bishop Edmund Lacy (1420-1455) has been more satisfyingly edited by G. R. Dunstan for the Canterbury and York Society.⁴⁵ This society also published in 1995 the first volume of a new edition of Bishop Walter Bronescombe which follows the layout of the manuscript register and provides a facing-page translation into English from the Latin text.⁴⁶ Recently the records of the Bishops of Exeter from the earliest times to the mid-thirteenth century have been edited by Frank Barlow and appear in the series English Episcopal Acta.⁴⁷

Other published sources which have proven invaluable are the extensive series of English chancery and judicial documents. The calendars of Patent Rolls, Close Rolls, Fine Rolls, and the Curia Regis Rolls have provided a great deal of information on Plympton Priory’s measures to protect its endowments and assert its rights. The editions of papal letters and petitions pertaining to England have also shed a great deal of light on the Priory’s relations with the secular clergy, the episcopate, and the parishioners of its

⁴³ Portions of the “Registrum” have been printed in Charters of the Redvers Family, English Episcopal Acta: Exeter, and elsewhere. Relevant non-published material appears in this dissertation in the footnotes.

⁴⁴ The Register of Edmund Stafford, Bishop of Exeter (AD 1395-1419): An Index and Abstract of its Contents, ed. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph (London: G. Bell; Exeter: H. S. Eland, 1886).

⁴⁵ The Register of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter, 1420-55: Registrum Commune, ed. G. R. Dunstan, 5 vols., Canterbury and York Society vols. 60-63, 66, 1963-72

⁴⁶ The Register of Bishop Walter Bronescombe, vol. 1, ed. O. Robinson, Canterbury and York Society, vol. 82 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1995). Nicholas Orme, in his review of this volume in *Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries*, 37 (1995), pp. 308-10, points out a number of difficulties with Robinson’s edition.

⁴⁷ English Episcopal Acta XI: Exeter 1046-1184 and XII: Exeter 1186-1257, ed. Frank Barlow (Oxford: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 1996).

chapels. Charters and other documents relating to the Redvers family, earls of Devon and benefactors of Plympton Priory, were published several years ago by the Devon and Cornwall Record Society.⁴⁸ Most importantly, a great number of documents from a variety of repositories have been made conveniently accessible to scholars of Devon monastic and religious history by the nineteenth-century antiquarian, Reverend George Oliver, in his Monasticon Diocesis Exoniensis.⁴⁹ Another helpful publication from the last century is R. N. Worth's Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records, which provides information on the Plymouth documents which survived fifteenth-century Breton raiders and sixteenth-century rioters. The twelfth-century "Annals" of Plympton, appended to the Priory's copy of Bede which is kept in the British Library, have also been published.⁵⁰

It is unfortunate that our knowledge of the history of the Priory gained from the documentary sources has been supplemented to only a limited extent by evidence derived from archaeological excavations. Soon after its dissolution, virtually the whole structure of the Priory was demolished for building materials.⁵¹ Inhabitants of the town of

⁴⁸ Charters of the Redvers Family and the Earldom of Devon 1090-1217, ed. R. Bearman. Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Series, vol. 37 (Exeter: Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1994).

⁴⁹ The main text was published in 1846 (Exeter: P. A. Hannaford; London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans), and an additional supplement in 1854 (Exeter: A. Holdon).

⁵⁰ "Annales Plymptonienses," in Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquellen, ed. F. Liebermann (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1879).

⁵¹ A fragment of a wall, which was located at the junction of the west range and the nave of the conventual church, still stands above ground and was consolidated by the Plympton St. Mary Civic Society in 1986; another wall fragment also stands nearby (P. Gibbons, "Plympton Priory: A Review of the Physical Remains," Report for English Heritage, 1997, pp. 2-3). An archway from the Priory has also been incorporated into a nearby

Plympton St. Mary constructed houses over the Priory site in the ensuing centuries, so that very little open space in the area has been available to archaeologists. Excavations of the nave of the conventual church, undertaken by V. Ledger in 1958 and 1959, provide some insight into phases of building, building materials, and types of decoration employed at the Priory.⁵² In 1988, seventeen trenches were dug in the Priory Mill area for an archaeological evaluation before the construction of a housing development on the site.⁵³ The most significant medieval finds from the examination of these trenches were evidence of a twelfth-century sunken track, later medieval drains, and a late medieval aqueduct made of stone which probably served as a mill leat. There is, alas, little remaining today at the site of the Priory in Plympton to summon to mind the eventful history of this wealthy and important religious house.

This study enhances our knowledge of a too-long-neglected order which was an important presence on the social and religious landscapes of England in the High and Late Middle Ages. Through an examination of the successes and tribulations of one particular Augustinian house, this dissertation investigates issues of patronage and benefaction, popular piety, and lay-religious relations. It also brings to light a number of unexplored aspects of the religious history of the south-west of England. Studying the history of

structure, the Tower House. Fragments of architectural sculpture from the Priory also decorate many gardens in the town of Plympton St. Mary.

⁵² V. B. Ledger, "[Notes] on Plympton St. Mary Priory," *Medieval Archaeology*, 2 (1958): p. 190; 3 (1959), pp. 303-4; 4 (1960), p. 139. For example, Ledger found an altar-table of Purbeck marble, walls of local limestone covered with patterned wall-plaster, tiled pavement, and fifteenth-century gilded mouldings. There was also evidence of rebuilding in the thirteenth century and a fire in the area of the south transept after the fifteenth century.

⁵³ Stewart W. Brown, "Plympton Priory Mill Site. Excavations, 1988," City of Plymouth Museum, 1989.

Plympton Priory serves, then, as a means of addressing and understanding a variety of significant themes within the realms of medieval religion and society.

Chapter 1: *The Founding of Plympton Priory: Background and Context*

A crucial time in the lifespan of any religious community is that surrounding its foundation. In the twelfth century, as the “new orders” flourished across Europe, members of the Church hierarchy and lay society who possessed sufficient means established religious houses of their favoured orders. This chapter will explore the circumstances surrounding the foundation of Plympton Priory in 1121 as well as the larger context in which foundations of English Augustinian houses occurred.

The Priory of Saints Peter and Paul, Plympton, took the place of an Anglo-Saxon college which had been located on the same site. In order to gain a clearer understanding of the transformation from college to priory, we will begin with a survey of what is known about the history of the college at Plympton before its refoundation as a house of Augustinian canons. Although the evidence is sadly not as complete as one might wish, from the documents which do survive we can gain some insight into the size of the college’s endowment and its status at the time of its refoundation in 1121. This chapter will also examine the first step in the conversion of college to priory: the royal gift of Plympton minster, along with several other churches, to the bishop of Exeter in the early twelfth century. As the authenticity of the charters concerning this gift has been questioned, some attention will be given to the difficulties surrounding these documents.

The second step in the transformation was the decision of William Warelwast, bishop of Exeter, to disband the collegiate church and to institute Augustinian canons in the

place of the secular canons. Bishop William Warelwast was one of several bishops who founded Augustinian priories in this period and consequently this chapter will consider in some detail the popularity of the regular canons among episcopal--as well as royal and curial--patrons. We will also examine the connections between the Gregorian Reform, in particular the campaign for clerical celibacy, and the spread of the Augustinian canons in England in the twelfth century. The oft-accepted explanation for the growth of the canonical order in twelfth-century England is that founders expected the regular canons to undertake the cure of souls in their districts or in the parishes of churches given to them. It will be suggested that this theory is problematic, due to the lack of supporting evidence. Rather, it will be suggested that a heretofore neglected explanation for the favour given to the regular canons might be the widespread admiration for their pursuit of the *vita apostolica* and their avowal of celibacy. Of course, if we are to discern contemporary expectations of the Augustinian canons, we must look at the statements made about the canons by the founders and other benefactors in their charters. While the charter evidence does not tell us the whole story behind any foundation, it supplies us with invaluable information about who was involved in the foundation of houses like Plympton and what their motives may have been.

The Pre-conquest Minster at Plympton

A minster, or college, existed at Plympton by the early tenth century.¹ Leland reported that the college was a "free chapel of the foundation of Saxon kings" and that the college

¹ J. H. Denton (Royal Free Chapels 1100-1300 [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970], p. 2) distinguishes between minsters (Anglo-Saxon foundations where clerics lived communally) and colleges (post-Conquest houses where the clerics had their own prebends). Others, however, use the terms more generally: John Blair states that in

consisted of a dean or provost with four prebendaries.² The earliest documentary reference to Plympton minster is in a charter of King Edward the Elder dated between 889 and 909.³ In this document the king gives Asser, bishop of Sherborne, 23 hides of land in Wellington, Bishops Lydeard, and West Buckland in Somerset in return for the minster of “Plymentum.” This would seem to imply that a bishop of Sherborne had been either the original founder of the minster, or had received it as a gift at an earlier time.

Little is known of the activities of the collegiate church at Plympton, or indeed of many of the minsters in England in the eleventh or early twelfth centuries. Recently there has been some debate as to the development of minsters and their relationship to pastoral care during the Anglo-Saxon period.⁴ There does seem to be agreement, however, that there was great diversity in the status and wealth of these minsters. Evidence from Domesday indicates that some were well-endowed and staffed by a full complement of 13 canons, some had only a few priests supported by three or four hides of land, and some

the eleventh century “*mynster* and *monasterium* could be used for any kind of religious establishment with a church” (“Introduction: from Minster to Parish Church,” in Minsters and Parish Churches: the Local Church in Transition, 950-1200, ed. John Blair, Oxford Committee for Archaeology, monograph no. 17, 1988, p. 1). Other authors in this latter book use the terms “minsters” and “colleges” interchangeably. The present writer will do so also for the words “minster,” “college,” and “collegiate church.”

² Leland, John. The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535-1543, ed. Lucy Toulmin Smith (London: George Smith, 1907), vol. 1, pt. III, p. 215. Leland is, of course, a late source whose information must be treated with some caution.

³ DB: D, vol. 2, notes to #1, 17.

⁴ Eric Cambridge and David Rollason in “Debate: The pastoral organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a review of the ‘Minster Hypothesis’,” Early Medieval Europe 4 (1995): 87-104, argue against the “minster hypothesis” (as formulated by John Blair and others). The core of this hypothesis is that early Anglo-Saxon minsters were responsible for the pastoral care of territorial districts until c. 950 when the growth of private manorial churches led to their decay. Cambridge and Rollason feel that the role of the minsters in pastoral care was less prominent. Blair’s response can be found in “Debate: Ecclesiastical organization and pastoral care in Anglo-Saxon England,” Early Medieval Europe 4 (1995): 193-212.

were in a very decayed state.⁵ In the eleventh century a number of these collegiate churches (as well as cathedral chapters) were developing prebendal systems in which each canon had his own prebend and his own residence; on the other hand, there are a number of instances of colleges and cathedrals moving towards a more communal way of life—using common refectories, living in dormitories, holding property in common, and practising celibacy.⁶ Those communities which did undertake a more restrictive existence often used or adapted the *Regula canonicorum* of St. Chrodegang of Metz (742-66) or the *Institutio canonicorum* of Amalarius of Metz which prescribed moderate versions of the apostolic “full common life” for clerics.⁷ The eleventh century also saw support from the Crown for an improved mode of living at collegiate churches and cathedrals: in 1008 Aethelred issued a decree (later renewed by Cnut) that canons with common refectories and dormitories were to live regularly and chastely.⁸

⁵ John Blair, “Secular minster churches in Domesday Book,” in Domesday Book: A Reassessment, ed. P. Sawyer (London: Edward Arnold, 1985), p. 114.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-24. The canons at Harold’s foundation at Waltham (later to become an Augustinian abbey) possessed their own residences and prebends, yet their food and clothes were paid for from a common fund. The Waltham canons were also free to marry. P. H. Hase describes the situation at Christchurch as “semi-communal”: the canons celebrated the day and night hours communally, may have been celibate, and received most of their income from one fund; yet, they lived in separate houses, likely did not dine together at a refectory, and possessed “embryonic prebends.” See “The Mother Churches of Hampshire,” in Minsters and Parish Churches, pp. 52-54, 60.

⁷ J. C. Dickinson, The Origins of the Austin Canons and their Introduction into England (London: S. P. C. K., 1950), pp. 16-20, 95-96. Chrodegang’s Rule stated that canons were to give their property to the Church, but they could enjoy its “usufruct”; some canons could live extra-claustrally in the town, but others had to share a common “fund, refectory, and dormitory”. Amalarius’ *Institutio*, a product of the Synod of Aachen in 816-17, did not require the renunciation of private property, but did set down regulations for common living, eating, and worship. Bishop Leofric instituted a refectory and dormitory for the cathedral canons at Exeter and had them follow Chrodegang’s Rule, but this arrangement did not long survive Leofric’s death. See David Blake, “Bishop Leofric,” TDA 106 (1974): 47-57.

⁸ Dickinson, Origins, p. 95.

Devon and Cornwall seem to have had an unusually high number of minsters by the eleventh century. There were at least twenty-six in the two counties between the sixth and eleventh centuries.⁹ The situation in Devon differs from that of Cornwall in that ten of the fourteen “probable minsters” were located on or near royal manors, and the remaining four are known to have been “founded or endowed by kings”.¹⁰ Indeed, the Saxon kings of Wessex seem to have been very involved in the establishment of minsters¹¹: “well-endowed [collegiate] churches were thickest on the ground where late Saxon kings had their main estates and conducted their main activities.”¹²

Plympton Minster’s endowment of two hides of land may seem small, but was not unusually so for the region.¹³ Of course, the exchange of 23 hides for Plympton suggests that it likely did have more extensive holdings originally but, like many other religious communities in Devon and Cornwall of the tenth and eleventh centuries, may have lost much of what it once had during the Danish and Norman invasions.¹⁴ Orme notes that a

⁹ Nicholas Orme, “From the Beginnings to 1050,” in Unity and Variety: A History of the Church in Devon and Cornwall, ed. N. Orme (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991), p. 9.

¹⁰ Ibid. Orme believes that the Devon minsters were likely founded from the eighth century onwards as part of a “royal initiative...to provide a major church in every district”. He points out that most of the Devon minsters were situated at the “centres of hundreds, the districts of local government which first appear in the tenth century”. If the plan was to establish one church for every hundred, it was erratically realized: some hundreds shared a minster, and the hundred of Plympton had two—St. Peter’s and St. Paul’s at Plympton, and a collegiate church at Yealmpton. The two hides of Plympton College were located within the royal manor of Plympton (DB: D, #1, 17).

¹¹ John Blair, “Introduction”, in Minsters and Parish Churches, pp. 1-3.

¹² Blair, “Secular Minster Churches,” p. 114.

¹³ According to the Domesday Book, the minster at Axminster had only half a hide; the Geld Inquest recorded that Crediton collegiate church held 3 hides. See Susan Pearce, The Kingdom of Dumnonia: Studies in History and Tradition in South-Western Britain A.D. 350-1150 (Padstow: Lodenek Press, 1978), p. 102.

¹⁴ Orme, “Beginnings,” p.11.

holding of one or two hides was typical amongst the Devon minsters, and while this was small, it would have been supplemented by tithes and other dues.¹⁵

Possessions of the College of Plympton before 1121

In cases of the refoundation of secular colleges as Augustinian priories, the endowment of the college was typically transferred to that of the new house. It would be useful to know the exact extent of the spiritualia and temporalia belonging to the college so as to be able to distinguish them from donations made to the Priory after its foundation in 1121. Unfortunately, little is known of the possessions of the college of secular canons at Plympton. Certainly, the church of St. Andrew at Sutton¹⁶ with some dependent chapels belonged to Plympton from before the Norman Conquest.¹⁷ It seems likely that Plympton possessed a number of other chapels before 1121. In 1124, Bishop William Warelwast granted Plympton Priory “and all its chapels, especially Plymstock” exemption from various payments due the bishops of Exeter.¹⁸ Unless the canons had been especially zealous in setting up several chapels within three years of their foundation, one might assume that these were chapels originally established by or given to the secular

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Sutton” or “Sutton Prior” was the original name of the community which, by the later Middle Ages, had come to be known as “Plymouth.”

¹⁷ EEAE # 23. In the dispute of 1137 between Reginald de Valletort and Plympton Priory regarding the ownership of the church of St. Andrew at Sutton, two elderly local men testified that Plympton Minster had owned St. Andrew “cum capellis et omnibus pertinentiis suis” until Henry I granted the manor of Sutton to Reginald. The judgement was given in favour of the Priory. Another reference to this matter in the same manuscript (Bodl. MS James 24, p. 164) mentions that a line of hereditary priests staffed the church of St. Andrew from the time of Harold Harefoot (1037x1040).

¹⁸ EEAE #20.

canons of Plympton sometime between its foundation and 1121.¹⁹ Indeed, it would be surprising if a collegiate church founded in the Anglo-Saxon period had not presided over several chapels. As P. H. Hase has stated, "Those Anglo-Saxon royal laws of the tenth and eleventh centuries which discuss parochial rights assume, without exception, that the normal parochial system in England was the mother church with its dependent chapels."²⁰ Such chapels might have been founded by the priests of the minster or by manorial lords, and in the twelfth century might have been served either by a resident curate or by the minster priests.²¹

There is some evidence, albeit of a rather confusing nature, that in late Anglo-Saxon times the college at Plympton may have had some connection with the church of St. Kew.²² In 1302, a group of Cornishmen complained in court that the prior of Plympton had not been fulfilling his duties to the church of St. Kew. They based their case--of which more will be said in Chapter Five--on the assertion that King Edgar had given the church to the canons with two carucates of land and a hundred shillings' rent so as to support two canons who would reside at the church.²³ The prior denied this contention,

¹⁹ O. J. Reichel ("The Hundred of Plympton in Early Times," TDA, Special Supplement, The Hundreds of Devon: The Hundreds of Plympton and Ermington in Early Times, 1933, p. 246) states that at the time of the Domesday Book, Plympton Minster had chapels at Brixton, Plymstock, Wembury, Shaugh, and Sampford Spiney, but does not cite his source for this information. The fact that none of these chapels is mentioned as gifts to the Priory in Henry II's inspeximus charter of c. 1154/55 or in Bishop John's confirmation charter of 1186x1191, and that no donation charters survive for them, suggests that they were part of the college's original endowment which was transferred to the Priory.

²⁰ P. H. Hase, "The Mother Churches of Hampshire," p. 51.

²¹ Blair, "Introduction," Minsters and Parish Churches, pp. 11-12.

²² This church was also known variously as Lannow, Lannowseynt, Landeho, Landoho, and the like.

²³ W. M. Picken, "The 'Landochou' Charter," in The Westward Expansion of Wessex and Supplement to the Early Charters of Devon and Cornwall, eds. W. G. Hoskins and H.

countering that the Priory had received St. Kew as a gift from William Warelwast, bishop of Exeter. He produced William's charter (now lost) and Henry II's *inspeximus* charter as proof that King Edgar had not been the donor of this church and land.

Despite this seemingly straightforward evidence of the origins of Plympton Priory's rights over St. Kew, a document does survive which one scholar, W. M. Picken, believes indicates that there was some truth to the account of the Cornishmen. This is the "Landochou charter," which was offered in evidence in the court case and seems to have come from the muniments of Plympton Priory.²⁴ It is dated to 961x963 and states that King Edgar granted land to the *monasterium* of St. Kew in Cornwall.²⁵ This possible link between the Priory and the church is not sufficient to establish the Priory's ownership of

P. R. Finberg, *Department of Local History Occasional Papers #13* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1960), p. 36.

²⁴Picken suggests that the charter remained at Plympton College even after the canons had lost St. Kew, and that the regular canons who took over the church in the 1120s kept it—even though the episcopal charter established their true title to St. Kew ("Landochou charter," pp. 43-44). Picken also thinks that the regular canons may have doctored the Landochou charter to remove conditions of service from it. Lynette Olson, however, feels that the charter is authentic as it stands. Picken's alternate suggestion is that the Landochou charter records a gift to the Landochou/St. Kew clerics, that the charter was kept at St. Kew until the regular canons took possession of the church, at which time they seized the church's muniments; the Cornishmen simply confused King Edgar's donation with Bishop William's. Picken felt this theory to be less convincing than the former, but the present writer would tend to disagree.

²⁵ Lynette Olson, *Early Monasteries of Cornwall* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1989), pp. 81-82. Olson, unlike Picken, equates the church of St. Kew (also known as Landochou) with the early Celtic monastery of Docco; she states that by the tenth century it is not known whether it was still a monastery or a "group of endowed clerics". Susan Pearce also maintains that St. Kew and Docco were one foundation (*Kingdom of Dumnonia*, p. 120), and believes that the charter may have been a confirmation of the existing possessions of St. Kew/Landoho. She also suggests that Edgar may have specified that the St. Kew/Landoho community were "to maintain two regular canons for the service of the church" in return for the confirmation. If this were so, the canons of Plympton Priory may have excised this condition from the text when the lawsuit was imminent. Given the fact that regular canons did not exist as such in tenth-century England, Edgar would not have imposed this condition.

St. Kew in the Anglo-Saxon period, however, especially since the college of Plympton or its canons are not mentioned in the charter. By the time of Domesday Book, St. Kew was definitely no longer in the possession of the secular college at Plympton.²⁶

In terms of land, the Domesday Book states that the king owned the manor at Plympton except for two hides (Colebrook/Boringdon and Wembury) owned by the canons of St. Peter of Plympton.²⁷ Henry I confirmed that these two hides were not amongst his lands at Plympton,²⁸ as did Henry II in his inspeximus charter of c. 1158.²⁹ The only other mention of the college in the Domesday Book pertains to Robert Bastard: he is recorded as having “two villagers on the land of St. Peter’s of Plympton”, for which they pay 5s.³⁰ This reference does not make clear whether the land is part of the two hides at Plympton or close to Robert Bastard’s lands at Mewy.³¹ Given that these are the only possessions of the college mentioned in the Domesday Book, one has the impression that

²⁶ DB: C, #1, 4. In 1086, the king held the manor of St. Kew, which had previously been held by Earl Harold.

²⁷ DB: D, #1, 17.

²⁸ Bodl. MS. James 23, p. 152. Some local antiquarians, such as Oswald Reichel, believed that William I gave these two hides to Plympton, but the charters of Henry I and II do not allude to this fact. Henry I’s writ in Bodl. MS. James 23 simply requested that the barons of Devon recognize that these hides were “quietas de omnibus placitis et querelis et Geldis et Danegeldis et auxiliis omnibus quae per hydas assidebuntur sicut quietores inde fuerunt tempore patris mei et fratris et meo tempore.” Henry I also notified the sheriffs of Devon in a charter of c. 1128 of the fact that Plympton’s two hides were free of all dues (Oliver MDE #2).

²⁹ Oliver MDE # 3.

³⁰ DB: D, vol.1 #29, 10. Domesday also states that before 1066 Ailwin held them.

³¹ The editors of Domesday Book: Devon, Caroline and Frank Thorn, believe that these lands were in Plympton Hundred, presumably part of the college’s two hides (vol. 1, #29, 10).

the secular canons, unlike those of the nearby Celtic monastery of St. Petroc at Bodmin³², did not own extensive estates.

It seems that the secular canons may also have owned land in Sutton: according to Leland, two of the four prebends at the college of Plympton were named after Plympton and Sutton.³³ A nineteenth-century local antiquarian, the Rev. R. N. Worth, condemned Leland's information concerning land-holding in Plymouth as groundless and likely derived from "monkish legends [or] forgeries".³⁴ It may be possible, however, that there was land attached to the church of St. Andrew's at Sutton--included in the phrase "omnibus pertinentiis suis"³⁵ -- which may have been later construed as having constituted a prebend.

By the early twelfth century, the college at Plympton had profitted from the arrival of new benefactors in its neighbourhood. The Redvers family of Devon made grants to the college within a few years of their arrival in England. Richard de Redvers, a Norman noble and loyal supporter of Prince Henry, followed Henry to England in 1100 when he succeeded to the throne.³⁶ Richard further demonstrated his loyalty during Robert, Duke

³² See Karen Jankulak, "The Cult of St. Petroc in England and Brittany, c. 550-c. 1220", Ph. D. Diss., University of Toronto, 1996, pp. 177-78. In the Domesday Book the church of St. Petroc at Bodmin is listed as having 18 manors plus 9 which had been usurped, making it the "largest ecclesiastical landholder in Cornwall" in 1086. It subsequently lost some of these and by the time of the Valor Ecclesiasticus was much less wealthy than its fellow Augustinian house, Plympton. Another pre-conquest minster and later Augustinian priory, St. Stephen's at Launceston, possessed only four hides of land in 1086 (although a 1076 confirmation charter indicated somewhat less than seven hides). See Cartulary of Launceston Priory, Lambeth Palace MS 719: A Calendar, ed. P. L. Hull (Torquay: Devonshire Press for the Devon and Cornwall Record Society, 1987), pp. xii-xiii.

³³ Leland, Itinerary, vol. 1, pt. III, p. 215.

³⁴ R. N. Worth, History of Plymouth from the Earliest Period to the Present Time (Plymouth: Brendon and Son, 1890), pp. 20, 27.

³⁵ See above, n. 17.

³⁶ Bearman, pp. 2-3.

of Normandy's invasion in 1101, and in return received from Henry I the Honour of Plympton in Devon, as well as other lands in Dorset and Hampshire.³⁷ At some point between 1100 and his death in 1107, Richard de Redvers granted to Plympton College, with the consent of his son Baldwin I (later earl of Devon), the land of Ridgeway in Plympton, the land between the road that leads to Plympton and the sea, and an aqueduct.³⁸ R. Bearman, the editor of the Redvers family charters, believes that a number of the gifts to the Priory confirmed by Henry I were merely existing possessions of the collegiate church.³⁹ However, if one checks the section of Henry II's *inspeximus* charter in which the gifts confirmed by his grandfather, Henry I, are listed, it is clear that many, if not all of these must have been given to Plympton after its refoundation as an Augustinian Priory. Robert Fitz Martin, Guy de Nunant, and Baldwin I de Redvers, to name a few donors⁴⁰, were all alive during the 1120s and 1130s, the period right after the refoundation. It is surely more logical to assume that these benefactions were made in the first flush of support for the new Priory, a pattern recognizable at many other Augustinian houses, than to surmise that they were made in the dying days of the minster. All evidence, then, suggests that the college at Plympton did not possess substantial landholdings and churches before the establishment of the regular canons there in 1121.

The Royal Donation of Churches to the See of Exeter

³⁷ Ibid., p. 3. See also Bodl. MS James p. 165: Richard de Redvers "eum [Henry I] multum juverit in regno Anglorum et ducatu Normanniae adversus fratrem suum Robertum Curthuse priorem natu quem apud Tenechebrai bello devicit in carcere quoad vixit tenuit."

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 156-57.

³⁹ RC, p.157.

⁴⁰ Henry II's *inspeximus* charter (Oliver MDE #3).

The secular college of Plympton remained under the patronage of the crown until the reign of Henry I (1100-1135). The royal patronage of the college must have derived from King Edward's exchange of land for it with Bishop Asser in the tenth century. This matter was later central to the fourteenth-century dispute between the Crown and the bishop of Exeter.⁴¹ During the court case, the jury found that before the establishment of the Augustinian priory at Plympton there existed a chapel and lands appurtenant, founded by the "progenitors" of King Edward III.⁴² In a judgement deemed "curious" by Oliver, the jury then ignored legal precedent and concluded that the Crown's gift of the church of Plympton to the bishop of Exeter did not convey the patronage of the Priory.⁴³ In the twelfth century, however, the bishops of Exeter give every indication of assuming that the right of patronage of Plympton and other churches had been legitimately transferred to them by the Crown.

The date of the royal gift of the church of Plympton to the See of Exeter is by no means certain. Indeed, there is some confusion as to the authenticity of the charters purporting to record this donation, as well as to the dates of the different versions. The charter--called here "A" for the sake of clarity--dated c. 1123 in Oliver's Monasticon is

⁴¹ Oliver MDE, p. 129. The case was reported in the Liber Assisarum 38 Edward III (1679), pp. 227-228.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid. There is some evidence that in the twelfth century the Redvers family also claimed that Henry I had given Richard de Redvers the patronage of the church at Plympton, but their case was rejected in court: "Patet ergo Regem Henricum non dedisse Ricardo de Redvers ius advocacionis in Plimtona...sed cum prænominatus Willelmus de Warewast episcopalem cathedram Exoniae adeptus est impetravit a domino Rege Henrico primo ut ius advocacionis in præfatis ecclesiis in perpetuum additularetur et carta illius confirmaretur episcopali sedi Exoniae quod et factum est. Haec enim carta et quaedam aliae Anglorum Regum aureis litteris insignes de pertinentia memoratarum ecclesiarum ad capellaniam Regum in Exoniae reservantur quas nos vidimus et audivimus legi coram

reproduced from the Coram Rege Rolls and states that Henry I “gave and restored” (*reddo et restituo*) various churches to the See of Exeter.⁴⁴ In the mid-twelfth century the word *reddo* appears in royal charters as a means of signifying a regrant; *restituo* seems to have been rarer,⁴⁵ but perhaps was used here to reinforce *reddo*. Among those churches named in the charter are the churches of St. Petroc at Bodmin and of St. Stephen at Launceston as well as the church of Plympton. The king restored the two former churches (or minsters) “free and quit in every way” as they were given by his royal predecessors in the original charters.⁴⁶

The church of Plympton, however, was in a different category: the charter stated that William I gave it and two other churches, Braunton and St. Stephen-Exeter, in Devon to William Warelwast “while he was still his chaplain”⁴⁷; Henry I conceded and gave

iusticiis Regis Henrici filii Matildis Imperatricis per Bartholomaeum piaie memoriae Exoniensem Episcopum” (Bodl. MS James 23, p. 165).

⁴⁴ Ibid., #1, p. 134. The text in Oliver is that of a petition of Thomas of Brantyngham, bishop of Exeter (1370-1394), to the Crown (Coram Rege Rolls, Hil. 2 Ric. II rot. 20). The petition is most likely related to the fourteenth-century patronage dispute. Bishop Thomas was active in seeking the return of the patronage to the Bishopric of Exeter: in the Anglo-Norman prologue and epilogue to the charter, the bishop summarized the contents and added that subsequent to this gift to the See of Exeter William Warelwast, bishop of Exeter, founded and ordained “la priorie de Plimpton en la mansion de la rectorie en dite eglise de Plimpton; et dona la dite eglise de Plimpton a les chanons rewelers [regulars] q’il myst illocques, ove terres, dysmes, et toutes autres choses a la dite eglise appartenantz; quelle foundation le dit roy Henry per sa chartre confirma etc.” Another copy of this charter is calendared in *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, Vol. II 1100-1135*, eds. Charles Johnson and H. A. Cronne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) #1391, p. 185.

⁴⁵ John Hudson, *Land, Law, and Lordship in Anglo-Norman England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 75-77.

⁴⁶ Oliver MDE #1. The other churches mentioned are Probus and St. Peran in Cornwall.

⁴⁷ D.W. Blake, “Bishop William Warelwast,” *TDA* 104 (1972), pp. 15-16, finds this clause to be unconvincing: William Warelwast was first recorded at court in 1087 or 1088, and given that he lived another fifty-one years after that time, a gift from William I for service before his death in 1087 “is to suppose outstanding service at a very young age.”

(*concedo et dono*) these churches, with all their tithes, lands, and appurtenances, free and quit of all “*consuetudinibus et querelis*” to the See of Exeter “to be held by hereditary right in perpetuity” (*hereditario jure imperpetuum optinendas*). The choice of the phrase *concedo et dono* seems to have been an unusual one: *dono* is not mentioned at all in Hudson’s treatment of twelfth-century granting terminology, although *reddo* and *concedo*, and occasionally *concedo* on its own, were used in royal charters to signify regrants.⁴⁸ Also, the appearance of inheritance language in this charter is remarkable: Hudson found that after the reign of William I, “the use of inheritance language in royal charters for churches is very rare, and confined to diplomas or mixed-style documents, generally beneficiary-drafted and often dubious.”⁴⁹ Could this charter of Henry I be spurious? The fact that it appeared as evidence offered by the bishop of Exeter in the late fourteenth-century court case concerning the patronage of Plympton Priory raises certain suspicions. However, the fact that Innocent III confirmed the royal donation in 1202 would suggest that a charter like this did exist; possibly in the fourteenth century it was “improved” before it was offered as evidence.⁵⁰

Indeed, despite its unusual language, charter A seems the most authentic of the three charters which claim to record this grant. D. W. Blake contends that although it is derived from the later Charter Rolls, the witness list of the charter is “full and satisfactory” and

⁴⁸ Hudson, *Land, Law, and Lordship*, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90. Hudson believes that the decline in the usage of the inheritance terminology in charters of this date is related to the reform movement in the Church and the desire of reformers to move away from classifying ecclesiastical lands as heritable.

⁵⁰ Innocent III confirmed to Bishop Henry of Exeter the donation of the churches, as well as their lands, tithes, and appurtenances, in April 1202. See *Letters of Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) concerning England and Wales*, eds. C.R. and Mary G. Cheney (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), #405, 66. Interestingly, included in this list of churches is the chapelry (*capellania*) of Bosham, Sussex, which is not mentioned in the various charters.

helps to provide a date of 1123.⁵¹ There is another copy, designated charter “B” here, in the Launceston Cartulary⁵² with identical wording, but it is traditionally assigned an earlier date--c. 1107--and its witness list is much more confused.⁵³ The editor of the Launceston Cartulary, P. L. Hull, points out that charter B is the only one containing mention of the church of Dohou (also Landoho or St. Kew) as among those Henry I vows to *reddere et restituere*--an interesting addition given Plympton Priory’s later troubles over this church. Blake’s theory is that charter B is either a forgery (although inexplicable, as “it adds nothing new to an existing genuine grant”) or an “unskilful second copy of the original act.”⁵⁴ The editors of the Regesta regum Anglo-Normannorum, while accepting charter A without comment, find the style of the nearly identical charter B to be “very unlikely”.⁵⁵

As well, a third copy, charter “C”, exists and is printed in the Regesta: this one dates from the reign of Stephen (1136) and seems to be his confirmation while at Exeter of the grant of Henry I.⁵⁶ The witness list has a number of errors in it, their “cumulative effect” being to cast doubt on the authenticity of the document.⁵⁷ Overall, Hull agrees with Blake that charter A, even though it appears in later sources, is more likely to have been the original and that charter B may be a forgery; in general, though, he finds that “none of the

⁵¹ Blake, “Warelwast,” p. 25.

⁵² Launceston Cartulary, pp. 1-2.

⁵³ Blake, “Warelwast,” p. 25.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* Blake thinks it improbable that Henry I would have made two identical grants to the See of Exeter.

⁵⁵ Regesta, vol. II, #841, p. 72.

⁵⁶ Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, vol. III: 1135-1154, eds. H. A. Cronne and R. H. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968) #284, pp. 106-7.

⁵⁷ Regesta, vol. III, p. 107. Blake also urges that this version be used with “caution”, and points out that it is unusual that Stephen merely confirms the grant without adding to it. See “Warelwast”, pp. 25-6.

texts of the three charters are entirely satisfactory.”⁵⁸ It is rather hard to imagine that a bishop of Exeter, as the only obvious beneficiary, would attempt to acquire rights to so many churches through forgery and think that they would not be missed. Given the emergence of charter A in the context of the Crown’s legal challenge to the episcopal patronage of Plympton Priory, the possibility remains that someone belonging to the episcopal curia in the fourteenth century was tempted to “improve” or re-invent a lost or damaged charter which was of such importance if the bishops were to successfully establish their claim. Regardless of the mystery concerning these charters and the misgivings about their validity, there is no doubt that these churches did pass into the hands of the bishops of Exeter in the twelfth century, as later evidence--such as the confirmation of Innocent III and records from episcopal registers--indicates. Even the eccentric jury of the fourteenth century did not find that there had been no gift of the church at Plympton from the Crown to the bishops of Exeter; they merely re-interpreted what the act of giving the right of patronage to a church entailed.

The Foundation of Plympton Priory by Bishop William Warelwast and Episcopal Patronage of the Augustinian Canons

Augustinian canons were introduced at Plympton in 1121. The twelfth-century “Annals” of the Priory record that they arrived in February of that year and were formally instituted that August.⁵⁹ Bishop William Warelwast had sought regular canons from the

⁵⁸ Launceston Cartulary, pp.1-2.

⁵⁹ “1121 9 Kal. Sept. Willelmus Dei gratia Exoniensis episcopus constituit canonicos regulares in ecclesia Sancti Petri Plimtonie. Qui tamen antea eodem anno iiii nonas Febru. ceperunt cohabitare.” Printed in Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquellen, ed. F. Liebermann (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1879), p. 27.

royal foundation of Holy Trinity-Aldgate in London, which was also a mother-house to the priories of Dunstable, Launceston, St. Frideswide's-Oxford, and St. Osyth.⁶⁰ Henry I confirmed the bishop's institution of regular canons at the college.⁶¹ Warelwast also refounded the secular college of Launceston and the Celtic monastery of Bodmin in Cornwall as houses of Augustinian canons.

William Warelwast early distinguished himself as a servant of the Crown rather than as a son of the Church. Warelwast was probably born in the Veraval region of Normandy, and first appears, as has been mentioned above, at court in 1087 or 1088.⁶² Warelwast came to national prominence during the dispute between Archbishop Anselm and William II and Henry I concerning investiture. Between 1095 and 1106 he made five journeys to Rome as their representative, and skilfully used his diplomatic talents and knowledge of law and theology to plead the royal case at the papal curia.⁶³ Henry I rewarded Warelwast with the bishopric of Exeter, which had been vacant for four years.

⁶⁰ Cartulary of Holy Trinity Aldgate, ed. Gerald A. J. Hodgett (Leicester: London Record Society, 1971), #10, 2. The chronicle printed along with the cartulary lists the daughter-houses but says nothing else about Aldgate's connections with them. Filiations between Augustinian houses tended to be weak connections, certainly unlike those of the Cistercians. There is no evidence in the surviving records of Plympton of any subsequent contacts with Aldgate, but Hull believes that Aldgate and Launceston continued to share links (Hull, Launceston Cartulary, p. xv) Aldgate was founded by Queen Maud, wife of Henry I (Dickinson, Origins, p. 111).

⁶¹ Bodl., MS James 23, p. 152: "Sciatis me concessisse canonicos regulares esse apud Sanctum Petrum de Plimton quos Episcopus Exoniensis ibidem ponit." Another slightly different version of this charter, Bodl. MS. Eng. Hist, c. 241 f. 53r, was printed by Dickinson in Origins, p. 283. The "Registrum" of Plympton also makes reference to a confirmation by Henry I (Bodl. MS. James 23 p. 165; see above, n. 43).

⁶² Blake, "Warelwast," p. 15. Blake also rejects the assertion of William of Worcester that Warelwast was the nephew of William I as there is no other evidence for this.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 22. George Oliver, in Lives of the Bishops of Exeter (Exeter: W. Roberts, 1861) took a critical view of Warelwast's service to the Crown, and declared that during an encounter with Anselm at Dover in 1095 he treated the primate with "vexatious, even

For the first dozen years of his episcopate, Warelwast continued to be very active in his service to the king: he bore messages, served as a judge, and acted as his legate at Rome during the tensions between the Provinces of York and Canterbury of 1114-1120.⁶⁴

During the 1120s and 1130s, Warelwast attended Henry I at court in Normandy and England, and was present at various Church councils in England until 1132.⁶⁵ Sometime before his death in 1137 the bishop had retired and become a canon at Plympton Priory; the “Annals” record that he was buried in its chapter house.⁶⁶

At Exeter, Warelwast began the rebuilding of the cathedral in the Norman style. Today the magnificent transept towers are largely all that remains of this cathedral, as it was rebuilt again in the Gothic style in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Construction began in 1112 or 1114 and the cathedral was consecrated in 1133.⁶⁷ He may also have instituted four territorial archdiaconates and overseen the development of the chapter as a

rude indignity” (p. 15). Blake points out that the main source for Warelwast’s activities on these missions was Eadmer, who is “generally an unsympathetic reporter” (p. 22).

⁶⁴ Blake, “Warelwast”, pp. 23-4. It is during his mission of 1120 to Rome that the first reference is made to Warelwast’s blindness; supposedly he was taunted for it at the papal curia. William of Malmesbury reported that Warelwast had been intolerant of the “frailty” of his predecessor at Exeter, Osbern, “saying that a blind man ought not to be a bishop”.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 24-5.

⁶⁶ “Annales Plymptonienses,” p. 27: “1137. Obiit Willelmus episcopus Exoniensis VI Kal. Oct. Qui in infirmitate extrema positus et anulum et baculum episcopo Wintoniensi Henrico reddidit, sicque ab episcopo Roberto Bathonie crismatus, canonicorum habitum petiit et accepit a Gaufrido priore Plimtoniensi. Cuius etiam corpus in capitulo nostro Plimtonie quiescit sepultum.”

⁶⁷ Malcolm Thurlby, “The Romanesque Cathedral of St. Mary and St. Peter at Exeter,” Medieval Art and Architecture at Exeter Cathedral: Conference Transactions of the British Archaeological Association for the year 1985, XI, ed. Francis Kelly (London: British Archaeological Association, 1991), p. 19. The fabric of the Romanesque cathedral was actually completed in the episcopate of Bishop Henry Marshall (1194-1206). Thurlby notes that the influence of the Romanesque cathedral can be seen in one of the few remaining fragments of Plympton Priory: polychromy in the form of green sandstone and limestone in the priory’s gateway arch may be derived from the juxtaposition of coloured sandstone and limestone of the cathedral nave aisle responds (p. 29).

“corporate and independent body”.⁶⁸ It seems interesting that Warelwast presided over the diminishing adherence of the cathedral chapter to the Rule of Chrodegang, yet at the same time was clearly concerned with regularizing the colleges of secular canons at Plympton and Launceston, and instituting regular canons at the monastery at Bodmin.

Warelwast was one of a group of bishops who had obtained their bishoprics as rewards for service to the king. Indeed, he and Roger, bishop of Salisbury, Henry I's chief justiciar, were consecrated as bishops by Anselm on the same day in 1107.⁶⁹ Although in this period relations between the episcopate and the monasteries were often troubled⁷⁰, the bishops were significant founders and benefactors of houses of the new orders.

Archbishop Thurstan of York founded Fountains Abbey for the Cistercians and was generous to Hexham Priory, a secular college refounded as an Augustinian priory by his predecessor⁷¹. Two archbishops of Canterbury fostered the growth of the Augustinian order in the early twelfth century: Anselm was involved in the founding of Dunmow Priory, Holy Trinity-Aldgate Priory, and possibly Llanthony Priory, while William of Corbeil (a regular canon himself) converted the hospital of St. Gregory's, Canterbury,

⁶⁸ Blake, p. 26. In a later article, though, David Blake states that territorial archdiaconates most probably came into being in the diocese before Warelwast's episcopate. See “The Development of the Chapter of the Diocese of Exeter 1050-1161,” Journal of Medieval History, 8 (1982), p. 3. Barlow, however, contends that Bishop William did indeed institute the territorial archdiaconates (EEAE p. xxxiii).

⁶⁹ Sally Vaughn, Anselm of Bec and Robert of Meulan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 309-10.

⁷⁰ Martin Brett, The English Church under Henry I (Oxford: University Press, 1975), p. 136.

⁷¹ Dickinson, Origins, p. 127. Thurstan also offered “encouragement” to the Augustinian houses of Guisborough, Drax, and Thurgarton. See also David Nicholl, Thurstan, Archbishop of York, 1114-1140 (York: Stonegate Press, 1964), pp.127-139.

into a house of Augustinian canons.⁷² Bishop William Giffard of Winchester founded the first Cistercian house in England, Waverley, as well as the Augustinian house at Taunton⁷³.

Bishop Alexander of Lincoln holds the record for most monastic foundations in the twelfth century by a bishop: he was responsible for the Cistercian houses of Thame and Louth Park, the Augustinian (Arrouaisian) house of Dorchester, and the Gilbertine house of Haverholm.⁷⁴ Dorchester had been a secular college, and amongst the endowments transferred to the regular canons were five chapels.⁷⁵ Interestingly, Bishop Alexander seems not to have added anything to these endowments himself, although the Empress Matilda, whom he supported before 1141, did give land and two more chapels.⁷⁶

Alexander's uncle, Bishop Roger of Salisbury, a well-known "leader of the anti-monastic movements of 1114 and 1123", was nonetheless generous to the Augustinian canons: he seems to have helped found St. Frideswide's at Oxford⁷⁷, and he was a benefactor of Merton, Cirencester, and Bradenstoke⁷⁸. Gerald of Wales, writing at the end of the

⁷² Ibid., pp. 127, 104-5. St. Gregory's, Canterbury, had been originally founded by Archbishop Lanfranc as a college of canons with pastoral duties. These first canons seem to have led a "full common life", but did not adopt the Rule of St. Augustine until William of Corbeil's time. For more details of Lanfranc's involvement with St. Gregory's, see Margaret Gibson, *Lanfranc of Bec* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978).

⁷³ Brett, *English Church*, pp. 137-8. Taunton was also a secular college refounded for regular canons. Giffard may have also founded the Augustinian house of St. Mary Overie at Southwark. See Dickinson, *Origins*, p. 120 n. 2.

⁷⁴ A.G. Dyson, "The Monastic Patronage of Bishop Alexander of Lincoln", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 26 (1975), pp. 1ff. Bishop Alexander's success in promoting these new orders in his diocese was partly dependent on co-operation with lay magnates, some of whom were hostile to his family for their influence at court, and some of whom were on the opposite side during the Anarchy.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁷⁷ Dickinson, *Origins*, p. 114 n. 1.

⁷⁸ Dyson, p. 12.

twelfth century, said that Bishop Roger had visited Llanthony Priory, a house famed for its strictness and its origins as a hermitage, and upon his return he “urged the court to support it.”⁷⁹

It may well have been the case that these bishops were following the trend amongst Henry I’s courtiers towards patronizing the new orders. Indeed, four of the seven episcopal founders--Warelwast, Giffard, Roger of Salisbury, Richard de Beaumes--were courtiers; other curial officials, such as the sheriffs Gilbert, Richard Bassett, Robert d’Oilly, and William Pont de l’Arche, also founded important houses of Augustinian canons.⁸⁰ Henry I founded five houses himself and played some role in the founding of a number of others, while Queen Maud founded Holy Trinity-Aldgate and helped Merton Priory.⁸¹ In all, Dickinson calculated that at least 33 of the 43 houses likely founded in the reign of Henry I owed their existence either entirely or partially to members of the court.⁸² Consequently, the bishops’ interest in establishing houses of regular canons must not be seen solely in an ecclesiastical context when so many curial figures were involved, as well.

Brett believes that these bishops may have been attracted to the Augustinian canons because of the relatively low cost of their foundations, or because they hoped that the

⁷⁹ Edward Kealey, Roger of Salisbury: Viceroy of England (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 119.

⁸⁰ Dickinson, Origins, pp. 128, 126. Dickinson is quick to point out, however, that many of these court figures were involved in founding houses of other orders as well.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126. Amongst these five foundations were Carlisle, the only cathedral priory in England to follow the Rule of St. Augustine, as well as Cirencester, which became one of the wealthiest Augustinian houses in England.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 128. Dickinson attributes the rapid growth of the order in this period to the “ascendancy” of Aldgate and Merton Priories, both of which were founded by well-loved figures at court (the former by Queen Maud, the latter by Gilbert the Sheriff). Aldgate and Merton together established about ten daughter-houses.

regular canons would undertake pastoral care, which, in his view, had traditionally been the concern of bishops and minsters.⁸³ Brett's interpretation of the canons' involvement in pastoral care is based on a misreading of the eleventh-century evidence cited in Dickinson, and it must therefore be regarded with caution.⁸⁴ This view has been repeated frequently,⁸⁵ but little evidence has been produced to substantiate it. Scholars of the history of the Augustinian canons such as Dickinson and Dereine have been careful to point out the ambivalent attitudes amongst churchmen of the late eleventh and twelfth century concerning the involvement of the canons in the cure of souls.⁸⁶ Hampered as we are by the erratic survival rate of foundation charters for twelfth-century Augustinian priories and episcopal *acta*, generalizations about the motives of the bishops for supporting the Augustinians must be made with great caution.

⁸³ Brett, English Church, p. 139.

⁸⁴ Brett claims that Hildebrand sought papal approval for the canons' undertaking of pastoral care; he bases this on Dickinson's discussion of Hildebrand's speech at the Lateran Council of 1059 (Origins, pp. 30-31). However, according to Dickinson, Hildebrand's aim was to attack the retention of private property amongst certain groups of canons. Hildebrand wished to promote the true *vita apostolica*; the issue of pastoral care does not seem to have come up. Dickinson's source for Hildebrand's speech was the manuscript published by Jean Mabillon in Annales Ordinis S. Benedicti, vol. iv, pp. 686 ff. Dickinson also cited Giovanni Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum nova, et amplissima collectio (Venice: Antonia Zatta, 1774; rpt. Paris and Leipzig: H. Welter, 1902), vol. 19, c. 898, 1025.

⁸⁵ For example, most recently by Janet Burton in Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 48-49 and by David Postles in "The Austin Canons in English Towns," Historical Research 66 (1993): 1-20. Burton does acknowledge the difficulties of insufficient documentation, however. Postles also interprets Dickinson's discussion of the events of 1059 and 1063 to mean that at these gatherings "the order was directed...specifically to be a proselytizing order" (p. 2). Postles seems not to have consulted the relevant canons in Mansi.

⁸⁶ Dereine, "Chanoines," col. 393 and Dickinson, Origins, pp. 26-9. Dickinson provides numerous examples of eleventh-century bishops on the Continent instituting regular canons at collegiate churches because of their frustrations with the low standards of worship at such places.

For Bishop William Warelwast, however, we do have two indications of his possible motives for refounding secular colleges as Augustinian priories. Leland stated in his Itinerary that William Warelwast was “displeasid with the chanons or prebendaries [of Plympton]...because they would not give up their concubines” and so dissolved their college, re-establishing them at a college in Bosham, Sussex.⁸⁷ He may have decided that it was less trouble to move the canons than to try to convince them to adopt a Rule. Reformers of the time were keenly aware of the likelihood of resistance by those unwilling to be reformed: Abbot Suger, making reference to his reforms at Ste. Genevieve, said that, “Irregular [canons] will never consent to [be] regular canons except by force”.⁸⁸ Further light is shed on Warelwast’s reasons for replacing the canons at Plympton in a passage from the “Registrum de Plympton”:

Therefore when William saw that many outrages and scandals abounded in the life and behaviour of his subjects, and especially of his clerics—for all laboured in incontinence, the priests just as the people—with the inspiration of God he endeavoured to correct this vice firstly in the greater churches. For there was then an intolerable evil when priests publicly took wives, and, having neglected the preparation and care of churches, thought only about the succession of their heirs, and indulged in the adornment of women and not of altars. Therefore William began just as a good shepherd to bring back chastity and decency, with the word of holy exhortation and by the example of canonical religion, for he instituted the order of canons in Devon and Cornwall with men of respectable life and placed them in the churches of Plympton, Bodmin, and Launceston, and persuaded King Henry I to confirm this.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Leland, Itinerary, vol. 1, pt. III, p. 215. The college of Holy Trinity at Bosham existed until 1550. A Saxon minster had existed on the site in the time of Edward the Confessor, who gave it to his chaplain, the Norman Osbern. Osbern became bishop of Exeter, and so the patronage of the college continued to belong to the bishops of Exeter. There were to be six prebendaries and six vicars. Although “well-endowed” in the time of Edward the Confessor, it had an income of only £47 in 1535 (MRH, pp. 413, 421).

⁸⁸ Giles Constable, The Reformation of the Twelfth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 112.

⁸⁹ Bodl. MS. James 23, p. 165: “Willelmus igitur cum subditorum et precipue clericorum vita et conversatione multas enormitates et scandala infirmorum abundare inspiceret.

This passage may be an excerpt from a lost Plympton chronicle. The writer claims that the bishop was so appalled by the scandals incurred by the clerics of the major churches that he turned to “men of respectable life” (*viros spectabilis vitae*) to replace them. This passage captures perfectly the appeal of the regular canons for reform-minded bishops: as priests freed from the distractions of women and the need to provide for heirs, the regular canons, unlike the married seculars, were able to devote themselves entirely to the worship of God and the *vita apostolica*.

A somewhat different emphasis can be seen in William Warelwast’s own foundation charter for Launceston Priory in 1127.⁹⁰ Here, it is not clear that incontinence was a problem amongst the secular canons. It may only be implied in the bishop’s horror at the evils in the world and his reproaches against the secular canons for the disgraceful and indecent performance of their duties:

Since many evils have multiplied on the earth, the wicked sons of Belial have everywhere been watchful that by the vilest of contrivances they might

Omnes enim incontinentia laborabant et erat in hac causa ut populus sic sacerdos deo inspirante satagebat hoc vitium primo in maioribus ecclesiis corrigere. Erat enim malum intollerabile cum sacerdotes publice uxores ducerent et neglecto ornatu et cultu ecclesiarum quasi de sola successione haereditanda cogitarent et mulieribus non altaribus orandis indulgerent, coepit ergo tanquam bonus pastor verbo sacrae exhortationis et exemplo canonicae religionis ad castitatem et honestatem revocare. Primus enim ordinem canonicorum in Devoniam et Cornubiam per viros spectabilis vitae instituit et in ecclesia Plimtoni’ et Bodmunensi et Lanstavatoni’ disposuit et dominum regem Henricum primum ad confirmandum induxit.”

⁹⁰ At Launceston, unlike at Plympton, the secular canons were allowed to remain at the priory until their deaths, at which point their prebends reverted to the house (Launceston Cartulary, p.5) This was a not uncommon solution to the problem of how to introduce regular canons while not dispossessing secular canons unwilling to accept a new way of life: in France during this period there are a number of examples of two parallel communities existing side by side until the seculars died out. See Constable, Reformation of the Twelfth Century, pp. 114-15. This approach did not always succeed, however: Constable mentions the example of St. Quiriac in Provins, where the two communities eventually separated.

disturb or ruin the Bride of Christ, the holy and immaculate church. Taking care for the future, and providing for the peace of the church and for the health of the Lord's flock, we made sure to command to written memory those things which we feared might be destroyed in a future time...I, William...lamenting that in my time the praises of God are repeated and extolled more tepidly and disgracefully than is usual or just by certain clerics in certain churches committed to my governance, decided to substitute men suitable and established in religion in them, so that they might give thanks to God there and intercede without ceasing for the sake of their transgressions and those of the people...it was done, so that, relying upon the advice and help of the king, the archbishop, my fellow bishops, and the lords of my province, I have established and confirmed for the remission of my sins, canons living according to the Rule of St. Augustine in the church of St. Stephen at Launceston.⁹¹

This text reveals Bishop William's perception of the primary functions of the Augustinian canons: firstly, they were to take the place of those who were negligent of their responsibilities. Secular canons who praised God "tepidly and disgracefully" had to go, and the clerics who were "suitable and established in religion" would serve in their stead. Secondly, the regular canons were to pray constantly for the souls of the people and for their own sins. The roles of monks and canons in society seem to overlap here: both were to engage in unceasing intercessory prayer for the people. Indeed, it must be kept in mind that from an early period prayer and the recitation of the divine office were

⁹¹ Launceston Cartulary, p. 5: "Quoniam multiplicatis malis super terram viri iniqui filii Belial undique ad hoc invigilant, ut nequissimis adinventionibus sponsam Christi ecclesiam sanctam et immaculatam vel perturbent vel subvertant. Caventes imposterum, et tam ecclesie quieti quam gregis domini saluti providentes scriptis memorie commendare curavimus que oblivione deleri tempore succedente pertinuimus... ego Willielmus ... humillimus dolens temporibus meis tepidius et indecentius solito et iusto in quibusdam ecclesiis regimine meo commissis a clericis eisdem deputatis laudes Dei frequentare et extolli decrevi viros ydoneos et religiose conditos in eis substituere, ut dignas Deo gratias ibidem agant, et tam pro populi quam pro suis excessibus sine intermissione intercedant. Unde factum est ut tam regis predicti quam archipresulis ceterorumque coepiscoporum meorum, et provincie mee optimatum consilio fretus et auxilio pro delictorum meorum remissione in ecclesia Sancti Stephani de Lanzavetona canonicos secundum Sancti Augustini regulam viventes constituerim et confirmaverim."

important obligations on the part of regular canons as well as monks.⁹² The perception that many communities of secular canons in Europe were failing to meet their liturgical and spiritual obligations and leading immoral lives was central to the drive of Reformers to regularize such institutions.⁹³ For Warelwast, the answer was to replace the personnel altogether and establish new communities.

Clerical Celibacy and the Popularity of the Regular Canons

The regular canons seemed to impress Bishop Warelwast as men capable of renewing the Church in Devon and Cornwall by maintaining a high standard of worship and prayer and practising celibacy. Of course, opposition to clerical marriage was not an unusual sentiment amongst the episcopacy of the period: clerical celibacy was an ideal preached with great vigour by the Gregorian Reformers. The Reformers had two main objections to married clergy, which will be examined in turn.

One serious concern was that a married clergy led to the inheritance of churches by sons of priests. One method of countering this problem was to forbid the ordination of priests' sons, which was eventually done by Urban II in the late eleventh century.⁹⁴ The "Registrum" contains a perfect example of hereditary succession by priests of the church of St. Andrew at Sutton (owned by Plympton Priory): it contains a list of clerical fathers

⁹² A set of customs for regular canons drawn up by Hildebrand, seemingly after he became pope, delineates the Psalms, lessons, and responses he expected the canons to chant. See Gustave Bardy, "Saint Grégoire VII et la réforme canoniale au XI^e siècle," *Studi Gregoriani*, 1 (1947): pp. 52-3. See also Charles Dereine, "Chanoines," cols. 365 and 370 for the obligations of canons to engage in public prayer and the recitation of the divine office in the Carolingian period.

⁹³ Dereine, "Chanoines," cols. 375-78.

⁹⁴ At the Synod of Rome in 1099. See Mansi, vol. 20, c.961-970.

passing the church to sons from the time of Harold Harefoot to the reign of Henry II.⁹⁵

The first priest in the line was Alfegh, a canon at Plympton Minster who “held the chapel and parish of Sutton as part of his prebend.”⁹⁶ The last priest in the line of succession,

Thomas, was the bastard son of the lord of Sutton, Reginald de Valletort, and the daughter of a previous priest, Dunprust.⁹⁷ Reginald had requested that Geoffrey, prior of Plympton, present Thomas to Bishop William for institution to the vicarage of Sutton.⁹⁸

This succession came to an end when Thomas, after the deaths of Bishop William Warelwast and his father and being on his own deathbed, handed over the key of the church to Prior Johel and the canons of Plympton Priory. It seems ironic that for some decades after their establishment at Plympton, the regular canons were seemingly tolerant of the inheritance of one of their churches by the sons of priests, and that Bishop William allowed the practice to continue.

It was not only the complications inherent in hereditary churches that bothered the Reformers. The sin of “nicholaism,” as they termed clerical marriage, was increasingly viewed with revulsion. Peter Damian linked clerical purity with reverence for the Eucharist by maintaining that “just as Jesus was born of a chaste Virgin, so his re-birth in the blessed sacrament must be solemnized by a priest sworn to chastity”.⁹⁹ Anselm shared

⁹⁵ EEAE #23n. Brett finds this hereditary succession a “striking fact” given Warelwast’s desire to rid Plympton of married canons (The English Church under Henry I p. 220).

⁹⁶ EEAE #23n.

⁹⁷ Dunprust was the great-grandson of Alfegh (EEAE #23n.). Dunprust’s son, William Bacini, had succeeded him, and then Thomas succeeded his uncle.

⁹⁸ Bodl. MS. James 23, p. 164. “Dicunt etiam ipsum Reginald de Valletorta primum supplicasse domino Galfrido Priori Plimton’ pro Thoma clerico filio suo bastardo ut eum admitteret in vicariam ecclesiae de Suthon sub annuo canonicis Plimton’ ecclesiae solvendo et eum praesentaret domino Willelmo Exoniae quod et factum est.”

⁹⁹ C. N. L. Brooke, “Gregorian Reform in Action: Clerical Marriage in England,” Cambridge Historical Journal 12 (1956): p. 3.

a similar viewpoint: he condemned those priests who “reeking of open and shameful licentiousness and contempt for the prohibitions of God and the saints, tenaciously serve at holy altars”, which they “pollute by their very presence.”¹⁰⁰ By the mid-eleventh century, the Church had forbidden marriage to any cleric above the rank of subdeacon and required a profession of chastity for those taking higher orders; nevertheless, it allowed the ordination of married men, who could keep their wives as long as they refrained from physical relations.¹⁰¹

The celibacy of canons as well as of parish priests occupied the minds of the reformers. The Council of Winchester, held by Archbishop Lanfranc in 1076, had declared that canons must not have wives, that priests or deacons could not henceforth be ordained without a profession of chastity, and that no priest could marry after the council.¹⁰² Priests already married, however, were allowed to keep their wives. In Dickinson’s view, Lanfranc’s moderate approach may have stemmed from a deliberate indulgence of a deeply-entrenched custom, from Norman toleration of clerical marriage, and Lanfranc’s sense of diplomacy.¹⁰³ Lanfranc emphasized his commitment to enforcing celibacy for canons in a letter to the Archbishop of Rouen in the same year: he wrote that any canon who was a deacon or priest would henceforth lose his prebend if he had a wife.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury, ed. and trans. by Walter Frohlich (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1990), vol. 1, #65, p. 183.

¹⁰¹ Brooke, “Gregorian Reform,” p. 4.

¹⁰² CS, Winchester 1076, can. 2.

¹⁰³ See Dickinson, “I canonici regolari e la riforma ecclesiastica in Inghilterra nei secoli XI e XII,” in La vita comune dei clero nei secoli XI e XII: Atti della Settimana di studio, 1959, eds. C. Violante and C. Fonseca (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1962) p. 285.

¹⁰⁴ The Letters of Lanfranc, Archbishop of Canterbury, eds. Helen Clover and Margaret Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp. 134-35. The Archbishop of Rouen had tried

As Lanfranc's attempts to promote clerical celibacy seem not to have produced the hoped-for results, the council held by Anselm in 1102 decreed that no clerics could take wives and that married clerics had to renounce their wives; as well, the profession of chastity at ordination was extended to subdeacons.¹⁰⁵ Canons found ways around these strictures, however: Gerard, archbishop of York complained in a letter to Anselm written shortly after the Council that canons were keeping their wives at the homes of neighbours, and they were visiting them there--technically complying with the letter of the law, but certainly not with its spirit.¹⁰⁶ Around the same time, Anselm wrote to William, archdeacon of Canterbury, about archdeacons and canons who had moved their wives to houses on their manors: Anselm was willing to tolerate visits between spouses, as long as no physical relations occurred and there were "legitimate witnesses" acting as chaperones.¹⁰⁷

That flouting of these decrees continued is demonstrated by the fact that Anselm held another council in 1108 exclusively to deal with this matter.¹⁰⁸ The council's canons lay out precisely the circumstances under which formerly-married priests may consort with

"to impose clerical celibacy on all clergy above the rank of subdeacon" at a council in Rouen in 1072; this had triggered a riot. Lanfranc's words were: "...vestro aliorumque venerabilium patrum exemplo provocatus per totam Anglicam terram pastorali auctoritate prohibui, ne cuiuslibet ordinis quisquam canonicus uxorem accipiat nec sortito antea, si praesbiter aut diaconus est, nisi prebenda carere velit, habere ulterius liceat."

¹⁰⁵ CS, I, pt. 2, p. 675, canon 5. At the same council the inheritance of churches by sons of priests was forbidden (canon 8). The attitude of Henry I seemed to be one of tolerance mixed with greed: at various points he granted married clerics licences to remain married, for a fee. See Brett, The English Church, pp. 77, 79, 81-82 and Letters of Anselm, (1994), vol. 3, #391-94, pp. 151-154.

¹⁰⁶ Letters of Anselm (Kalamazoo, 1993), vol. 2, # 255, pp. 244-5. Gerard also complained that priests and deacons were refusing to make professions of chastity: "they repeatedly go back and forth, publicly, from the beds of their concubines to the altar, and then from the altar to the beds of wickedness."

¹⁰⁷ Letters of Anselm, vol. 2, #257, p. 249.

the wives they have put away, and the punishments due them should they create further scandal.¹⁰⁹ The First Lateran Council in 1123 took an even stronger line by declaring that any marriage entered into by a cleric in higher orders was to be dissolved.¹¹⁰ Legatine councils at Westminster in 1125, 1127, and 1129 reiterated the prohibitions against priestly incontinence; in 1127 an especially harsh canon was passed that required the expulsion of priests' concubines (except legitimate wives) from the priests' parishes.¹¹¹ Despite these measures taken by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, clerical marriages continued to occur: Gerald of Wales complained (likely exaggerating) at the end of the twelfth century that "nearly all" English priests were married.¹¹² The extent to which this continued to be a problem at secular colleges by Gerald's time is not clear. Certainly in English conciliar decrees on this issue in the thirteenth century the secular canons cease to be mentioned specifically,¹¹³ as they had been in the decrees of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Of course, their numbers had declined drastically: Dickinson pointed out that after the time of Henry I there were "comparatively few" collegiate churches in twelfth-century England.¹¹⁴ The wave of foundations of houses of regular canons which had

¹⁰⁸ Brooke, "Gregorian Reform," p. 15 n.47.

¹⁰⁹ *CS* I pt. 2, pp. 700-03. An interesting aspect of this issue is the importance placed on the role of the archdeacon in the enforcement of these canons: canon 6 declares that archdeacons must swear not to accept money in return for toleration of infractions.

¹¹⁰ Brooke, "Gregorian Reform," p. 5.

¹¹¹ *CS*, I, pt. 2, pp. 740, 747-48.

¹¹² J. R. H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1945), pp. 64-66. In the thirteenth century bishops continued to penalize married priests or those living in concubinage, but with only limited results. Brooke, "Gregorian Reform," p. 7, points out that in England the problem was "particularly acute", and that Pope Alexander III denounced many times the "frequency not merely of married clergy but of hereditary succession."

¹¹³ *CS*, II, *passim*.

¹¹⁴ Dickinson, *Origins*, p. 144.

swept over England in Henry's reign had had a profound effect on the old collegiate churches.¹¹⁵

Is it possible, then, that the bishops favoured the conversion of houses of secular canons into those of regular canons partly, or even largely, because of a desire to eliminate clerical marriage amongst these communities? Were Bishop Warelwast and his fellow bishops influenced by the spirit of the age, as well as by the memory of Archbishops Lanfranc and Anselm, to continue the campaign for canonical celibacy by converting secular colleges into regular ones, and by founding houses of Augustinians themselves? Warelwast was probably present at the Councils of 1108 and 1125 and may have participated in the discussion of this issue. Is it not significant that Anselm fought so hard against clerical marriage and at the same time supported the earliest efforts to found Augustinian houses in England? Both Brooke in his early article¹¹⁶ and Dickinson¹¹⁷ make the connection between the Reformers' drive to abolish clerical marriage and the popularity of the Augustinian order of canons who lived communally and chastely. C. H. Lawrence has also recently stressed this connection.¹¹⁸ Dickinson maintained that the idea of converting secular colleges into Augustinian priories was likely appealing because

¹¹⁵ Of course, some collegiate churches were founded in the twelfth century, some Anglo-Saxon foundations such as Crediton and Wimborne continued to exist until the 1540s, and in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the founding of colleges became popular once more. An examination of the list of secular colleges in Knowles and Hadcock's Medieval Religious Houses, however, reveals that of the thirty-eight Anglo-Saxon colleges which probably survived the Conquest, five had been dissolved outright by c. 1350, three had been granted to cathedrals or other colleges, eight had been granted or made subject to monasteries, and twenty-two had been converted into houses of regular canons or monks.

¹¹⁶ Brooke, "Gregorian Reform," p. 8.

¹¹⁷ Dickinson, Origins, pp. 241-244.

¹¹⁸ C. H. Lawrence, Medieval Monasticism, 2nd edition (London: Longman, 1989), pp. 163-169.

“better safeguards were thereby secured for the maintenance of regular worship and clerical morals” without the need to make substantial additional endowments.¹¹⁹ And yet, this explanation for the rapid increase in the number of Augustinian houses seems not to have been pursued by many scholars, most of whom—for example, Brooke himself in a more recent article¹²⁰—prefer the theory that the dominant characteristic of the Augustinian canons was their involvement in pastoral care. Of course, it would be equally erroneous to dismiss altogether the possibility that some founders of Augustinian communities did hope or expect that the canons would undertake the cure of souls or be particularly active in the care of the sick, travellers, and pilgrims. When so many of the surviving documents express other expectations of the canons, however, it would seem unwise to contend that such motives were general amongst those who patronized the Augustinian canons.

Indeed, an examination of a variety of foundation charters from Augustinian houses reveals that when the motives of the founders are mentioned, they are almost always of the conventional sort: “I found this house for the remission of my sins, for the souls of my ancestors and descendants, etc.” Very rarely—if ever—do founders specify that they are establishing a house of Augustinian canons in order to foster pastoral care in their communities. Indeed, gifts of churches are listed in the same manner as temporal

¹¹⁹ Dickinson, *Origins*, p. 144.

¹²⁰ Christopher N. L. Brooke, “Monk and Canon: Some Patterns in the Religious Life of the Twelfth Century,” in *Monks, Hermits, and the Ascetic Tradition: Papers of the 1984 and 1985 Ecclesiastical History Society, Studies in Church History*, vol. 22 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 125. Brooke does acknowledge in this article the variety of types of foundations of the order, from the isolated Llanthony Priory with its origins as a hermitage to the urban hospital of St. Bartholomew’s-Smithfield. However, he also feels that “it stands to reason that [gifts of] tithes and pastoral responsibility were intimately

benefactions, and are not followed by conditions that the canons serve them personally. Some light can be shed on this matter by examining documents from Augustinian houses similar to Plympton Priory: that is, houses that were either founded by bishops, or were converted from secular colleges. Cirencester Abbey, for example, had been a secular college which seems to have first attracted the attention of Bishop Roger of Salisbury, who made some gifts in which he retained the life interests.¹²¹ Henry I made further donations and was recognized as founder. In his charter of 1133 he declared that he, the “unworthy builder” of the abbey, had made his gifts “for the souls of my fathers and ancestors and for the remission of my sins and for the state and safety of my realm to Abbot Serlo, all his successors, and the regular canons serving God there.”¹²² The secular canons were allowed to maintain their prebends, which were excluded from the transferral of endowments; presumably the prebends would revert to the abbey as the canons died.¹²³

Gervase of Canterbury recorded in his Chronica that in 1130 Henry I gave to Archbishop William of Canterbury the church of St. Martin’s, Dover, which had, “from ancient times,” been occupied by secular canons. Gervase alleged in his chronicle that these canons had bound themselves to the sins of gluttony and lechery, had immersed

linked in early days.” He also conceives of the canons as “folk nearer to the city centres, to the ordinary lives of the community, to pastoral care, at least in origin and principle.”

¹²¹ Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey, ed. C.D. Ross (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), vol. 1, p. xxii.

¹²² *Ibid.*, p. 22: “pro animabus patrum et antecessorum meorum remissione peccatorum et pro statu et incolumitate regni mei abbati Serloni primo et omnibus successoribus eius et canonicis regularibus ibidem Deo servientibus.”

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

themselves in secular affairs, and had neglected the recitation of the Divine Office.¹²⁴

Another contemporary source reiterated the incontinence of the secular canons' lives, and blamed the temptations of women of the town and surrounding area.¹²⁵ Archbishop William decided that the site of the college, in the midst of a town, was not suited for a religious way of life, and so he decided to build the refounded house outside the town. Being a regular canon himself, the archbishop was predisposed, Gervase believed, towards instituting regular canons in his new foundation. This plan was ultimately aborted, however, by the objection of the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, who asserted their rights over the church and forced the introduction of Benedictine monks at Dover instead.¹²⁶

Episcopal involvement also seems to have been a crucial factor in the conversion of the collegiate church of Christchurch, Twynham, into a house of Augustinian canons. In the early 1150s, Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, and Hilary, bishop of Chichester (who was also Dean of the college) counselled Baldwin de Redvers, earl of Devon, to replace the secular canons of Christchurch with Augustinians.¹²⁷ An earlier Dean, Gilbert de Dousgunels, had gone to Rome with the agreement of the five canons to seek papal licence to convert the college into a priory of regular canons, but he had died on his return.¹²⁸ Henry had instituted Hilary, then his clerk, to the deanery of the college on the death of the exploitative Dean Peter de Oglander; Hilary remained dean for four years

¹²⁴ Gervase of Canterbury, "Chronica," in The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury, ed. W. H. Stubbs, Rolls Series, vol. 73, pt.1. (London: Longman, 1879-80), pp. 96-7.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Charles R. Haines, Dover Priory (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1930), p. 60.

¹²⁶ Gervase of Canterbury, "Chronica," pp. 97-99.

¹²⁷ MRH p. 154.

after his promotion to the see of Chichester in order to carry through the reforms.¹²⁹ In a subsequent confirmation charter, Baldwin stated that he was “inspired by God to institute the order of regular canons for the honour of God, and for the health of our souls and those of our ancestors.”¹³⁰

In the reign of Henry II, Simon de Beauchamp founded Newnham Priory, to which he transferred the endowments of the college of St. Paul’s, Bedford. In his charter of 1166, which he says was approved by Henry II, Pope Alexander III, and Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, Simon states that he was counseled by wise and pious men to convert the prebends of the college which his ancestors had founded to the use of the new priory “ad uberiorem divini cultus reverenciam et pure religionis honestatem...”¹³¹

Similar sentiments are echoed in the 1178 foundation charter of Henry II for Waltham Abbey. He stated that on the advice of “great men both religious and lay” he had decided to remove the secular canons “on account of the scandal caused by [their] irreligious and worldly life.”¹³² He had consulted with Pope Alexander III, and had arranged for suitable provision for the secular canons elsewhere. The Augustinian canons had taken possession of Waltham in 1177, “introduced by bishops appointed by the king.”¹³³ Henry granted

¹²⁸ Hase, “Mother Churches of Hampshire,” p. 59. Hase’s information comes from an account in the Christchurch Cartulary of the history of the college before its conversion.

¹²⁹ Hase, pp. 52, 60.

¹³⁰ RC, #33, p. 82.

¹³¹ Cartulary of Newnham Priory, ed. Joyce Godber (Bedford: Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 1963-64) pt. 1, p. 10.

¹³² Early Charters of the Augustinian Canons of Waltham Abbey, Essex ed. Rosalind Ransford (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1989) #26, p. 14-16.

¹³³ Ibid.

numerous gifts to them for the salvation of himself and his descendants, as well as for the “redemption of his predecessors the kings and queens of England”.¹³⁴

These charters reveal a respect for the Augustinian canons as practitioners of divine worship and holy living. They indicate that bishops and lay founders alike were concerned about the standard of worship and moral behaviour of the canons at ancient Anglo-Saxon secular colleges. The circumstances surrounding the refoundation of Plympton Minster exemplify the different forces at work behind such a transformation: royal support of the spread of the Augustinian order in England and the regularization of secular colleges, a court circle active in the foundation of Augustinian houses, a climate of hostility in the Church towards clerical marriage, and episcopal initiative in the promotion of the Augustinian canons. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that the Augustinian canons may have been the recipients of patronage and benefactions for a variety of reasons. As a “new order” in the first decades of the twelfth century, they appealed to those who wished to support monastic and clerical reform. As well, the Augustinian canons were the first of the new orders to appear in England, and consequently lacked competition for benefactions for several decades until the arrival of the Cistercians in 1128.¹³⁵ One must not underestimate the appeal of whatever might be perceived as new, untainted, and pure to those who were seeking to obtain the spiritual benefits inherent in founding and endowing religious communities.

Once the Augustinian canons were in place, however, a priory’s later fate had much to do with the extent of the gifts granted at its foundation. The next chapter will deal with

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Burton, Monastic and Religious Orders, p. 55.

the provision of a generous endowment for Plympton Priory by its episcopal patrons and by lay and clerical benefactors.

Chapter 2: *Building the Endowment: Patrons, Benefactors, their Motives, and their Gifts*

In the first chapter we demonstrated that the climate of reform in the early twelfth century was an important influence on ecclesiastics and laymen who founded houses of the new order of Augustinian canons. We also considered the transformation of Plympton Minster, a small and relatively poor Saxon college, into an Augustinian Priory through the intervention of the bishop of Exeter. In this chapter we will examine the endowment of the new foundation in the twelfth century. Given the Priory's later status as the second-wealthiest monastic house in the Diocese of Exeter, it is important to investigate the origins of this wealth and its characteristics as *spiritualia* and *temporalia*. A number of questions will be addressed: to what extent did the bishops of Exeter, as patrons, favour the Priory with gifts? Did the Priory attract benefactors only from its immediate locale, or also from further afield? What motivated people to make gifts to Plympton Priory, and were there any special factors affecting their decision to give churches to the Priory?

We will also examine in some detail the kinds of gifts given to the Priory in the twelfth century. The special issues behind the transferral of *spiritualia* from the laity to the canons will be addressed. As well, an examination of the variety of donations of *temporalia* will shed light on the diverse economy of the Priory and of the region of South Devon in this period. An investigation of the identities of the lay benefactors of Plympton Priory will also contribute to our knowledge of the networks of monastic patronage existing in the West Country in the twelfth century. All surviving evidence

indicates that these first few decades after Plympton's foundation were the crucial ones in the establishment of its material success; this period in the life of the Priory consequently merits close attention.

Gifts from the Bishops of Exeter and the Episcopal Circle in the Twelfth Century

The bishops of Exeter continued to show their support to Plympton Priory in the twelfth century by granting the canons substantial gifts of land, churches, and money. Bishop William Warelwast, the founder and first patron, was especially conscientious in attending to his duty to provide for the economic well-being of his foundation. Although we have the texts of only two episcopal donation charters for Plympton, from these and from other episcopal *acta* and confirmation charters we can obtain some impression of the relations between the canons of Plympton, the bishops of Exeter, and the chapter of Exeter.

Shortly after the foundation of the Priory, in 1124, William Warelwast, "burning with the zeal of charity and following in the footsteps of the holy fathers," absolved Plympton and all its chapels, especially Plymstock, from the payment of synodal and paschal dues and all other episcopal exactions in perpetuity.¹ These dues were the standard payments

¹ "...[Z]elo caritatis accensus et sanctorum patrum vestigia sequens, pro amore Dei et peccatorum meorum remissione atque pro salute totius capituli mei, ecclesiam sancti Petri apostolorum principis de Plimton' omnesque capellas sibi pertinentes, nominatim de Plimestoke ab omni censu synodali, et paschali consuetudine et ab omni exactione episcopali". (EEAE #20, p. 19) Why Plymstock should be singled out for particular mention is not clear, unless Bishop William foresaw the later troubles Plympton would have with Tavistock Abbey, which owned the manor of Plymstock, over this chapel. Abbot Walter of Tavistock recognized Plympton's rights to the chapel c.1164 (Dugdale *MA*, II, p. 500), but a final resolution of this disagreement occurred only in 1429 (Henry

bishops were entitled to seek from clerics and monasteries in their dioceses. The synodal fee was exacted from each person a bishop requested to attend a synod; the amount seems to have varied according to the size of the church or monastery, ranging from a few pence to several shillings.² The paschal due likely refers to the fee paid by the clergy on Maundy Thursday for chrism to be used at Easter.³ Another type of episcopal exaction was the *cathedraticum*; this was a sum owed to the bishop as he travelled around his diocese inquiring after offenses which would be corrected at the synod.⁴ Addleshaw pointed out that twelfth-century bishops remitted such dues and exactions in recognition of the Gregorian Reform's new conception of the relationship between priest and bishop: the bishop was no longer to require a priest to pay fees for "spiritual things", as a lord would require services or dues from a vassal.⁵ John of Oxford, bishop of Norwich, displayed this attitude between 1198 and 1200 when he absolved all the churches in his diocese from payment of the paschal due (but not the synodal): he anathematized anyone exacting any other due, especially for such things as institutions to benefices, dedications of churches, and the like.⁶ Bishop William Warelwast was cautious, however, to ensure that his rights and those of the archdeacon were protected.⁷

VI's inspeximus charter: DRO W1258M/D74/4). See Chapter Three for a fuller discussion of Plympton Priory and the chapel at Plymstock.

²Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century*, p. 120.

³Brett, *English Church*, p. 164. The amount may have been 7d.

⁴ The *cathedraticum* seems to have been similar in conception to the procuration, a sum owed to the bishop when visitations became common (Brett, *English Church*, pp. 166-67). The procuration was an annual payment offered in lieu of the provision of hospitality to the bishop during his visitation.

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

⁶ John of Oxford did allow "due and moderate procurations for burials, vigils, and celebrations of marriages." See *English Episcopal Acta VI: Norwich*, ed. C. Harper-Bill

This bishop also granted to Plympton Priory the sum of sixty shillings from the prebend of each canon of Exeter Cathedral who died or entered the religious life.⁸ Warelwast stipulated that the canons of Plympton were to say the same number and sort of services for each cathedral canon as for one of their own brethren. They were also to pray for William and his sins, as he took care to support them in their need.⁹ After his death they were to pray for him and his successors just as they would for one of their own, or even more, if they were feeling charitable.¹⁰ In the same charter he gave Plympton a tenement in Exeter, which had previously belonged to Ranulfus de Haga and, after him, to Clarembald.¹¹

(Oxford: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 1990), #262, pp. 209-10. Bishop Robert Chesney of Lincoln also exempted (c. 1150x1161) an Augustinian house, Owston Priory, from payment of synodals and all other episcopal customs, except the Peter's Pence. See English Episcopal Acta I: Lincoln, ed. David Smith (London: Oxford University Press for The British Academy, 1980), #216.

⁷ The bishop conceded that "any financial penalties incurred by the priory's domestic servants are to go to the canons, although jurisdiction and penitential discipline over them are reserved to the bishop and archdeacon" (EEAE #20, p. 19).

⁸ EEAE #22 pp. 20-22. The grant was made on the occasion of the dedication of the new cathedral church in Exeter (p. 22n).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21. "Quo sicut eorum indigencie nostra suffragari curat abundancia, ita et pro nostris et nostrorum offensis precare Deum non desistat religionis eorum cultus et perseverencia."

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21. "Nolo autem vos latere quia et pro me ipso et pro meis successoribus post mortem ecclesia Plimtone annuatim tale obsequium facere suscepit et concessit, quale et ipsa faciet post obitum sui prelati proprii iuxta morem sue institutionis, nisi forte caritas eorum gratiam pro gracia quantumlibet adauxeret."

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-22. In Bishop John's confirmation (EEAE #168) this property is referred to as "domum quandam et terram que fuit Clarembaldi in vico australi." Clarembald was a doctor, royal chaplain, canon of Exeter cathedral, and friend of William Warelwast. See Frances Rose-Troup, "Clarembald and the Miracles of Exeter," Exeter Vignettes (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1942), p. 9.

These gifts were confirmed by the chapter of the cathedral on the same day, July 2, 1133.¹² The chapter's charter sheds an interesting light on the relations between bishop and chapter at Exeter in the 1120s: the cathedral canons spoke in glowing terms of the bishop's thoughtfulness. They said that previously the custom at Exeter had been that after the death of a canon, his prebend was simply handed over to another at the will of the bishop, although the chapter could offer advice. Now the bishop had come up with a way to improve this situation, with their approval: upon the death of each canon, his prebend would be paid out to help the poor for a year after his death, for the good of his soul. The Plympton canons were to receive sixty shillings from the prebend, for the salvation of the living and the rest of the dead and for the soul of the dead canon expressly.¹³ Several subsequent bishops--Robert Warelwast (Bishop William Warelwast's nephew), Robert Chichester, Bartholomew, and John the Chanter--and Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury issued confirmations of this gift, most probably at the solicitation of the priors of Plympton.¹⁴ Robert Warelwast added twenty more shillings to the gift so that the total amount that went to Plympton at the death of each canon was four pounds.¹⁵

It is interesting that both William, the founder of the Priory, and the chapter, expressed the desire that the canons of Plympton pray for them and for the souls of their dead brethren. What these men expected of the Plympton canons seems to have been little

¹² Oliver MDE #8. Translated by Barlow, EEAE #22 n., p.22.

¹³ Ibid.: "pro salute vivorum et requie defunctorum et nominatim pro nostri canonici defuncti anima."

¹⁴ Oliver MDE # 11 and 13.

¹⁵ Oliver MDE #13. Orme says that this was the basic annual income for a prebend at Exeter Cathedral. Exeter Cathedral as It Was (Exeter: Devon Books, 1986), p. 34.

different from what these men might have expected of monks: prayers for the souls of the living and the dead. Bishop William himself stated the belief that the worship the canons engaged in would assist in God's forgiveness of his sins.¹⁶ The bishop and the chapter seem to have felt that by their gift and confirmation they were entering into a sort of spiritual confraternity with the Plympton canons, an expectation often stated explicitly in other monastic charters of the period.¹⁷ Once again, the early evidence would seem to suggest that early patrons and benefactors valued the Augustinian canons as practitioners of ceaseless divine worship and intercessory prayer.

Warelwast also gave Plympton a house and gardens belonging to Ascelin the archdeacon which he granted in free alms, and he consented to Hugh de Saucei's benefaction of land in Luscacombe.¹⁸ He and the chapter were also present when Aluric Fitz Wischi donated land at "Madworthy," near the leper hospital in Exeter.¹⁹ In addition, the bishop gave his permission to his nephew, namesake, and steward to grant land at Stokeley and Ashridge to the Priory; this gift was later confirmed by the bishop's successor, his nephew Robert Warelwast.²⁰ Difficulties arose, however, when William

¹⁶ EEAE #22: "pro nostris et nostrorum offensis pacare deum non desistat religionis eorum cultus et perseverencia."

¹⁷ Janet Burton, Monastic and Religious Orders in Britain, 1000-1300 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 216.

¹⁸ Oliver MDE #14. Hugh de Saucei was a vassal of the earl of Devon. Luscacombe is in present-day Bickington, Teignbridge hundred.

¹⁹ EEAE #43. Barlow points out that the Priory granted this land, 1176x1184, to the Hospital of St. John the Baptist in Exeter at the petition of Robert Fitz Gille, archdeacon of Totnes, for an annual rent of half a mark.

²⁰ EEAE #42. The original owner of the land is not clear: Bishop Robert's confirmation of 1138 x 1141 states that Robert Bevin quit-claimed the land which William Warelwast (the nephew) bought from his father, Ralph ("eam a patre suo Radulfo emerat") with the consent of his uncle the bishop, and gave to the Priory. An account in the "Registrum" notes, however, that Bishop Robert confirmed the gift of land at Stokeley from William

Warelwast (the nephew) gave the land of Stokeley to his wife Aliz, daughter of William de Buz, as dower. Aliz subsequently ran away from her husband with Richard of Flanders and sold Stokeley.²¹ The prior of Plympton was able to get back the land, nevertheless, in a settlement: he gave Aliz and her new husband four silver marks to renounce their hold of the land forever, an offer which they accepted. At the same time Robert Bevin quit-claimed all right to the land and, after placing the knife of Robert the Hermit on the altar of the chapel of Saint Faith, swore to this on the Gospels; Prior Geoffrey gave him three silver marks.²² This time the land remained in the hands of the Priory, and at the time of the Dissolution the manor of Stokeley/Priorton was valued at £8 13s 5d.²³

Bishop William Warelwast was also involved in the donation of land in Cornwall to Plympton Priory, albeit in a roundabout way. The "Registrum" tells us that he gave William de Rouen, for his service, land at Trevella from the demesne of his manor of Treger.²⁴ William de Rouen gave to his brother, Robert de Rouen, three Cornish acres plus three virgates of land--Loe, Lamfioc, and Harcourt²⁵--from the manor. After Bishop William's death in 1137, Robert de Rouen, following the example of the bishop, decided

Warelwast, his relative, land which he, William, bought from Robert Bevin and gave to the church when he became a canon at the Priory ("predictae ecclesiae secum fieret canonicus dedit"). William also gave the land of Ashridge with Bishop William's consent; the bishop had given it to his nephew for his service as steward. EEAE #42n.

²¹ EEAE #42.

²² *Ibid.* Perhaps the knife of Robert the Hermit was considered a holy relic? Placing a knife on the altar to signify the offering of a gift was not uncommon in the twelfth century (V. H. Galbraith, "Monastic Foundation Charters of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," Cambridge Historical Journal, 4 [1934], pp. 211-12).

²³ Valor Ecclesiasticus (Oliver MDE #28). Bishop John the Chanter confirmed Bishop Robert I's charter, 1188x1191, EEAE #167. Ashridge and Stokeley (also known as Priorton) are in Sandford, Crediton hundred.

²⁴ EEAE #44.

to become a canon at Plympton; he persuaded Bishop Robert of Exeter and his nephew John of Rouen to concede this land, which he wished to bring with him to the Priory.²⁶ John of Rouen returned the land into the hands of the bishop and quit his claim to the land; in return, the bishop released him and his heirs from the payment of a third part of a knight's fee, and Prior Geoffrey gave him six silver marks and the hauberk of his uncle Robert. Rents from the manor of Tregendale brought the Priory a hundred shillings and three pence a year in 1535.²⁷

One of the most significant gifts from Bishop William Warelwast to the Priory was the church of St. Kew in Cornwall. As was mentioned in Chapter One, according to "Cornish tradition," this church belonged to Plympton in Anglo-Saxon times; by the time of Domesday, however, it was in royal hands.²⁸ It was one of the churches given to Bishop William Warelwast by Henry I in the controversial documents discussed above. The church at St. Kew was evidently some kind of small minster whose prebends were to revert to Plympton Priory as the secular canons died. A confirmation charter of Bishop John of Exeter states that the episcopal donation consisted of the church of Landeho together with its lands, tithes, liberties, and all appurtenances, so that with the death of the clerics their prebends would fall to the canons of Plympton.²⁹ While there is no surviving

²⁵ Ibid. Barlow notes that Trevella manor, with the church of St. Feock (Lamfioc), was part of the episcopal manor of Tregear, and that Loe and Harcourt are in the same parish.

²⁶ EEAE #44. A fragment of the confirmation charter exists in the "Registrum," p. 153 and is also printed in EEAE #44. It states that the donation was made at St. Germans in Cornwall "per cu[l]tellum super altare sancti Michaelis".

²⁷ Valor (Oliver #28).

²⁸ Picken, "The 'Landochou' Charter," pp. 36-37, 43.

²⁹ Oliver, MDE, #14. "...ecclesiam de Landeho cum terris, decimis, libertatibus, et omnibus pertinentiis, ita ut decedentibus eiusdem ecclesie clericis prebende eorum in

charter regarding William Warelwast's granting of St. Kew to Plympton, the canons of Plympton did possess such a document in the 1260s when Bishop Bronescombe challenged Plympton Priory's right to the church.³⁰ Bronescombe also noted at that time that the Dean and Chapter of Exeter had confirmed the donation, as had subsequent bishops of Exeter.³¹ Given the later troubles Plympton was to have in asserting its right to this church, Bishop William's gift was something of a mixed blessing.³²

Episcopal generosity to Plympton Priory may also have inspired other members of the diocesan administration to make benefactions to the canons. Ascelin, the archdeacon whose house and gardens in Exeter were bought by William Warelwast and given to Plympton, also granted the Priory land in his own right, a half virgate and half ferling of land in Sampford Spiney, of the fee lands of the earl of Devon.³³ Another archdeacon was a good friend to Plympton some decades later: Robert Fitz Gille, archdeacon of Totnes (c. 1170-Jan. 1186), brother of John of Salisbury and seemingly a physician.³⁴ The "Registrum de Plympton" contains an obituary notice and account of the gifts of Robert: while he lived, he rebuilt the refectory and the infirmary and gave a golden chalice with gems, a chasuble, and a cope decorated with gold thread, a missal, two lectionaries, the

ecclesie vestre usus et vestros cedant". The lands attached to St. Kew were known as the manor of Lanowe Seynt by 1535, when it was valued at £11 9s 3d (Oliver MDE #28).

³⁰ Reg. Bronescombe, ed. Robinson, p. 131.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² This matter will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three. The value of the church of St. Kew was £20 in 1535, according to the Valor Ecclesiasticus.

³³ Oliver, MDE #3. Barlow notes that Ascelin may have been one of the first territorial archdeacons in the Diocese of Exeter; he seems to have died either in 1122 or 1132. See EEAE p. 306 n.

³⁴ Frank Barlow, "John of Salisbury and His Brothers," Journal of Ecclesiastical History 46 (1995): pp. 99-100.

Pentateuch, and, to Prior Martin, a collection of Decretal letters.³⁵ Like William Warelwast I, William Warelwast II, and Robert of Rouen, Robert Fitz Gille retired to the priory and became a canon. When he was *in extremis*, he bequeathed all his books to the Priory, including the Epistles of St. Paul, a Psalter, and Gratian's *Decretum*, except his medical texts.³⁶ He was buried in the conventual church, having left the Priory ten silver marks and his palfrey, in addition to other treasures this "ever most tender lover" bequeathed to the canons.³⁷ As well, on the day before he died, Robert had asked the canons of Plympton to provide on the anniversary of his death six shillings' worth of wine, food, and other comforts for the poor, for the salvation of himself and the canons.³⁸ They complied with this request: the writer of the obituary urged future brothers to attend to the wishes of one from whose generosity they benefitted.³⁹

Bishop John the Chanter also confirmed, 1188x1191, to Plympton Priory its long-standing right to present to the archdeacon of Totnes a priest to be instituted to the rural deanery of Plympton.⁴⁰ Gilbert Basset, archdeacon of Totnes (1190-1207), recognized this right as well.⁴¹ The main role of the rural dean was to "supervise...a group of parochial clergy": the dean was meant to oversee the moral behaviour of the clergy, visit

³⁵ Ibid., p. 109.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 99, 109. The "Registrum" states that the names of the books were recorded in their catalogue, now sadly lost.

³⁷ Ten silver spoons "*desiderans eos semper talibus velle et posse uti*," a silver cup and silver bowl "*appendentes tres marcas et dimidiam et eo amplius*," his mazer cup, a silver bowl to be used in the conventual church.

³⁸ Barlow, "John of Salisbury," pp. 100, 109.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 109: "*...eius tam benignae liberalitatis participes, idem exaudire et pro suo tempore exsolvere.*"

⁴⁰ The episcopal confirmation was acknowledged in a privilege from Pope Celestine III. (EEAE #169, p. 152).

⁴¹ EEAE #169, p. 152; MDE #15.

sick vicars and curates, and preside over monthly ruridecanal meetings.⁴² In England the rural deans were usually appointed by the bishop, but in the diocese of Exeter the practice was for the incumbents of the benefices in a deanery to elect the rural deans each year.⁴³ Plympton Priory's right to appoint the rural deans for its district is an example of the interconnectedness between the canons and the diocesan hierarchy in Devon.

The close ties between Plympton Priory and the episcopal circle continued throughout the twelfth century. William Warelwast was not the only bishop of Exeter who was generous and helpful to the Priory in the first eight decades after its foundation. Bishop John's confirmation charter of 1186x1188 lists the priory's spiritualities and temporalities which were gifts of the bishops or were confirmed by them.⁴⁴ For example, Ancatillus, priest of Exeter Cathedral bought land belonging to the episcopal fee in South Street, Exeter from the heirs of Algarus Bula; Bishop Bartholomew gave his consent.⁴⁵ There are

⁴² Alexander Hamilton Thompson, "Diocesan Organization in the Middle Ages: Archdeacons and Rural Deans," Proceedings of the British Academy, 29 (1943), pp. 185-6. While these were the duties of the rural deans in theory, Hamilton Thompson found little evidence of such activities in the episcopal registers, where for the most part the rural deans appeared as recipients of standard commissions of inquiry.

⁴³ Reg. Grandisson II, p. 713n. That the incumbents were not always conscientious about fulfilling this responsibility is shown by an entry in Bishop Thomas Brantyngham's register for 1390: he sent out a tersely-worded mandate ordering the incumbents of the Archdeaconry of Cornwall to hurry up and elect their rural deans (Reg. Brantyngham II, p. 706). In 1333, an aggrieved Bishop Grandisson complained that some rural deans in the diocese had placed others "minus ydoneos, viles pauperes, levis opinionis" in their offices (presumably for a fee) and that they had handed them their seals of office. Bishop Grandisson declared that in the future rural deans had to exercise their duties themselves, unless they were incapacitated, and keep the seals in their possession. Offenders had to pay 100s towards the re-building of the cathedral. (Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 712-13).

⁴⁴ EEAE #168. Bishop Bartholomew also confirmed the Priory's possessions (EEAE #118).

⁴⁵ Ibid. The land in South Street also included a house which Algarus had built on it. In return, the canons had to pay 2s to the bishop of Exeter at each of the four terms of the year. The bishops were similarly businesslike about land which the canons bought from

no surviving records of benefactions to Plympton Priory by Bishop Bartholomew, but he seems to have had a close relationship with it: during a court case in the 1160s concerning some married clergy in the archdeaconry of Barnstaple, Bartholomew sent a canon of Plympton to the Curia in Rome to represent him.⁴⁶ The most important gifts from bishops of Exeter were undoubtedly the spiritualities: the confirmation charter lists fourteen churches given to the Priory either by the bishops or with their approval. Indeed, it is only possible to identify definitely three churches which came directly from the bishops of Exeter: St. Kew, St. Anthony-in-Roseland,⁴⁷ and St. Just-in-Roseland,⁴⁸ all in Cornwall. Bishop Robert I of Exeter (1138-1155) gave the latter two to the Priory “with all lands, tithes, liberties, and belongings.”⁴⁹ Unfortunately, we do not know the identities of donors

Wimundus the goldsmith and his heirs with the consent of Bishop Bartholomew: the canons were to give the bishop four pence a year for it.

⁴⁶ Adrian Morey, Bartholomew of Exeter: Bishop and Canonist (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), p. 93. Another indication of this relationship--and of the status of Plympton Priory in the diocese--was that during the negotiations that resulted in Bartholomew's elevation to the see of Exeter, John of Salisbury wrote Bartholomew that he should come to Canterbury, accompanied by the abbot of Tavistock and the prior of Plympton (*ibid.*, p. 13).

⁴⁷ This church became a cell of Plympton. Leland said in his Itinerary that two canons had resided there. St. Anthony's also had a dependant chapel, St. Gerrans. The manor of St. Anthony, also known as Burdohowe, was valued at £9 in the Valor; the total in the Ministers' Accounts is £11 3s 10d (Oliver MDE #28, #30). Little is known of this cell, other than the couple of mentions in the episcopal registers: on October 3, 1259, Bishop Bronescombe dedicated the church, and in 1338 the French burnt down the cell during a raid on Cornwall (Reg. Bronescombe, p. 65 and Reg. Grandisson II, p. 872).

⁴⁸ A dispute arose between the prior of Plympton and John le Sor over the patronage of the church of St. Just in the 1180s; this dispute is discussed in detail in Chapter Three. A memorandum in the “Registrum” states that Bishop Leofric (1046 x 1072) had appointed his brother Odmer to oversee his lands in Cornwall, including the episcopal manor of Tregear, of which St. Just-in-Roseland was part; Odmer's son was Osbert Sor, who was father of a John Sor (EEAE #1n).

⁴⁹ Oliver MDE #3.

of two churches, Bridestowe in Devon⁵⁰ and Maker in Cornwall⁵¹, of which Plympton came into possession between the times of Henry II's inspeximus charter (c.1158) and Bishop John's charter (1186x1191).

Another church mentioned in Bishop John's confirmation charter of 1186x1191 was that of St. Mawgan-in-Pydar in Cornwall. In 1086 the bishops of Exeter held the manor of Lanherne, on which the church of St. Mawgan-in-Pydar was located.⁵² Possibly, then, this was another episcopal gift to the Priory. By c.1265 the manor of Lanherne had passed by marriage into the hands of the Arundell family.⁵³ The lords of Lanherne also obtained the advowson of the church of St. Mawgan-in-Pydar some time in the early fourteenth century, although the Priory continued to receive a pension of two marks.⁵⁴ A peculiar wrinkle in this transferral is the fact that in 1279 the prior of Plympton and Guy de Nunant made a joint presentation to the church of St. Mawgan-in-Pydar.⁵⁵ As the main branch of the Nunants had died out by 1206, this Guy must have been a descendant of a cadet line; he was also involved in a presentation to a church belonging to the Lanhern

⁵⁰ In 1086 the manor of Bridestowe was held by Ralph of Pomeroy from Baldwin the Sheriff (DB: D #16, 7). In 1242-43 Bridestowe appeared in the Book of Fees as belonging to the Honour of Okehampton (BF, p. 756). Baldwin the Sheriff was lord of the Honour of Okehampton; it is possible that one of his d'Avranches or Avenel descendents made the gift of the church of Bridestowe. See below for other gifts of this family to Plympton Priory.

⁵¹ In 1086 the manor of Maker was held by the Count of Mortain (DB: C, #5, 2, 14). After the confiscation of the Count's estates, Maker passed to the Valletorts. In 1346 Ralph de Vautort--seemingly a member of a cadet branch of the family--held one fee in chief in Sutton, Maker and Kingstamerton of the Honour of Trematon (FA vol. 1 p. 404).

⁵² DB: C, #2, 7.

⁵³ The manor had previously been held by the Lanherne family of Devon of the bishops of Exeter. They also held two other episcopal manors in Devon. (Personal communication from Dr. Oliver Padel, September 16, 1997.)

⁵⁴ Reg. Grandisson I p. 373. The last presentation made by the Priory to this benefice was in 1309 (Reg. Stapledon, p. 255). Their choice as rector was Benedict Arundell.

estates, Phillack, around the same time.⁵⁶ It may be possible that the Priory was originally entitled only to a moiety of the advowson of St. Mawgan, and members of the Nunant family owned the other half. Perhaps sometime before 1309, when the Priory made its sole presentation to the church, this branch of the family had died out and the Priory was able to gain rights to the whole advowson.

This flow of churches from bishops to the Augustinian canons has often been interpreted to mean that the bishops expected them to undertake pastoral duties. This contention has been considered to be especially true of those priories which had been refounded from secular colleges. For example, Janet Burton in her recent survey of English monasticism stated: "It may be assumed that bishops who placed regular canons in the ancient minster churches intended them to fulfil the same pastoral and parochial functions as their predecessors..." and "churchmen seem actively to have promoted the establishment of regular canons in their dioceses in order to place the care of parishes in their hands".⁵⁷ Since we unfortunately do not have a surviving example of an episcopal charter granting a church to the Plympton canons in this period, we cannot state with certainty the intentions or motivations of the bishops of Exeter in this case. However, from Warelwast's comments in his two grants to Plympton and from the remarks of the chapter in their confirmation charter of 1133, the characteristics of the canons which these men single out for remark pertain to the traditional monastic responsibilities of prayer and intercession. The spiritual benefits that the canons could yield to their

⁵⁵ Reg. Bronescombe, p. 174.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 162. This presentation was brought to my attention by Dr. Oliver Padel.

benefactors were emphasized in these documents, not the pastoral benefits to the community. Studies of episcopal donations of churches to Augustinian houses with fuller extant documentation for the twelfth century should help to clarify the expectations amongst the bishops and their circles in regards to the duties of the canons towards these churches.

Gifts from Magnates and their Vassals: Spiritualia

The Augustinian canons profitted from another product of the Gregorian Reform: the pressure on secular lords to surrender their ownership of their churches. In addition to the churches and pensions which Plympton Priory received from the bishops of Exeter, a number of local landowners granted the Priory the churches on their estates. When considering the donations by laymen of churches and pensions, it is important to keep in mind the special context which surrounded gifts of *spiritualia*.⁵⁸ In the eleventh century, the Reform movement challenged the right of secular lords to grant their churches freely to whomever they pleased, and to institute their priests of choice to these benefices. The Reformers wished to "define and assert the sacred character of spiritual revenues and to forbid their possession by laymen or sale in any form."⁵⁹ They asserted that the lords did

⁵⁷ Burton, *Monastic and Religious Orders*, pp. 47-48. Burton does note, however, that the nature of the sources for this period makes it impossible to tell whether the canons did indeed serve the churches they were given.

⁵⁸ *Spiritualia* can be defined as any income that derived from ecclesiastical sources: for example, tithes, offerings or alms (such as mass-pennies and the like), pensions from rectories or vicarages, dues (such as the mortuary payment or burial dues), the rectorial messuage, and the yield from the glebe land.

⁵⁹ Giles Constable, "Monastic Possession of Churches and '*Spiritualia*' in the Age of Reform," in *Il monachesimo e la riforma ecclesiastica (1049-1122)*. Atti della quarta Settimana internazionale di studio, 1968 (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1971), p. 318.

not truly own their churches, nor could they “presume to grant spiritual office”, which was the prerogative of the bishop; instead, according to the *ius patronatus*, the lords functioned as advocates or protectors of the churches where they retained the right of advowson.⁶⁰ In 1102, Anselm’s Council at Westminster declared that monks could not accept churches from the laity without the approval of the bishop.⁶¹ This was reiterated at the First Lateran Council in 1123⁶² and at councils at Westminster in 1125 and 1127.⁶³ As a consequence of this development, a new procedure arose by which a cleric received a benefice: the patron now had to present a cleric to the bishop, who instituted him as rector or vicar, after which the bishop would order the archdeacon to induct the cleric.⁶⁴

Given this climate of hostility towards lay ownership of churches and tithes, it is no surprise that the early twelfth century witnessed an extensive transferral of these *spiritualia* to monastic and collegiate foundations. Knowles estimated that perhaps a quarter of the parish churches in England belonged to monasteries by the year 1200.⁶⁵ Brett maintains that the Benedictines along with the Augustinian canons benefitted from this trend and that “it seems unreasonable to look for special explanations [i.e. the canons’ supposed involvement in pastoral care] for a general phenomenon.”⁶⁶ Janet Burton found that in twelfth-century Yorkshire gifts of parish churches contributed

⁶⁰ Brett, English Church, pp. 141-42. The right of advowson is the right to present a cleric to a benefice. It is also known as the right of patronage.

⁶¹ CS I, pt. 2, c. 22, p. 677.

⁶² Addleshaw, Rectors, p. 17.

⁶³ CS I, pt. 2, c. 4 (1125), p. 739: c. 10 (1127), p. 749.

⁶⁴ Addleshaw, Rectors, pp. 18-19.

⁶⁵ David Knowles, The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Time of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 597.

⁶⁶ Brett, English Church, p. 230.

significantly to endowments of the monasteries, “most conspicuously those of the Augustinian canons”.⁶⁷ However, it was by no means uncommon for alien Benedictine houses, and, more surprisingly, Cistercian houses, to be the recipients of parish churches.⁶⁸

From the viewpoint of the incumbent of the benefice, the main effect of the conveyance of ownership into the hands of the religious was that the monastery was likely to expect a far higher pension than the lay lord had, and might eventually appropriate the church’s revenues.⁶⁹ From the viewpoint of the secular donor, he or she was able to reap “very desirable spiritual rewards” by giving a church, “of considerable actual or potential value to a monastery [but] now of diminished value to a layman”.⁷⁰ For a monastic house such as Plympton Priory, these donations of churches and pensions became a windfall: by 1535 the value of its *spiritualia* was just over £454, nearly equal to the value of its temporal possessions and far greater in value than the *spiritualia* of any other monastic house in the Diocese of Exeter.⁷¹

Henry II’s *inspeximus* charter and the “Registrum” provide information on the identity of the donors of some of the other churches: Fulk Fitz Ansger and Fulk’s wife, Adeliza,

⁶⁷ Janet Burton, “Monasteries and Parish Churches in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Yorkshire,” *Northern History* 23 (1987): p. 40.

⁶⁸ Burton, “Monasteries,” p. 40. Burton mentions as examples William Paynel granting seven churches to Drax Priory (Augustinian), Robert de Brus granting eight churches to Guisborough Priory (Augustinian), and the endowment of Holy Trinity-York (Benedictine) with twelve churches plus a moiety of a thirteenth.

⁶⁹ Addleshaw, *Rectors*, p. 8.

⁷⁰ B.R. Kemp, “Monastic Possession of Parish Churches in England in the Twelfth Century,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 31 (1980): p. 135.

⁷¹ Oliver *MDE* #28.

gave Marystow, with the consent of their lord Roger de Nunant;⁷² Roger, son of Stephen de Mandeville, confirmed the gift of Blackawton;⁷³ William fitz Stephen may have given the church of Dean;⁷⁴ Pagan fitz Serlo gave Tamerton Foliot with its dependent chapel of Martinstow,⁷⁵ and Guy, a vassal of Roger de Nunant, donated Egg Buckland ("Buckland Guidonis").⁷⁶

The Priory also received a pension, valued at 40 shillings in 1291, from the church of Stoke-in-Teignhead; this may have been granted them by Nicholas de la Pole or by a member of his family, as the location is called Stokes Nicholai de Pola in Bishop John's confirmation charter.⁷⁷ By the end of the century the Priory also owned the church of

⁷² Oliver MDE #3.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Kirby's Quest lists the prior of Plympton as holding the vill of Dean for a knight's fee from the heirs of William fitz Stephen (FA, vol. 1, p. 323). William fitz Stephen made other gifts to the Priory as well. The "Registrum" contains a fragment of a foot of a fine concerning a Radulphus de Hampton and his wife Orreis and their claim to the church of Dean; this is printed in English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I, vol. II, ed. R. C. Van Caenegem (London: Selden Society, 1991), pp. 612-13, # 564.

⁷⁵ Oliver MDE #3. "Martinstow" or "Martynstowe" became corrupted into "Maristow", the modern name; it should not be confused with Marystow, also known as Sidenham or Stowe St. Mary. Plympton Priory also had a manor at Martynstowe.

⁷⁶ Bodl MS. James 23, p. 159: "Bartholomaeo Dei gratia venerabili Exoniensi Episcopo et toti capitulo Roger[us] de Nonant salutem. Sciatis me concessisse ecclesiae sanctorum apostolorum de Plimton...ecclesiam sancti Edwardi de Boclande cum omnibus pertinentiis suis quam Wido miles meus dominus fundi illius ipsis concesserat et quicquid Wido ecclesiae Plimton pro salute sua et suorum, et nostra in elemosynam donavit in feudo quod de me tenet; concedo eidem ecclesiae Plimton in eadem libertate quam Wido illud hactenus de me tenuit, scilicet salvo servitio Regis et meo quantum res ipsa Regi vel mihi debet, sicut carta eiusdem Widonis demonstrat..."

⁷⁷ Oliver MDE #14. Other members of the Pole family were generous to the priory in the twelfth century: Roger de la Pole and his brother Pomeray gave land at Cadover in Meavy in the time of Henry I (Oliver MDE #3). Maurice de la Pola granted them land at Shaugh and seemingly at "Eadwirdi" (Bodl. MS. James 23, pp. 160, 161; see below, notes 245 and 246). The Poles were vassals of the Nunants of Totnes. However, William de Vernon, earl of Devon (c.1193x1208) confirmed the gift of the church of Stokes, with appurtenances, to Plympton Priory in his general confirmation of the Priory's

Ilington; it seems that either an earl of Devon or one of his vassals was the donor, as William de Vernon, earl of Devon, confirmed the gift c.1193x1208.⁷⁸ Earl William also either gave or confirmed to Plympton the chapel of St. Mary in the earl's castle at Plympton, saving to the earl and his countess and heirs the income from the chaplaincy when they were in residence as well as the service from the chapel on Sundays and feast days.⁷⁹

Plympton Priory lost its rights to other churches granted to it in the twelfth century. Between 1142 and 1154/55, William Avenel notified Bishop Robert Warewast, the earl of Devon, and his son Richard that he was confirming his father Ranulph's and his great-aunt Adeliz's gifts to Plympton Priory, namely, the churches of Alphington, Kenn, and the chapel of St. Mary, with its four prebends, in Exeter Castle.⁸⁰ Adeliz was a daughter

possessions. See RC #23, p. 168. Perhaps the Poles also held some land of the Redvers family.

⁷⁸ RC, #23 p. 168. The Taxatio records that Plympton Priory received a pension of 100 shillings a year from Ilington in 1291.

⁷⁹ RC #83, p. 123. This is all we ever hear of the priory's possession of the castle chapel at Plympton, except for Earl Baldwin I's charter which grants the canons the right to appoint a priest "in capella burgi et castelli" (RC #22, pp. 73-4).

⁸⁰ RC, App. 2 #8, pp. 182-3n. The family relationships amongst the lords of Okehampton in the mid-twelfth century are complicated and not at all clear. Bearman believes that Ranulph may have been the son of another Ranulph, second husband of an otherwise unknown sister of Adeliz. Another view is that this unknown sister married William d'Avranches, had a son Robert d'Avranches, who in turn was father of Maud (G. E. Cokayne and Vicary Gibbs, Complete Peerage, vol. 4 [London: St. Catherine Press, 1910-59], pp. 308-9). Sanders states that Adeliz's daughter Alice married Ranulph Avenel, and their daughter Maud married firstly either Robert d'Avranches or William de Curchi (Sanders, English Baronies, p. 69). This would seem to be contradicted by the record of a charter of Robert Fitz Roy in the Cartulary of St. Nicholas Priory. This is a concession by Matilda, daughter of Robert d'Avranches and heir of Richard Fitz Baldwin, of a vineyard given the priory by Richard and his brother Robert Fitz Baldwin ("Charters in the Cartulary of St. Nicholas Priory at Exeter," in Collectanea topographica et genealogica, vol. 1 [London: J. B. Nichols, 1834], p.188). See also MA vol. 5, p. 378 and VCH: Devon I, p. 554 for records of this family.

of Baldwin the Sheriff, who had been granted land at Kenn and Alphington by William I.⁸¹ Baldwin the Sheriff had also been castellan of Exeter castle, as had his son Richard, “which could explain why Richard’s sister had been in the position to make this unusual gift.”⁸² Adeliz was also responsible for the foundation of Plympton Priory’s cell at Marsh Barton.⁸³

All of these churches seem to have been reclaimed by the Avenel family within a few decades, however: none are mentioned in Bishop John’s confirmation charter of 1186x1188. A charter from the Courtenay Cartulary provides some insight into these events: in 1219x1227, Robert de Courtenay, son-in-law of Earl William of Devon and heir of the Honour of Okehampton, gave Plympton Priory and the Priory’s cell at Marsh Barton fifty-six acres and a water-conduit from his lands at Alphington.⁸⁴ He explained in the charter that he made these gifts in return for the quittance of the Priory’s claim to the churches of Kenn and Alphington and the castle chapel in Exeter,⁸⁵ for which they had

⁸¹ Ibid. pp. 182-3 n. Baldwin and his family were also responsible for founding Cowick Priory, a cell of the abbey of Bec, by 1144 (J. C. Ward, “Fashions in Monastic Endowment: The Foundations of the Clare Family, 1066-1314,” Journal of Ecclesiastical History, 32 [1981] p. 430).

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ The “*Annales Plymptonienses*” record for 1142: “Obiit Adelis vicecomitis filia IX kl. Septemb. Hoc eodem anno obitus sui dedit ecclesie de Plimtone capellam de castello Exoniensi et fecit eam fundare extra muros civitatis in loco qui dicitur ad Mareis. Confirmata est hec donatio et cimiterium consecratum 14 k. Junii, concedente et testante comite Baldwino cum aliis compluribus, episcopo quoque [Ro]berto presente et testante cum clero non minimo.” Baldwin’s and Bishop Robert’s confirmations have not survived.

⁸⁴ Devon Record Office, TD 51 (Courtenay Cartulary) pp. 266-267.

⁸⁵ The castle chapel remained in the hands of the earls of Devon, even though the castle had become subject to direct royal control in 1154; the bishops of Exeter attained the right of institution to the four prebends (Denton, Royal Free Chapels, p. 128).

taken him to court.⁸⁶ The Priory displayed a keen willingness to defend its entitlement to its churches, as will be seen in further examples from the thirteenth century to be discussed in the next chapter.

Of course, one of the main areas of controversy surrounding the Augustinian canons is the question of why this order in particular received so many *spiritualia*. As with the bishops, it has been assumed that lay patrons and benefactors endowed the canons with parish churches in the hope that the canons might undertake pastoral care in these parishes. Unfortunately, there is no original charter surviving in which a layman grants a church to Plympton Priory which might specify the donor's motives. The best we have is Roger de Nunant's confirmation of Guy de Buckland's gift in which Roger states that Guy made his gift in alms for the salvation of his soul and those of his family and his lord Roger, a standard formula in monastic charters.⁸⁷ However, an examination of a map of Devon will show that some of the churches were so far away from the Priory that personal service by the canons would have been extremely difficult; nor is there any evidence that any of these churches--except for St. Kew, St. Anthony-in-Roseland, and Marsh Barton--were ever cells with resident canons. For example, the church of Marystow was a good twenty-five miles from Plympton. The lack of definite evidence in this period regarding lay expectations of the canons of Plympton should, consequently,

⁸⁶ Courtenay Cartulary, pp. 266-67. Robert de Courtenay was son of Hawise and Reginald de Courtenay; Hawise was the daughter of Maud d'Avranches and William de Curchi, and inherited the Honour of Okehampton (Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 69-70). Robert married Marie, second daughter of Earl William de Vernon of Devon; when the male line of the Redvers failed in the late thirteenth century, the Honour of Plympton and the Earldom of Devon passed to Robert de Courtenay's great-grandson, Hugh II de Courtenay. For Hugh II's dealings with Plympton Priory, see Chapter Three.

⁸⁷ Bodl. MS James 23, p. 159 (see above, n. 76).

lead one to be extremely cautious about positing their involvement in the cure of souls in the twelfth century.

Other Motives of Lay Benefactors of the Augustinian Canons

The responsiveness of the laity to the Church's disapproval of secular control of churches and tithes was only one of a number of reasons for the support given to twelfth-century monastic and canonical orders. The phrases that one comes across so frequently in charters of donation, such as "I give for the salvation of my soul and those of my ancestors and successors," may seem like stock ingredients inserted as a matter of course by scribes. However, there is no reason to doubt that these statements very often did indeed reflect the donor's expectations: monks and monasteries existed to pray collectively for the souls of sinners, and what better way to ensure that one would be included in their prayers, and hence improve one's chances of salvation, than to make a donation to the monastery? That this was not a purely selfish concern is demonstrated by the common inclusion of requests for the prayers of the souls of one's parents, children, ancestors, and successors. Sometimes the donor requested that the monks or canons pray for the souls of his lord and the lord's family as well. The act of giving to a monastic community was a gesture of faith in the usefulness of intercessory prayer and an expression of collective anxiety over the fate of the unredeemed soul.

Some carried these pious impulses to their logical conclusion and adopted the habit themselves. As we have seen, Bishop William Warelwast, Archdeacon Robert Fitz Gille, and Robert de Rouen all decided to become canons at Plympton Priory. In the cases of the bishop and the archdeacon, it is known that they retired to the Priory at the end of their

careers; the bishop died soon afterwards. To become a monk, nun, or canon at the end of one's life was referred to as entry *ad succurrendum*: one was able to live one's life in the world but, when one's end seemed near, one could reap the spiritual benefits of being a professed religious. Another way of securing an affiliation with a monastery was for a benefactor to enter into a spiritual confraternity with the house: as a confrater, he could expect prayers for himself and his family, obits and alms on the anniversary of his death (as for Robert fitz Gille), and possibly burial in the conventual church.

An example of the combination of confraternity and entry *ad succurrendum* can be seen in the "Registrum de Plympton." In return for a concession regarding land held by the priory by gift of the donor's father,⁸⁸ Jordan fitz William fitz Stephen and his wife were to receive the benefit of the canons' prayers--whatever was normally done for brothers received *ad succurrendum*--at the memorial services to be held on the anniversaries of their deaths.⁸⁹ Jordan specified, however, that if he should at some point be free of his wife, he wished to be accepted as a canon, *in extremis* if that should be

⁸⁸ William fitz Stephen also gave Plympton a virgate of land in Maidencombe before 1168, the year a composition was made between the Priory and Forde Abbey to settle a dispute between them over this land (Oliver MDE # 9). William may also have given Plympton Dean church (see above, n. 74). As well, he appeared as a witness at a court judgement regarding Plympton Priory in 1168-69 (English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I, vol. 1, pp. 487-88, #452). He also witnessed the Avenel charter (1142x1154/55) regarding the churches of Kenn, Alphington, and the Exeter castle chapel (RC App. 2 #8, pp. 182-83). William fitz Stephen held a knight's fee from Robert fitz Roy and half a fee from William de Tracy in 1166 (RBE, p. 252).

⁸⁹ Bodl. Ms James 23, p. 161: "commune beneficium orationum et omnium bonorum quae fient in ecclesia Plimton in obitu nostro fieri pro nobis quicquid statutum est fieri pro animabus fratrum susceptorum ad succurrendum."

necessary.⁹⁰ Jordan was thus able to leave his options open, according to whether he becomes a widower or merely sought entry when death was imminent.

The full text of the charter is not copied in the "Registrum," but in the portion which is extant, Jordan stated that the canons gave him, on the day of his father's burial, one good horse, and that afterwards they gave his wife one penny and him three marks. Jordan and his wife then conceded to the canons the gift which the canons had held in his father's lifetime for more than thirty years.⁹¹ This concession may have been in reality a commercial transaction, as were so many other grants at this time. Harper-Bill offers two examples of knights making donations to Norman abbeys and receiving money, horses, and the offer of entry *ad succurrendum* in return.⁹² Similarly, in the case of Stokeley, Prior Geoffrey of Plympton gave Robert Bevin three silver marks to quit his claim to the land, and he received him "in fratrem," as a confrater of the house. To concede admission into a monastery or offer prayers in exchange for a donation brought the religious houses perilously close to accusations of simony; hence the cautiousness of the language in such charters.

⁹⁰ Ibid.: "si aliquando liber fuero a conjuge et rationabiliter hoc quaesiero suscipiar in canonicum vel in extremis saltem si tantum tardavero."

⁹¹ Ibid.: "Dederunt etiam mihi in die sepulturae patris mei equum unum bonum et postea tres marcas et sponsae meae unum denarium aureum. Et pari consensu concessimus ambo eisdem canonicis totam hanc elemosinam praedictam quam tenuerant in vita patris mei de ipsius dono annis triginta et amplius liberam et quietam de omni servitio terreno praeter murdrum et denegeld." The phrase "denarium aureum" is rather puzzling, however, as these seem to have appeared only in the latter part of the thirteenth century.

⁹² Christopher Harper-Bill, "The Piety of the Anglo-Norman Knightly Class," Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1979 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1979, 1980), pp. 67, 71. Guidard de Farcis, c. 1128, gave land to Jumièges; the abbey in return "granted him the benefits of confraternity, with the promise of reception if he so wished," as well as sixty solidi, a palfrey, and a tunic worth seven solidi for his son. As well, Serlo de

Another interesting case from Plympton's "Registrum" concerning entry into the convent is that of the Weston family. In 1171x1173, William de Weston, in the presence of Bishop Bartholomew, confirmed the gift of four ferlings of land, free of all service, which his father had granted to the Priory.⁹³ William's father had made this gift when he and another son, Gilbert, had become canons at the Priory. At the same time, it was agreed that William's wife was to be maintained honourably by the church of Plympton while she lived. This charter, like that of Jordan fitz William fitz Stephen, exemplifies the close connections between the Priory and local benefactors and their families and the willingness of the canons to offer a range of spiritual and material benefits in exchange for the donations.

Others made donations to monasteries as penance for misdeeds. As Harper-Bill states, "[c]onsciousness of guilt in specific matters was a frequent motivation for grants".⁹⁴ A rather spectacular example of this can be found in Plympton's "Registrum": Albreda, daughter of Robert de Aurivalles gave three ferlings of land at Wrangaton in Ugborough for the salvation of the souls of her parents, ancestors, and successors.⁹⁵ So far, this is quite conventional: however, she added that she was also making the gift "for the

Lingèvres gave the church of Bucéels to St.Etienne-Caen, which gave him money, a palfrey, and a promise of entry whenever he wished.

⁹³ EEAE #142A. This gift seems to correspond to the mention made in Henry II's inspeximus charter of the land of Ham given by Godfrey de Weston with the consent of his lord, Robert Bulzun (seemingly a tenant of the Nunants of Totnes). In 1346, the prior of Plympton held a quarter of half a fee in Kenterbury and Westonsham (FA vol. 1, p. 404).

⁹⁴ Harper-Bill, "Piety", p. 64.

⁹⁵ Bodl MS. James 23 p. 157: "Notum sit omnibus tam presentibus quam futuris quod Albreda filia Roberti de Aurivallo dedi ecclesiae beatorum Apostolorum petri et pauli de Plimton et canonicis ibidem deo famulantibus tres ferlingos terrae in Wraggatuna ita

absolution of my husband Robert de Lestre, deceased, in reparation for the injury which he did to the church by burning and plundering, for which he was excommunicated!"⁹⁶

The damage may possibly explain structural changes made to the nave of the Priory church made in the late twelfth century.⁹⁷ No other reference to the episode exists, so Robert de Lestre's motives in attacking the Priory must remain obscure.⁹⁸ Given that the reign of Henry I is referred to in the past tense, the date of Albreda's charter might fall during the reign of Stephen, in which case Robert's actions may have been related to the violence of the Anarchy. Whatever the circumstances, Albreda was clearly distressed enough over her dead husband's mistreatment of the Priory and his subsequent excommunication that she felt the need to make reparation. Sadly, knightly intrusions onto monastic estates were not at all rare in the twelfth century. Launceston Priory similarly received grants from Reginald, earl of Cornwall, in recompense for destroying the Priory's tower and for other damages.⁹⁹

magnos sicut fuerunt tempore Henrici Regis pro animae meae et patris mei et matris meae et omnium antecessorum et successorum et parentum meorum salute..."

⁹⁶ Ibid. : "pro absolutione Roberti de Lestre mariti mei defuncti in restauratione damni quod fecerat eidem ecclesiae per combustionem et depredationem pro quo fuerat excommunicatus."

⁹⁷ Paul Gibbons, "Plympton Priory: A Review of the Physical Remains". Unpublished report for English Heritage, 1997, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Roger and Richard de Lestre were vassals of Richard I de Redvers who accompanied him to England in 1100 (Bearman, p. 38). Robert de Lestre, likely a son of Robert or Richard, may be the same person who appears in the Red Book of the Exchequer for 1201-2 as having held a fee in Langeforde in Devon which by that time was included in William Brewer's Honour of Bampton (*RBE*, p. 302). A William de Orvalle paid 5 marks scutage for two and a half knights' fees in Devon in 1160-1161 (*RBE*, pp. 25). In 1166 a Robert de Oreweie--which the editors of the Red Book of the Exchequer equate with Aurivalle/Aureavalle/Orvalle--held a half fee in Somerset (*RBE*, p. 231).

⁹⁹ The author of the *Gesta Stephani* stated that Reginald was a plunderer of church property and had been excommunicated by Bishop Robert I of Exeter for his crimes. (*Launceston Cartulary*, pp. xvii-xix).

Gifts from Magnates and their Vassals: Temporalia

While the spiritual possessions constituted a significant portion of the wealth of the Priory, the temporal possessions--that is, lands, rents, rights to mills, services, and the like--contributed nearly as much. In the Valor Ecclesiasticus the total net value of the *spiritualia* was reckoned at £454 7s 2.5d, while the *temporalia* were reckoned at £443 23s 5 and 5/8d. Among houses of the Augustinian canons, the proportion of *temporalia* to *spiritualia* varied greatly: Robinson found that many houses, such as Bodmin Priory and Keynsham Abbey, received more than 70% of their income from their *temporalia*, while others, such as the Welsh houses, received less than 30% of their total income from these sources.¹⁰⁰ Of the 121 Augustinian houses listed in the Valor with their incomes divided into *temporalia* and *spiritualia*, 90 had temporal incomes that exceeded the spiritual, leaving 31 for which the opposite was true.¹⁰¹ Plympton Priory, then, belonged to the minority of Augustinian houses that had been more successful (albeit slightly) in gaining churches and pensions than lands and rents.¹⁰² In the cases of both Bodmin Priory and

¹⁰⁰ Robinson, Geography, p. 275. The *temporalia* of Keynsham actually constituted 90% of its income.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. There were 33 houses for which spiritual/temporal incomes could not be determined.

¹⁰² The limitations of the Valor Ecclesiasticus should be kept in mind, however: only whole manors are listed for Plympton, whereas charter evidence and later documentation indicates that Plympton had numerous extra-manorial pieces of land, urban properties in Plymouth, and fishing rights which were not reckoned in the Valor accounting. For the purposes of the Valor, a "manor" consisted of demesne, tenements, and a court which yielded income through fines; the manors of some areas, such as the South-West, consisted almost entirely of tenements with very little demesne. See Alexander Savine, English Monasteries on the Eve of the Dissolution, Oxford Studies in Social and Legal History, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909) pp. 150-51 and Robinson, Geography, pp. 312-13. As well, in regard to *spiritualia*, R. N. Swanson has expressed concern that

Launceston Priory, the other Augustinian houses founded by Bishop William Warelwast, their *temporalia* were more valuable than their *spiritualia*.¹⁰³

Most of the temporal gifts granted to Plympton Priory in the twelfth century were parcels of land. It is difficult to assess what proportion of the Priory's eventual endowment these twelfth-century gifts represent: the erratic survival rate of Plympton's charters and the vagueness of some of those which do survive interfere with definite conclusions on this matter. However, a comparison of the Valor and the twelfth-century material does reveal that by the end of the twelfth century, Plympton Priory owned property in all the areas which would later be listed as manors in the 1535 survey. Like so many other houses of the "new orders" of the twelfth century, the bulk of the donations to the Priory seems to have occurred during the century of their introduction into England.¹⁰⁴ Later gifts, while no doubt gratefully received by the monasteries, were rarely as substantial as those given at or near the foundation of the monastery.

the figures given for parochial incomes in the *Valor* do not adequately reflect the costs of the benefices to the incumbents (R. N. Swanson, "Standards of Livings: Parochial Revenues in Pre-Reformation England," in *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill [Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991], 154-55).

¹⁰³ For Bodmin the value of *temporalia* was £217 9s 11d and the *spiritualia* £72 2s; for Launceston, £229 2s 6.5d and £159 8s 8d, respectively. The only other monastic houses in the Diocese of Exeter which had higher incomes from *spiritualia* than from *temporalia* were the Augustinian St. German's Priory and Hartland Abbey, as well as the poor alien Benedictine cell, St. Mary at Totnes. The Cistercian monasteries in the Diocese had, of course, very small incomes from *spiritualia*; the wealthiest house in the Diocese, the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine foundation, Tavistock Abbey, earned £669 12s 8.5d from its *temporalia* and only £172 6s 5d from its *spiritualia*.

¹⁰⁴ Cirencester Abbey, one of the wealthiest Augustinian houses in England, derived its income almost entirely from the endowments made in 1133 at its foundation (*Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey*, pp. xxi-xxii).

Generally, the lands granted to Plympton Priory were given in free, pure and perpetual alms (“in liberam, puram et perpetuam elemosinam”); this means that the canons held these lands by frankalmoign tenure and did not have to render secular service to the donor or his or her heirs. However, the Priory frequently owed forinsec service--or, to use the term common in the South-West, “utibannum”--to the king on these lands.¹⁰⁵ A number of times in the “Registrum” the benefactor states that their gift is quit of all service except the “utibannis” of Danegeld and murder dues,¹⁰⁶ although at least in one case the Priory received land quit of these dues as well as geld and other aids.¹⁰⁷ However, as has been mentioned, the donor typically requested that in exchange for the gift, prayers be said by the canons for him or her, their family, and their ancestors and descendants. Consequently, the canons owed “spiritual services” for these lands; indeed, “the unique quality of frankalmoin tenure was that spiritual services were expected from the recipient.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ This was not unusual: according to a ruling of 1219, forinsec (foreign) service was considered to be owed for land held by frankalmoign tenure unless stated otherwise in the charter of donation (Toby Burrows, “Monastic Benefactors in Medieval Yorkshire,” *Journal of Religious History*, 12 [1982], p. 4).

¹⁰⁶ Examples can be found in Guy de Briteville’s charter and in the grants of Mabilia de Nunant and Maurice de Pola (Bodl MS. James 23 pp. 159-160). Henry I, who had confirmed Plympton’s ownership of two hides of land quit of all dues, made further decrees instructing his men not to claim these dues from the Priory (Bodl MS. James 23 p. 152). Matilda de Pomerey, in her grant concerning the rent paid by the canons for “Halgawilla”, specified that if Danegeld, murder dues, or any other foreign service was levied on the land, it would be deducted from the rent of 4s per year. (Bodl MS James 23 p. 157).

¹⁰⁷ Bodl. MS James 23, p. 158. Robert fitz Martin confirmed his vassal Nicholas de Busey’s grant of land in “Wixtanewardi” to the Priory “quieta et absoluta ab omnibus geldis Danegeldis murdris auxiliis servitiis tam ad regem quam ad me..”

¹⁰⁸ Burrows, “Monastic benefactors,” p. 4.

In only one of the surviving twelfth-century charters is the word “manor” used in relation to a gift of land to the Priory.¹⁰⁹ Usually the donor would give either “all the land of X” or, for example, “three ferlings of land at X.” Robinson states that Augustinian manors were of two groups: those that were given in their entirety to a monastery, and those that were artificial creations of the canons, who built up such estates in a “piecemeal” fashion “over many years through gift and purchase,” renting and exchange.¹¹⁰ This latter category does seem to apply to the estates built up by Plympton Priory: parcels given in the twelfth century were scattered around Devon and Cornwall, with a concentration in Plympton and Roborough Hundreds. The manor of Plympton Grange, for example, seems to have been created from the donations of a number of different benefactors in the twelfth century. A rental made in 1408/9 revealed the extent of this scattered mode of land acquisition: the free tenants alone of Plympton Grange manor rented thirty-three holdings in more than fourteen parishes in Devon.¹¹¹ The Valor Ecclesiasticus shows that Plympton Priory had seventeen manors (including Plympton Grange) and one farm; this is certainly exceptional for an Augustinian house in the

¹⁰⁹ Bishop Robert’s letter to Roger II de Mandeville refers to the Strete property Roger had seized as a “manor” (EEAE # 46).

¹¹⁰ Robinson, Geography, pp. 290-1, 310. Robinson also points out that the older Benedictine foundations already possessed a great number of manorial units by the time the Augustinians arrived; hence the smaller number of manors available for the canons. Remarking on the “vigorous land policy” of the Cistercians, the same author concludes that “[i]t is difficult to avoid the impression that the acquisition of lands was less important to the Augustinians than to the Benedictines or Cistercians” (Robinson, Geography, p. 331).

¹¹¹ J. Stevens, “Plympton Grange”, unpublished transcript in the Plymouth Central Library, Local Studies Room, p. 5. This information is derived from BM Harley MS 4766. The parishes were generally concentrated in the South Hams district of Devon.

diocese of Exeter, where, on average, Augustinian priories held between 5 and 7.5 manors.¹¹²

The early charters of Plympton rarely specify the type of land that is being given; that is, we cannot tell from the documents as to whether the land was to be used for crop cultivation or for pastoral husbandry. In most cases charters state that the donor is giving the Priory the land ("terra") of a particular place. Without any other qualifying adjectives, this phrase might well indicate arable land. However, an examination of the location of these land grants on topographical maps of Devon and Cornwall does suggest that Plympton Priory most likely possessed both arable land--in the fertile South Hams district, the Tamar valley along the Cornish border, and the Exe, Creedy, and Yeo valleys--and pastoral land on the edges of Dartmoor. The two types of land may have been intermixed, however, as flocks of sheep and cattle may have been kept on farms of the lower levels (and grazed on Dartmoor in the summer); also, farms at an elevation of nine hundred feet up the western slopes of Dartmoor were known to have cultivated grain in the Middle Ages.¹¹³ In the High Middle Ages the Southwestern economy can be characterized as mixed agrarian, and perhaps as predominantly arable, especially in the the more fertile areas.¹¹⁴

It is possible that Plympton Priory was also the beneficiary of a trend in Devon and Cornwall at this time towards waste clearances and colonization. In the eleventh century, these counties, as shown by the Domesday Book, were some of the poorest in England:

¹¹² Robinson, Geography, p. 327.

¹¹³ John Hatcher, The Agrarian History of England, vol. 2 1042-1350 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 239.

¹¹⁴ Hatcher, Agrarian History, p. 398.

the low population was concentrated in fertile areas like the coastal region of Torbay and the Vale of Exeter, while large sections of the counties were waste land and high moorland.¹¹⁵ In the twelfth century, however, extensive wood clearances, reclamations of moor slopes, and marsh draining occurred, encouraged by large landowners who granted “small estates on the margins of their manors” to “men who appear in the records subsequently as free tenants.”¹¹⁶ The charters of Plympton contain the names of those who were tenants of the largest landowners in Devon; it does not seem too unreasonable to suspect that at least some of these men were recipients of these sorts of colonization grants, and, newly prosperous, were in the position to make gifts of land to the Priory. This seems particularly likely for those lands given to the Priory on the moor fringe at Dean, Shaugh, Meavy, Waterfall, Thrushelton, and Samford Spiney. One such example may be Pagan, son of Serlo, who gave Plympton Priory eighty acres of land at Blaxton, in Tamerton Foliot. Serlo had been a sub-tenant of Godfrey de Valletort in 1084.¹¹⁷ The land that Pagan gave was described as “inter boscum et planum,” between a wood and a clear space.¹¹⁸ A number of grants to the Priory specify that the land is given with a wood, “cum bosco”: Earl William’s confirmation charter reveals that lands in Shortridge, Tamerton Foliot, Brixton, Woodmanswell, and Ermington were all granted to the Priory

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 238-9. W.G. Hoskins calculated that in 1086 the waste land (moorland, woodland, marshes) and intermittently-cultivated land of Devon made up several hundreds of thousands of acres, not including the highest reaches of Dartmoor and Exmoor (“The Making of the Agrarian Landscape,” in *Devonshire Studies*, eds. William G. Hoskins and H. P. R. Finberg [London: Jonathan Cape, 1952], p. 318).

¹¹⁶ Hoskins, “Agrarian landscape,” pp. 318-320.

¹¹⁷ O. Reichel, “The Hundred of Plympton,” p. 252. The Valletorts at that time held the Honour of Trematon of the Count of Mortain (Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 90-91). In the *cartae baronum* of 1166, Radulfus de Valletort appears holding fifty-nine knights’ fees of the earl of Cornwall and one knight’s fee in chief (RBE pp. 259, 261).

with their woods, and that the Redvers family allowed the Priory the right to gather as much dead wood as they needed for cooking their food.¹¹⁹ Could it be, then, that Plympton played a role in the clearance and utilization of waste land and land on the moor fringe, and that benefactors gave them such land in the anticipation that they would do so?

Colonization is also indicated by the substantial number of rural churches in Devon originally built in the period c. 1150-1220.¹²⁰ In the Anglo-Saxon period, what churches there were, were probably built of wood or other, less durable materials.¹²¹ As lands were newly cleared and settlements established, so the need for constructing churches grew. Local landowners often undertook this construction but made over their churches to the monasteries when the pressure against lay ownership began to develop. Another factor, then, in the many donations of *spiritualia* to Plympton was likely this increase in the number of churches in Devon in the twelfth century as a result of the clearance of waste and moor land.¹²²

The agrarian economy of Plympton Priory was similar to that of most religious houses in its diversity. The arable land given to Plympton Priory was probably used to grow oats,

¹¹⁸ Oliver MDE #3.

¹¹⁹ "...de mortuo bosco quantum opus fuerit ad coquendum cibos ipsorum canonicorum et fratrum et hospitum..." RC, App. #1, #23, pp. 168-9.

¹²⁰ Hoskins, "Agrarian landscape," p. 321.

¹²¹ Nikolaus Pevsner pointed out that "...there is hardly any visible record of the presence of the Saxons in Devon, other than a few decorated crosses and fragments of crosses...no building or part of a building remains" (Buildings of England: South Devon [Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1952], p. 16).

¹²² Three of Plympton Priory's churches--Dean Prior, Ilsington, and Meavy--and one chapel, Sampford Spiney, were on Dartmoor. Several others, such as Ugborough, Bridestowe, Bratton, Marystow, and Thrushelton, could be considered to be on the moor fringe.

the most popular crop in the South-West due to the damp climate and poor soil, as well as wheat.¹²³ Tavistock Abbey, which owned lands close to some of Plympton's, grew wheat, rye, and oats,¹²⁴ and the earls of Devon grew barley, oats, wheat, peas, and beans on their manor at Plympton in the thirteenth century.¹²⁵ The pasture land provided for large flocks of sheep and cattle; the Devon sheep produced only a coarse, low-quality wool, however, and not much of it was sold to foreigners.¹²⁶ That Plympton Priory kept sheep is indicated by the *Inspeximus* charter of Henry II in which, under the section of gifts from Earl Richard I and his vassals, the grant of twigs from dead wood for the making of their sheepfolds ("virgas de bosco ad faciendum caulas suas") is specified.¹²⁷ Plympton Priory also received from the earls of Devon the right of pannage, or grazing their pigs, in unspecified woodland.¹²⁸ As well, Leland claimed that St. Nicholas Island (now Drake's Island) off Plymouth, had belonged to the Priory as a gift from Walter de Valletort and was the location of their rabbit warren.¹²⁹ Most English monasteries kept rabbits for the

¹²³ Hatcher, *Agrarian History*, pp. 392-95.

¹²⁴ H. P. R. Finberg, *Tavistock Abbey: A Study in the Social and Economic History of Devon* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951) chapter four, *passim*.

¹²⁵ K. Ugawa, "The Economic Development of some Devon Manors in the Thirteenth Century," *TDA* 94 (1962), pp. 635-7. Ugawa found in his study of the manors of the earls of Devon in the county that the sales of grain constituted 36% of the total manorial revenues at Plympton in the thirteenth century.

¹²⁶ Hatcher, *Agrarian History*, pp. 395-6. In 1315, the Cistercian houses of Newenham, Forde, and Buckfast, and the Premonstratensian house at Torre were trading their wool to the Florentines.

¹²⁷ Oliver, *MDE* #3. In Earl William's confirmation charter of c. 1193x1208 the twigs are granted "ad caulas pecorum suorum faciendum" (*RC*, App. 1 #23, p. 168).

¹²⁸ Oliver, *MDE* #3.

¹²⁹ Leland, *Itinerary*, vol. 1, pt. iii, p. 215. "...He gave onto Plymtoun priorie the isle of S. Nicolas *cum cuniculis* conteyning two acres of ground, or more, and lying at the mouthes of the Tamar and Plym ryvers." In 1461, Edward IV, "out of devotion to SS. Peter and Paul," granted the Priory the right of free warren in all their demesne lands and woods in Devon (*Calendar of Charter Rolls*, vol. 6, Henry VI-Henry VIII, p. 215).

fur and meat, and the rabbit warrens might be extensive, surrounded with barriers or hedges to keep out predators;¹³⁰ hence, an island was an ideal location. The earls of Devon also granted the Priory all the land next to their garden together with a marsh, a meadow, and water,¹³¹ suggesting that mixed gardening for the priory's consumption, growing of hay, and grazing of flocks occurred in or near the monastic precinct.

The "water" referred to in the confirmation seems to refer to that which flowed from a spring in Plympton to the priory via an aqueduct. Henry II's *Inspeximus* charter mentions a donation on the demesne of Earl Baldwin of a water conduit through the canons' gardens to their workshops; Earl Richard I confirmed the gift of a water conduit from Plympton castle to the priory,¹³² a distance of about 800 metres. A fragmentary charter in the "Registrum" seems to be a copy of the original grant: the grantor, probably Earl Baldwin I, states that the gift was made so that the canons might have clean water in their house for the singing of masses and other necessities.¹³³ Such a source of pure water would have been very important for a monastery situated in a town, as the Priory was; procuring "unpolluted drinking water" was generally a problem for monasteries located in

¹³⁰ S. Moorhouse, "Monastic Estates: Their Composition and Development," in The archaeology of rural monasteries, eds. Roberta Gilchrist and Harold Mytum (Oxford: BAR, 1989), pp. 65-66.

¹³¹ Oliver MDE #3. "...totam terram iuxta hortum suum cum mora et prato et aqua..."

¹³² Oliver MDE #3; RC #45, p. 91.

¹³³ RC #83, p. 123n. The fragment concludes by stating that lest anyone trouble the canons in the future about the springs and aqueduct, the donor gives them the meadow, too, "in perpetuam et omnino quietam elemosinam." Another charter extract in the same manuscript contains a confirmation by Earl William, c. 1193x1208, of various gifts by the Redvers family to the canons which includes a fuller description of the layout of the spring and conduit: "Preterea do et concedo eidem ecclesie conductum aque de fonte qui est sub cruce comitis Ricardi per pratum quod est inter eandem crucem et hortum canonicorum et per mediam viam que est iuxta eundem hortum, ut habeant in perpetuum in domo sua mundam ad missas suas cantandas etc." (RC, #83, p. 123n.)

towns, which tended to rely on water brought in “from distant springs” by conduits.¹³⁴

Recent archaeological excavations at Plympton have revealed a stone aqueduct, or raised leat, running to the Priory from the direction of the castle; this would not have been the conduit referred to in the charters, as it is dated at post-1300, but it may have replaced the earlier aqueduct.¹³⁵ The archaeologists also discovered two medieval stone-lined drains which seem to have been part of a drainage system to “collect ground water and use it to flush away effluent and other waste.”¹³⁶ Plympton Priory also had a water sluice (“exclusagium”) at Meavy; this may have been granted by a member of the de Meavy family, who had given land in the area to the Priory as well.¹³⁷

Plympton Priory also received several grants of rights of fisheries in the area. Monastic ownership of river fisheries was common in the Middle Ages: given the Benedictine prohibition against the consumption of meat—a prohibition generally adhered to until the later Middle Ages—fish was a major item of the monastic diet.¹³⁸ Charters granting rights

¹³⁴ C. J. Bond, “Water Management in the Rural Monastery,” in The Archaeology of the Rural Monastery, p. 84.

¹³⁵ Stewart Brown, “Plympton Priory Mill Site: Excavations 1988,” Plymouth City Museum (1988), pp. 9-10. Brown believes that the aqueduct was most likely a mill leat, as the direction headed south of the cloisters, towards the supposed area of the mill; he bases this partly on the fact that the leat which replaced this one in the post-medieval period conveyed stream water, which would not have provided pure drinking water as wells or springs would have done.

¹³⁶ Brown, “Plympton Priory Mill,” pp. 8-9.

¹³⁷ Oliver MDE #3; also Reichel, “Plympton Hundred,” p. 256 n.2. A confirmation of Walter de Meavy’s grants to the Priory is printed in George Oliver’s Additional Supplement to the Monasticon Diocesis Exoniensis (Exeter: A. Holdon, 1854), p. 15, #2. Walter also appears as a litigant against the Priory over land at Scobhill (MS James 23 pp. 159-160). A fragment from the same manuscript suggests that an Elias de Meavy was another benefactor to the Priory (MS James 23 p. 154).

¹³⁸ Fish could also be an important source of revenue for those who held fishing rights. For example, profits from fishing made up 22% to 28% of total manorial revenues at the

to monasteries to fish in a river might refer to the right to fish a specified length of the river by netting or angling, or it might refer to the right to erect a weir (barrier) across the river to which were attached nets or basketwork traps.¹³⁹ In addition to weirs, monasteries often owned storage buildings on the shore, rights of access, and enclosures for pack animals.¹⁴⁰ In its foundation charter, the Premonstratensian house of Torre in Devon was given the right to fish and trawl in Torbay; in 1327-8 the monks were granted the right to spread and dry their nets below a cliff belonging to a neighbouring manor.¹⁴¹

Perhaps the most generous fishery grant to Plympton Priory was from Reginald de Valletort.¹⁴² Reginald gave the Priory the right to fish in the Rivers Tamar and Lynher for the better provision of food for the canons and their guests.¹⁴³ Reginald excepted from this grant a pool "sub aula de Halton" and the pool "sub aula de Kallistoke" and the

earl of Devon's manor of Topsham, on the Exe, in the late thirteenth century (Ugawa, p. 653).

¹³⁹ C. J. Bond, "Monastic Fisheries," in Medieval Fish, Fisheries, and Fishponds in England BAR British Series vol. 182, ed. Michael Aston (Oxford: BAR, 1988), pp. 78, 84-7. Foreshore weirs, which were corrals of brushwood, were also built to trap fish in tidal waters. In the thirteenth century weirs on rivers became subject to legislation because of the depletion of the fish stocks and the taking of young fish, as well as the obstruction of navigation. In 1224-5 weirs, except those by the sea-coast, were ordered to be pulled down. This law, as well as ones punishing those who took young fish, were confirmed again throughout the 14th and 15th centuries (which would suggest they were being flouted). In the 1390s charges were laid against the abbots and priors of houses along the Severn for having weirs and taking young fish, but the charges were ultimately all dropped on technicalities.

¹⁴⁰ Moorhouse, "Monastic Estates," p. 64.

¹⁴¹ Bond, "Monastic Fisheries," p. 77.

¹⁴² There were several Valletorts of this name in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. One Reginald was a witness to a confirmation of Henry I in 1103-4 (Regesta II, #680); another Reginald lived c. 1172-1187 (Sanders, Baronies, pp. 90-91).

¹⁴³ "...ad meliorationem victus eorum et ad hospitalitatem ibidem uberius conservandam, omnem piscationem tam in Tennbria [Tamar] quam in Lyner cum aquis concurrentibus in tractibus sagenae..." (Bodl. MS James 23, p. 167). This charter is also copied in the "Black Book of Plymouth" (f. 70v), West Devon Record Office W46.

length from that pool up to the fishery of the same town.¹⁴⁴ These exceptions were likely made because of the Valletorts' own fishing activities on the river; Calstock was in the southern part of the Valletorts' Honour of Trematon, and at the end of the twelfth century Roger de Valletort made an agreement with the Abbot regarding the use of the salmon weirs which each party had built on the Tamar near Calstock.¹⁴⁵ Reginald further conceded to Plympton Priory the right to fish hake anywhere in the specified waters, as long as they reserved for him and his heirs moieties of the catches of hake and the first hauling of the seines.¹⁴⁶

Earl Richard I of Devon gave or confirmed to the Priory half the tithe of the fishery at Bickleigh on the River Plym.¹⁴⁷ Baldwin made a similar gift to Tavistock Abbey, granting the monks the tithe of all the fish caught at Buckland on the Tavy.¹⁴⁸ Plympton

¹⁴⁴ Bodl. MS James 23, p. 167: "excepta pola sub aula de Kallistoke et ab ipsa pola usque ad piscariam eiusdem villae et excepta una pola sub aula de Haltona." Calstock is on the furthest navigable stretch inland of the Tamar River, which divides Devon and Cornwall; Halton Quay is a couple of kilometres further downstream on the Tamar. Both Calstock and Halton are on the Cornwall side of the river. The "aulae" mentioned in this charter may refer to large buildings on the shore which served as landmarks.

¹⁴⁵ H. P. R. Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, pp. 161-162.

¹⁴⁶ Bodl. MS James 23, p. 167: "Concessi etiam iisdem canonicis quod possint ubique hakiare in dictis aquis et hakingis, salvis mihi et haeredibus meis medietatibus totius piscationis ad hakingam pertinentis ubi et quando servientes nostri auxilium vel consilium tam in retibus quam in hominibus praestiterint et salvo mihi et haeredibus meis primo tractu videlicet ubi sagena praedictorum canonicorum et nostra intervenerit..." Other fish caught in the Tamar were salmon, lampreys, and trout (Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, p. 164).

¹⁴⁷ Oliver MDE #3.

¹⁴⁸ Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, pp. 159-61. This gift was to cause difficulties later, after Amicia, Countess of Devon, founded a Cistercian abbey at Buckland in the thirteenth century. Buckland and Plympton also seem to have come into conflict over the Bickleigh fishery: in 1327-28 there was a dispute between the prior of Plympton and the Abbot of Buckland regarding a trespass at Bickleigh, and then a trespass at Plympton (Index of Placita de Banco preserved in the Public Record Office 1327-28, List and Index Society Publications, vol. 32, pp. 91, 94).

also received the rights of fishing in all the land of Johel de Stanhuse, whose name would suggest that his land was situated in Stonehouse, now a part of Plymouth.¹⁴⁹ This is probably the fishery referred to in another Valletort charter: Ralph, son and heir of Reginald de Valletort, gave a mill and three adjacent acres at Surepole--another area now subsumed into Plymouth, very near Stonehouse--to Plympton Priory, and at the same time granted the canons "a suitable way thereto by the corner of his garden of Sutton as anciently the fathers were accustomed to go to the fishery of the canons at Surepole."¹⁵⁰ These gifts suggest that Plympton was also involved in ocean fishing. Some of the species flourishing in these waters in the sixteenth century were, according to John Hooker, haddock, cod, hake, plaice, whiting, sole, and pilchards.¹⁵¹

Several other donations of note were made to the Priory in the twelfth century. During the reign of Henry I, Goslen Bastard gave Plympton Priory a quarry in Efford, Egg Buckland.¹⁵² This quarry no longer survives--Efford has been consumed by the suburbs of Plymouth--but historically this area has produced limestone, Roborough elvan (a granitic building stone), and slate.¹⁵³ This quarry may have been the source of the limestone used in the twelfth-century construction of the Priory: V. B. Ledger found in her excavations at

¹⁴⁹ West Devon Record Office W46, "Black Book of Plymouth," f.70v (calendared in CPMR, pp. 38-9).

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, f. 68v (calendared: CPMR, pp. 37-38). Ralph de Valletort held 59 knights' fees of the count of Mortain (Sanders, Baronies, p. 91).

¹⁵¹ Todd Gray, "Devon's Fisheries and Early-Stuart Northern New England," in The New Maritime History of Devon, ed. M. Duffy et al. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press/Conway Maritime Press, 1992), pp. 139-40.

¹⁵² Oliver MDE #3

¹⁵³ W. G. Hoskins, Devon (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972), pp. 262-64. Limestone was especially common as a building material in the Plymouth area; slate was also used for building churches, farm buildings, and boundary walls in the South Hams district.

the Priory site that the walls of the conventual church had been built mostly of local limestone.¹⁵⁴

Another type of gift worthy of comment is that of the human variety. The evidence from the Plympton charters indicates that the granting of people in donation charters was not uncommon in the region in the twelfth century. Walter Giffard gave the Priory a man named Edward Blakeman along with his sons, and Walter and his mother also granted, in addition to land at Aveton Giffard, four men.¹⁵⁵ William, earl of Devon, confirmed the grant of four men belonging to the earl's Plympton Manor.¹⁵⁶ Robert Fitz Martin included the gift of Ailric son of Samer of Calstock in a grant to the Priory.¹⁵⁷ In addition, Geoffrey de Furnell gave Ailwardus of Luvestona and his children to Plympton Priory.¹⁵⁸ Without further information in the charters, it is difficult to discern whether these people were unfree tenants, who possessed some rights, or slaves, who had none. At the time of Domesday, more than a quarter of the slaves in England could be found in the counties of Somerset, Devon, and Cornwall; within fifty years or so of Domesday the practise of slave-holding in England had virtually disappeared.¹⁵⁹ Consequently, while there is a possibility that some of these charters, especially those earlier in date, may have represented gifts of slaves, it is more likely that they indicate gifts of unfree tenants.

¹⁵⁴ V. B. Ledger, "[Note on] Plympton St. Mary," Medieval Archaeology 2 (1958), p. 190 and Medieval Archaeology 3 (1959), p. 139.

¹⁵⁵ RC, #45, p. 92.

¹⁵⁶ RC, App. 1, #23, p. 168.

¹⁵⁷ Oliver, MDE #3

¹⁵⁸ EEAE #27A. "...dedi et concessi...Ailwardum, meum hominem de Luvestona, liberum et absolutum cum toto suo catali [*sic*] et haeridibus suis pro amore dei et pro salute regis Henrici et Ricardi filii Baldewini et pro mea et meorum salute..." Geoffrey also promised that neither he nor his heirs would try to reclaim Ailward or his heirs.

A significant source of revenue for Plympton Priory came from its urban properties in Plymouth and Exeter. Other than the aforementioned charter of Ralph de Valletort in which the mill at Surepole and the three acres of land are mentioned, there are no other surviving grants to the Priory of land in Sutton Prior.¹⁶⁰ The Priory did acquire various tenements in Sutton, however, possibly through purchase. In 1254 the prior received royal permission to hold a market in Sutton and an annual fair in the town,¹⁶¹ and an inquisition into land-holdings in Sutton in 1281 revealed that the prior of Plympton, as well as having the assize of bread and ale, had £14 9s 6.5d in rents from the properties in the town.¹⁶² There is more evidence that some of the Priory's properties in Exeter were acquired through benefactions: as we have seen, the bishops of Exeter granted the Priory several tenements there in the twelfth century. As with Plymouth, it is possible that the Priory bought further tenements: a reference to such a purchase might be found in Bishop John the Chanter's confirmation of episcopal gifts to the Priory. Bishop John noted that the Priory had bought land, perhaps in Exeter, from Wimundus the smith and his heirs,

¹⁵⁹ David Pelteret, Slavery in Early Medieval England (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1985), pp. 231, 236.

¹⁶⁰ In the twelfth to fourteenth centuries the area of modern-day Plymouth consisted of Sutton Prior (the portion that belonged to Plympton Priory as a monastic borough), Sutton Vautort (the manor of the Valletort family), and the tithing of Sutton Raf. Sutton Prior was centred around the church of St. Andrew and the area near the harbour now known as The Barbican (C. Gill, Plymouth: A New History, Vol. 1 [Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971], p. 95).

¹⁶¹ CPR, Henry III vol. 4, 1247-58, p. 263.

¹⁶² In 1439 the prior yielded his rights and properties in the town in return for an annual fee farm rent of £41 from the burgesses. In 1463-64, the Priory and the town of Plymouth petitioned Parliament for permission to reduce the fee-farm rent to £29 6s 8d on account of the poverty of the borough (CPMR, pp. 10-12)

with the consent of Bishop Bartholomew in return for an annual payment of 4d.¹⁶³ A rental of the Priory's cell of Marsh Barton, near Exeter, which was made in 1421 listed Plympton's lands and tenements in the city; the total value of these properties was £23 12s 7d.¹⁶⁴ The properties were classed as tenements, shops, gardens, and open spaces; these were distributed throughout almost every parish of Exeter.¹⁶⁵ The cell at Marsh Barton may well have been established in order to administer the Exeter properties.

While a paucity of documents hampers our understanding of the extent of Plympton's land holdings and its management of them, the material surviving from the twelfth century does shed some light on the types of *temporalia* benefactors were giving the Priory and their distribution in Devon and Cornwall. The donations—including as they do grants of fertile low-lying land, moor land, fisheries, and a quarry—provide a glimpse of the agrarian landscape of twelfth-century Devon and an insight into the economic framework of Plympton Priory.

The Benefactors: Magnates and their Vassals

¹⁶³ Oliver MDE #14. A puzzling fragment referring to Wimundus exists in the "Registrum": "praeterea dedimus ecclesiae Plimton Wimundum fabrum et totam progeniem in liberam et quietam elemosinam. In carta Claritia de Vaus" (Bodl MS. James 23 p. 157). Whether Wimundus was free or not is consequently not clear. Hubert de Vaux was a vassal of the Redvers family who left England in 1149 with Duke Henry. (Bearman, p. 38)

¹⁶⁴ Oliver MDE #24. The Valor listed the value of the Exeter properties as £29 2s 5d in 1535; the Ministers' Account list the value of rents as £15 1s 5d, and the value of the site of Marsh Barton and its demesne land as £11 6s 2d (total: £26 7s 7d). The Valor lists only the Exeter rents for Marsh Barton; it is hard to reconcile the discrepancy between this figure and the one in the Ministers' Accounts.

¹⁶⁵ Oliver MDE #24.

Having considered the kinds of gifts, both temporal and spiritual, which Plympton Priory received in the twelfth century, it is time to examine in more detail the identities of the benefactors. In recent years, scholars have begun to look more closely at the patrons and benefactors and their relationships with the monasteries they founded or assisted. Such research can reveal a great deal about the reasons for a monastery's economic success or lack thereof, as well as trends in monastic patronage in a given period. We can also detect whether "networks of patronage" existed around a monastery, that is, whether a group of barons and their families and tenants co-operated in order to support a new foundation. Since benefactors frequently made grants to a number of different monasteries, investigating their patterns of donation can prevent us from making the mistake of identifying them simply as benefactors of Cistercians or Augustinians. Another question worth asking is whether benefaction patterns changed over time, and whether families which played an early role in supporting a house continued to do so.

The Augustinian canons, as a "new order" of the early twelfth century, attracted a great deal of patronage from members of court and the episcopacy, as has been mentioned in Chapter One. R. W. Southern has, on the other hand, emphasized the humbler origins of some of the founders of Augustinian houses in England.¹⁶⁶ While numerous patrons and benefactors did indeed come from less prominent families, the picture is somewhat more complicated. Dickinson pointed out that there was a chronological separation

¹⁶⁶ R. W. Southern, Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), p. 245. For Southern, the Augustinian canons were a modest order with requirements less costly than the Benedictines; hence they attracted a group of prosperous but not wealthy men and women who desired the spiritual benefits of patronage without having to pay for the expenses involved in founding a Benedictine house.

between types of benefactors: magnates were involved in founding many houses in the early twelfth century, but by mid-century the founders of new houses and the benefactors of existing ones tended to come from lower social strata.¹⁶⁷ An example of this is Cirencester Abbey, the wealthy Gloucestershire house of Augustinian canons. In contrast to the magnates who made gifts at the time of its foundation in 1133, most of its benefactors later in the twelfth century were local minor nobility with more limited resources; after the middle of the twelfth century, the Abbey had only a couple of benefactors of the magnate class, and these were not particularly generous.¹⁶⁸ This trend is not limited to the Augustinian canons: Joan Wardrop in her study of Fountains Abbey found that by c. 1210 magnates had virtually ceased to make new grants to the abbey, while the period c.1180-c.1240 saw a surge in donations from knightly families.¹⁶⁹ Wardrop also divided benefactors within families according to generations: a typical “first-generation benefactor” was generous to the monastery, while a typical “second-generation benefactor” did not make his or her own grants, but merely confirmed old ones. “Second-generation benefactors” might also witness the Abbey’s charters or act sometimes in the capacity of “protector” of the monastery, as long as such assistance did

¹⁶⁷ Dickinson, Origins, pp. 138-141.

¹⁶⁸ Cartulary of Cirencester Abbey, pp. xxii-xxiii. This shift towards benefactions from knightly families was also evident after 1160 at the Augustinian priories of Nostell and Bridlington in Yorkshire (Burrows, “Monastic Benefactors,” p. 6).

¹⁶⁹ Joan Wardrop, Fountains Abbey and its Benefactors, 1132-1300 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1987), pp. 169-70, 211-12. Wardrop classifies benefactors into three main groups: magnates, knightly families, and peasants. The first group were barons, a group characterized by the fact that they were lay tenants in chief who held their lands *per baroniam*. Knightly families held their lands simply by knight service. According to Wardrop, what really defined a magnate—and set him apart from a baron with small estates and no influence at court—was the size of his estates, access to the king and “political power and authority,” as well as a sense of family lineage.

not infringe on his or her own rights.¹⁷⁰ The stream of benefactions tended to dry up by the third and subsequent generations, as the amount of land to give away had diminished and newer orders appeared and attracted gifts.¹⁷¹

The evidence from Plympton Priory would seem to support a similar scenario. While making allowances for the only partial survival of charters from the Priory, those we do have suggest that the major grants to the Priory occurred within a few decades of its foundation in 1121. The bishops of Exeter seem not to have made any more substantial contributions to the Priory after 1155; indeed, Bishop William Warelwast, the founder, was by far the most generous of the twelfth-century bishops in his gifts to the Priory, subsequent bishops generally seeming content to confirm the earlier gifts.¹⁷² Similarly, the first two earls of Devon, Baldwin I (d. 1155) and Richard I (d. 1162), displayed interest in the Priory; the general confirmation of grants to the Priory by the earls and their vassals, issued by Earl William c.1193x1208, shows, however, that few new benefactions had been made by the Redvers family since the death of Earl Richard.¹⁷³ Nor

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 146.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 212. For challenges by heirs of benefactors who tried to reclaim lands granted by their ancestors to Plympton Priory, see Chapter Three.

¹⁷² Bishop Bartholomew (1161-1184) confirmed the gift of Bishop William of sixty shillings after the death of a cathedral canon; Bishop Robert II (1155-1160) had done the same, whereas Bishop Robert I Warelwast (1138-1155) had increased the original gift so that it totalled £4 (Oliver MDE #11). Bishop Bartholomew also confirmed the grants of lands from his three predecessors to the Priory (Oliver MDE #10) without adding anything. Bishop John the Chanter also confirmed this gift (Oliver MDE #13) and made a general confirmation (Oliver MDE #14), 1186x1188, of all previous episcopal benefactions to Plympton Priory without seeming to add anything himself. Most of the gifts in the general confirmation were from Bishop William Warelwast.

¹⁷³ RC, App. 1, #23, pp. 167-168. William de Vernon confirmed the churches of Ugborough and Ilsington with appurtenances, as well as land at "Evigcatona" with four men, and firewood for the cooking of the canons' food. It is not clear whether these items, none of which were included in the *inspeximus* charter of Henry II c.1158, were grants by

is there any record of members of the Nunant and Valletort families, holders of the Honours of Totnes and Trematon respectively, making benefactions to the Priory after the mid-twelfth century.¹⁷⁴

Another issue to be kept in mind when considering the benefactors of Plympton Priory is that only a few of them lived outside Devon and Cornwall. Important twelfth-century benefactors from outside these counties were Robert fitz Martin and his wife Matilda Peverel,¹⁷⁵ Emma, daughter of William Pont de l'Arche, the Empress Matilda's chamberlain,¹⁷⁶ and the de Reigny family of Somerset. Emma was the betrothed of Earl Richard I of Devon, and c. 1150 gave Plympton Priory land at Newton St. Cyrs; in 1179, her brother Robert Pont de l'Arche conceded this gift in exchange for five marks from the Priory so that he might repay a debt to King Henry II.¹⁷⁷ The only known land outside Devon and Cornwall which was given to the Priory was the land of Postridge, Spaxton, in Somerset. The donors were Roger de Reigny, his wife Mabilla, and their sons William, Baldwin, and Richard; the gift was confirmed by their lord, William de Curchi.¹⁷⁸ The

William, other members of the Redvers family, or their vassals. One reason for the lack of donations from the Redvers family was likely the extended period of minority after Earl Richard's death, and the early demise of both his sons; William de Vernon was his brother, and succeeded as an elderly man (Bearman, pp. 39-40).

¹⁷⁴ Sanders, *Baronies*, pp. 90-91. The last Nunant lord of Totnes died in 1206; the last Valletort in 1275; Isabella de Fortibus, the heiress of the Redvers, died in 1293.

¹⁷⁵ Oliver *MDE* #3.

¹⁷⁶ *RC*, p. 164n. William de Pont de l'Arche had been Stephen's chamberlain, but had defected to Matilda; he was sheriff of Hampshire in 1141 (*Regesta*, III, pp. xix, xxiv).

¹⁷⁷ Emma seems to have died before marrying the earl. The final concord is printed in Redvers charters, pp. 163-4; Henry II's confirmation of the agreement is Oliver *MDE* #4.

¹⁷⁸ Oliver *MDE* #5. The original gift would have been made by the 1160s, as William de Curchi's wife--Maud d'Avranches, the heiress of the Honour of Okehampton--married secondly Robert Fitz Roy, who died in 1172 (Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 69). Might these vassals of William de Curchi have been influenced in their choice of monastic house by

Priory seems not to have maintained an enduring interest in this property, however, and eventually divested itself of it.¹⁷⁹ A Devon woman who married into the Somerset nobility also concerned herself with Plympton Priory: Matilda de Pomerey seems to have been the wife of Robert I de Beauchamp, baron of Hatch Beauchamp.¹⁸⁰ The grant she made was from her own lands in Devon: "Halgawilla," which was part of her patrimony and inheritance at Woodford.¹⁸¹ She asked her son to concede this gift for the sake of her love and the love of God.¹⁸² Plympton Priory also received the gift of land in Langage,

their lord, whose in-laws, the Avenels of Okehampton, were also benefactors of Plympton Priory?

¹⁷⁹ In the thirteenth century the Priory had decided to lease out this land in Postridge to a Walter de Kentisbeare and his heirs for an annual rent of 43s 6d, payable at the cell of Marsh Barton. Walter and his heirs were allowed to "assignare, vendere, vel dare [predictam terram] cuicunque voluerint, dummodo hoc nullo modo alicui domui religionis nec in Iudaismo pignori obligare presumant." Juliana, widow of William le Bret, confirmed this lease to Joan Trevit in 1279/80 (Oliver, MDE #17). The Priory had acquired more land in Postridge by this point; the canons seem to have sold the annual rent by 1384 (Victoria County History: Somerset, ed. R. W. Dunning [London/Oxford: Institute for Historical Research/Oxford University Press, 1992], vol. 6, p. 69 and Hylle Cartulary, ed. R. W. Dunning, Somerset Record Society [Yeovil: Somerset Record Office, 1968], vol. 68, p. 46).

¹⁸⁰ A Robert I de Beauchamp appears in records in the years 1103-1113. A Robert II de Beauchamp flourished in the 1150s and was charged scutage on 17 knights' fees in 1166. Sanders, Baronies, p. 51. See also John Batten, "The Barony of Beauchamp in Somerset," Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, 36 (1890): 20-59.

¹⁸¹ The manor of Woodford was near Plympton. Matilda specified that four shillings were to be paid annually to her and her heirs for this land (Bodl MS. James 23, p. 157): "Et praeterea dedi praenominatae ecclesiae in perpetuam elemosinam et omnino quietam quartum ferlingum videlicet Halgawilla pro quattuor solidis per annum reddendis tali tenore quod in murdrum vel Denegeld vel quodlibet aliud utibannum super manerium de Wodeford evenerit de illis quattuor solidis quicquid de utibannis super predictos quattuor ferlingos evenerit acquietabitur. Et si quid de illis quattuor solidis super utibannum residuum fuerit, mihi meisque successoribus reddere. Et si utibannum tantum evenerit quod quatuor solidi non sufficiant ad illud reddendum de redditu futuri anni quantum de utibanno evenerit reddatur."

¹⁸² Bodl. MS James 23 p. 157: "Matilda de Pumeria, Roberto de Bello Campo karissimo filio suo salutem in domino. Sciatis quia ego pro salute mea et vestra et patris vestri et omnium antecessorum et successorum nostrorum dedi in elemosinam de patrimonio meo

not far from the town of Plympton; the donor was Richard Pincerna.¹⁸³ Richard's lord, who gave his consent, was Henry de Culture, a minor Somerset lord who held one knight's fee there in chief in 1166.¹⁸⁴

Other wealthy Augustinian houses of England such as Waltham and Cirencester were successful at attracting benefactors from beyond the counties in which they were situated; these were prestigious royal foundations, however, and for that reason likely attracted donors from a variety of locales. A recent study of two prosperous Augustinian priories in Yorkshire revealed an interesting discrepancy in the geographical distribution of benefactors: most of the gifts to Bridlington Priory in its early years came from the founder, Walter de Gant, and his family and tenants, and from the tenants of the neighbouring Honour of Holderness; early grants to Nostell Priory came from benefactors in the Honour in which it was founded as well as from at least fifteen different baronies.¹⁸⁵ Bridlington Priory, then, "essentially represents the pattern of a baronial

et haereditate mea de Wodeford quattuor ferlingos terrae sicut carta mea predictae ecclesiae confirmavi. Quare vos precor sicut filium meum karissimum quod hanc elemosinam pro Dei amore et meo sicut benedictionem meam vis habere praedictae ecclesiae concedas." Note the discrepancy between Matilda's donation charter and this one: in the former the land is a quarter ferling, in the latter it is four ferlings. It seems that this gift was later challenged: a fragment of court proceedings in the "Registrum" records that Robert Abbot, son of Roger Abbot, remitted the complaint against the Priory regarding land at "Halgawilla" in front of the royal justiciars (Bodl. MS. James 23 p. 161): "Praeterea remitto eis imperpetuum de me et haeridibus meis querelam quae fuit inter nos de terra de Halgawilla, sicut cyrographum inter nos testatur factum apud Exoniam coram Iusticiariis domini Regis scilicet Ricardo Archdiacono Wilton' et Ioscelino Archdiacono Cicestrensi et Hugone Bardulf et Radulfo filio Stephani et Galfrido filio Aszonis—testibus Roberto de Bellocampo et Ricardo filio Roberti milite eius, O[s]berto clerico eius. etc. In charta Roberti Abbatis filii Rogeri Abbatis."

¹⁸³ Oliver *MDE* #3. The canons had to pay Richard five shillings a year for this land.

¹⁸⁴ *RBE* vol. 2 p. 230.

¹⁸⁵ Toby Burrows, "Monastic Benefactors," p. 6. Burrows points out that Nostell "was close to a region where several fees were mixed, while Bridlington was at the boundary

foundation, in which the early endowment was produced by a co-operative effort of the whole barony".¹⁸⁶ Plympton, too, can be said to fall into the category of "baronial foundation": for, even though it was an episcopal foundation, a sizable portion of the early endowment of the Priory seems to have been the work of the local honorial barons, their families, and their vassals.

The barons of most of the honours in twelfth-century Devon participated in varying degrees in contributing to the endowment of the priory: those of Okehampton, Dartington, Barnstaple, Trematon, Totnes, and Plympton all took part. Most of the benefactions made by the laity to Plympton were connected with the last-mentioned. The Honour of Plympton, along with the Honours of Christchurch (Dorset/Hampshire) and Carisbrooke (Isle of Wight), were granted to Richard de Redvers, a supporter of Henry I, after his demonstration of loyalty during Robert, Duke of Normandy's invasion of England in 1101.¹⁸⁷ A "knight of considerable standing in Normandy," Richard de Redvers exemplified the "new men" of Henry I's reign, "promoted into the ranks of the major land-holding families in England as a reward for loyal service".¹⁸⁸ As part of the Honour of Plympton, Richard de Redvers received the manors of Plympton and Tiverton;

[of]...areas dominated by a single barony." Nostell also had the advantage of having a famous and influential prior in this period, and was dedicated to St. Oswald, whose cult was popular in the twelfth century. Both these factors seem to have resulted in gifts to the Priory.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁸⁷ Bearman, pp. 2-3. See also Bodl MS. James p. 165: Richard de Redvers "eum [Henry I] multum juverit in regno Anglorum et ducatu Normannie adversus fratrem suum Robertum Curthuse priorem natu quem apud Tenechebrai bello devicit in carcere quoad vixit tenuit."

¹⁸⁸ Bearman, p. 3. The Redvers family owned land in Normandy in N  hou (in the Cotentin) and Vernon (in the Vexin).

in both towns he built castles.¹⁸⁹ Richard and other members of his family were generous to the Benedictine Abbey of Montebourg in Normandy, which established a cell at Appuldurcombe on the Isle of Wight on land given to the Abbey by Richard de Redvers; Richard founded Loders, in Dorset, as a cell of Montebourg.¹⁹⁰ As has been pointed out above, Richard is known to have made grants to the college of secular canons at Plympton; after his death in 1107, his son Baldwin, continued to make benefactions and concessions to what was by 1121 the Augustinian Priory at Plympton.

Several charters of Baldwin de Redvers survive which establish his interest in the new foundation at Plympton: between 1121 and 1130, Baldwin restored to the Priory the church scot from Yealmpstone, Brixton, and other lands nearby,¹⁹¹ and declared that the Priory should have all the tithes in the parish of Plympton, but especially the third part, of which the Priory had been unjustly deprived.¹⁹² In the same period, Baldwin also released

¹⁸⁹ Frederick Hockey, "The House of Redvers and its Monastic Foundations," in Anglo-Norman Studies V: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1982 (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1983), ed. R. Allen Brown, p. 147. Little remains of the castle now except the motte and the bailey. The manor of Plympton which belonged to the earls of Devon should not be confused with that of the Priory, Plympton Grange. The comital manor was also referred to by the names Plympton Erle or Plympton St. Maurice.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 147-48.

¹⁹¹ RC, #13, p. 64. "...chirchsettas de Alwardestune et Brixstanestune et de aliis terris meis que in parrochia illa sunt et de illis terris nominatim que citra aquam Plime sunt". The nature of the church-scot is still not entirely clear; it seems to have a thrave (twenty-four sheaves) of wheat in some regions. It was payable at Martinmas. J. H. Round, "Church-scot in Domesday," English Historical Review 5 (1890), p. 101.

¹⁹² RC, #13, p. 64. The third part of the tithes is referred to as "that which the serfs used to have" ("quam servi habere solebant"). Reichel cites this clause as evidence that in the middle of the twelfth century the lord of the manor could "dispose of tithes as he saw fit" and that a portion was reserved for the use of the poor (Reichel, "Hundred of Plympton," p. 259). But can "the poor" be necessarily equated with these serfs?

the Priory from castle-work at Plympton,¹⁹³ and in 1133 he witnessed the charters of Bishop William and the Dean and Chapter of Exeter in which they granted a pension to the Priory on the death of each canon.¹⁹⁴ His only other known grant to the Priory, 1141x1155, is of land at “Gerstona” and next to his demesne at “Doveresduna”, as well as the tithe of his mill, and the right to present a priest to the chapel of the borough and castle.¹⁹⁵ In the same charter Baldwin affirmed that the burgesses of the town of Plympton granted to the Priory, with his assent, a payment of 3d from each of them annually.¹⁹⁶

If Baldwin was not more generous to the Priory, it ought to be kept in mind that he had other distractions: in 1136 he rebelled against King Stephen. Baldwin’s force held Exeter Castle during a long, gruelling siege, but the men who were holding Plympton Castle, “utter cowards and irresolute”, covertly surrendered to King Stephen.¹⁹⁷ Two hundred of the king’s knights showed up suddenly at Plympton, to the shock of the inhabitants, razed the castle to the ground, and wreaked havoc on Baldwin’s lands.¹⁹⁸ He subsequently fled England and became a consistently loyal follower of the Empress Matilda. He fought for

¹⁹³ RC, #14, p. 64. Baldwin made this grant and those of the previous chapter “for the sake of the soul of his father and for the remission of his sins”.

¹⁹⁴ Oliver MDE #7 and #8.

¹⁹⁵ RC, #22, pp. 72-3. A house next to the chapel was also provided for the priest.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.* “Burgenses etiam eiusdem ville de singulis domibus singulis annis tres denarios dederunt, me assentiente, manibus eorum mecum super altare missis, quos tres denarios, iusticia vestra simul cum mea reddi faciat.” This is the first mention of a borough at Plympton.

¹⁹⁷ Gesta Stephani, ed. and trans. K. R. Potter (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 35-37.

¹⁹⁸ “..[T]hey stripped bare, by frightful ravages, all Baldwin’s land, which in those districts is extensive and pleasant and rich in all good things, and returned to the king at Exeter with many thousands of sheep and cattle.” Gesta Stephani, pp. 35-37. One

her cause in Normandy and in England and, for his efforts, Matilda created him earl of Devon by 1142.¹⁹⁹

Baldwin was also involved in the patronage of a number of other monastic houses: he was considered the founder of Savigniac abbey of Quarr on the Isle of Wight and of the Cluniac priory of St. James, near Exeter;²⁰⁰ he also founded the Augustinian priory at Breamore (Hampshire) with his uncle Hugh, and was involved in the re-foundation of the secular college at Christchurch, Twynham, as a house of Augustinian canons.²⁰¹

Baldwin's vassals made generous benefactions to Quarr, and the Redvers family continued to make grants to Breamore and Christchurch.²⁰² The canons of Plympton Priory thus had a number of rivals for the attention of Baldwin and other members of the Redvers family.

While Baldwin may not personally have made extensive gifts to Plympton Priory, his vassals certainly did. As Wardrop points out in regard to Fountains Abbey, even when the magnates' grants were smaller than the knights', the role of the magnates in "setting the example"--influencing their tenants and dependents to give as they had--and confirming their vassals' grants should not be underestimated.²⁰³ Henry II's *inspeximus* charter lists

wonders how much Plympton Priory suffered from this devastation, considering that its lands and Baldwin's were intermingled in Plympton and the surrounding area.

¹⁹⁹ Bearman, pp. 7-8. He seems not to have been an active supporter after 1142.

²⁰⁰ Bearman points out that even though Earl Baldwin was asked to issue foundation charters to Quarr and St. James in the mid-1140s, both had actually been established some years earlier (Bearman, p. 9).

²⁰¹ Hockey, "House of Redvers," pp. 148-49. Baldwin also confirmed the possessions of Carisbrooke Priory on the Isle of Wight. He and his wife Adeliza were buried at Quarr Abbey.

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ Wardrop, *Fountains Abbey*, pp. 168-69.

lands and donors named in a previous charter of Henry I:²⁰⁴ from this document it is clear that those enfeoffed with lands from the Redvers' manor of Plympton played a significant role in the endowment of the Priory. The status of these earliest benefactors is sometimes difficult to ascertain: Richard de Holweia, for example, who gave a half-virgate of land in Widey, Egg Buckland, and Nigel de Plympton, who gave the land of Biri in Plympton manor,²⁰⁵ seem not to have been prominent landowners in the county. Assessing status purely on the basis of size of gift is risky, however: Robert fitz Martin and his wife Matilda Peverel granted a half-virgate of land in Bureton and the land of Swinestone of the Redvers manorial lands in Ermington to the Priory.²⁰⁶ These grants do not seem much more substantial than those given by the less-prominent Nigel and Richard, but we know that Robert fitz Martin was an important baron: he held the barony of Blagdon in Somerset and made benefactions to the abbey of Holy Trinity, Savigny, the abbey of Tiron, and the abbey of Stanley in Wiltshire.²⁰⁷ Matilda Peverel also founded the Cluniac priory of Kerswell in Devon between 1119 and 1129 and made grants to St. Nicholas

²⁰⁴ The text of this charter does not survive in its entirety; a portion exists in the "Registrum" (RC, App. 1, #2, pp. 156).

²⁰⁵ Oliver MDE #3. Richard de Holweia (Holloway) appears in the Pipe Roll for 31 Henry I regarding a claim against a member of the Giffard family for a war-horse (PR 31 Henry I, p. 157).

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.* Matilda Peverel also gave the Priory the land of Wulward Black and his son, and the land of a certain widow, in Ermington, which she gave the canons in exchange for land at Kilbury. Richard de Redvers enfeoffed Matilda Peverel with the manor of Ermington between 1100 and 1107; Peverels were lords of two manors in Devon, but tenants of the Redvers in Ermington, Kilbury, and Kingston (RC, #3, p. 157n, and Bearman, p. 38).

²⁰⁷ Sanders, English Baronies, p. 15. In 1162 Robert had five knights' fees in Somerset and five in Devon. His family is also connected with the abbey of St. Dogmaels in Wales.

Priory in Exeter.²⁰⁸ Ascelin the archdeacon, who gave the Priory a half-virgate and a half-ferling of land in Sampford Spiney, and whose house and gardens Bishop William Warelwast bought for the Priory, can be assumed to have held a more elevated position in society as well.²⁰⁹ Pagan, son of Serlo, on the other hand, while seemingly only a tenant of the Valletort and Redvers families, made the substantial grants of eighty acres at Blaxton in Tamerton Foliot and the church of Martynstowe there.²¹⁰

After the time of Henry I, benefactions continued to flow to the Priory from the Redvers' estates. Most of these gifts appear in Henry II's inspeximus charter and in subsequent confirmations of the Redvers family. The accession of Henry II in 1154 was shortly followed by the death of Baldwin de Redvers, who was succeeded by his son, and sometime sheriff of Devon, Earl Richard I.²¹¹ Earl Richard I continued to involve himself in the Priory's interests. For example, when Geoffrey, the second prior, approached him some time between 1155 and 1160 to assert that the men of the Priory's lands should not have to pay market dues to the earl, Richard I agreed that the prior had established his case and confirmed the exemption.²¹² The extent to which Earl Richard was personally

²⁰⁸ C. Holdsworth, "From 1050 to 1307," in Unity and Variety: A History of the Church in Devon and Cornwall, ed. N. Orme (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1991), pp. 40-41; "Charters in the Cartulary of St. Nicholas Priory, at Exeter," in Collectanea topographica et genealogica, vol. 1 (London: J. B. Nichols, 1834), p. 64.

²⁰⁹ Oliver MDE #3. A virgate varied between fifteen and sixty acres; a ferling was a quarter-virgate and in Devon usually ranged between fifteen and thirty-two acres. (Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, p. 39)

²¹⁰ Oliver MDE #3.

²¹¹ Bearman, pp. 11-12. Richard lost his position as sheriff of Devon in 1157/58, and his confirmation as earl of Devon was not automatic. Bearman interprets these royal snubs as evidence of Henry II's desire to limit baronial autonomy in the county; certainly Earl Richard was not a nationally-prominent magnate as his father had been, nor did he receive much royal favour.

²¹² RC, #45, p. 92.

generous in regards to benefactions is unclear, however, given that Henry II's insipid charter does not clearly distinguish between grants made by Earl Richard I himself or confirmations of grants made by his vassals. An examination of all of Earl Richard I's surviving charters concerning monasteries reveals that in general he made very few original gifts during the time he was earl; rather, most of his charters are confirmations of previous gifts from his family or of grants from tenants.²¹³ The importance of these confirmations should not be underestimated, however: any gift from a vassal was dependent on the earl's support and consent, and was theoretically rendered the more secure when the earl endorsed in a confirmation charter. An example of how this worked is the fragment from Earl Richard's general confirmation charter for Plympton from the "Registrum": two vassals, Walter Giffard and Eustace of "Alfemestona" petitioned the earl to allow them to grant the service of Alfemestona to Plympton Priory; the earl allowed this, but reserved for himself the service of one knight, which he was owed in scutage.²¹⁴ Earl Richard I promised that if anything were lacking from Walter Giffard's fee or Eustace's fee, he would not seize it from this service granted to the Priory.²¹⁵ The Giffard and Alfemestona families made a number of other benefactions to Plympton

²¹³ *RC, passim*. Earl Richard I issued three confirmation charters to Montebourg Abbey, two to Savigny and its daughter-house Quarr Abbey, two to Christchurch Priory, one to Plympton Priory, one to the Knights Hospitallers, and one to St. James Priory at Exeter. Of the charters which record his original grants, three were to Christchurch (one was at the request of a tenant, one was an exchange) and two were to Quarr.

²¹⁴ *RC*, #45, pp. 91-92. "...servicium de Alfemestona concessu et petitione Walteri Giffard et ipsius Eustachii, salvo meo servicio scilicet unius militis per denarios..."

"Alfemestona" could be either Yealmpstone near Plympton (*PN:D*, p. 254) or Train in Wembury (*DB: D*, ii, 35, 27).

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* "...si aliquod servicium defecerit de feudo Walteri Giffard sive feudo predicti Eustachii, precipio et concedo quod nunquam namus capiatur pro nullo defectu in Alfemestona nisi pro defectu predictae Alfemestona..."

Priory: Walter gave the canons Edwin Blakeman and his sons, and Walter and his mother jointly granted Combe and Tetwell in Aveton Giffard²¹⁶; he also donated land at Lamerton between c.1129 and 1141.²¹⁷ Hugh of Alfemestona granted a half-ferling of land in Alfemestona, and his son Eustace also gave land and a wood in the manor of Ermington.²¹⁸

Other benefactors made grants from their own lands as well as from the estates they held of the Redvers family: Geoffrey de Furnells, sheriff of Devon and Cornwall 1128-1130,²¹⁹ held land in East Devon in chief from Henry I, but held other lands from the Honour of Plympton.²²⁰ Earl William de Vernon confirmed Geoffrey and his son Alan's grant of "Lamora" in the Redvers manor of Cullompton to the Priory²²¹; Geoffrey also

²¹⁶ RC #45, pp. 91-92.

²¹⁷ RC App. II #3, pp. 178-179. These charter fragments concern the services owed by the Priory for the land: they owed no geld or forinsec service "nisi quando milites de feudo domini Baldewini hoc faciunt", and they owed no service to Giffard or his heirs, although the prior conceded "annuatim unam parcariam aratorum [plough-service] in hieme et unam parcariam messorum [harvest-service] in autumpno de suis tenentibus". Another charter fragment directly preceding this in the "Registrum" also pertains to services and dues at Lamerton: "cum omnibus pertinentiis suis liberas et quietas ab omni consuetudine et exactione donis et auxiliis placitis et querelis et araturis et omnimodis occasionibus et servitiis saecularibus tam ad me quam ad meos haeredes et successores pertinentibus pro tertia parte servitii unius militis et pro utibanis tantummodo quantum pertinent ad tertiam partem unius militis de feudo domini comitis. Nec ista praedicta terra quam ecclesia de Plimton in manerio de Lamertona habet debet unquam cum hominibus eiusdem manerii geldare, vel consuetudinem facere excepto murthero et danegeldo nisi cum militibus de feudo domini mei comitis. In carta Walteri Giffardi." (Bodl. MS. James 23, pp. 156-57). Lamerton is near Tavistock. The Giffard family also gave land in Lamerton to Tavistock Abbey and land to Launceston Priory (RC, App. 2, #12 and #13, pp. 184-85).

²¹⁸ Oliver MDE #3 and RC, App. I #23, pp. 167-9.

²¹⁹ Pipe Roll of 31 Henry I. Michaelmas 1130 (London: HMSO, 1929), p. 152.

²²⁰ Bearman, p.38. Geoffrey seems to have been a regular member of Earl Baldwin's entourage; he acted as witness to ten of Baldwin's charters.

²²¹ RC, App. I, pp. 167-9.

gave Prior Geoffrey his man Ailwardus with his goods and heirs,²²² while his son Alan granted his land at Sideham and Worvagat.²²³ Another baron who is known to have been associated with Earl Baldwin was Stephen de Mandeville, lord of the Honour of Erlstoke in Somerset and member of Baldwin's entourage when he was in exile in Normandy during the Anarchy.²²⁴ Stephen also held Blackawton and Stokenham in Devon of Earl Baldwin and seems to have given Blackawton church to Plympton Priory.²²⁵ Stephen's son, Roger II, turned out to be a thorn in Plympton Priory's side: Stephen had given Plympton Priory the manor of Strete in the presence of Bishop William Warelwast, the chapter of Exeter, and Robert Warelwast (later bishop). Roger took back the manor, and incurred the wrath of Bishop Robert who, in a mandate of 1154x1155, advised him to return it "ne oporteat nos iuxta praeceptum domini papae ecclesiasticum iustitiam in vos exercere."²²⁶ This was to no avail: Strete manor eventually found its way into the ownership of Torre Abbey.²²⁷

²²² EEAE #27A..

²²³ Bodl. MS James 23, p. 161: "Dedi ecclesiae sanctorum Apostolorum etc. terram de Sidenham et de Worvagat quantam ibi habui excepta terra illa Willielmi de Codrevil quam de me tenet libere pro Regio servitio in carta Alani de Furnellis." Alan also made a grant to St. Nicholas Priory in Exeter, for the sake of his soul and that of his lords, Baldwin and Richard (RC, App. 2, #16, pp. 188-89). The *cartae baronum* reveal that Alan held knights' fees from the bishop of Exeter, from Robert fitz Roy (married to the heiress of Okehampton), and from William de Tracy (RBE, pp. 248, 253, 254).

²²⁴ Bearman, p. 38. Stephen's father, Roger I, and Roger I's brother Geoffrey had been Norman vassals of Richard I de Redvers who accompanied him to England. Roger I was rewarded with the Honour of Erlstoke, but also held two manors in Devon; Geoffrey seems to have received the Honour of Marshwood in Dorset from Henry I (Sanders, Baronies, pp. 42, 64)

²²⁵ Ibid. In Oliver MDE #3, the church of Blackawton is listed as a benefaction to the Priory, which Roger son of Stephen de Mandeville confirmed and conceded. This seems to suggest that his father made the original donation.

²²⁶ EEAE #46.

²²⁷ Deryck Seymour, Torre Abbey (Exeter: James Townsend, 1977), pp. 219-229

It seems that after the deaths of Earl Baldwin, the baronial network of patronage began to loosen and fray as the heirs of the original benefactors began to show less commitment to, or interest in, Plympton Priory. Bearman notes that in Earl Richard I's time, 1155-1162, West Country influence waned amongst the household of the earl of Devon as the Redvers family began to consider Carisbrooke Castle on the Isle of Wight its residence of choice.²²⁸ As the orientation of the earldom came to centre around south-central England rather than Devon, it is no surprise that the houses in Devon formerly patronized by the Redvers family received less of the family's attention than those in Dorset and Hampshire. This change is reflected in the charters of Earl Baldwin II (1162-1188) and Earl Richard II (1188-1191): because of their short terms as heads of the family--Earl Baldwin succeeded as a minor and only came of age in 1179²²⁹--it is not surprising that numerically their grants to monasteries should have been fewer. Earl Baldwin II did issue confirmation charters to Launceston Priory in Cornwall and St. James Priory at Exeter, but Christchurch Priory received two original grants as well as two confirmations from him.²³⁰ Interestingly, all of Earl Richard II's surviving monastic charters recorded original gifts, and all were made for the sake of his brother's (Earl Baldwin II's) soul.²³¹ The uncle of Earl Richard II, William de Vernon, succeeded him and continued the pattern of patronage which had been evolving through the course of the

²²⁸ Bearman, p. 39.

²²⁹ Ibid., p. 12. Because Earl Baldwin II was a minor in 1166, no *carta baronum* was made listing the knights enfeoffed on his land during the survey ordered by Henry II; hence our knowledge of which vassals held which lands in the Honour of Plympton is somewhat limited for the mid-twelfth century (Bearman, p. 18).

²³⁰ *RC, passim*. Earl Baldwin also made one original grant each to Launceston Priory and to St. James Priory.

²³¹ Ibid. These grants were to Quarr, Breamore, Montebourg, and St. James.

century: the majority of his charters, both confirmations and original gifts, were made to Christchurch Priory and Quarr Abbey, although he did issue a couple of confirmation charters to Plympton Priory.²³² Without the initiative of Earl Baldwin I in encouraging benefactions to the new Augustinian house in the Honour of Plympton, it seems that benefactions eventually slowed to a trickle from this circle, who instead focused their attentions on houses their family had founded.

While the earls of Devon, their vassals, and members of their household contributed a great deal to the establishment of Plympton Priory's wealth in the mid-twelfth century, the lords of the Honour of Totnes and their tenants also played a significant role in this process. By 1123, Guy (or Wido) de Nunant (or Nonant) had inherited this honour from his father, Roger I, who received it from William II.²³³ Guy is not known to have made any personal gifts to Plympton Priory, but he allowed his tenants Hugh de Waleford, Fulk fitz Ansger and his wife Adeliza, and Roger de Pole and his brother Pomeroy to make benefactions.²³⁴ Fulk and his wife, who had also given the priory the church of Marystow, granted the land of East Sherford in Brixton by 1135, and between 1138 and 1141 granted the land of West Sherford, a deed which was confirmed by Guy--with his son Roger's

²³² Ibid. The charters of William de Vernon also record gifts and confirmations to Montebourg, Carisbrooke and Lyre, the Knights Templar, and Breamore. His sister, Hawise II, was a benefactor of Quarr, Christchurch, Hartland Abbey in Devon, and the Knights Hospitallers. Margery de Vernon, William de Vernon's first cousin once removed, issued two charters each to Lyre and to Christchurch.

²³³ Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 89. Roger I founded the small Benedictine priory at Totnes as a dependency of SS. Sergius and Bacchus Abbey in Angers.

²³⁴ Oliver *MDE* #3.

consent—as well as by Bishop Robert I of Exeter, at the Nunants' request.²³⁵ Guy de Nunant's wife Mabilia also granted the Priory a "little estate" (*terula*) at "Scobbahill."²³⁶

Roger II de Nunant, who succeeded his father as lord of Totnes by 1141 and died c.1177,²³⁷ seemingly only personally gave Plympton Priory the land of Britsworthy in Meavy, but his charters reveal a keen interest in protecting the Priory's rights to lands granted by his tenants. For example, when Walter de Meavy challenged the Priory's right to "Scobbahill" before the royal justiciars at the court in Totnes in 1168-69, Roger attested to the fact that he had confirmed his mother's gift.²³⁸ Walter claimed that the land was his by hereditary right, but was not able to produce any evidence that he had ever had seisin. The canons' response was that the land had been given them by Mabilia, Roger's mother; Roger had confirmed this gift, and many witnesses were able to assert the truth of the canons' case. Roger even offered to prove by his body, or by the body of one of his knights, that Walter had no right to the land.²³⁹ This was not necessary, as the justiciar William Bubrun found in favour of Plympton Priory; Roger's sons Guy, Henry, and

²³⁵ EEAE #41. The manor of Sherford was worth £28 4s 1.25d in 1535. A Robert fitz Fulk gave the Priory, by c. 1158, "Hordruneland", which seems to have been a part of the Honour of Totnes. Reichel contends that "Hordruneland" must correspond to the Priory's land later known as Canonbarn or Canbarn ("Hundred of Plympton," p. 256).

²³⁶ English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I, pp. 487-88, #452. The account of her gift states that "...Mabilia hanc praefatam terulam totam tempore Henrici Regis senioris multis annis libere et quiete tenuit sicut propriam suam possessionem et eo anno toto quo idem Rex Henricus obiit et annis aliquot post eius obitum postea quando voluit pro salute animae suae et animarum ad se pertinentium hanc terram ecclesiae Plimtoniae in quietam elemosinam et liberam ab omni servitio terreno et consuetudine praeter danegeld et mурdro pro Deo [donare]." "Scobbahill" is in Charlton parish, Coleridge Hundred.

²³⁷ Sanders, Baronies, p. 89.

²³⁸ English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I, pp. 487-88, #452.

²³⁹ Ibid. "Et ego huic responsioni superaddidi quod paratus eram probare per corpus meum, vel per unum de militibus meis quod verum erat hoc responsum et quod Walterus in hac terra saepe nominata nihil unquam recti habuit vel habere debuit."

Baldwin conceded their grandmother's gift and their father's confirmation, and Roger sent a notification of the proceedings to Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter.²⁴⁰

This was not the only instance when Roger de Nunant notified bishops of Exeter, the patrons of Plympton Priory, of his endorsement of gifts to the canons. The same Guy de Buckland who witnessed the previous notification also granted Plympton the church of St. Edward at Egg Buckland, and Roger dutifully notified Bartholomew and the chapter of Exeter Cathedral of his concession of his knight's gift.²⁴¹ Another notification demonstrates how the monastic house could be the initiator of this process: although Bishop Robert I and Guy de Nunant (with his heir Roger's consent) had both confirmed the gift of Fulk and Adeliza of West Sherford, Prior Geoffrey requested that Roger, after he had succeeded his father, concede once again what he had previously conceded in the presence of the canons.²⁴² As Robert de Nunant later reported to Bishop Robert II, he did so and, at the same time, confirmed the Priory's possession of whatever else they had from his fees. He and his mother Mabilia signified their consent by placing a bough of laurel on the altar, presumably of the conventual church, on the Feast of St. Cuthbert.²⁴³

²⁴⁰ Ibid. Witnesses to Roger's notifications were his steward, Richard Babran, William Fitz Stephen, Hugh de Caravilla, Guy de Buckland, and Guy's brother Stephen the priest. Hugh and Guy both held fees from Roger de Nunant (*RBE*, pp. 257-58).

²⁴¹ Ibid. The charter fragment also implies in the phrase "et quicquid Wido ecclesie Plimton pro salute sua et suorum, et nostra, in elemosynam donavit in feudo quod de me tenet..." that Guy made other donations to the priory.

²⁴² *EEAE* #41n. The date of this document would seem to be 1155 x 1160.

²⁴³ Ibid. Two witnesses of this charter were Guy and Robert de Briteville. The "Registrum" also contains a fragmentary charter involving a grant of land to the Priory from Guy de Briteville; it is addressed to Roger de Nunant and Bishop Bartholomew (MS James 23 p. 160). The *cartae baronum* for Totnes mention a widow of Briteville as holding five knights' fees in 1166 (*RBE*, p. 258). Regarding the bough of laurel, Galbraith cites a charter in which a quit-claim of land is made "per unum ramum arboris" ("Monastic Foundation Charters," p. 211).

In another notification, to either Bishop Robert I or Bishop Robert II, Roger de Nunant informed the reader that his vassal Maurice de Pola requested him to issue a confirmation of his gift of land at Shaugh to the priory.²⁴⁴ Roger also took the opportunity to advise Maurice and his heirs not to exact any of the services from the Priory for this land from which it had been exempted, nor to disturb the canons in any way.²⁴⁵

Another benefactor of note was Walter de Clavile, lord of Burlescombe in East Devon near the Devon-Somerset border. By 1158, he had granted the churches of Burlescombe in Devon and East Morden in Dorset, as well as the mill of Burlescombe and the lands of Farway and Northwood.²⁴⁶ Although these gifts are included in the *inspeximus* charter for Plympton, they were transferred to the Priory of Canonsleigh when it was founded c.1160, and Walter de Clavile was considered that house's founder. The confirmation charter Walter obtained from his lord, William, earl of Gloucester, states that the recipients were "the church of Leghe...and the canons serving Christ there according to

²⁴⁴ Bodl MS. James 23 p. 160: "Ego autem petitione praedicti Mauriti eandem terram cum eisdem libertatibus praenominatae ecclesiae concessi..." Maurice de Pola held six knights' fees from Roger in 1166 (RBE, p. 258).

²⁴⁵ Bodl MS. James 23 p. 160. Maurice granted the land "...liberam et quietam ab omni servitio ad militiam pertinente et donis et auxiliis et angariis et occasionibus et consuetudinibus et exactionibus et omnimodis servitiis excepto murdro et denegeldo..." Roger declares that "...per cartam meam sigillo meo munitam confirmavi praecipiendo ne Mauritius vel eius haeredes vel aliquis suorum de praedicta terra aliquid exigat nisi murdrum et denegeldum, vel vexare praesumat." Maurice de Pola seems to have also granted the Priory land at "Eadwirdi": "Ita quod nihil reddat nisi murdrum et denegeld et assisam si per Regem facta fuerit in comitatu. In carta Mauricii de Pola pro terra de Eadwirdi." (Bodl. MS James 23, p. 161).

²⁴⁶ Oliver MDE #3. Walter also notified Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter of his gifts up to that point (1161x1177): see Cartulary of Canonsleigh Abbey (Harleian MS no. 3660): A Calendar, ed. Vera M. C. London (Torquay: Devonshire Press, 1965), #12. Walter de Clavile was also a benefactor of St. Nicholas Priory in Exeter ("Charters in the Cartulary of St. Nicholas Priory," in Collectanea topographica et genealogica, p. 187).

the rule of Plympton.”²⁴⁷ It would seem that Leigh was for a time either a cell of Plympton Priory or a daughter-house. The odd reference to the “rule of Plympton” suggests that the notion of the Augustinian canons as an order had not yet completely coalesced, and that mother house-daughter house filiation was seen to be significant and worthy of note. Vera London suggested that Leigh was established as a daughter-house to which could be sent canons who were involved in an election dispute at Plympton Priory in 1160-61.²⁴⁸ While it does seem that there was discontent over the choice of successor to Prior Geoffrey, who died in 1160, there is no substantial evidence to indicate that this was connected with the creation of Leigh.²⁴⁹

Early in the next century tensions arose between the two houses, resulting in an agreement being struck in 1216 between Leigh (by then known as Canonsleigh Priory) and Plympton regarding the rights of the latter regarding the former.²⁵⁰ Measures set out

²⁴⁷ Earldom of Gloucester Charters, ed. Robert B. Patterson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) #44, p. 59. Henry II also issued a confirmation of Walter de Clavile’s gifts to Leigh (Cartulary of Canonsleigh Abbey, #14).

²⁴⁸ Cartulary of Canonsleigh Abbey, p. x, n.5.

²⁴⁹ Morey, Bartholomew of Exeter, pp. 10-11. Morey cites a letter issued to an unnamed religious house in the diocese during the vacancy following Bishop Robert II’s death in 1160. The canons were told to obey one Richard as their superior until there was a new bishop at Exeter who could sanction an election at the priory. “The last prior, when dying, had suggested Richard as his successor, but the archbishop had been informed by Richard de Redvers, earl of Devon, and Alan de Furnell, that dissensions had broken out in the community through the existence of an opposition party headed by a certain Peter of Taunton and his brother William.” The archbishop ordered the malcontents to be punished “according to the canonical sanctions” and the canons to obey Richard as their prior. Morey’s suggestion that the priory mentioned is Plympton accords with the timing of Prior Geoffrey’s death, the fact that he was succeeded by Richard Pilot, and with the involvement of Earl Richard and Alan de Furnell, two known benefactors of the Priory.

²⁵⁰ The prior of Plympton Priory was allowed to be present, along with the bishop of Exeter, at the election of the Prior of Canonsleigh; if the canons of the latter did not choose one of their own canons for the position, they were to turn next to Plympton Priory before seeking a prior from another Augustinian house. It was the responsibility of

in the composition to ensure the proper discipline of the Canonsleigh canons seem to have been ineffectual, however: in the thirteenth century the priory slid into decline, and in 1284 the seven remaining canons were evicted. Canonsleigh was refounded by Matilda, Countess of Gloucester and Hertford, as a house of Augustinian canonesses, and the lands and churches given by Walter de Claville were transferred to the new community.²⁵¹

As this chapter has shown, Plympton Priory attracted the support of a cross-section of the landed groups in Devon society. The founder of the priory, Bishop William Warelwast, understood the need of a generous endowment for a new monastic house, and subsequent twelfth-century bishops of Exeter displayed, to varying degrees, an interest in assisting his foundation. The involvement of the bishops of Exeter influenced other clerics in the diocese, such as Robert Fitz Gille, to make benefactions; the dean and chapter of Exeter Cathedral also demonstrated a willingness to confirm the episcopal donations. And yet, despite the fact that Plympton Priory was an episcopal foundation, the striking impression gained from the charter evidence is that the barony of Devon and the baronial tenants were active participants in the creation of a sizeable endowment for Plympton. Whether they were motivated by an interest in this new order, the bringing of new lands under cultivation, or the salvation of their souls and the souls of their loved ones, these lay benefactors indicated a commitment to the support of the Priory in the first

the Prior of Canonsleigh to discipline the canons of his house and to "check their excesses"; however, if these excesses were on such a scale that the Prior of Canonsleigh could not correct them, the responsibility fell to the Prior of Plympton. Through this composition "all the lawsuits which earlier sprang up betw. them have been laid to rest, and all the charges & discords of this kind set aside" (Reg. Bronescombe, ed. O. Robinson, #276).

few decades after its foundation. Without their donations of churches, pensions, lands, and fisheries, Plympton Priory would never have become as wealthy as it did. The next chapter, however, will investigate the troubles Plympton had with the heirs of these benefactors, who were often less pleased with the fact of their ancestors' generosity.

²⁵¹ Cartulary of Canonsleigh Abbey, pp. ix-xi.

Chapter Three: *Managing the Inheritance: Gains, Losses, and Challenges in the Twelfth, Thirteenth, and Fourteenth Centuries*

The previous chapter revealed that Plympton Priory, like many other religious houses founded in England in the twelfth century, was dependent on the goodwill and generosity of a network of patrons and benefactors for the creation of a sizable endowment. This chapter will investigate how, after the initial wave of donations in the decades after the foundation of the Priory in 1121, these relations endured or changed over time. For, while the majority of heirs of the original benefactors made no challenges to the gifts made by their predecessors, some did, and engaged Plympton Priory in court cases to determine rightful ownership. We shall see how Plympton Priory reacted to such challenges and asserted its claims to its inheritance. Another crucial factor in the Priory's management of these disputes was the support of its patrons, the bishops of Exeter. This chapter will explore the role of the bishops in defending the Priory when members of the laity took Plympton to court, and will discuss their continued interest in this episcopal foundation. That relations between Priory and bishop were not always amicable will be revealed in a discussion of Plympton Priory's conflicts with Bishop Walter Bronescombe.

Plympton Priory was hardly alone in enduring challenges to its rights; indeed, property disputes and court cases were common occurrences at medieval religious houses. Very often, the lay disputants were heirs of the original donors or patrons. Brian Golding, in his recent work on the Gilbertine order, has noted that "attempts to recover advowsons alienated in the

twelfth century were particularly common in the following century as either the heirs of the donor or their lords tried to regain control of “their” churches.”¹ An examination of the early charters of Waltham Abbey is a perfect example of this tendency: in the thirteenth century, Waltham was involved in disputes with descendants of donors who made claims to the advowsons of Croxby, Caterham, and Lambourne churches.² In her study of Lanthony by Gloucester, Ann Geddes found that “while disputes undoubtedly arose from strained relations, it is significant that they rarely emerge except among parties with close ties or coincident interests.”³ Occasionally religious houses had the misfortune of having their patronage fall into the hands of a descendant of their founder who was particularly litigious--as the Cistercian Quarr Abbey had reason to know in its dealings with its patroness, Isabella de Fortibus, Countess of Albemarle, during a lengthy dispute in the late thirteenth century.⁴

The documents available tend to give a limited picture of the history of Plympton Priory in this period. They record the disputes or conveyances that found their ways into the Curia Regis Rolls or the Feet of Fines, but they unfortunately do not tell us much about the positive and uneventful relationships between the Priory and descendants of lay benefactors. Of necessity, this chapter will discuss primarily conflicts in which Plympton Priory was engaged, but one must keep in mind that calmness and peace may well have been just as characteristic of the relations of the Priory with other individuals and groups at this time.

¹ Brian Golding, Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertine Order, c. 1130-c. 1300 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 367.

² Early Charters of the Augustinian Canons of Waltham Abbey, Essex, pp. xl, xli, xliii.

³ Ann M. Geddes, “The Priory of Lanthony by Gloucester: an Augustinian House in an English Town, 1136-1401” (Ph. D. Diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1997), p. 116.

Disputed Advowsons and Rights to Spiritualia

Before beginning an examination of one of the most common types of disputes in which Plympton Priory was involved, it will be helpful to consider the development of the legal context of advowson cases. The judicial venue for the hearing of cases concerning advowsons was one of the areas of contention between Henry II and Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, in their dispute over the jurisdictions of church and state. Indeed, the first clause of the Constitutions of Clarendon of 1164 dealt with this matter. Henry II declared that it had been a custom of the realm for disputes concerning the advowsons of churches—even if these disputes involved members of the clergy—to be settled in the royal court.⁵ The origins of the conflict over this issue lie again in the Gregorian Reform. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the Reformers encouraged lay owners of churches to renounce their possession of them. However, the Church continued to tolerate the retention of the right of presentation (the advowson) by lay patrons of churches. For Henry II the difficulty was not the increasing hostility towards lay control of churches, but rather the Church's claim that cases involving advowsons should be heard in ecclesiastical rather than royal courts.⁶ Henry's view was that suits regarding benefices concerned "questions of real property", and should be tried in the Curia Regis, whereas the view of the Church was that they concerned the cure of souls, and hence ought to be tried in ecclesiastical courts.⁷ Pope Alexander III maintained this point of view in the decretal *Quanto te*, and this is the position to which the papacy continued to

⁴ Stanley Frederick Hockey, Quarr Abbey and its Lands, 1132-1631 (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1970), pp. 103-113. Isabella de Fortibus was the last of the Redvers family.

⁵ "The Constitutions of Clarendon," English Historical Documents, 1042-1189, ed. David C. Douglas, George W. Greenaway (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953) 1st ed., vol. 2, p. 719.

⁶ W. L. Warren, Henry II (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), p. 543.

adhere. However, in 1261, the Council of Lambeth conceded that cases of advowson were still being held in lay courts and that the Church had had no success in altering this practice.⁸

The Tractatus de legibus et consuetudinibus regni angliae of “Glanvill”, written probably between 1187 and 1189,⁹ recorded twelfth-century developments in the English common law, including new procedures for dealing with cases of disputed advowsons. “Glanvill” distinguished between two types of pleas concerning advowsons: those started when the church was vacant, and those started when the benefice was occupied.¹⁰ In the former case, when the plaintiff was, technically speaking, seeking the possession, or seisin, of the right of presentation, the hearing called to settle the matter was referred to as the “assize of darrein presentment.” The plaintiff, if successful in proving at this assize that he was the last person to have made a presentation, would recover seisin and present an incumbent to the vacant church.¹¹ If the church were not vacant, a plaintiff would seek the writ *Precipe*; the question of determining who made the last presentation might still have to be resolved, but the royal writ would order the withholder of the church to return it to the plaintiff. If he did not do so, the writ allowed for the summoning of the royal court to deal with the matter.¹² The advantage of the assize of darrein presentment was that it “[was] quicker than the *Precipe*, and serve[d] to

⁷ “Constitutions of Clarendon,” p. 719n.

⁸ C.R. Cheney, From Becket to Langton: English Church Government 1170-1213 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1956), pp. 109-110.

⁹ The Treatise on the Laws and Customs of the Realm of England commonly called Glanvill, ed. G. D. G. Hall (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965), p. xi.

¹⁰ Glanvill, IV, 1, p. 43.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

get a presentee into the vacant church before the bishop [became] entitled, after the lapse of three months, to present.”¹³

The following cases of disputed advowsons involving Plympton Priory demonstrate the variety of approaches used by either the Priory or rival claimants. The jurisdiction of the royal courts seems to have been accepted by both the laity and the canons, but the latter also seem not to have been reluctant to enlist the assistance of their patrons, the bishops of Exeter, when required.

St. Andrew's, Sutton

The first evidence we have of a challenge to Plympton Priory's right to a church is from the decade after its foundation as an Augustinian house. Reginald de Valletort, who may have been the donor of the fisheries to Plympton, challenged the Priory's rights to the church of St. Andrew's at Sutton. His reasons for doing so are rather unclear, given that Prior Geoffrey had presented Reginald's bastard son by the daughter of Dunprust, hereditary priest of St. Andrew's, to the vicarage of the church c.1128.¹⁴ Bishop William Warelwast, recounting the history of the dispute, said that he had summoned the two parties, Reginald and the canons, before him and that they had gathered together old men in order to establish their cases. Two older men, Leofric of Chaddlewood and Wulfmaer of Coleford, swore on the gospels that they had heard from elders and knew themselves that before the Normans conquered England St. Andrew's belonged to the church of Plympton. They also swore that the canons of Plympton held St. Andrew's, along with its chapels and all its appurtenances, as their own possession

¹³ Hall, *Glanvill*, p. 183. This episcopal right had been declared in canon 17 of the Third Lateran Council of 1179.

until the time when the king gave Sutton to Reginald de Valletort.¹⁵ It was decreed that the canons of Plympton had possessed the church “perpetually in peace”; Bishop William endorsed this judgement c.1137 and threatened anyone who ignored it with anathema.¹⁶

Thomas, the vicar of St. Andrew’s and Reginald’s son, gave the key of the church back to Prior John of Plympton (1169x1176) as he was dying.¹⁷ Not all members of the Valletort family were content to give up their rights to St. Andrew’s, however: probably in 1172 or 1173,¹⁸ Sir Johel de Valletort began proceedings in the name of his nephew,¹⁹ who was in his custody, to retrieve the church of St. Andrew’s. According to Bartholomew, bishop of Exeter (1161x1184), Johel had injuriously vexed the canons concerning the church of Sutton, and the matter had been brought before the royal justiciars, Richard de Luci, Geoffrey Ridel, archdeacon of Canterbury, and Richard of Ilchester, archdeacon of Poitiers.²⁰ In a letter to the justiciars after they had heard the case, the bishop reminded them that the canons had shown

¹⁴ EEAE #23 n.

¹⁵ EEAE #23: “...ecclesia Sutton membrum Plimton’ ecclesiae habebatur, et personae Plimton’ ecclesiae ipsam cum capellis et omnibus pertinentiis suis usque ad tempus quo Reginaldus de Valletorta ex regis dono susceperat Suttonam in pace tenuerant sicut suam propriam possessionem.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Barlow dates the bishop’s notification between March 14 and September 26, 1137 (the latter date being that of the bishop’s death). Such specific dating is rather puzzling, given the imprecise dates Barlow provides for the witnesses in his appendix to EEAE: Robert was archdeacon of Totnes from c. 1113-1138; Hugo was archdeacon of Totnes from 1137?-1162; and William was archdeacon of Cornwall from c. 1128-1150. The last witness, Edmarus Cuic, may have been a canon of Exeter Cathedral; he may have been the “Edmarus” who appeared in the chapter’s confirmation of Bishop William Warelwast’s gift of 60 shillings to the Priory on the death of each canon (EEAE #22n.).

¹⁷ EEAE #23n.

¹⁸ EEAE #120n.

¹⁹ The nephew was probably Reginald de Valletort II, who died in 1187 (Sanders, Baronies, p. 91).

²⁰ EEAE #120.

them a charter which showed that King Henry I had given the church of Sutton, and that the canons had also shown the justiciars the charter of c. 1137 of Bishop William Warelwast.²¹

It seems rather odd that there should have been a charter of Henry I in which he granted the church of St. Andrew's to Plympton Priory. According to Bishop William's charter, the elders Leofric and Wulfmaer had sworn that the church of Plympton had possessed the church of Sutton since before 1066. How then could Henry I have been the donor of the church?

However, Bishop William's charter did imply that Plympton's possession of St. Andrew's had lasted only until the time when Reginald de Valletort received the manor of Sutton from Henry I. Presumably Reginald had seized or attempted to seize the church, hence the court case of c. 1137. Might the charter of Henry I presented to the justiciars have been a re-grant of the church of Sutton to Plympton? If so, why was it not mentioned in the judgement of c.

1137? This royal charter might also have been a now-lost confirmation to the canons of their rights to the church at Sutton. In his letter, Bishop Bartholomew also stated that the Priory had been entitled to the church of Sutton since its foundation ("quas a fundamento ecclesie sue habuisse noscuntur"), but it is not clear whether he meant the foundation of the secular college in Anglo-Saxon times or the foundation of the Augustinian priory in 1121, or whether indeed he meant uninterrupted possession.

Bishop Bartholomew reminded the justiciars in his letter that when they had heard the case at Northampton, they had tried to arrange a peaceful resolution of the dispute between Sir Johel and the canons.²² However, Sir Johel had continued to damage and injure the lands, fisheries, and church of Plympton Priory "tanta iniquitate et temeritate," and as a

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

consequence, he deserved to have ecclesiastical penalties imposed upon him. Bishop Bartholomew had declined to carry these out, but he told the justiciars that he was prepared to do so if they did not coerce Johel to comply. Clearly, his plea to the justiciars yielded no results, and the bishop imposed an interdict upon Johel's lands.²³

The case was appealed to Rome in 1174x1175; Johel's messenger, who arrived first, successfully sought a papal commission to Richard, archbishop of Canterbury, to investigate Johel's complaint about the interdict.²⁴ When the representative of Plympton Priory arrived at the Curia, however, he produced the charter recording Bishop William Warelwast's judgement of the 1137 case.²⁵ The representative of Johel de Valletort claimed that Johel and "his predecessors had held the patronage up to the present time, and that [Bishop William's] charter had never been seen before." Pope Alexander III decreed that neither party had come adequately prepared, and commissioned Richard, archbishop of Canterbury, and Roger, bishop of Worcester, to hear the case; if they found for Plympton Priory, the interdict was to be enforced, silence imposed on Johel "and his party", and, if Johel did not repent, the judges-delegate were to excommunicate him.²⁶ The pope nullified the previous commission to the archbishop of Canterbury, made in response to Johel's representative's version of events, as it had been obtained by "suppression of the truth."²⁷

On June 27, 1175, the judges-delegate passed judgement at Lambeth. As they had cited Johel to appear by a fourth and peremptory edict and he had not shown up nor sent a

²³ Mary G. Cheney, Roger, Bishop of Worcester 1164-1179 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), Appendix II, #37, pp. 334-35.

²⁴ Ibid., Appendix II, #52A, p. 344.

²⁵ Ibid., Appendix II, #37, pp. 334-35

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

representative, they declared him contumacious.²⁸ Archbishop Richard and Bishop Roger inspected the charter of Bishop William Warelwast. Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter definitively established the authenticity of the document by comparing its seal with those attached to other charters of Bishop William Warelwast.²⁹ This was the normal practice at the time for establishing the validity of charters produced in court.³⁰ Canon Stephen of Plympton also swore that he had sought the papal commission on the basis of a transcription of this charter; he and another canon took an oath that they had been told by the elders of Plympton Priory that the charter was indeed an authentic document of Bishop William Warelwast.³¹ The judges-delegate declared that they accepted the authenticity of the charter and that the Church of St. Andrew's consequently belonged to Plympton. Archbishop Richard and Bishop Roger imposed silence upon Johel and those who had instituted the action against the canons and forbade him or his men from molesting, bothering, or disturbing the canons about the church.³²

Johel de Valletort turned out to be a formidable opponent, however. By 1176, he had presented Walter de Coutances, royal vice-chancellor and archdeacon of Oxford, and later royal justiciar, bishop of Lincoln, and archbishop of Rouen, to the church of Sutton.³³ Walter, as well as being a *familiaris regis* to Henry II, was a Cornishman who came from a knightly

²⁸ Ibid., Appendix I, #53, pp. 283-84.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ C. T. Flower, Introduction to the Curia Regis Rolls, 1199-1230, Selden Society vol. 62 (London: Selden Society, 1944), p. 281.

³¹ Cheney, Roger, Bishop of Worcester, Appendix I, #53, pp. 283-84.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ralph V. Turner, "Clerical Judges in English Secular Courts: The Ideal versus the Reality," in Judges, Administrators and the Common Law in Angevin England (London: Hambledon Press, 1994), pp. 162-63.

family.³⁴ This may explain why he and a member of the Valletort family—which also owned lands in Cornwall—would be known to each other. An excerpt from what seems to have been a chronicle kept at Plympton sheds further light on this matter:

The aforementioned Johel did not cease then to impede our law, but presented Walter de Coutances, chancellor to the lord king, afterwards archbishop of Rouen, to the aforesaid church. Whereupon a composition was made between him and us by Bishop Bartholomew and Prior John so that he might hold the aforesaid church from us in return for giving us three silver marks annually; which he did for a while, but after he was promoted to the episcopate of Lincoln [in 1183], Prior Martin conceded the church to John de Coutances, Walter's nephew, to be held in the same way. John swore fidelity in our chapter.³⁵

John de Coutances was not only the nephew of Walter, but was also a rising member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy: he succeeded his uncle as archdeacon of Oxford by 1184, he was Dean of Rouen by 1188 or earlier, and he was consecrated bishop of Worcester in 1196.³⁶

John of Coutances' own links with Henry II are indicated by the appearance of his name in the witness lists of two of the king's late charters.³⁷ By presenting such powerful and influential men to Sutton church, Johel displayed a keen sense of strategy: even though the judges-delegate had found against him, he knew that he could keep his claim alive if he presented

³⁴ Peter A. Poggioli, "From Politician to Prelate: The Career of Walter of Coutances, archbishop of Rouen, 1184-1207" (Ph. D. Diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1984), pp. 18-19. Walter owned some land in Coutances, hence his appellation "de Coutances". His family was not of high status, but they did make some grants of land to Tavistock Abbey.

³⁵ Bodl. MS. James 23, p. 164: "Praefatus tamen Johel nondum cessavit impedire ius nostrum sed presentavit ad memoratam ecclesiam dominum Walterum de Constantiis domini Regis cancellarium, post futurum Archiepiscopum Rotomagensem; unde facta est compositio inter ipsum et nos per Bartholomaeum Episcopum et priorem Johannem ut ipse praefatam ecclesiam teneret de nobis reddendo annuatim 3 marcas argenti quod et ipse diu fecit. Sed eo promotus in Episcopum Nicholiensem [sic: Lincoln] prior M. concessit illam ecclesiam Johanni de Constantiis eodem tenore tenendam, nepoti praedicti Walteri, et ipse in capitulo nostro fidelitatem juravit."

³⁶ English Episcopal Acta IV: Lincoln 1186-1206, ed. David M. Smith (London: British Academy for Oxford University Press, 1986), #59n., #69n., #80n.

men the bishop of Exeter and the prior of Plympton would be reluctant to antagonize. The bishop was in an especially difficult situation, as his acceptance of the presentee would imply that he believed Johel de Valletort was the true patron.³⁸ What discussions went on between Bishop Bartholomew, to this point so supportive of Plympton Priory, and the prior over the proper course of action one cannot know, but it is possible that there was some degree of collaboration in their response to Johel's cunning move.

Given the royal connections of Walter and John de Coutances,³⁹ any action to deprive them of this benefice might well have resulted in unpleasant consequences. By making an agreement with the new incumbents, Plympton Priory did not have to concede the advowson; indeed, the payment of a pension would seem to indicate an acknowledgment on the part of the incumbent that the Priory was the legitimate patron of the benefice. The canons perhaps felt that their best recourse was to tolerate the situation until Sir Johel's nephew came of age or Sir Johel died.⁴⁰ Interestingly, Sutton is not mentioned in Bishop John the Chanter's confirmation (1186x1188) of all *spiritualia* and *temporalia* granted or confirmed to Plympton Priory by bishops of Exeter.⁴¹ This may have been because the patronage of the church was

³⁷ Robert W. Eyton, Court, Household, and Itinerary of Henry II (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1974), pp. 282, 295.

³⁸ As J. W. Gray pointed out: "Not only personal qualifications, but presentation by the true patron were necessary to canonically valid admission and institution..." See "The *Ius Praesentandi* in England from the Constitutions of Clarendon to Bracton," English Historical Review, 67 (1952), p. 482.

³⁹ During the last decade of Henry II's reign, Walter de Coutances was one of the most frequent witnesses to the king's charters. Ralph V. Turner, Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 16.

⁴⁰ Sir Johel seems to have outlived his nephew, and appears in the Pipe Rolls in the late 1180s regarding a dispute with a Robert Foliot over lands in Devon (PRS 34 Henry II, p. 170). He was also involved in a robbery case in Cornwall in 1200 (CRR, v. 1 Richard-2 John, p. 267).

⁴¹ EEAE #168; Oliver MDE #14.

still considered to be disputed, or it may have simply been because the bishops of Exeter had not confirmed to the Priory the *spiritualia*--including the chapels and Sutton church--which had come to it as an "inheritance" from Plympton Minster. Certainly in the thirteenth century the canons seem to have been in secure possession of Sutton church; they are listed in the register of Bishop Walter Bronescombe as being the patrons of Sutton when they made a presentation in 1264.⁴² As the senior line of the Valletorts had died out by 1275,⁴³ the canons had no further challenges from that quarter. Sutton, along with its dependent chapel of St. Budeaux, was included in Bishop Grandisson's confirmation of Plympton Priory's *spiritualia* in 1335.⁴⁴

An interesting aspect of this case is the support given to Plympton Priory by Bishop Bartholomew. Whether it was writing to the royal justiciars urging them to action, excommunicating Sir Johel and laying an interdict on his lands, or assisting the papal judges delegate in verifying the authenticity of Bishop William Warelwast's charter, Bishop Bartholomew demonstrated an eagerness to defend the rights of Plympton Priory. As a frequent papal judge-delegate himself, and as an expert on canon law,⁴⁵ Bishop Bartholomew was the perfect ally for Plympton in circumstances such as these. He obviously took seriously his responsibilities not only as diocesan, but also as patron of several religious houses.

It is also interesting to see how, in the decades after the Constitutions of Clarendon, the issues of jurisdiction in cases of advowson were worked out in practice. The Sutton case reveals that the original venue for Sir Johel's action was the Curia Regis; when a judgement

⁴² Reg. Bronescombe, p. 162.

⁴³ Sanders, Baronies, pp. 90-91

⁴⁴ Oliver MDE #21; Reg. Grandisson II, p. 775.

⁴⁵ Morey, Bartholomew of Exeter, pp. 36, 39, 44-52.

there was ineffective in resolving the dispute, the bishop of Exeter had to intervene and threaten the imposition of ecclesiastical penalties if the justiciars did not put further pressure upon Johel. That the bishop did indeed have to resort to an interdict would seem to suggest that royal justice was less speedy and reliable in this instance.⁴⁶ Johel de Valletort, when faced with an unsatisfactory verdict in the royal court, appealed to the Pope and very nearly succeeded in persuading him of his side of the story. While the final judicial sentence on the matter was given by papal judges-delegate, the ultimate resolution of this dispute came about through a compromise between the two parties. In the end, neither royal nor ecclesiastical justice was effective in countering the strategies of a clever and determined plaintiff with no legal right to an advowson.

St. Just-in-Roseland: Darrein Presentment

Hardly had a resolution been reached in the Sutton dispute before Plympton Priory became involved in another disagreement over a church. Episcopal involvement was a feature of this case, as well. As has been mentioned in the previous chapter, in the 1180s a dispute arose between Plympton Priory and John le Sor. This concerned the patronage of the Cornish church of St. Just-in-Roseland which was resolved by a composition made in 1188x1190 between the two parties before the royal justiciars.

An agreement was made by the parties before the royal justiciars: John and his heirs would present a suitable cleric to the prior and his successors, and together they would present the cleric to the bishop of Exeter for institution to St. Just. Plympton Priory would receive an

⁴⁶ C. R. Cheney stated in regard to the question of whether the royal or ecclesiastical courts offered "swifter and surer justice" that "recent studies of the working of the royal court of the

annual pension of half a mark while Alured, the vicar of St. Just, lived, but after his death the pension would increase to a mark. John and his heirs would not be able to present any candidate, however, who could not provide assurance that he could pay the annual pension to Plympton Priory.⁴⁷ While this agreement addressed the issue of the procedures to be followed concerning presentations, it did not clearly state which party was rector of the church of St. Just.

The matter was re-opened at the beginning of the next century. At the Cornish Eyre at Launceston in 1201, an assize of darrein presentment was adjourned at the request of John le Sor to determine the patronage of St. Just church, which was then vacant.⁴⁸ John le Sor, who was a tenant of an episcopal estate in Cornwall,⁴⁹ claimed the advowson against Bishop Henry Marshal of Exeter. The bishop's representative, William of Taunton, disputed the assertion that the church was vacant and claimed instead that the prior of Plympton was the rector of St. Just.⁵⁰ The claim in an assize of darrein presentment that the church was not indeed vacant was called the "exception of plenarty." The normal response of the court was to ask for evidence of admission and institution to the church, such as certificates from the bishop, an archdeacon, or other ecclesiastical official.⁵¹ Of course, when the defendant in this sort of assize was himself a bishop, the situation became rather more complicated.

Angevins...do not show it in a very favourable light" (*From Becket to Langton*, p. 108).

⁴⁷ *EEAE* #170: "nisi quilibet presentatus idoneam cautionem prestiterit quod ipse annuatim solvet quiete nobis et successoribus nostris in perpetuum predictam marcam argenti..."

⁴⁸ *Pleas before the King or his Justices, 1198-1202*, ed. Doris M. Stenton, vol. 2 (Selden Society vol. 68, 1952), pp. 148-9.

⁴⁹ In a survey made between 1207 and 1212, John Le Sor held an acre and a half of the bishop of Exeter in Cornwall (*BF*, vol. 1, p. 44).

⁵⁰ *Pleas before the King or his Justices, 1198-1202*, pp. 148-9.

⁵¹ Gray, "Ius Praesentandi," pp. 496-97.

Prior Johel appeared and endorsed William of Taunton's statement with the claim that he was indeed the rector and had been for forty years. Indeed, he had presented the current perpetual vicar, William de Kaune. John le Sor contradicted this version of the situation: he stated that on the day he had sought the writ the church of St. Just had not been vacant, that the prior was not the rector, and that an agreement had been made between them providing for joint presentations to the benefice and a pension for Plympton Priory. John was able to support his position by showing the original charter and a confirmation charter of Bishop John the Chanter. This seems to have flustered Prior Johel, who acknowledged that there had been some sort of agreement, but that he was not sure of the details; he was granted permission to check the Priory's muniments, but he neither produced the documents nor returned. The bishop and his attorney similarly could not refute the case of John Le Sor.⁵² The hearing was to resume at Westminster one month from Michaelmas.

At the court of Michaelmas, 1202, the case was resolved in the presence of Bishop Henry and Osbert Le Sor, who represented his father. A foot of a fine reveals that the bishop recognized that the plaintiff held the advowson of the church of St. Just, "saving an annual pension to the Church of Exeter of thirty marks, and one silver mark to Plympton Priory at Michaelmas."⁵³

In this case, the inconsistencies in Prior Johel's version of events suggest that John le Sor's claim to the advowson of the church was indeed the stronger one. If Prior Johel had indeed presented William de Kaune to the perpetual vicarage, this would seem to have been a violation of the agreement between the Priory and John Le Sor that the latter was to present

⁵² Pleas before the King or his Justices, 1198-1202, pp. 148-9.

the cleric to the former. Of course, as we have seen with the case of Sutton church, “illegal” presentations did occur and seem to have been the recourse of parties who knew they had weak claims to benefices. The fact that Prior Johel only acknowledged the 1188x1190 agreement—an agreement to which he was a party—when it was produced in court, and then claimed to be unclear of its contents, is rather suspicious. His retreat to the Priory and subsequent non-appearance would also suggest that Prior Johel knew that he had been out-manuevered by the legitimate claimant.

The role of Bishop Henry Marshal in this case demonstrates the close ties between the Priory and its patron: the bishop supported the prior of Plympton in his assertion that he was the rector of St. Just when he must have known that the earlier charters had not established the right of the prior to this advowson. The lack of definite resolution in these charters of the issue of the identity of the rector created an ambiguity which bishop and prior perhaps viewed as an opportunity which could be exploited. It is also puzzling that the bishop would claim the exception of plenarty in the royal court, when he could offer no certificates of admission and institution to establish his case. Perhaps he felt that the justiciars were unlikely to demand such evidence from the bishop himself, in which case he was mistaken.⁵⁴ In this circumstance, the interests of both the Priory and the bishop were threatened, and bishop and prior co-operated in order to resist a lay claimant’s assertion of rights to a church. In the end, both the bishop of Exeter and Plympton Priory were able to preserve their financial interests in the church of St. Just. Plympton continued to receive a pension of one mark from St. Just until the

⁵³ *Fines sive Pedes Finium sive Finales Concordiae in Curia Domini Regis*, vol. 1, ed. Joseph Hunter (London: Record Commission, 1835-44), p. 353.

⁵⁴ Gray pointed out that “the secular courts would not accept a bare exception of plenarty, unsupported by evidence of admission and institution” (“*Ius Praesentandi*,” p. 496).

Dissolution.⁵⁵ Into the fourteenth century, the Le Sor family continued to present to the church of St. Just-in-Roseland.⁵⁶

Gerrans

Bishop Henry Marshal was also involved in an agreement with Plympton Priory regarding the church of Gerrans, in Cornwall, which seems to have been dependent on the Priory's cell of St. Anthony-in-Roseland.⁵⁷ In this case, the advowson clearly belonged to the bishops of Exeter; the matter in question was the allotment of tithes to the respective parties. As there is no previous extant reference to Plympton Priory's connection to Gerrans church--for example, it is not mentioned in Bishop John the Chanter's confirmation of 1186x1188--this document may well record the original donation of a share of tithes to the Priory from the bishop of Exeter. The agreement, which was made on July 8, 1203, stated that the bishops of Exeter would have "full right in perpetuity to confer on whomsoever they will the whole tithe of their demesne, both in fruits and other things belonging to the aforesaid church" as well as "a half

⁵⁵ This is shown consistently in the *Taxatio*, Bishop Grandisson's confirmation of *spiritualia*, and the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. See Table 1.

⁵⁶ In 1309, Reginald le Seor was instituted to St. Just; the patron is listed as John Le Seor (*Reg. Stapledon*, p. 253).

⁵⁷ The exact status of Gerrans church is unclear. In this agreement, it is called "ecclesia". However, when the bishops collated rectors to the church in the fourteenth century, the collations were made "ad porcionum in ecclesia" or to the "porcio curata ecclesie parochialis" (*Reg. Stapledon*, *passim*, and *Reg. Grandisson*, *passim*). The only exception is Bishop Grandisson's confirmation of Plympton's *spiritualia* from 1335, in which Gerrans is referred to as a chapel dependent on Plympton's cell of St. Anthony-in-Roseland. In the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, the entry refers to the "capella parochialis S. Gerendi a predicta rectoria S. Antonii dependens." In the episcopal registers, however, Gerrans appears over and over as a rectory in its own right.

of all the tithes and of the occasional offerings of the altar yielded from the parish.”⁵⁸ Both Gerrans and St. Anthony were located on the “great episcopal manor of Tregony,”⁵⁹ which explains why Bishop Henry was concerned with protecting the right of the bishops of Exeter to dispose of the tithes of their demesne lands as they saw fit. Plympton Priory would receive the other half of the parish tithes (including the tithes of fruits and other things) and of the altar offerings, “to be turned to their own use in perpetuity.”⁶⁰ The settlement also affirmed the episcopal right to present a chaplain to the benefice and stated that the bishops would take care to choose men who would make every effort to render the proper sum to Plympton Priory.

This agreement, which seems to have been a straightforward donation, indicates the continued interest of the bishops of Exeter in increasing the revenues of Plympton Priory. While the possible assignment of the tithes from the episcopal demesne lands elsewhere would have diminished this income, the yield of half the tithe from the “fruits and other things” of the parish was a not insubstantial portion. Plympton Priory would thus have received a significant amount of the greater and lesser tithes of Gerrans parish, the greater consisting of a tenth of the grain grown in the parish, while the latter would consist of other produce, such as fruit, vegetables, hay, forest windfall (like acorns), animals and products derived from them (for example, wool, milk, and beeswax).⁶¹ The occasional offerings to the church by parishioners could also add up to an impressive sum. Parishioners were expected to

⁵⁸ Reg. Bronescombe, ed. O. F. Robinson, vol. 1, p. 111. The text of the document survives in a later confirmation by Bishop Walter Bronescombe made on May 19, 1261. Given the tensions between Bishop Bronescombe and Plympton Priory which erupted in the fall of 1261 (for which see below), the timing of this confirmation is interesting.

⁵⁹ EEAE #1n.

⁶⁰ Reg. Bronescombe, ed. O. F. Robinson, vol. 1, p. 111.

make oblations at Christmas, Easter, and the feasts of the dedication of the church and of the saint to which the church was dedicated. In addition, they were encouraged to make oblations when they attended Mass and communicated, and, as has been previously mentioned, at Martinmas (the church-scot).⁶² That Plympton Priory did well from this gift of a portion of Gerrans church is indicated by the value listed in the Valor Ecclesiasticus: the moiety of the tithes was £13 6s 8d, which exceeded the income Plympton received from a number of its other churches and chapels in 1535.⁶³

Legal Disputes and Conveyances of the Thirteenth Century: Evidence from the Curia Regis Rolls and Feet of Fines

The sources for legal disputes of the early thirteenth century are problematic. The Curia Regis rolls provide some information about such cases, but often few details are given, and resolutions of the conflicts might not be recorded at all. Other valuable sources are the feet of fines. These documents, also known as final concords or fines, recorded agreements between parties in the royal courts. They are known as “feet” because they were the third portion, the *pes*, of a cirograph made in triplicate; each party would have their own copy, and the “foot” would be kept by the court. One must keep in mind, however, that many—perhaps the majority of—fines were not resolutions of actual conflicts between the plaintiffs and the defendants. As the fines made before the royal justices were the most secure method of conveying land and

⁶¹ Moorman, Church Life, pp. 114-19.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 126-132.

⁶³ On June 8, 1292, Thomas, bishop of Exeter, was granted a licence for the alienation in mortmain of the advowson of a moiety of the church of St. Gerrans, Cornwall, to Plympton Priory (CPR, Edward I vol. 2, 1281-92, p. 496). The alienation of the other moiety to

advowsons, it seems that people who wished to sell or donate land to another party frequently chose to do so by levying fines rather than by charter.⁶⁴ Consequently, even though each foot of a fine declares that one party was a plaintiff, another a defendant, and that a certain plea was made in court, the actual event simply may have been a straightforward sale or grant. Because there is very often no other source to provide a context for the fines, one may not be able to ascertain whether the fine is the conclusion to a court case or a conveyance. Despite these qualifications, the Curia Regis rolls and the feet of fines do provide, in the absence of a cartulary, valuable evidence regarding Plympton's *spiritualia* and *temporalia* in this period. As well, some of the feet of fines involving Plympton Priory can be identified as resolutions of disputes. They further establish the involvement of the royal courts in the hearing of cases regarding advowsons of churches.

One example of a foot of a fine which seems not to refer to a dispute is that of February 3, 1202, when Richard of Sideham remitted and quit-claimed the advowson of Marystowe church to Plympton Priory.⁶⁵ Marystowe had been given to Plympton Priory by Fulk Fitz Ansger and his wife Adeliz, tenants of Roger de Nunant, before 1158⁶⁶; presumably Richard was a descendant or heir from a collateral branch of the family. The fine was made between Richard and Prior Johel of Plympton, the latter through his representative, Richard

Plympton Priory seems not to have occurred, however, as the Valor records that Plympton Priory only had one half of the tithes of Gerrans, rather than all the tithes.

⁶⁴ John Hudson, The Formation of the English Common Law: Law and Society in England from the Norman Conquest to Magna Carta (London and New York: Longman, 1996), pp. 208-9. Hudson points out that a fine "was conclusive proof [of conveyance] in future cases, and--unlike a charter--required no one to warrant it." Warranty was guarantee of tenure.

⁶⁵ DFE, vol. 1, #31, p. 22. In the terminology of the feet of fines, the instigator of the suit is called the "claimant" or the "plaintiff"; the possessor of the land or church whose ownership is being challenged is called the "tenant" or the "deforciant."

⁶⁶ Oliver MDE #3.

Marchepais, who frequently appears in the Priory's records in this period. The prior gave Richard of Sideham twenty shillings in return for his remission and quit-claim. Quite probably, the prior had initiated this transaction and was simply forestalling potential litigation by seeking from the heir of a benefactor a renunciation of his claims to the church or property in question. In this instance, then, the fine seems to be little different from the quit-claims Plympton Priory participated in during the twelfth century, except for the venue, the court at Westminster.

In another case regarding the advowson of a church, the circumstances would seem to suggest that the foot of the fine recorded the resolution of an actual conflict, although the possibility remains that the "case" was a straightforward conveyance. This is indicated by earlier entries in the Curia Regis rolls which record the existence of pleas before the king's justiciars. In 1206, the rolls for the Michaelmas term mention that William de Vernon, earl of Devon, had begun an action against Prior Robert of Plympton over the advowson of an unspecified church.⁶⁷ Over the next two years, various attempts were made to set a date for the hearing of the case,⁶⁸ but this did not finally occur until June 8, 1208. On that date, a fine was made between Earl William--as deforciant and Prior Robert, the plaintiff, who was represented by David Aaron and Richard Marchepais.⁶⁹ In the foot of the fine, the church is finally named: Exminster, which was on the estates of the earls of Devon by the river Exe.

⁶⁷ CRR, vol. 4 (7-8 John), p. 300. "Dominus G. significavit justiciariis quod Comes Devonie posuit loco suo coram eo Willelmum Baucan vel Gilbertum de Mara....versus priorem de Plinton' de placito advocacionis ecclesie ad lucrandum vel perdandum." The entry lists a number of other people against whom the earl of Devon was initiating actions at the same time.

⁶⁸ CRR vol. 5 (9-11 John), pp. 66, 130, 162.

⁶⁹ DFE, vol. 1, #59, p. 36.

The fact that Prior Robert was the plaintiff in this case indicates that he was probably the initiator of the process; however, his motives for doing so are obscure. There is no previous record of a gift from a member of the Redvers family to the Priory of the church of Exminster,⁷⁰ and the court records are silent as to the arguments presented by the Prior's representatives in support of Plympton's claim to the church. There is the possibility that this foot of a fine is no more than a record of the donation, and that the four entries in the Curia Regis rolls merely refer to the setting of a date for the final concord. However, most of the other feet of fines for Plympton do not have so many correlating entries in the Curia Regis rolls, which suggests that they were not actual disputes. In any event, Earl William did end up acknowledging the right of the prior and convent to Exminster and granting the church "in free alms". In return, "the prior received him into all benefits and prayers which shall be made in his church of Plympton forever."⁷¹ If there had been feelings of rancour between the two parties over this issue, Prior Robert must have felt that it was important not to alienate a powerful member of a family with a history of generosity to the Priory. However, Golding notes in reference to the Gilbertine order that a house would "frequently grant confraternity rights in return for quitclaims of advowsons."⁷² Consequently, the language of exchange of benefits in the feet of fines must be viewed with caution, as this does not inevitably indicate that tension existed between the parties.

If the canons of the Priory felt that the fine between them and Earl William had established their right to the advowson of Exminster church once and for all, they were

⁷⁰ Exminster had been a demesne manor of the Redvers earls of Devon since at least the 1140s. Bearman points out that this concord is the first evidence of the advowson of the church there being in the hands of Plympton Priory (*RC*, p. 139n.)

⁷¹ *DFE*, vol. 1, #59, p. 36.

mistaken. In 1260, John Bloyo appeared in the court of the King's Bench to seek the replevin of the advowson of the church of Exminster to the prior of Plympton.⁷³ An action of replevin indicated that the advowson had been distrained⁷⁴; John Bloyo was in effect appearing in court to say that the advowson had been unjustly seized, and to appeal for its return until the matter went to court. The earl of Devon at this time was Baldwin V, the last male of the Redvers line who died in 1262 after having been earl only since 1257. From the judicial record, it is not clear whether Baldwin V or another party had challenged the Priory's right to the advowson of the church of Exminster. Whatever the circumstances behind this dispute, Plympton Priory retained its right to present to the church, and indeed did so until the Dissolution.⁷⁵

In another instance, a protracted court case arose between Plympton Priory and a person who was the heir of a twelfth-century benefactor. Between 1199 and 1202, Alan of Buckland and the prior appeared in court a number of times concerning three and a half ferlings of land at Egg Buckland, near Sutton, and a half ferling of land in Hooe, Plymstock.⁷⁶ Alan was not only a local landowner, but was a royal servant with good connections: in 1201, one of the court entries refers to the fact that he is "in royal service with William Brewer,"⁷⁷ onetime sheriff of Devon, royal justiciar, and eventually, custodian of the bishopric of Exeter in 1223-

⁷² Golding, Gilbert of Sempringham, p. 366.

⁷³ CCR, Henry III vol. 11, 1259-61, p. 159. "Johannes Bloyo venit coram rege in crastino Pasche et petiit advocacionem ecclesie de Exminstr' priori de Plumpton' replegiari, que capta etc. propter defaltam etc. coram justiciariis de Banco versus Baldewinum de Insula ut dicitur"

⁷⁴ Actions of replevin were very common at this time: see CCR, Henry III vol. 11, 1259-61, *passim*.

⁷⁵ The Priory next made a presentation to Exminster in 1274 (Reg. Bronescombe, p. 141).

⁷⁶ CRR, vol. 1 (1 Richard I- 2 John), pp. 89, 127, 233, 257, 300, 375, 422, 441. Also Rotuli Curiae Regis, ed. Sir Francis Palgrave (London: Record Commission, 1835), vol. 1, pp. 313, 411, and vol. 2, p. 36.

⁷⁷ CRR, vol. 1 (1 Richard-2 John), p. 375.

24.⁷⁸ Alan's original claim in 1199 was that he was entitled to the lands by right and inheritance, and that the prior had unjustly deprived him of the land by force.⁷⁹ Prior Joel came to court and denied that he had employed force; he also contended that he ought to hold those lands, as well as others, from Alan. In 1200, in another encounter at the Curia Regis, Prior Joel stated that Alan's father, Guy of Buckland, had given the Priory the lands in question, and produced charters of confirmation to support this.⁸⁰ Alan retorted that if his father had made such a charter, it was due to the illness from which he died. He placed himself under the judgement of a jury of men from the neighbourhood and the witnesses of the confirmation charter, since the witnesses named in the charter of donation had all died. The prior decided to rely on the persuasiveness of the facts as stated in his documents.

The witnesses must have supported the case of Plympton Priory. Ultimately, a final concord was made between the two parties the next year. In the foot of the fine, made on July 1, 1201, Alan acknowledged all the land to belong rightfully to the Priory; for his part, Prior Joel granted the land to Alan and his heirs forever in return for 12s paid for all service (except foreign service) at Michaelmas and Easter.⁸¹ Some decades later, Alan's heir, Isabella Giffard (also known as Isabella of Buckland), showed herself to be her father's daughter and contended that the Priory had acted in contravention of the fine made with her father in 1201.

⁷⁸ Barlow, *EEAE*, pp. xlvii-xlviii. William Brewer played an important role in the administration of the government during the minority of Henry III, hence his appointment as custodian of the see. Brewer used his influence in this position to arrange the election of his nephew--another William Brewer--as bishop of Exeter in 1224.

⁷⁹ *CRR*, vol. 1 (1 Richard-2 John), p. 89.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 257.

⁸¹ *DFE*, vol. 1, #45, pp. 28-29. The prior excepted from the grant, however, the wood of "Briggerig" and the land Henry son of Walter held of Alan. When Henry was to come of age, he was to pay back to the prior the loan which the prior had made to Henry's father upon the land of Mainston.

In 1237, she instituted court proceedings concerning the customs and services attached to the land,⁸² and on June 25, 1238, she and Prior Robert made a fine. Isabella conceded that the land did indeed belong to the prior and the church of Plympton, and in return, the prior granted it to her and her heirs on the same terms as those mentioned in the fine of 1201. Prior Robert also gave Isabella five marks.⁸³

Heirs or relatives of twelfth-century benefactors also made conveyances of land or confirmations of existing grants to Plympton Priory through the use of fines. For example, in 1201-2, Reginald de Weston, who was named as the “tenant” in the case, recognized that four ferlings of land with appurtenances at Westonsham, from the demesne of Weston, belonged to Prior Joel.⁸⁴ Godfrey de Weston had given land at Ham to Plympton Priory by c.1158,⁸⁵ and Godfrey’s son William of Weston confirmed this grant of four ferlings of land from the demesne at Westonsham between 1171x1173.⁸⁶ It would seem logical to assume that these four ferlings are the same ones mentioned in the 1201-2 fine, although it is odd that given the earlier donation of the land to the Priory, Reginald is the party deemed the “tenant”. Perhaps this is because Prior Joel was the one who sought the fine? Or possibly because even though Godfrey de Weston had given the land in the twelfth century, the Westons had remained on

⁸² CCR, Henry III vol. 3, 1234-37, p. 571. “Isabel Giffard attornavit loco suo H[a]m[onem] de Karevil versus Priorem de Plynton de pluribus consuetudinibus et serviciis que idem Prior exigit et in tenemento ipsius Isabelle in Bocland’ et Ho.” Isabel evidently married into the Giffard family, who also had historic connections with Plympton Priory. See previous chapter.

⁸³ DFE, vol. 1 #274, pp. 136-7. Within a few years, Isabella had died. In 1242-43, the “heir of Isabella Giffard” was recorded as holding “duo feoda” in Egg Buckland, in Compton, and in Ho, “set non facit inde nisi servicium ii feodorum et dimidii” (BE, vol. 2, p. 789).

⁸⁴ *Fines sive Pedes finium*, vol. 1, p. 55. The action had been initiated in 1200; an early curia regis roll records that the prior of Plympton had appointed Richard Marchepais to act for him (CRR vol. 1, p. 297).

⁸⁵ Oliver MDE #3.

the land as actual tenants. The latter seems a likely possibility, given that the fine states that Prior Joel had conceded the land and the appurtenances to Reginald for life, and that after the death of Reginald “the land will revert to the prior or his successors, quit of Reginald’s heirs.”⁸⁷

In other instances, the feet of fines do seem to record new conveyances, whether they be sales or donations. In 1202, Prior Joel and Thomas, son of Gervase of Winsor made a fine whereby Thomas granted the prior a mill at Horthill, the suit of the mill from Thomas’ lands, Horthill itself, a ferling of land at Winsor, and a wood near Filesam Brook.⁸⁸ In return, Prior Joel gave Thomas two silver marks and Thomas’s son Gervase one bezant. Thomas and his father do not appear in the surviving twelfth-century donation charters, so Thomas may well have been a “new” benefactor.

Similarly, William of St. Stephen was not obviously related to any of Plympton Priory’s twelfth-century benefactors (keeping in mind, of course, our imperfect knowledge of the genealogies of the Devon gentry in this period). William conveyed to Plympton Priory land at Dean, on the fringe of Dartmoor on June 30, 1228. He gave and granted two ferlings and two and a half acres of land in Chiscumbe, to be held of him and his heirs forever, for as much foreign service as would be owed on a ferling of land.⁸⁹ Almost twenty years later, William of St. Stephen granted to Plympton Priory the manor of Overdene, an estate equivalent to one and eight parts of a fee in 1242-43. William had held this manor of Nicholas Fitz Martin, lord

⁸⁶ EEAE #142A. See Chapter Two for discussion of Plympton Priory’s obligations to the Weston family in return for this gift.

⁸⁷ Fines sive pedes finium, vol. 1, p. 55. Reginald was to pay the priors of Plympton 10s annually, at Michaelmas and Easter.

⁸⁸ DFE, vol. 1, #42, p. 27. Winsor is in Ermington hundred, near Yealmpton.

⁸⁹ DFE, vol. 1, #232, p. 113

of Dartington.⁹⁰ Like the land of Chiscumbe at Dean, the manor of Overdene was to be held by the Priory of William and his heirs forever; in this case, Plympton Priory had to give to the “chief lords of that fee” a silver mark each Easter for services due from the manor, but William and his heirs would attend to providing the homages and reliefs due from the manor.⁹¹ This was not a straightforward donation, however: Prior Robert gave sixty silver marks (£40) to William for the manor. Given the size of this sum--much larger than any of the token payments mentioned in the feet of fines or in charters⁹²--this is undoubtedly a sale. This is the clearest evidence we have of Plympton Priory purchasing land in the vicinity of previous holdings,⁹³ a common strategy of religious houses to consolidate their holdings. The value given for the manor of Dean Prior in the Valor Ecclesiasticus was £40 8s 3d,⁹⁴ which would seem to suggest that Plympton Priory had done little to increase its revenues from this source over the centuries.

⁹⁰ BF, vol. 2, p. 764

⁹¹ DFE, vol. 1, #447, pp. 222-23. William of St. Stephen recognized the right of the prior to the manor, including “demesnes, homages, and services of free men, villeinages, woods, meadows, and pastures” and anything else belonging to the manor.

⁹² For example, on June 17, 1268, Prior Robert of Plympton reached a final concord with Baldwin de la Flere and his wife Mabel concerning a messuage and a ploughland at La Flere and La Dune (in Sherford). Baldwin and Mabel acknowledged that all services and dues pertaining to the messuage and land belonged to the Priory “as by their gift,” to be held from Baldwin and Mabel and from Mabel’s heirs “in free and perpetual alms forever.” In return for all services and suit of court, the Priory was to give them one clove of gillyflower each year at Easter. For his part, Prior Robert received Baldwin, Mabel, and Mabel’s heirs into the spiritual benefits of the Priory (DFE, vol. 2, #670, pp. 342-3).

⁹³ Nicholas de Buseye sold Prior Geoffrey land at Netherdene (also known as Nitherdene) between 1128 and c.1158 (Oliver MDE #3). In 1242-43, the Priory held 3 parts of half a fee at Nitherdene of Nicholas Fitz Martin, lord of Dartington (BF, vol. 2, p. 764). Plympton Priory also owned the church of Dean by 1184/85 (English Lawsuits from William I to Richard I, vol. 2, ed. R. C. Van Caenegem, Selden Society vol. 107 [London: Selden Society, 1991], pp. 612-613).

⁹⁴ Oliver MDE #28. The Taxatio value is much smaller--£6 3s--but given the unreliability of the figures in the Taxatio, this discrepancy need not be overly troubling.

Conflicts with Hugh de Courtenay

Plympton's dealings with the earls of Devon became complicated once again with the succession of the young heir of the Honours of Plympton and Okehampton, Sir Hugh de Courtenay II, who came of age in 1297.⁹⁵ Hugh II, who was recognized by King Edward III as earl of Devon in 1335, was the great-great-grandson of William de Vernon, by descent from William's daughter Marie, who married Robert de Courtenay, lord of Okehampton. Sir Hugh, unlike most of his predecessors as earls of Devon, played a prominent role on the national scene. He was summoned to Parliament regularly from 1298/9 to 1334, fought in the Scottish wars, was one of the Lords Ordainers in 1313, and by 1318 had become a member of Edward II's council.⁹⁶ A man of some determination, Hugh II was unlikely to have been very tolerant of what he perceived to be Plympton Priory's encroachments on some of his rightful possessions. By the early fourteenth century, a dispute had arisen between the two parties over a plot of land in Plympton called "Le Sablon".⁹⁷ The prior and convent were forced to remit to Sir Hugh the southern half of Le Sablon, whose boundaries were drawn up by the two parties on April 18, 1305. Sir Hugh was thorough in his investigation of the matter--the charter refers to his having "inspected and understood the muniments" of the canons--and decided to quit his and his heirs' claim to the residue of the plot, with appurtenances, from the causeway to the land of Woodford.

⁹⁵ Sanders, *Baronies*, p. 70.

⁹⁶ *Complete Peerage*, vol. 4, p. 324.

⁹⁷ Courtenay Cartulary, DRO TD 51, pp. 229-30. "Le Sablon" is described in the charter as lying on the western part of the causeway which ran between "Clapere" (a street in Plympton) and the chapel of Plympton St. Mary, which stood in the cemetery of the conventual church.

Shortly thereafter, Sir Hugh challenged successfully Plympton Priory's right of presentation at the chapel of Bratlegh. In a charter dated June 7, 1305, Prior John of Plympton conceded, remitted, and quit-claimed to Sir Hugh the advowson of Bratlegh church together with the land adjoining it and all its appurtenances.⁹⁸ The Priory also remitted and quit-claimed to Sir Hugh the annual pension of three marks which they had received from the chaplain at Bratlegh. The mystery here is the identity of this chapel: Plympton Priory is not otherwise known to have received a pension from, or claimed the advowson of, a Bratlegh chapel. Nor is there any record in the episcopal registers in the Diocese of Exeter that the Courtenay family or the earls of Devon ever possessed the advowson for a chapel of this name. Finally, "Bratlegh" does not occur in The Place-Names of Devon or in the episcopal registers for the Diocese of Exeter.

It is tempting to suppose that this is an error on the part of the scribe responsible for this section of the Courtenay Cartulary: perhaps he was thinking of Brightleigh, a church near Okehampton to which the Courtenays did have the right of presentation. However, there is no other evidence linking Plympton Priory with Brightleigh, although the Priory did have lands not far distant from Okehampton. It is possible that there was a chapel named Bratlegh dependent upon a church of which the Courtenays were patron, and that, like many other medieval chapels, it did not gain parochial status and survive into the modern period. In modern gazetteers of Britain, the name "Bratlegh" is linked to several geographical features in Hampshire. Might Bratlegh have been a gift to Plympton Priory from one of the Redvers earls

This may well be the first documentary evidence of the chapel's existence. For the full text of this charter, see Appendix 1.

⁹⁸ Courtenay Cartulary, DRO TD 51, pp. 63-64. See Appendix 1 for the full text of this charter.

of Devon or one of their retainers? The Redvers family held the Honour of Christchurch, which included lands in Hampshire, in the thirteenth century.⁹⁹ An inspection of the published episcopal registers for the diocese of Winchester does not reveal a benefice by the name of Bratlegh, however.

The matter is complicated by the fact that Plympton's relationships with some of its chapels--such as Wembury, Shaugh, and Brixton--are only clarified with the Valor Ecclesiasticus: neither the Taxatio of 1291 or Bishop Grandisson's confirmation of Plympton's *spiritualia* in 1334 include references to Plympton's chapels. Only occasional references such as the one above to the chapel of Plympton St. Mary point to their existence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and given the lacunae in the documents for Plympton, it would be rash to assume that Plympton Priory never received a pension from a Bratlegh Chapel. However, the lack of any other corroboration for its existence is indeed puzzling.

Tavistock Abbey and Plymstock

The one chapel for which we have definite evidence of a twelfth-century relationship with Plympton Priory was the one in Plymstock. The settlement of Plymstock was about three miles from the Priory; today it, like Plympton, is a suburb of Plymouth. The area was evidently exceptionally productive: the Valor records that Plympton Priory received an income of £62 a year from this chapel, an extraordinarily high sum.¹⁰⁰ H. P. R. Finberg pointed out that as Plymstock was in the "highly fertile region of the South Hams," it

⁹⁹ Bearman, pp. 20-22.

¹⁰⁰ The figure given in the Ministers' Accounts (Oliver MDE #30) is even higher: £72. No other chapel or church, except for the conventual church with its dependent chapel of

benefitted from the protection of nearby ridges, and its limestone soil, “for centuries grew excellent wheat-crops.”¹⁰¹ If the glebe land, tithes, and offerings yielded even a fraction of the Valor amount in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, one can see why parties who felt they had a claim to this chapel were interested in asserting their claims.

The essential reason for the disputes at Plymstock was that the two wealthiest religious houses, Tavistock Abbey, the wealthy Benedictine monastery, and Plympton Priory, both had claims in the area. Tavistock Abbey owned the manor of Plymstock from before the Conquest,¹⁰² whereas the chapel of Plymstock seems to have had a historic connection with the minster at Plympton. Finberg found evidence that even in the twelfth century, Tavistock Abbey had “recognized...the pre-eminent aptitude of Plymstock soil for wheat-growing.”¹⁰³ In the decades after its refoundation as an Augustinian priory, Plympton found its right to the chapel being challenged by the monks of Tavistock. The “strife, disputes, and accusations” were resolved--for a time--by an agreement which was drawn up between Abbot Walter and the monks on one hand and Prior Richard and the canons on the other in c.1164.¹⁰⁴ The charter stated unequivocally that the chapel was to remain in perpetuity a possession of Plympton Priory, freely and without any more troubles. The “spiritual fraternity” of the

Plympton St. Mary, brought the Priory such an impressive income (MRH, pp. 137-45, *passim*).

¹⁰¹ Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, pp. 86-7.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 3, 5. Edwy, brother of King Edmund II Ironside, granted Tavistock Abbey his manor at Plymstock. Domesday Book records that the Abbey had two virgates of land at Plymstock.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 241. The Valor records that in 1535 Tavistock Abbey received £12 9s 3d in money rents at Plymstock; however, it also received £26 10s 10d in wheat-rents (rents in kind). It should be kept in mind that “the manor was not co-extensive with the parish,” constituting only about 900 acres (Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, p. 87). Hence the discrepancy between the Priory’s income from the chapel and the Abbey’s income from the manor.

¹⁰⁴ MA, II, p. 500 (see also Reg. Lacy IV, pp. 274-76). Finberg dates the document to c.1164.

agreement was evidenced in the arrangements regarding deceased members of the abbey and priory. The canons of Plympton would say the same services upon the death of an abbot or monk of Tavistock as they would do for a prior or canon of Plympton. As well, if an abbot of Tavistock were to die, the canons at Plympton were to provide a full daily pittance of food in their refectory throughout the year after his death, and the monks of Tavistock would do the same when a prior of Plympton died. If a monk of Tavistock were to die, the pittance at Plympton would take place on the day of the announcement of his death.¹⁰⁵ When the monks of Tavistock visited Plympton, they were to be received as familiar brothers (*"sicut fratres familiares"*) in the choir, refectory, and dormitory, and so, too, for the canons of Plympton visiting Tavistock.

The charter contains clauses which indicate a subordinate status for Plympton Priory, however. This may have been a holdover of some arrangement between the monks of Tavistock and the priests of Plympton minster before 1121. Or, this may have been the price Plympton had to pay to mollify its powerful neighbour. The agreement states that if the abbot and convent of Tavistock had to call the prior or any of the canons of Plympton to the abbey, the prior or canon had to go. As well, if for any reason the abbot required the assistance of the prior of Plympton or one of the canons in business pertaining to the rights of the abbey, the prior or canon had to pay for his own expenses if the matter was to be handled within the diocese, or at the abbot's expense if outside. In addition, when a new chaplain was to be placed at the chapel, the prior of Plympton had to present him to the abbot and convent of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. "Abbas debet habere plenariam prebendam in refectorio Plimpton per totam primum annum obitus sui, et monachi in prima die annunciationis obitus sui. Simili modo prior de Plympton plenariam habebit prebendam in refectorio Tavistochiae per totum annum obitus sui primum, et canonici prima die annunciationis obitus sui."

Tavistock as a measure of respect. The chaplain and the prior of Plympton had to promise honorable service to God. The prior of Plympton would correct a chaplain who required discipline, or remove one who was incorrigible. Finally, when any of the monks of Tavistock came to Plymstock, the chaplain had to provide free entry to the chapel, as well as a candle for dinner, matins, and service in the chapel.

Tavistock Abbey and Plympton Priory had uneven relations over Plymstock. In 1228, the Easter sitting of the Curia Regis heard two cases concerning the Priory and land at Plymstock. In the first one, an Ada Forestarius complained that he had been assaulted on the road between Plym Bridge and Roborough by Geoffrey le Hostiller and Walter de Durevill.¹⁰⁶ They had stolen from him nine shillings in pennies, a nag with harness worth nine shillings, and a sword worth twelve pence. They then seized him and put him in the stocks until the sheriff decided what to do with him.¹⁰⁷ The involvement of Plympton became clear when Geoffrey, Walter, Thomas Splot, and Richard Gupill testified that the prior of Plympton had a curtilage in Plymstock which he had enclosed with a hedge, which Ada and a force of fifteen armed men threw down in the middle of the night. Prior Richard appealed to the sheriff of Devon, who had knights and legal men inquire whether the prior had the right to raise the hedge. They agreed that he did. So, Prior Richard again constructed a hedge and a gate; once again, Ada and his armed men tore it down on the night of the Thursday after Martinmas (November 11, 1227). Walter was nearby and heard the tumult and raised a clamour against the malefactors, who fled over the Plym to Roborough hundred. Geoffrey, the king's serjeant there, raised "hue" ("uthesium") against them; some fled into the woods, some into a church. Geoffrey

¹⁰⁶ CRR, vol. 13 (1227-30), p. 120.

found Ada in the church and confiscated his belongings (the horse, harness, and sword), and seized him when he left the church. The prior of Plympton came and made a fine for him and his men for forty shillings. While there is no mention of the participation of the abbot of Tavistock in encouraging these attacks, the competing claims of Priory and Abbey in this area, and the escape route of the attackers over the Plym to the north-west--in the direction of Tavistock Abbey--suggests the possibility that there may have been more to these incidents than is immediately apparent.

In the second case of the Easter term concerning Plympton and Plymstock, Tavistock Abbey became more clearly involved. It seems rather coincidental that another case would come up concerning a different curtilage of land at Plymstock during the same judicial term; this land is likely the same as that which provoked the outburst of Ada Forestarius. Abbot John of Tavistock sought against Prior Richard the curtilage of land with its appurtenances.¹⁰⁸ The prior came to court and sought an inspection by a jury of the land in question; a day was also set for judgement by the justiciars. The final concord between Plympton and Tavistock over this issue survives, and records that on June 30, 1228, that "recognizance of the great assize was summoned" to settle this issue.¹⁰⁹ The resolution was that the abbot of Tavistock acknowledged, remitted, and quit-claimed the curtilage to the prior of Plympton. In return, Warin son of Joel granted the abbey two pounds of wax to be delivered annually at Daccumbe at Easter.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Another plaintiff, Ralph Buket, made a similar complaint against Thomas Splot, who relieved him of 8s 3d, an axe, and a knife, and then put him in the stocks.

¹⁰⁸ CRR, vol. 13 (1227-30), pp. 120-21.

¹⁰⁹ DFE, p. 98. #200.

¹¹⁰ Warin's grant of wax was to come from one ferling of land in Plymstock held by Henry Haghene; if Henry or whoever else who held the land did not deliver the wax, the abbot or his

In the early fourteenth century, the two religious houses demonstrated that they were able to co-operate in certain instances. A charter survives in the Devon Record Office which reveals that on the Friday after August 15 in 1302 a wall was built in Plymstock between Tavistock's manor and Plympton Priory's Grange manor.¹¹¹ Tavistock and Plympton agreed that the wall would be a common one, and that both houses would be involved in its maintenance. A couple of years later, however, this spirit of co-operation seems to have been overshadowed by Tavistock Abbey's desire to re-assert its rights regarding the chapel at Plymstock. On November 27, 1304, Prior John acknowledged the terms of the twelfth-century agreement between the two parties.¹¹² He also admitted that he had been derelict in fulfilling these obligations to the abbot of Tavistock, and agreed to pay him twenty casks of wine in compensation. The abbot of Tavistock remitted five of these. That the priors of Plympton would continue to make such concessions (although clearly they were less than diligent about fulfilling them) is a testament to the value they placed on the chapel of Plymstock. Both the gifts in kind to the abbots and the implied inferior status of the Priory must have been irksome, but for the canons Tavistock's goodwill and co-operation must have been worthwhile. As with the case of the curtilage, the Abbey could prove a nuisance if not properly mollified.

successors were allowed to "distrain them for their chattels found on the said land until full payment be made."

¹¹¹ DRO W1258M/D74/2. The document is badly stained in parts, and the details of the arrangement are not legible.

¹¹² *MA* II, p. 500. In addition to the terms spelled out in the charter of c.1164, Prior John acknowledged that the priors of Plympton were obliged to provide the abbots of Tavistock with six white loaves of bread, two flagons of wine, and five candles each time they visited Plymstock manor. Plympton also had to give each abbot-elect who had to make journeys for his confirmation, up until the time of his installation, a decent palfrey and groom,.

A century later, one of the parties decided to seek confirmation of the charter of c.1164. The Duke of Bedford's collection at the Devon Record Office contains two copies of a royal inspeximus charter concerning this document. The king in question is King Henry IV or V--"Henricus Dei gracia rex Anglie et Francie et dominus Hibernie"--who dates his charter "sexto die Novembri anno regni nostri octavo".¹¹³ Unfortunately, there is no witness list which might have assisted with dating; this might have been 8 Henry IV (1406) or 8 Henry V (1420). The only other names provided are those of John Thorlby and William Prestwyk. Thorlby was a royal clerk at Westminster; his name appears in the Patent Rolls a number of times between 1408 and 1422.¹¹⁴ William Prestwyk was an attorney active in 1407.¹¹⁵ On the back of D74/4 a later hand has written "6 Nov. 8 Hen. 6 [1429]", but this would hardly fit with subsequent events. For, on June 15, 1429, arbiters between Tavistock Abbey and Plympton Priory had made an award regarding Plymstock Chapel.¹¹⁶

The two parties had sought the intervention of Masters Roger Bolter, precentor, and John Waryn, canon, of Exeter Cathedral, and William Wynard and John Coplestone, who would provide a judgement to which both parties agreed to adhere. To a great extent the award, as it was called, was a re-assertion of the previous obligations of Plympton, but in this case the arbiters stated that all previous documents--especially the charter of c. 1164 and the "confession" of Prior John from 1304--were rendered null and void by this new agreement. Indeed, the older documents were sent to the bishop of Exeter for judicial cancellation. As

¹¹³ DRO W1258M/D74/4. The other copy of the inspeximus charter, DRO W1258M/D74/4 (2) is in poor condition.

¹¹⁴ CPR Henry IV vol. 3, 1405-8, p. 440, vol. 4, 1408-13, p. 261; Henry V vol. 1, 1413-16, pp. 206-7, 303, vol. 2, 1416-22, pp. 105, 112, 151, 443.

¹¹⁵ CPR Henry IV vol. 3, 1405-8, p. 328.

¹¹⁶ Reg. Lacy IV, pp. 268-277.

well, both parties agreed that if either party defaulted on making a composition embodying the arbiters' award by Christmas, 1429, that party would have to pay 500 marks. The composition was drawn up and sealed by the abbot and convent of Tavistock on December 10, 1429, and by the prior and convent of Plympton on October 7, 1429; it was confirmed by Bishop Lacy on December 12, 1429. Consequently, it would make little sense for either party in the interim to have sought royal confirmation of a document which would shortly have been nullified. The 1406 or 1420 *inspeximus* charter may have been sought by Plympton Priory before the decision was made to bring in arbiters, in the hopes that this would strengthen Plympton's case. Given the negative characterization in the charter of the relations between Tavistock and Plympton in the period leading up to the award,¹¹⁷ perhaps the canons of Plympton were concerned that the situation would not be resolved in the Priory's favour. In any event, the composition of 1429 is the last recorded instance of conflict between Tavistock Abbey and Plympton Priory over Plymstock. Plympton's later difficulties with the parishioners of that vill in the mid-fifteenth century--which will be explored in Chapter Five--seem to have been unrelated to the ownership of the manor by the abbey.

The documents recording the disputes between Plympton Priory and Tavistock Abbey shed light on the potential for centuries-long quarrels developing between wealthy and powerful religious institutions in areas of overlapping jurisdictions. While the normal state of relations between the Abbey and the Priory may have been characterized by the supportive "spiritual fraternity" proclaimed in the charter of c.1164, our knowledge of such relations is by necessity limited to the evidence of the surviving documents. The willingness of both parties to assert

¹¹⁷ Ibid. In addition to the issue of the chaplain, there were other, unspecified sources of tension ("necnon aliis querelis et demandis diverse dissensiones, lites et discordie nuper

their claims repeatedly in a variety of venues and with a variety of methods over such a long period of time demonstrates the enduring strength of institutional memories of rights and entitlements at religious houses.

Conflicts with the Patron: Bishop Bronescombe and Plympton Priory, 1255-1263

While the canons of Plympton sought to safeguard their spiritual income and patronal rights through their vigilant protection of their advowsons, they were also interested in maximizing the income from some of their churches through appropriation. This practice originated in the twelfth century and became a popular means by which monasteries--usually pleading poverty or the costs of providing hospitality--could increase their revenues from parish churches.¹¹⁸ Typically, when a religious house was given a parish church, it became the church's patron, obtained the right to present the rector and received merely a pension from the church's revenues; if it chose to appropriate these revenues, the religious house would become a corporate rector that would present a vicar to attend to the cure of souls.¹¹⁹ After an appropriation, the religious house usually received the great tithe (the hay and grain), whereas the vicar received the altar-dues and the small tithe, which together were commonly known as the altarage.¹²⁰

At Church councils throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, attempts were made to regularize the appropriation process and prevent excessive exploitation of parochial revenues by the monasteries. In 1215 the Fourth Lateran Council sought to ensure adequate support for

habite et mote fuissent...").

¹¹⁸ Moorman, *Church Life in England*, p. 39.

¹¹⁹ B. R. Kemp, "Monastic Possession of Parish Churches," pp. 147-48.

the parish clergy by instituting perpetual vicarages: canon 32 declared that the patron or bishop had to ensure that a reasonable portion of a church's revenues were set aside for the parish priest, and that the rector, if unable to reside in the parish himself, had to arrange for the creation of a perpetual vicarage.¹²¹ The perpetual vicarage was meant to provide a decent income and security of tenure for those who were actually serving parish churches. Still, the system of appropriation by religious houses was open to obvious abuse: funds which might have stayed in the parish and been used for poor relief might instead be channeled towards the improvement of a religious house's food and wine.¹²² The religious house might also try to cut costs by hiring the cheapest chaplain or vicar rather than the most fit.¹²³ It is well to keep in mind, though, that monastic corporate rectors were not the only offenders in this respect: pluralists and absentee rectors who served at court or at a university might be just as exploitative.

On May 22, 1255, Pope Alexander IV granted the prior and convent of Plympton permission to "hold to their uses [i.e. appropriate] the church of Egg Buckland in [the diocese of Exeter] of their patronage, value 12 marks."¹²⁴ The appropriation would "take effect on the death or resignation of the rector, Master Nicholas de Plympton, papal subdeacon and chaplain."¹²⁵ Along with the conventional phrase stating that a portion of the income should

¹²⁰ R. A. R. Hartridge, A History of Vicarages in the Middle Ages (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 36, 38.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

¹²² Moorman, pp. 40-41. Moorman gives instances of monasteries appropriating parish churches in order to provide pittances (extra food), pocket-money, feasts, and better clothing for the monks.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹²⁴ CPL vol. 1 1198-1307, p. 317.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

be reserved for the vicar of the church, the grant specifies that the “diocesan's consent” is “not required” for this appropriation.¹²⁶

It is not known why the priory appealed directly to the pope, in essence going over the head of the bishop of Exeter. Perhaps Master Nicholas, as a papal chaplain, suggested this route. By the fourteenth century, the more common method of seeking appropriation involved the monastery petitioning the bishop for approval: the bishop would initiate an inquiry in the neighbourhood of the church and ascertain whether the religious house did indeed need the extra income; the bishop would seek the consent of the chapter, after which formal confirmations would be drafted.¹²⁷ The actual appropriation occurred on the death or resignation of the rector, at which time the bishop would ordain a vicarage stipulating the income of the vicar.¹²⁸

Less usual was appropriation through acquisition of a papal bull, perhaps because of the considerable expense involved in obtaining one. The petitioning monastery, if successful, might see papal letters dispatched to the bishop allowing the appropriation if the reasons behind the petition were legitimate; alternately, the monastery might receive the bull itself which permitted direct appropriation upon the voidance of the rectory--no episcopal intervention was required.¹²⁹ Plympton Priory sought this latter type of bull. The papacy did not exactly encourage monasteries to evade episcopal scrutiny, but by issuing such bulls, it could not help but provide a loophole in the normal appropriation process. Innocent III had

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Roy Martin Haines, Ecclesia Anglicana: Studies in the English Church in the Later Middle Ages (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989), p. 4. The monastery needed to be in possession of the advowson of the church it was endeavouring to appropriate. Haines also notes that “successful opposition” by bishops to appropriations was “rare”.

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

declared, in a letter of 1204 to the bishop of Ely, that religious houses needed the consent of the diocesan to appropriate churches unless they obtained an indulgence from the pope which said that they could do so “without the consent of their bishop.”¹³⁰ Plympton Priory was by no means alone in asking for “direct appropriation” bulls: Hartridge points out that papal “permission to appropriate on voidance [i.e. on the death or resignation of the rector] was not rarely given.”¹³¹ In any event, the papal grant was to cause the priory more trouble than it could have foreseen.

Five years later, on May 27, 1260, the same pope sent an indult to Plympton Priory granting the canons permission “in accordance with an indult of Pope Celestine, to hold all their churches on their voidance” and to appropriate the church of Dean of their patronage, worth little more than £6 13s 4d.¹³² Dean had belonged to the Priory since at least 1186x1191, when it was listed in the episcopal confirmation charter as being one of the churches the bishops of Exeter had either given or confirmed to Plympton Priory.¹³³ The income from this church was, according to the canons, needed by them because of an increase in the demands of “hospitality” at the Priory. Another interesting phrase is used in this indult: “notwithstanding that they have presented to the bishop divers clerks to be instituted rectors of the said church.”¹³⁴ The bishop's involvement in the process of institution to benefices in the past has been acknowledged, but once again it seems to be assumed that papal approval is an

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Hartridge, *History of Vicarages*, p. 31.

¹³¹ Ibid. Hartridge cites several examples of monasteries in England and France obtaining papal indulgences to appropriate without the diocesan's consent being required. His view is that this practice was a “bad policy, striking a terrible blow at local church discipline, and encouraging the monks in their frequent insubordination to the bishops” (p. 32).

¹³² CPL vol. 1 1198-1307, p. 372.

¹³³ Oliver *MDE* #14.

acceptable substitute for episcopal approval in regard to the appropriation of parish churches. An interesting consideration here is which Pope Celestine gave the original indult. Could it have been Celestine IV, who died merely a few days after his election in 1241, likely without having performed any official duties?¹³⁵ Or was it Celestine III (1191-8)? Unfortunately, no papal registers survive from before 1198, so we cannot know what the original text of the indult was. Given that Celestine III granted numerous similar bulls to other English religious houses, it is very likely that he is the Celestine who sent the indult. When the bishop of Exeter challenged the appropriations, he claimed that Celestine's privilege had been subsequently rendered invalid by a "contrary action" on the part of the pope.¹³⁶ Bishop Bronescombe did not elaborate, unfortunately, on what the nature of this contrary action had been.

A few months after Pope Alexander approved the Priory's appropriation of Dean church, Walter Bronescombe, the bishop of Exeter, passed a judicial sentence against the Priory. On October 5, 1261, he ordered that the church of Egg Buckland and its fruits were to be sequestered until the bishop "ordained otherwise".¹³⁷ The bishop had summoned the prior and convent of Plympton before him to demonstrate by what right they held the churches of St. Kew, Dean Prior, and Egg Buckland. The canons of Plympton contended that they were legally entitled to hold the church of Egg Buckland due to the privilege granted them by Pope Alexander IV. This gave them permission to "enter into possession of" Egg Buckland "when

¹³⁴ CPL vol. 1 1198-1307, p. 372

¹³⁵ J. N. D. Kelly, The Oxford Dictionary of Popes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 192.

¹³⁶ Reg. Bronescombe, ed. O. F. Robinson, p. 133.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 129.

it should happen to fall vacant by the resignation or decease of the rector of the same."¹³⁸

Bronescombe was not convinced, however: he declared that the condition concerning the resignation or death of the rector had not been established to him or the previous bishop of Exeter and that, in any event, the terms of the papal privilege had not been preserved.

Bronescombe found that his episcopal rights ("ius dyocesani") had been infringed and that no one had been canonically presented to him or Bishop Blund for institution to the vicarage of Egg Buckland.¹³⁹ This was his reason for the sequestration of the fruits of the church.

Challenged over their rights to Dean Prior, the prior and canons had to retract a previous claim, that they had held it from a "certain Italian" (a rector instituted by Bishop Blund) in exchange for a fee-farm payment.¹⁴⁰ This would suggest that there had been some previous investigation into their entitlement to the church of Dean Prior. The canons maintained that the privilege of Pope Alexander IV, citing the indult of Pope Celestine, was sufficient to confirm them in their ownership of the church. As has been mentioned above, Bishop Bronescombe rejected this argument because of its several flaws: firstly, they had taken possession of it initially without anyone else's permission; secondly, Pope Celestine later had withdrawn his privilege, rendering his original grant invalid; thirdly, Pope Alexander's privilege was invalid because they had already appropriated Dean Prior by the time they applied for it; and finally, Alexander's privilege was contingent on the truthfulness of the facts presented to him, and as the information was "for the most part false," it was only just that the

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 131. Master Nicholas de Plympton seems to have resigned the church of Egg Buckland by this point.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 131.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 133.

convent should lose the benefice they had sought from him.¹⁴¹ The bishop deprived them of Dean Prior and, moved by a spirit of charity, gave it to Master Gervase of Crediton, a prominent cleric in the Diocese of Exeter during this period.¹⁴²

The church which particularly attracted the bishop's attention, however, was that of St. Kew in Cornwall, also known as the church of Lannowseynt. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, St. Kew had been given to Plympton Priory by Bishop William Warelwast,¹⁴³ who had received it from King Henry I in 1123; Warelwast in turn had given it to the canons of Plympton shortly thereafter.¹⁴⁴ The *inspeximus* charter in which Henry II confirmed the gifts made to Plympton Priory included St. Kew, with all its appurtenances, and specified that as the secular canons of that church died off, their prebends would fall to the use of the regular canons of Plympton.¹⁴⁵ Warelwast's donation, as Bronescombe conceded, had been confirmed by the chapter of Exeter, and by later bishops of Exeter. However, Bishop Bronescombe decided that the original collation by Warelwast and the subsequent confirmation had been invalid, the church therefore lacked a governor, and consequently the right of ordination and collation devolved to him.¹⁴⁶ His argument for this action rested on the

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Master Gervase of Crediton later became the rector of Calstock, and held the benefice of West Down for a lengthy period *in commendam*. He was also a prebendary at the collegiate church of Crediton. In 1276, he was "commissioned to deal with all causes in the bishop's court, in the absence of the bishop or his official." (*Reg. Bronescombe*, pp. 62, 167, 190).

¹⁴³ Not, as O. F. Robinson states in her edition of the Register of Walter Bronescombe, Bishop William Brewer.

¹⁴⁴ Warelwast's charter does not survive, but it was shown by the canons of Plympton to Bishop Bronescombe, and it made an appearance early in the next century in the lawsuit brought against the Priory by certain Cornishmen. See Chapters Two and Five for further discussion of Plympton and its relationship with St. Kew.

¹⁴⁵ Oliver *MDE* #3. The church of St. Kew seems to have been appropriated by the Priory at some point in the twelfth century.

¹⁴⁶ *Reg. Bronescombe*, ed. O. F. Robinson, vol. 1, p. 131

view that Bishop Warelwast had had no right to alienate St. Kew, since as bishop he was “procurator” rather than “lord” of the things of his church and could not give away anything without the chapter’s consent.¹⁴⁷ The chapter did confirm the donation, but Bronescombe stated that this was done “long afterwards,” as if this would cast doubts on the legitimacy of the chapter’s confirmation.

Aside from questioning the episcopal right to alienate church property, Bronescombe also contended that Warelwast had wrongly claimed that there were no secular canons at St. Kew at the time he gave it to Plympton and that the church had been vacant; indeed, there continued to be secular canons at the church throughout Warelwast’s life, according to later episcopal records.¹⁴⁸ Bronescombe considered this fact to be important because, in Warelwast’s original collation of the Plympton to the church of St. Kew, he had “seemed to imply” that this collation would become valid “on the removal or decease of the clerks or secular canons.” If Plympton had indeed taken possession before the benefice had become vacant, this action would have rendered their possession invalid. Bronescombe proceeded to criticize the Priory for replacing the secular canons with regulars “without the consent and sanction of the diocesan” and for currently leaving the church utterly empty of any priest. “Since divine worship should be increased, not diminished,” Bronescombe found, and since St. Kew lacked a lawful governor (“legitimo gubernatore”), the church reverted to him for collation.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Ibid: “Quia vero prefatus W(illelmus) episcopus, qui rerum ecclesie sue procurator erat non dominus, sine legitimo consensu capituli res sue ecclesie alienare potuit, ad huiusmodi donationem processit.”

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 133.

Plympton Priory was thus deprived of three of its appropriated churches in what must have been a rather uncomfortable confrontation with Bishop Bronescombe. One might conclude from the severity of the bishop's rebukes that the Priory had seriously incurred his wrath and that the deprivations were irrevocable. All was not what it seemed, however. Two days later, Baldwin, the prior of Plympton, and the canons Walter le Hostiller and Robert Blund, surrendered the title of Dean Prior to the bishop. The church then lacked a rector because of the resignation; nevertheless, the Priory still possessed the advowson of Dean Prior, and the prior presented Master Nicholas de Plympton, papal chaplain, archdeacon of Norfolk, and former Rector of Egg Buckland, to the church.¹⁵⁰ The bishop accepted this presentation, but had to defer it, as he had appointed Master Gervase of Crediton to the church; Gervase, stating that he wished the best for the religious, resigned Dean Prior to the bishop. The bishop in turn instituted the archdeacon to the church *in commendam*, "assigning it to him at his pleasure," on October 7.¹⁵¹

However, on October 15, Master Nicholas de Plympton resigned the benefice. Bronescombe's reaction to this event was to grant, very graciously, the Priory the appropriation of Dean Prior church "for the relief of the need of the poor folk and pilgrims who flocked" to Priory.¹⁵² Bishop Bronescombe acknowledged the Priory's full title and right of presentation to the church, and its ownership of Dean Prior's fruits and offerings, except for a "suitable portion for the vicar, who is to be canonically presented" to the bishop. The dean

¹⁵⁰ Master Nicholas de Plympton--who, on the basis of his name, must assuredly have known the Priory and been known to it --seems to have held the church of Bridestowe, also in the patronage of the Priory, *in commendam* in 1259-60 (Reg. Bronescombe, p. 119).

¹⁵¹ Reg. Bronescombe, ed. O. F. Robinson, p. 135

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

and chapter of Exeter give their consent.¹⁵³ On the same day Prior Baldwin presented David de Beare to the bishop for institution to the vicarage of Dean Prior.¹⁵⁴ It is not known when precisely the Priory retrieved the advowsons of Egg Buckland or St. Kew: there is no mention of such procedures in the episcopal registers, although these registers do become rather patchy in the latter part of the thirteenth century. However, the records of Bishop Quivil, which Hingeston-Randolph included in his edition of the registers of Bishop Bronescombe, do include a record of Plympton Priory presenting one Reymund de Lanhoho to the vicarage of St. Kew in 1283.¹⁵⁵ As well, Bishop Stapledon's register records that the Priory made a presentation to Egg Buckland in 1318, and Bishop Grandisson recognized Plympton's right to both churches in his confirmation of the Priory's *spiritualia* in 1334.¹⁵⁶

So what is to be made of this episode? The bishop took away three churches from Plympton Priory, then turned around and approved the appropriation of one of them a few days later. One cannot help but suspect that there was a certain element of unrecorded co-operation between the bishop, the Priory, and Masters Nicholas and Gervase in this matter. Clearly the main concern of the bishop was to assert his right to approve the appropriation of churches to monasteries within his diocese. Plympton's decision to seek papal rather than episcopal permission to undertake appropriation was the spark that set off the fire; the bishop could not let this infringement on his rights go unanswered. One wonders whether, if the

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. After the assessment of the vicarage, it was found to consist of "all the occasional offerings, the tithe of hay, the land at the fixed rent of 4 shillings and 6 pence, one and a half farthings [uno ferlingo et dimidio] immune from the payment of tithes, and 30 shillingsworth of the garb tithes, together with the acceptance of the ordinary burdens, while the extraordinary ones are to be divided proportionately."

¹⁵⁵ Reg. Bronescombe, p. 372.

¹⁵⁶ Reg. Stapledon, p. 209; Reg. Grandisson II, p. 775.

Priory had not decided to obtain papal consent for the appropriations, the bishop ever would have challenged the validity of the original institutions. In Bishop Bronescombe, however, the monasteries of Devon were to find a zealous defender of episcopal rights and conformity to the letter and spirit of canon law.¹⁵⁷ During his episcopate, Bronescombe came into much more serious conflict with Tavistock Abbey over a contumacious abbot whom he deposed,¹⁵⁸ with Forde Abbey over a presentation to a benefice,¹⁵⁹ and with Buckland Abbey over its founding in 1279 without an episcopal licence.¹⁶⁰ Indeed, Bishop Bronescombe also tried to force Plympton Priory to pay suit of court at Crediton for lands they held at Stockleigh.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Walter Bronescombe had been closely affiliated with the royal court before becoming bishop of Exeter. In 1251 Henry III sent him to the papal curia to attend to matters of royal concern. He was archdeacon of Surrey at the time of his promotion to the See of Exeter. See Marion Gibbs and Jane Lang, Bishops and Reform 1215-1272, with Special Reference to the Lateran Council of 1215 (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 191, 199.

¹⁵⁸ O. Robinson, Reg. Bronescombe, p. xxxviii. See also Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, pp. 23-24. Finberg's description of the events is more sympathetic to the abbot of Tavistock than is Robinson's brief appraisal. Robinson includes a list of the charges of mismanagement against the abbot for which he was eventually deposed. In 1265, Bishop Bronescombe sought to discover from the abbot by what right the abbey held its appropriated churches; when the abbot did not appear to defend the abbey's rightful claim, the bishop sequestered the churches' revenues and sent men to confiscate property. A great deal of damage was alleged to have been done, and the abbot initiated a civil suit against the perpetrators. Finberg's judgement is that the bishop had acted in an "arbitrary" fashion and had been probably put up to these actions by greedy "subordinates."

¹⁵⁹ O. Robinson, Reg. Bronescombe, vol. 1, p. xxxviii. This particular conflict resulted in mutual excommunications and a long-drawn-out struggle involving the pope, the king, and the Cistercian abbots of England.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xxxviii. Bronescombe only absolved the monks of Buckland on his deathbed, after appeals from the queen and the archbishop of Canterbury. See Christopher Holdsworth, "The Cistercians in Devon," in Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown, eds. C. J. Holdsworth, C. Harper-Bill, J. Nelson (Wolfeboro, N. H.: Boydell Press, 1989), pp. 179-91.

¹⁶¹ In 1284, Bishop Quivil reversed a previous judgement against Plympton Priory by Bishop Walter Bronescombe and released the prior from all suit in the bishop's court at Crediton by reason of his land at Stockleigh. This decision was confirmed by Bishop Edmund Lacy, Apr. 25, 1446 (Reg. Lacy II, pp. 351-52).

Unfortunately for Plympton Priory, within a few years, the bishop was to find fault with them again.

On the 21st of August, 1263, we find in Bishop Bronescombe's register a letter of Walter le Hostiller,¹⁶² canon of Plympton Priory, in which he conceded, through his authority as procurator for the subprior and convent of Plympton, that the bishop should have "peaceful possession or custody" of the priorate of Plympton during its vacancy.¹⁶³ The event which spurred this new dispute was the death of Prior Baldwin on March 26th of the same year.¹⁶⁴ It seems from Walter le Hostiller's letter that in some way the Priory had thwarted the bishop's patronal right of custody and had elected Brother Robert Blund Prior, seemingly without episcopal licence. The bishop imposed sentences of excommunication and interdict on members of the Priory for their transgression. Walter le Hostiller, writing on behalf of the subprior, cantor, cellarer, seneschal, and convent of Plympton, begged that they be absolved from their sentences and promised that at least one of the excommunicates and others from the Priory would appear at Exeter Cathedral on a day appointed by the bishop for the benefit of absolution. In regard to their offences, he submitted himself, the subprior, and convent, to the judgement of the Dean of Wells and the archdeacons of Exeter and Norfolk, as long as they rendered their judgement by the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross (September 14).¹⁶⁵ They would observe their findings "under penalty of 100 silver pounds." Afterwards, once Robert Blund had renounced his election, the Priory would seek a licence for election from the bishop

¹⁶² He had been appointed proctor by Subprior Thomas on August 19 (Reg. Bronescombe, p. 227).

¹⁶³ Reg. Bronescombe, p. 225: "pacificam possessionem vel quasi custodie."

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

and re-elect him, this time canonically, so that the bishop would be able to perform the necessary presentation.¹⁶⁶

A few days later, on August 30, the bishop was entertained at Plympton and several matters of business were discussed and resolved. The canons acknowledged in front of many witnesses that they were required to keep two of their number at the church of St. Kew, and vowed that they would send two canons there immediately. Concerning their sequestered property and personal transgressions, which were not specified, the subprior declared on behalf of the convent that they would pay the bishop 100 marks. On September 2, John Marker the sacristan, Robert Splot the cellarer, and Brother Bricius all received absolution from their sentence of excommunication from the Dean of Exeter at Exeter Cathedral. Two months later, Bishop Bronescombe confirmed the election of Brother Robert Blund as Prior, ordering the archdeacon of Totnes to install him; at the same time he told the subprior and convent that they should be obedient in spiritual matters. He then commanded Master Robert de Polamesforde, custodian of the priory, to assign to the prior the administration of the temporalities and those things committed to him in the time of vacancy.¹⁶⁷ A couple of years later, Bishop Bronescombe forgave the remaining 50 marks owed to him by Plympton Priory.¹⁶⁸

This sequence of events is very revealing about relations between the bishop and the Priory during the time of vacancy. It seems that there were two major infractions here: firstly, the refusal to grant custody of the Priory to the bishop after the death of the prior and secondly, the election of a new prior without episcopal licence. Given that the surviving documents in

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 227.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 227-28.

the episcopal registers do not reveal the complete story of this conflict, the motives and behaviour of the canons of Plympton Priory must remain somewhat elusive. Surely, after their unpleasant dealings with Bishop Bronescombe a short time before during the struggle over the appropriations, they must have known that he was not a man to treat insubordination--whether real or perceived--lightly. In this case, even though the exact details of the canons' transgressions are not known, it is quite clear that they did not accord the bishop his full rights as patron and diocesan after the death of their prior. Canon law dictated that religious houses electing new priors needed the licence of their bishop; English customary law stated that the patron of a house had the right of custody--and enjoyment of the religious house's revenues--during the time of vacancy. Since the canons of Plympton had impeded in some way the bishop's exercise of his custodial rights, and had dared to elect a new prior without the bishop's approval, the negative response of Bishop Bronescombe to their actions should have come as no surprise.

While conflicts between religious houses and bishops are a common feature of medieval religious history, relations between Plympton Priory and the bishops of Exeter seem generally to have been smooth and mutually supportive. The Priory's dealings with Bishop Bartholomew and Bishop Henry Marshal in the twelfth and early thirteenth century are good examples of this. The tensions between Priory and bishop during the episcopate of Walter Bronescombe seem to have been due to unfortunate and impolitic decisions on the part of the canons, as well as to the forcefulness of Bishop Bronescombe's personality. Overall, when examining the history of Plympton Priory, from the latter part of the twelfth century to the mid-thirteenth century, one sees a religious house which generally displayed a good

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 228.

understanding of what was required of it in order to maintain its rights, its lands, and its churches. Ever willing to defend itself in challenges to rights, Plympton Priory usually came out ahead, although not always without concessions and compromises.

Chapter Four: *The Canons and their Place in Clerical Society*

In previous chapters we have examined the close relations--sometimes stormy, often calm--between Plympton Priory and the bishops of Exeter. The focus has, to this point, been on the bishop as patron. In this chapter we will investigate the roles of the Priory in "clerical society"--that is, in the community of clerics in the diocese--and as patron of churches. As a powerful and wealthy ecclesiastical institution, Plympton Priory played a prominent role in one of the activities that most preoccupied churchmen in the Middle Ages, the presentation of clerics to benefices. The fact that Plympton Priory possessed, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, the advowsons of nineteen churches meant that it was frequently called upon to choose clerics to fill its rectories and vicarages. Through an examination of the kinds of men the Priory presented--their origins, education, level of ordination, status, and ties with the bishops of Exeter--we will gain a fuller understanding of the links between the Priory and the secular clergy in the diocese. Another often-neglected aspect of a religious house's responsibilities to the clerical society of its diocese is the participation of the religious in providing titles for ordination. In this chapter, the involvement of Plympton Priory in this process--and its likely motivations for becoming more involved over time--will be considered. Of course, one issue that dominates discussion of the Augustinian canons and their role in clerical society is the extent to which they engaged in the cure of souls. In this chapter, after a discussion of what we

know of the origins of individual canons and their links to the communities, the evidence for the participation of the canons of Plympton, both as beneficed clergy and in less formal roles, in the cure of souls will be explored. The methodology employed has been largely prosopographical in approach; that is, the groups under discussion--the canons and their presentees to benefices and titles--have been analyzed according to geographical origin, careers, and education.¹

The Canons in the Fourteenth Century

The logical starting point of any analysis of the clerical and patronal functions of the canons of Plympton Priory is with what we know of the canons themselves. While the names of priors and some canons do appear in documents preserved in the episcopal registers or in the governmental records of the period, it seems quite likely that the majority of canons remain unknown to us. Still, we can identify numerous canons of Plympton Priory. Some of these names can be gleaned from the ordination lists in the episcopal registers for the periods of 1308-1321 and 1370-1392; these yield the names of thirty-two canons. The ordination lists from the episcopate of Bishop Grandisson (1327-69) have unfortunately been lost, but the names of ten canons appear in his register in other contexts. A few other names appear in other sources during his episcopate.²

¹ For a description of the prosopographical methodology, see George Beech, "Prosopography," in *Medieval Studies: An Introduction*, ed. James M. Powell, 2nd edition (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), pp. 185-226.

² For example, Thomas Tokere and Thomas of Donne appear in the *Calendar of Papal Letters* (CPL vol. 3, 1342-62, pp. 598, 263) and Richard, brother of John Croke att Mille appears in the *Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem*, vol. 11, #615.

Consequently, when the priors are factored in, we know the names of forty-eight of the canons of Plympton Priory during the fourteenth century.³

This is obviously a number much lower than the actual total, as the ordination lists cover only thirty-five years of the century. The number of names for the two periods of surviving ordination records—twelve in thirteen years, and then twenty in twenty-two years—would suggest that there was a fairly constant number of new recruits and men “progressing through the ranks” during the century, although of course the Black Death must have had an impact on the population of the Priory in mid-century.⁴ It is known that there were nineteen canons at Plympton Priory in 1377,⁵ twenty-three in 1434-5,⁶ and twenty-one in 1534.⁷

³ See Table 2.

⁴ It is not known how many of Plympton’s canons died during the raging of the Black Death in the diocese in 1348-9 and 1361. That the Priory did suffer losses is indicated by a reference in Bishop Brantyngham’s register (*Reg. Brantyngham* vol. 2, p. 263). However, it is unlikely that the devastation would have been as severe as at Bodmin Priory, where only two canons survived; otherwise there would most likely have been some record of this in Bishop Grandisson’s register. The rapid turnover of vicars at Plympton’s churches of Tamerton Foliot and Egg Buckland, which were only a few miles from the Priory, suggests that the district did indeed endure substantial fatalities.

⁵ R. J. E. Boggis, *A History of the Diocese of Exeter* (Exeter: William Pollard, 1922), pp. 262-3. Boggis obtained his figure from the unpublished Clerical Subsidy Roll for the Archdeaconry of Totnes. When one compares the number of canons at Plympton with the numbers of religious at other houses in the archdeaconry at this date (1377), it is clear that the other houses had suffered much more than Plympton from the Black Death and its after-effects. The Cistercian abbeys of Buckland and Buckfast had nine and fifteen monks respectively; the Benedictine abbeys at Tavistock and Torre each had eleven, while the small Benedictine priories of Modbury and Totnes were reduced to one monk each. There were nine nuns at Cornworthy Priory. The prior of Plympton had the highest income amongst the religious in the archdeaconry: £160 6s 8d. In comparison, the abbot of Tavistock had a paltry income of £41 19s 11d.

⁶ Oliver *MDE* p. 132

⁷ *MRH*, p. 171. There were nineteen canons at the surrender of the Priory in 1539. Knowles and Hadcock speculate that there were “probably forty” canons at the Priory in the thirteenth century, but there is no clear evidence to support this figure.

Surname evidence for the period 1308-1321 suggests that the majority of the canons ordained in these years were from Devon, and of these most were from communities in the South Hams district of Devon or other areas near Plympton.⁸ However, surname evidence must be treated with caution: as David Levine has discussed, place-name surnames may have referred not to birthplaces, but to the area in which an individual began his career.⁹ By the end of the fourteenth century, the names that appear in the ordination lists of Bishop Brantyngham prove more difficult to decipher. Firstly, over the course of the fourteenth century, as surnames increasingly became heritable, it is less clear whether place-name surnames indicate actual origin in a particular locale.¹⁰ Secondly, none of the surnames contain “de” any longer,¹¹ which adds to the confusion as to whether these names refer to places. For example, did Thomas Marshall come from the village of Marshall in Devon, or did he descend from someone who had once held a

⁸ For example, Leigh, Strashleigh, Englebourne, and Pruston Barton are all in Coleridge hundred, where Plympton Priory held land. Cheverstone (near Kenton) and Exminster were also close to the lands of Plympton’s cell, Marsh Barton. Coryton is near Plympton’s lands and church in the Marystowe/Thrushelton area. Buckland is a few miles north-west of Plympton, and Colebrook is a neighbourhood in Plympton. Forde is in East Devon. Pin may refer to the place-name in East Devon, or to the de Pin family, who were benefactors of Plympton Priory in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (Oliver, Supplement to the MDE, pp. 14-15).

⁹ David N. Levine, “The Origins and Careers of the Canons of Exeter Cathedral 1300-1455,” in Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991), pp. 88-89. While Levine writes specifically about cathedral canons in this article, his warnings about assuming too much from place-name surnames is relevant for any consideration of clerical and religious origins in this period.

¹⁰ Peter McClure, “Patterns of Migration in the Late Middle Ages: The Evidence of English Place-name Surnames,” Economic History Review, xxxii (1979), pp. 167-8. McClure states that “the growth of hereditary naming is not likely to interfere seriously with one’s results until after the middle of the fourteenth century in the south and midlands [of England]...”

position as a marshal? While some surnames seem derived from Devon place-names—for example, Shaldon, Combe, Coryton, and Holland—the majority are not identifiable as such. Perhaps after the Black Death the Priory began to draw recruits from a wider area.

Attempting to assess the social status of the canons is similarly problematic. None bears the names of the most distinguished families in Devon in this period, such as the Courtenays, Pomerays, or Zouches, nor, definitely, of the knightly families of the county such as the Peverells, Giffards, or Bonvills.¹² In the cases of Nicholas de Pin or Thomas of Donne, there may have been connections with the knightly families of these names, but this cannot be considered a certainty. As Lepine has also pointed out, one must not be overly hasty about claiming origins in groups of lower social status based on negative evidence, although people with unknown origins are not likely to have come from the “prominent baronial and knightly families whose pedigrees are best known.”¹³

Sadly, there are no surviving documents which would indicate how frequently popes or bishops of Exeter tried to exert influence upon the Priory to accept their nominees as canons. One example does appear in a papal mandate, however, which would seem to indicate that papal backing did not automatically guarantee a welcome into the Priory. In 1326, Matthew de Mimminglond, prior of Plympton, refused to accept John de Holinp as

¹¹ It is possible that this was due to a change in the editorial practice of F. C. Hingeston-Randolph, editor of the episcopal registers of the diocese of Exeter.

¹² The names of the canons have been compared with the lists of the baronial and knightly families of Devon listed in Sir William Pole's Collections towards a Description of the County of Devon (London: J. Nichols, 1791), pp. 34-71.

¹³ Lepine, “Exeter canons,” p. 95.

a canon, tore up the papal letters ordering him to do so, and threw them in Holinþ's face.¹⁴ As a consequence, John XXII cited Mimminglond to appear before him.

Turning to the issue of the canons and their participation in the cure of souls, an examination of the records of institutions preserved in the episcopal registers indicates that virtually none of the canons served in churches belonging to Plympton Priory as beneficed clergy. Of the institutions from 1257 to 1394, in only one case do we see a canon taking on the cure of souls at a parish church. This was Master Nicholas de Weylonde, whom the Priory presented to the vicarage of Sutton in 1334,¹⁵ a benefice which had been left vacant by Master William de Woollegh, who had decided to become a canon at Plympton Priory.¹⁶ Whatever their involvement in the cure of souls in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries--an involvement for which there is little evidence, either positive or negative--it is clear that in the later thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries the canons of Plympton were appointing secular clergy to the churches in their patronage rather than exercising parochial responsibilities themselves.

Of course, it ought to be noted that over the course of the fifteenth century, a number of canons of Plympton Priory did receive papal dispensations to hold benefices, whether they entailed the cure of souls or not. They were certainly not the only religious in England seeking such dispensations in this period: Heath calculated that between 1447 and 1492, 413 English religious obtained papal dispensations to hold benefices, of whom

¹⁴ *CPL* vol. 2 1305-1342, p. 252.

¹⁵ *Reg. Grandisson* III p. 1305. Master Nicholas likely regretted his institution to Sutton a couple of years later, when a group of parishioners abducted him.

¹⁶ *Reg. Grandisson* I, pp. 466-67, II, pp. 768-9. In 1332, Master William of Woollegh wished to become a canon at Plympton, but he was not given licence to do so by the bishop until 1334.

177 were Benedictine monks, 144 were Augustinian canons, and 75 were mendicants.¹⁷

An example from Plympton Priory is John Dygoun, who, in 1401, obtained a dispensation to hold, “together with his canonical portion in Plympton” any benefice, even if it was usually served by the secular clergy.¹⁸ It is to be doubted whether Dygoun actually intended to leave Plympton and carry out an incumbent’s duties himself, however. He had also received a papal confirmation a few months earlier of an arrangement between him and the Prior John allowing him a private room at the Priory, very specific and generous provisions of food and clothing for himself and his servant, and exemption from mandatory attendance at choir for the recitation of divine office.¹⁹ Indeed, in a dispensation granted to the Priory in 1450, the practical motives behind the presentation of canons to benefices are apparent: the prior had petitioned the pope, explaining that as

they have the patronage of a number of benefices with and without cure wont to be governed by secular clerks, and that if they could present three of their canons for as many of such benefices, and have such three benefices governed by them, it would be a relief to the prior and convent, and provision would probably be better made to the said benefices...²⁰

¹⁷ Peter Heath, The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), pp. 175-78. Heath cites a variety of reasons provided to justify the holding of benefices by religious, including the support of infirm abbots or priors, the need for income during study, and occasionally enthusiasm to undertake pastoral care. Heath assumes that the Augustinian canons were more likely to have been resident in their benefices, but admits that there is little evidence of this.

¹⁸ CPL, vol. 5, 1396-1404, p. 429.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 356. Heath suggests that for some petitioners a benefice was “a concealment of apostasy, a remedy for the inmate who found the Rule too demanding or too lax.” He cites the example of a canon at the Augustinian priory of Ashridge who obtained a dispensation to hold a benefice in 1462 because he was sick and could not take part in the divine services at his house (Heath, English Parish Clergy, p. 176). One suspects that similar motivations might have been present in John Dygoun’s situation.

²⁰ CPL, vol. 10, 1447-1453, p. 62.

From the point of view of the canons, it would seem to be sensible to have the option to eliminate the middlemen--the perpetual vicars and rectors--and maximize the spiritual income for the Priory, pressed for funds as it often seems to have been. With the papal dispensation, they could employ stipendiary priests or celebrate divine worship themselves, as they saw fit.

There are indications, however, that the canons of Plympton personally undertook the celebration of divine worship at some of the Priory's chapels, especially those in or quite near Plympton, at least in this later period. Since these chapels did not constitute benefices, they do not appear in the records of the institutions in the episcopal registers. In documents concerning arrangements between Plympton Priory and its chapels in the fifteenth century--of which more will be said below--there are references to canons being involved in holding services. This was the case at Plympton St. Mary, where canons traditionally celebrated Mass on Sundays and feast days.²¹ At Brixton, the Prior, according to the 1478 agreement, could send either canons or secular priests to preside at services.²² The composition between Tavistock Abbey and Plympton Priory in 1429 specified that the prior could choose either secular or regular chaplains to fulfill the specified duties.²³ In the register of Bishop Lacy we also encounter one Sir William Holdyche, a canon of Plympton Priory, appearing as curate of the chapel of St. John-in-

²¹ Reg. Lacy III, p. 248. In the 1441 composition between the Priory and the parishioners of Plympton St. Mary, it was stated that the Priory would pay for a suitable secular chaplain for the chapel, and in addition a canon would come from the Priory to celebrate divine worship with the chaplain on Sundays and feast days as was the usual and customary practice ("more solito et consueto").

²² H. Montagu Evans, "Wembury: Its Bay, Church, and Parish, Part 1," TDA, vol. 41 (1909), p. 284, Appendix III.

²³ Reg. Lacy IV, p. 270.

Arcubus, in Exeter, in 1454.²⁴ And finally, in the letter of complaint from parishioners at Wembury to Henry VIII in 1535, the petitioners refer to either a priest or a canon coming from Plympton to their chapel on Sundays.²⁵ While these cases do not indicate the scale of the canons' involvement in the cure of souls at their chapels, they do suggest that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was not unusual for the canons to take part in the celebration of divine worship at these locations.

One must also note an episcopal licence granted to the canons of Plympton Priory in 1376-77 to "perform divine services themselves, or employ suitable chaplains to do so, in the chapels dependent on their appropriated churches."²⁶ Of the appropriated churches with such chapels, Sutton had at least two, St. Budeaux and St. Katherine on the Hoe, Marystowe also had two, at Thrushelton and at St. James in the Wode, and Newton St. Cyrs had one at Norton. Other churches appropriated to Plymouth may have had such chapels, but given the often ephemeral nature of their existence, and the fact that many did not survive into modern times, it is impossible to know with certainty how many chapels would have been covered by this licence. One must be cautious, too, in interpreting this licence as an indication of renewed interest in the cure of souls, as the licence does permit the canons to employ others to take their place. The canons may possibly have sought the licence because, in the years following the Black Death, the shortage of priests meant that the canons wanted to be able to step in themselves if the chapels were short-staffed. Or, as with the papal dispensation of 1450 mentioned above, financial motives may well have been a factor: the canons may have wished to garner the

²⁴ Reg. Lacy III, p. 198.

²⁵ Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic, Henry VIII, vol. 9, p. 391, #1147.

income that would normally have gone to chaplains. Even if the canons employed stipendiary priests to take their places at these chapels, they might still have realized some profits from these arrangements.

The matter of the canons' involvement in the cure of souls cannot pass without noting the opinion of J. C. Dickinson, the eminent scholar of the English Augustinian canons. While acknowledging that more work needed to be done in this area, he stated that "it seems clear that to the end of their days the medieval Austin canons never engaged in parish work on any substantial scale though it now [i.e. c. 1340-c.1500] became more common than before. The larger houses might send a brother or two to one of their livings but this was probably more for financial reasons than anything else, and possibly in some cases to give a particular person a break from monastic routine."²⁷ This increased interest in obtaining benefices was definitely present amongst the canons of Plympton Priory in the later Middle Ages, but whether this was an expression of their "original mission" as an order is doubtful. That the Benedictines' desire to obtain benefices exceeded that of the Augustinians would seem to indicate that other factors and motivations were at play. For Plympton Priory, we simply do not have firm evidence one way or the other regarding the participation of the canons in fulfilling the duties of beneficed clergy in the twelfth

²⁶ Reg. Brantyngham I, p. 376.

²⁷ J. C. Dickinson, The Later Middle Ages from the Norman Conquest to the Eve of the Reformation, vol. 2 of The Ecclesiastical History of England (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1979), pp. 287-8. Dickinson noted that the bishops were generally not keen on sending canons away from their houses to benefices, and they tried to require the canon who was the incumbent to bring at least one companion in order to preserve some sort of conventual life. Dickinson believed that these requirements were often disregarded.

and first half of the thirteenth centuries.²⁸ From 1257 to 1394, there is only the one case of a canon of Plympton obtaining a benefice. Of course, the fifteenth-century evidence regarding the chapels suggests that personal service by the canons at these smaller centres of worship may have been occurring for some time. However, as with the issue of the canons and the procuring of benefices in the fifteenth century, it is unwise to reason backwards from these later activities and to assume that they are characteristic of the earlier period, as well.

Men Presented to Benefices by Plympton Priory, 1257-1394

If the canons of Plympton Priory seem not to have served as beneficed clergy in its churches, then whom did the canons present to the benefices in their patronage? Given the reputation of the canons for being more involved in the cure of souls than the monastic orders, it would be helpful to know whether there is any evidence whether the canons made an effort to present better-qualified clergy and those more likely to be resident. One might ask, too, if the canons were liable to episcopal or papal pressure to accept certain candidates for presentation, a trend familiar enough to students of the period. Of course, one must keep in mind that it is usually not clear whether the Priory, when making presentations, had freely chosen well-connected men in order to obtain their good will, or were responding to the requests of clerics seeking benefices. One can often

²⁸ The mid-twelfth century dispute over St. Andrew's, Plymouth, demonstrated that secular clergy served as vicars there at an early point. On the other hand, the canons may have sent brethren to live at St. Kew in the twelfth century. Their presence at St. Kew is not established, however; evidence for it derives from the word of the Cornishmen who complained at the eyre of 1302 and whose testimony was not thoroughly reliable in other respects.

identify cases of the latter, however, when the person who was ultimately presented to a benefice by the canons appears in the episcopal or papal registers as having sought a benefice in the patronage of the Priory.

The episcopal registers for 1257-1394 contain records of 126 presentations to benefices in the patronage of Plympton Priory, excluding those collated by the bishops of Exeter on account of lapse. This does not represent the total number of Plympton's presentations during this period,²⁹ but does seem to represent a high proportion. The number 126 includes several duplicates, as some clerics exchanged benefices or resigned, only to be presented by Plympton Priory to some other benefice. Excluding these duplicates, the number of presentees who can be identified as such is 119. Attempting to ascertain the origins of the presentees brings one up against the same obstacle one encounters while trying to assess the origins of the known canons of Plympton Priory: while place-name surnames from the thirteenth century tend to be rather more reliable indications of origin, over the course of the fourteenth century surnames seem to be less reliable indications of birthplace. While bearing in mind the aforementioned concerns about surname evidence, those place-name surnames which do exist for the thirteenth century do strongly suggest that a sizable proportion of incumbents between 1257 and 1326 originated within the diocese.³⁰ If Moorman's contention is correct, that local men

²⁹ The register for Bishop Quivel from the late thirteenth century is incomplete, and the register of Bishop Bitton, his successor, is missing. F. C. Hingeston-Randolph did manage to construct lists of incumbents and some institutions from existing records nevertheless.

³⁰ Of the 38 names of incumbents which we have for the period 1257-1306, 18 have definite Devon or Cornwall place-name surnames. For the period 1307-1326, 14 of the 31 incumbents have Devon place-name surnames (there were no Cornwall names in this group).

were more likely to remain in their parish,³¹ then this statistic indicates that many of the incumbents at Plympton's benefices were probably resident.³²

The number of incumbents bearing names from areas near the Priory suggests that the Priory played an important role in offering opportunities of support for clergy who were from their region. For example, there were a number of men who were termed "of Plympton," "of Plymstock," "of Torre," "of Sutton." Some may have been employed in the service of the canons; others may have been related to members of the Priory. An example of the latter is Master Walter de Mimminglond, who was obviously a relative of Matthew de Mimminglond, prior in the early fourteenth century. Plympton Priory presented Master Walter to the Rectory of Meavy in 1309 (he had previously been rector of Bickleigh); by the time of his death in 1321, he was rector of Bratton, another benefice in the patronage of Plympton Priory.³³

Another matter one might wish to explore concerning the presentees is the number of pluralists in this group. Pluralism--the possession of several benefices at the same time--was a common feature of the late medieval church, one which had fierce critics and

³¹ Moorman, Church Life, pp. 24-25.

³² They would most likely have been so during the period 1355-69. Bishop Grandisson tried to enforce residency amongst the parish clergy by refusing to issue licences for non-residence after 1355 (Reg. Grandisson III, 1174).

³³ Reg. Stapledon, pp. 234, 298; Reg. Bronescombe pp. 413, 428. Master Walter also held a prebend at Glasney collegiate church in Cornwall. Three other relatives of Prior Matthew--John de Mimminglond the elder, Andrew de Mimminglond, and John de Mimminglond the younger--all received first tonsure in the chapel of the prior on December 9, 1319 (Reg. Stapledon, p. 528). A John de Mimminglond appears as rector of Peter Tavy in 1328, when Bishop Grandisson granted him a licence of non-residence to study for two years (Reg. Grandisson II, p.407).

staunch defenders.³⁴ A pluralist obviously could not personally serve a number of benefices unless they were quite close together; consequently, he would have to employ stipendiary priests to fulfill his duties. However, absentee rectors who were not pluralists would have done this as well. There was also an important distinction between benefices with and without the cure of souls. According to canon law, clerics could hold two “compatible” benefices at the same time without a papal dispensation.³⁵ A dispensation was only required when a petitioner was seeking to hold two or more benefices with cure.

Pluralism was well-entrenched in the diocese of Exeter, although not to the same extent as in some other dioceses. In the list of pluralists prepared for Archbishop Langham in 1366, there were 41 pluralists resident in the diocese of Exeter.³⁶ The figures for other dioceses in the province of Canterbury ranged from 169 for London to five at Llandaff and Rochester.³⁷ The list shows that only four of the Priory’s benefices were held by men who possessed other benefices, and these were all without cure: Nicholas Terrier, the rector of Exminster, Thomas Tuggel, rector of Stoke-in-Teignhead, John Burel, rector of Ugborough, and Ralph de Ryngstede of the diocese of Lincoln, vicar of

³⁴ W. A. Pantin, The English Church in the Fourteenth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press and Mediaeval Academy of America, 1980), pp. 35-43.

³⁵ The Council of Lyons in 1274 had categorized benefices as either entailing the cure of souls or not. Those who held benefices in the former group were rectors, perpetual vicars, archdeacons, and the deans, chancellors, precentors, and treasurers of cathedrals and collegiate churches. Most of those who held benefices without cure--*sinecures* (from *sine cura*)--were canons at cathedrals or collegiate churches. Archbishop Peckham published the decrees of the Council at his Council at Reading in 1279. This canon limiting pluralism was not well-received amongst episcopal and court circles (Heath, Church and Realm, pp. 24-25).

³⁶ C. J. Godfrey, “Pluralists in the Province of Canterbury in 1366,” Journal of Ecclesiastical History, vol. 11 (1960), p. 25.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Sutton.³⁸ All of these pluralists seem to have been members of the Church hierarchy who required financial support. Nicholas Terrier, “licenced in civil law” was a canon of Exeter; Thomas Tuggel was a canon of Exeter and of St. Probus college in Cornwall; John Burel was a canon of Crediton college; Ralph de Ryngstede, in addition to being a canon of Exeter Cathedral, was also a canon of Bangor and Heytesbury.³⁹ There is only a handful of cases between 1257 and 1394 where Plympton Priory presented men who held benefices with cure elsewhere to the churches in their patronage.⁴⁰ Generally, the rules concerning not holding two or more benefices with cure seem to have been well-observed.

Tuggel, Burel, Terrier, and Ryngstede were typical of the pluralists who held Plympton’s benefices. Incumbents who also held prebends at collegiate churches in the diocese and at Exeter Cathedral constituted a significant proportion of the men presented by Plympton Priory: 24 of the 119 incumbents. Many of these seem to have been affiliated with the bishops of Exeter, who possessed the right of patronage over these

³⁸ Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 1251-53, 1255.

³⁹ In 1352, Ralph received papal permission to study for five years, during which he was to be ordained subdeacon and, by the end of the period, priest (CPL vol. 3, p. 433).

⁴⁰ For example, Michael Cergeaux, who was vicar of Sutton in 1390, was rector of St. Ladock at the same time. He resigned St. Ladock for St. Martin’s-by-Looe in 1391. He was also a canon of both Wells and Chichester, and was expecting canonries at Crediton and Deywerton (CPL, vol. 4 1362-1404, p. 376). Stephen de Brawode, who had been presented to the rectory of Stoke-in-Teignhead by the Priory in 1316, was instituted to the rectory of Alphington in 1317-18. He resigned the latter, however, “per constitutionem Johannis Pape XXII contra plurales editam,” a reference to the papal bull *Execrabilis* of 1317 (Reg. Stapledon, p. 184). Richard of Plymstock, who had been holding the rectories of Exminster and Uffculme concurrently, was deprived of them both c.1317, although he seems to have retained the latter (Reg. Stapledon, 216, 315, 323). There are a few other presentees--Walter de Ferrers, Richard of Colyton, Walter de la Slade, Andrew Sedburgh--who may not have resigned their previous benefices before their presentations to

sinecures.⁴¹ Some of these men were or became quite powerful members of the diocesan administration: Roger de Toriz, rector of Blackawton and then Bridestowe, was Dean and then archdeacon of Exeter, as well as a canon of Bosham⁴²; Bartholomew of St. Laurence, Rector of Exminster, similarly was Dean and then archdeacon of Exeter.⁴³ Andrew of Kilkenny, rector of Bridestowe and canon of Crediton, seems also to have been an episcopal official; he resigned in 1282 and Plympton Priory presented his relative, Henry of Kilkenny, to the same benefice.⁴⁴ A canon of Exeter Cathedral who was an incumbent of one of Plympton's benefices later turned out to be very troublesome: Roger of Colyton, precentor and then Dean of Exeter engaged in recurring battles with Bishop Grandisson in the early years of Grandisson's episcopate.⁴⁵ Some incumbents were long-time episcopal colleagues or relatives: Otto Northwood, who was rector of Stoke-in-Teignhead and

benefices in the Priory's patronage, but there is some uncertainty about the dates in these cases.

⁴¹ Collegiate churches--such as Bosham, Crediton, and Glasney--and cathedral chapters provided bishops with useful means for supporting favoured clerics. Of course, kings and popes often wished to assign such benefices to their own clerics. While about a third of the canons of Exeter cathedral were engaged in royal business at some point, only about a dozen were described as royal clerks; similarly, only sixteen canons had links to the Curia (Lepine, "Exeter canons," pp. 117-18). Consequently, few of the Exeter canons who held Plympton's benefices were likely to have belonged to the papal and royal inner circles. The relatively low proportions of royal and papal clerics at Exeter Cathedral were likely due to the small size of the prebends.

⁴² Reg. Bronescombe, pp. 115, 119, 270.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 413, 407.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 119, 194, 338. Henry was a canon of Exeter, as well. Andrew of Kilkenny became a canon of Exeter in 1282 and was later promoted to the the office of dean (Lepine, "Exeter canons," p. 113).

⁴⁵ Reg. Stapledon, p. 191; Reg. Grandisson III, pp. xxxvi-xxxviii, xl-xli; John Le Neve, Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae, 1300-1541, IX Exeter, compiled by Joyce M. Horn (London: University of London/Athlone Press, 1964), pp.4, 7, 12, 23.

treasurer of Exeter before becoming archdeacon of Exeter,⁴⁶ was a nephew of Bishop Grandisson.⁴⁷ William of Nassington, rector of Bratton for a couple of years in the 1330s and canon of Exeter,⁴⁸ moved to the diocese with his brothers Thomas and John after assisting Grandisson in the archdeaconry of Nottingham before his elevation to the see.⁴⁹ Sir Thomas of Stapledon, rector of Exminster⁵⁰, was related to Bishop Stapledon and similarly prospered through his connections.

The number of presentees who were affiliated with the bishops of Exeter indicates either that the bishops appealed to Plympton Priory, a monastic house of their patronage, to assist them in supporting members of the diocesan hierarchy; or, that the canons of Plympton Priory chose to present men who were well-connected and whose connections might prove of use to them. Both scenarios might well be accurate and need not be mutually exclusive.⁵¹ One must keep in mind that Plympton Priory only received relatively small pensions from its rectories.⁵² As a consequence, the function of the

⁴⁶ Reg. Grandisson III, p. 1441; Fasti, pp. 10n, 13, 18n, 33. Otho also held prebends at three collegiate churches.

⁴⁷ Lepine, "Exeter canons," p. 93.

⁴⁸ Reg. Grandisson III, p. 1279; Fasti, pp. 27.

⁴⁹ Lepine, "Exeter canons," p. 93.

⁵⁰ Reg. Stapledon, pp. 216, 372; Fasti, p. 25. He also held prebends at the cathedral, Bosham, and Crediton.

⁵¹ Heath notes that bishops could institute men to benefices in the patronage of others by collating them after six months had lapsed. As well, the "exertion of pressure" upon religious houses eager to receive "episcopal friendship" could result in the presentation of the bishops' nominees. Heath also points out that some religious houses virtually reserved benefices for influential, well-educated men who could be expected to be of assistance to them (Heath, English Parish Clergy, pp. 32, 34).

⁵² According to the Taxatio, the Priory received £6 13s 4d from Bridestowe, £5 6s 8d from Bratton, £5 from Ilsington, and £1 6s 8d from St. Mawgan-in-Pydar (the Priory lost the advowsons of all four in the fourteenth century, but continued to receive pensions from all but Ilsington). Blackawton yielded a pension of £6 13s 4d, Ugborough £8, Exminster £3 6s 8d, and Stoke-in-Teignhead £2.

rectories as venues for patronage of important men may have greatly enhanced their value for the canons of Plympton Priory.

The domination of certain of Plympton's benefices by episcopal officials suggests that an understanding had been reached between the Priory and the bishops, however. For example, Plympton Priory tended to present episcopal officials to the unappropriated churches of Exminster (a town much closer to Exeter than to Plympton), Blackawton, Meavy, Stoke-in-Teignhead, Bratton, Ilsington, and Bridestowe. This is undoubtedly because they were rectories and produced higher incomes than the Priory's vicarages.⁵³ Interestingly, when Plympton Priory divested itself of several advowsons in the fourteenth century--of which more will be said below--the bishops of Exeter acquired those of Bratton, Ilsington, and Bridestowe, churches to which they seem to have had an almost unofficial right of patronage for some time.

Not surprisingly, the greatest number of Masters who appear in the records were those who were rectors of Plympton's episcopally-dominated benefices. Between 1257 and 1394, only three vicars--one of Dean Prior, two of Sutton--are known to have been Masters. It is to be expected that the best-educated of the beneficed clergy would be concentrated amongst the rectories, and would overlap closely with the group consisting of cathedral canons, pluralists, and episcopal officials. The proportion of presentees

⁵³ According to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*, in 1535 the rectory of Ugborough was worth £76 11s 1.5d; the rectory of Stoke-in-Teignhead, £36 15s 10d; the rectory of Exminster, £33; the rectory of Bridestowe, £32 17s 9.5d; the rectory of Bratton, £21 5s .5d; the rectory of Meavy, £13 4s 10.5d. The 1535 figure for Blackawton does not suggest what its value may have been to fourteenth-century rectors, as the Priory appropriated the church in the sixteenth century. The *Taxatio* figure, £6 13s 4d, is suspicious: aside from the questions of the accuracy of the *Taxatio* (see Appendix 2), this is the same amount which appears as the pension the Priory received from the church.

designated as Masters in the episcopal registers in relation to the total number of incumbents remains remarkably consistent from 1257 to 1394: 36% from 1257 to 1307, 37% from 1327 to 1369, and 38% from 1370 to 1394. The only exception was the episcopate of Thomas Stapledon, 1308-1326, when the proportion sank to 25%. This consistency is rather remarkable, given the upheavals of the Black Death and the consequent high turnover of incumbents, not to mention Plympton Priory's loss of the advowsons of five rectories in the fourteenth century.⁵⁴ This may be partly due to an increasing tendency throughout the fourteenth century for rectors to resign and exchange benefices--a trend particularly notable at Exminster in the latter part of the century--while vicars often held onto their benefices for quite lengthy periods. Such exchanges would boost the proportion of rectors within the total number of incumbents.

Of course, not all of the well-educated men of influence who held Plympton's benefices obtained them exclusively by episcopal influence. Some had petitioned popes to reserve benefices in the Priory's patronage for them until vacancies occurred. As is well-known, the issue of papal provisions to benefices was extremely controversial in the fourteenth century: English objections to the practice escalated as the provisions themselves did during the 1340s, resulting in the statute of Provisors of 1351 and its re-issues in 1365 and 1390.⁵⁵ However, Plympton Priory's benefices do not seem to have been subject to papal provision on a large scale, perhaps because few of its benefices

⁵⁴ The Priory itself converted a rectory into a vicarage through its appropriation of Newton St. Cyrs in 1338. If this church is included, then the total number of lost rectories would be six.

⁵⁵ See Peter Heath, *Church and Realm, 1272-1461* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), pp. 125-132, 213-18 for a discussion of the reasons behind the hostility to provisions in England in the fourteenth century.

were very valuable. While there are a number of cases in which petitioners received reservations but never seem to have been presented,⁵⁶ there are a couple of petitioners who did successfully obtain provision to benefices in the Priory's patronage: Richard Norreis, MA,⁵⁷ and John Burel⁵⁸ were successive rectors of Ugborough, the most valuable of Plympton's rectories, according to the *Valor Ecclesiasticus*. That clerics were concerned that benefices already might be reserved by the Apostolic See is demonstrated by an institution record from 1328, when Richard de Wodelonde stated that if it turned out that the church of Stoke-in-Teignhead was reserved, he would take back his previous church, that of St. Ruan Major.⁵⁹

There were several occasions, however, when the canons of Plympton--displaying an unhappiness with papal provisions shared by many of their countrymen--actively resisted presenting the petitioners. For example, in 1357, Innocent VI granted the petition of John

⁵⁶ For example, Henry Giffard, a student at Oxford in 1366, petitioned Urban V for a benefice in the gift of Plympton Priory (*CPP*, pp. 517, 521). Urban granted the request, but there is no record of Plympton ever presenting Giffard to a benefice. Similar cases are those of Richard de Yernsethele in 1329 and William de Worston in 1332, although the latter reservation was made at the request of the Priory itself and the king (*CPL* vol. 2 1305-1342, pp. 309, 373).

⁵⁷ Norreis obtained the reservation of one of Plympton's benefices in 1317-1318 even though he was rector of Wardleigh at the time (*CPL* vol. 2 1302-1342, pp. 159, 173). He was also a canon of Exeter (*Fasti*, pp. 32, 34). There is no record of his institution, but in the pluralists' list of 1366 John Burel stated that his predecessor had been Richard Norreis (*Reg. Grandisson* III, p. 1252).

⁵⁸ Burel's petition was granted by Innocent VI in 1357, on the same day that Burel obtained a benefice in the gift of Shaftesbury Abbey (*CPP*, p. 296). Two years later, he appealed to Innocent again for a benefice in the gift of the bishop of Exeter; at that time he was still waiting to obtain the Plympton Priory benefice (*CPP*, p. 346). By 1366, he was canon of Crediton as well as rector of Ugborough (*Reg. Grandisson* III, p. 1252).

⁵⁹ *Reg. Grandisson* III, p. 1266.

Uppehulle, bachelor of canon and civil law, for the vicarage of Newton St. Cyrs.⁶⁰ The problem was that the benefice was not empty: the Priory had presented William de Molton, possibly illegally.⁶¹ Nothing seems to have come of Uppehulle's provision to Newton St. Cyrs, for in 1363, Sir John de Beauchamp petitioned Urban V on behalf of John Denis for this church, even though the prior and canons were still "unlawfully detaining it".⁶² There is no record of Denis obtaining Newton St. Cyrs, either: the Priory presented Sir Geoffrey Breye in 1365 after it next fell vacant.⁶³

Another revealing feature of the records of institutions is the information provided on the orders of the incumbents. The institution of men not in holy orders and consequently incapable of fulfilling their priestly duties was considered by many churchmen to be a problem for the Church in the later Middle Ages.⁶⁴ While the information is far from complete--many names appear without corresponding designation of their status⁶⁵--one can still determine that a fair number of the men Plympton Priory presented to its

⁶⁰ CPP, p. 303. At the same time he was a canon of Crediton and was litigating at the Curia for a canonry at Exeter; he also held the church of Torbryan, which he said he was willing to resign.

⁶¹ It was alleged in 1363 that after the resignation of John Lynham--who had been presented in 1318--that the benefice had been left empty for so long that it had lapsed to the Apostolic See (CPP, pp. 471-2). Consequently, the Priory's presentation of William de Molton--of which there is no record in Grandisson's register--would have been invalid. However, according to Grandisson's register, the Priory had canonically presented vicars for institution to Newton St. Cyrs in 1342 and 1348-9, so the facts cannot be as they were stated to the pope.

⁶² CPP, pp. 471-2. By this point Uppehulle was the incumbent of Havant in the diocese of Winchester; Denis expected to be presented as a poor clerk to a benefice in the gift of Ramsey Abbey, but he stated he would resign this.

⁶³ Reg. Grandisson III, 1498.

⁶⁴ Moorman, Church Life in the Thirteenth Century, pp. 223-25.

⁶⁵ For the period 1257-1394, fifty-six incumbents appear in the records without levels of ordination designated; sixty-eight have such designations.

benefices were in holy orders.⁶⁶ Of the sixty-eight incumbents for whom we have designations from 1257 to 1394, fifty-four were in higher orders, while fourteen were in minor orders. Even this number is somewhat misleading, however, as some of the incumbents whom Plympton Priory presented as clerks or chaplains soon afterwards received higher orders, as canon law dictated.⁶⁷ For example, in 1318, Plympton Priory presented John de Milletone to the rectory of Peter Tavy while he was still a clerk; he became a subdeacon less than two months later, however.⁶⁸

There was some change in the situation over time. The episcopal registers show that for the period 1257-1326, of the group for whom we have designations, twenty-seven incumbents were in holy orders (of whom sixteen were priests), while only seven were in minor orders. The figures for the years between 1327 and 1394 are rather more problematic, due to the impact of the Black Death. The plague raged during the episcopate of Bishop Grandisson (1327-69), and because of the high mortality rate amongst the parish clergy and the increased need for fully-ordained priests,⁶⁹ we see a consequent increase in the number of priests being presented by Plympton Priory to its benefices: twenty-three.⁷⁰ As we unfortunately lack the ordination lists for Grandisson's

⁶⁶ That is, they were either priests, deacons, or subdeacons. Men who were designated as "clerics" or "chaplains" in the institution records would have been in minor orders (doorkeeper, lector, exorcist, or acolyte).

⁶⁷ Canon law dictated that those instituted to benefices in minor orders had to be ordained priest within a year of their institution (Lepine, "Exeter canons," p. 107).

⁶⁸ *Reg. Stapledon*, pp. 116, 241. John de Milletone was also a consistory court official for the Archdeaconry of Totnes.

⁶⁹ Nicholas Orme, "The Later Middle Ages and the Reformation," in *Unity and Variety*, p. 56. About a third of the parish clergy in the diocese of Exeter died.

⁷⁰ No deacons appear amongst the Priory's presentees in Grandisson's episcopate, and only one subdeacon; there were three chaplains (eleven presentees appear without ordination designations).

episcopate, it is difficult to know how many of these priests were young men who had quickly moved up the orders due to the great demand for their services in the diocese. Certainly, dispensations for ordination of men who were under-age or illegitimate increased significantly in the decades after the Black Death.⁷¹ The canons of Plympton Priory themselves sought a dispensation in 1372 to allow young members of their community to be ordained in their twentieth year, “as the recent plague has caused a serious reduction in the number of priests.”⁷² As a consequence of the difficulties inherent in the institution records, and the occurrence of an extraordinary event such as the Black Death, it is impossible to know whether the canons of Plympton preferred to present men who were in holy orders to their benefices or were simply being conscientious about adhering to canon law. However, the figures which do exist suggest that the problem of unqualified incumbents was perhaps not as significant for the parishioners of Plympton’s benefices as elsewhere.

Titles

A normal feature of the ordination lists which appear in episcopal registers are the “titles” attached to the names of those who are being ordained to the orders of subdeacon, deacon, or priest.⁷³ In theory, the title ensured that the ordinand had “guaranteed financial support to maintain the dignity of his orders” and was a “basic requirement” for those

⁷¹ In the wake of the Black Death, Bishop Grandisson ordained, with special papal permission, 50 illegitimate candidates and 100 men who were underage (Reg. Grandisson III, p. lxvi).

⁷² Reg. Brantyngham II, p. 263.

seeking ordination.⁷⁴ The lists show that clerics who were not already beneficed clergy or religious were ordained either “to their own patrimony”--that is, their own resources were sufficient to support them until they were to receive a benefice--or “to the title of X”, X being an individual, a religious house, or some other corporate entity. The latter form of title constituted the majority by the end of the fourteenth century, a change which has caused some scholars, such as H. S. Bennett, to wonder whether the titles represented actual guarantees of support or were fictions, “paper qualifications” bought by ordinands.⁷⁵ Swanson hypothesized that the increased activity of religious houses in supplying titles indicated a development in diocesan administrative practices: diocesan officials may have “delegated responsibility” to certain religious houses for the examination of candidates, and the titles given these candidates were merely a formality.⁷⁶ Geddes, in her study of Lanthony-by-Gloucester, found that Lanthony’s hospital of St. Mary Magdalene at Dudstone provided titles for far more clerics at the end of the fourteenth century than it could possibly support, suggesting that these titles “meant something other than a guarantee of financial support.”⁷⁷ On the other hand, there were few ordinations to the title of Lanthony Priory in the fourteenth century; she concludes that these “probably were genuine statements of patronage.” Swanson does point out that richer institutions were less likely to provide titles than poorer ones: for

⁷³ R. N. Swanson, “Titles to Orders in Medieval English Episcopal Registers,” in Studies in Medieval History presented to R. H. C. Davis, eds. Henry Mayr-Harting and R. I. Moore (London: Hambledon Press, 1985), p. 233.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 234; H. S. Bennett, “Medieval Ordination Lists in English Episcopal Registers,” in Studies presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson, ed. J. Conway Davies (London, 1957), pp. 28-29.

⁷⁶ Swanson, “Titles,” p. 355.

example, Norwich Cathedral offered few titles, whereas a nearby hospital offered hundreds.⁷⁸

The evidence from the ordination lists of the episcopal registers for Exeter reveals that Plympton Priory's practices concerning titles changed over the course of the fourteenth century. As the ordination records for the episcopate of Bishop Grandisson (1327-1369) have unfortunately not survived, we must rely on lists covering the years 1308-21 and 1370-94. These two sets of lists reveal that in the earlier period, Plympton Priory provided the titles for the ordination of only four men: William de la Hulle (or Hill), William de Limestone, Henry de Porta, and Robert de Raddon.⁷⁹ Only one of these, William de la Hulle (or Hill), was ever presented by the Priory to a benefice.⁸⁰ Upon investigating the identities of others who were involved in the process from 1308 to 1321, it appears that certain religious houses, such as Buckfast Abbey and Tavistock Abbey, were fairly active in providing titles. However, in the diocese of Exeter, the provision of titles seems to have been dominated in this earlier period by the beneficed clergy and by the laity.

However, by the episcopate of Bishop Thomas Brantyngham at the end of the century, the situation had changed along the lines described by Swanson. Lay involvement in the giving of titles seems to have virtually vanished from the Diocese; the ordinands by this point received titles only from religious houses. Certain houses such as Launceston and

⁷⁷ Geddes, p. 355.

⁷⁸ Swanson, "Titles," p. 242.

⁷⁹ Reg. Stapledon, pp. 234, 505, 525, 533. Robert of Raddon (a place where Plympton Priory held land) may have had some kind of more personal connection with the Priory, as he received first tonsure in the chapel of the prior in 1310 (Reg. Stapledon, p. 234).

⁸⁰ Reg. Stapledon, pp. 234, 467.

Tavistock continued to give titles to large numbers of ordinands, but others, such as Plympton Priory, had by this point become more active participants. From 1370 to 1394, Plympton Priory provided titles for eighteen ordinands. The records of institutions from Bishop Brantyngham's register show that Plympton Priory did not present any of these men to benefices in their patronage. Five ordinands did obtain benefices in the diocese, but were presented by other patrons. This lack of subsequent support on the part of the Priory would seem to indicate that titles had indeed lost, as Swanson contends, much of their original meaning for clergy and Priory alike. However, what to make of the notable increase in numbers of titles provided by Plympton Priory by the end of the fourteenth century? If wealthier houses tended not to be very active in this procedure, what does this increase signify? What about Bennett's suggestion that poorer houses may have raised funds by charging ordinands for titles?⁸¹

One should keep in mind that compared to other houses in the diocese--such as the poor Benedictine house of Tywardreath--Plympton Priory was still not a major supplier of titles to ordinands in the latter part of the century. Also, as wealthy as a house might be, it might still fall into financial difficulties, or simply wish to take advantage of a source of income which required few obligations on its part. We know that the Priory's finances were not in a healthy state by 1329 and again in 1331, when Bishop Grandisson ordered an inquiry into them.⁸² Certainly, Plympton Priory would have incurred heavy legal expenses in the latter half of the fourteenth, when it was involved in several long-running

⁸¹ Bennett, "Medieval ordination lists," p. 29.

⁸² Reg. Grandisson I, pp. 231-2 and II, pp. 620-1.

disputes with the Crown.⁸³ Perhaps, then, the increase in the number of titles over the course of the fourteenth century signifies a growing awareness on the part of the Priory as to the monetary benefits which might stem from this process. It is hard to see why the religious houses would provide more and more titles over time if they were doing so only at the request of the bishops. No matter how cordial relations might be between bishop and religious, it would seem more likely that financial incentives existed. This would explain the explosion of titles and the takeover of the process by religious houses from the laity.

Plympton Priory, then, played the role of intermediary in the religious life of the diocese, possessing the desired goals--titles and benefices--of aspiring clerics and the power to help or hinder the clerics in their attainment. Of course, as we have seen, the canons of Plympton Priory did not have perfect autonomy in terms of these decisions. Their actions and choices belonged in the nexus of episcopal and papal agendas as well. The consequent diminution of their free choice in regard to choosing incumbents may have been seen by the canons as an acceptable sacrifice, however, if the well-connected clerics selected by the bishops and the popes proved to be of assistance to them.

These commonplace activities of assisting with ordinations and presenting to benefices were the main points of contact between the Priory and the beneficed or hoping-to-be-beneficed clergy of the diocese. Despite the fact that the canons of Plympton themselves were clerics, too, and could, with papal dispensation, undertake the same duties as their presentees, the evidence for Plympton is that this possibility did not

⁸³ These disputes concerned the lands of Talkogon and Trevynek and the claiming of the patronage of Plympton Priory by Edward III.

attract the canons in the second half of the thirteenth and in the fourteenth centuries. Only in the fifteenth century did the canons begin to seek out such dispensations in a significant way. Our glimpses of the canons serving at chapels near the Priory suggests that it would be wrong simply to assume that if the canons did not fill their own benefices they did not engage in the cure of souls at any level. The interest of the canons in making the most of their *spiritualia*, and their relations with the parishioners of churches and chapels, will continue to be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Five: *The Priory, its Churches and Chapels, and its Relations with its Parishioners*

After having discussed in the previous chapter how the possession of *spiritualia* linked Plympton Priory with clerical society, we may now consider other implications of the Priory's rights to churches and their income. This chapter investigates two different but inter-connected themes: first, the attempts by the Priory to exploit its spiritual income through appropriation, augmentation, and timely alienation; and secondly, the voicing of lay discontent at the Priory's governance of its churches and chapels. Over the course of the fourteenth century and into the fifteenth, the parishioners came to develop a sense of local identity and a desire for local control. For the most part we will explore how these aspirations manifested themselves in regard to the gaining of greater independence for chapels dependent on the Priory, but on occasion--as at St. Kew and Plymouth--lay dissatisfaction with the overlordship of the Priory spread into both the spiritual and the temporal spheres. Consequently, no artificial distinction will be made here between events in these two realms, even though the primary focus will be on the Priory's exploitation of its income from *spiritualia*, its role in the cure of souls, and the perceptions and reactions of the laity to these.

This chapter throws into high relief the competing conceptions of the purpose of *spiritualia*: for the laity, churches and chapels were primarily meant to be sites of divine worship, and the main duty of their incumbents was to attend to the spiritual needs of the parishioners. Whatever the state of pastoral care in these parishes in earlier times, by the

later Middle Ages significant segments of the lay population came to perceive it as inadequate. From the point of view of the Priory, churches and chapels provided income that would support the canons in their duties of reciting the Office and celebrating Masses in the conventual church. The exploitation of spiritualities--that is, the attempts to derive greater incomes from them--did not necessarily indicate an indifference on the part of the canons towards the state of pastoral care in the parishes under their jurisdiction. Indeed, it is due to the limitations of the sources that we tend to hear only of the complaints and the tensions between parishioners and Priory; lesser disputes may have been settled peacefully by the Priory and laity without resort to bishop or Crown. However, it is hard to escape the impression that a gap was widening between laity and canons in regard to their expectations of what the Priory was obligated to do for the parishioners. While the canons were pre-occupied with issues of management, of defending their rights to their *spiritualia* and making the most of them financially, the laity were beginning to consider their churches and chapels the *loci* of community identity.

Spiritualia: Appropriations, Alienations, and Augmentation

One of the most remarkable features of Plympton Priory was the large proportion of its income--slightly more than a half--which it derived from spiritual sources.¹ As we have

¹ Plympton Priory had by far the highest income from *spiritualia*--£454 7s 2.5d--of any Augustinian house in England for which we have definite income figures. The next closest was the famous pilgrimage house, Walsingham Abbey, which received £301 14s 10d. Unfortunately, such wealthy houses as Bristol, Cirencester, St. Batholomew's-Smithfield, Osney, St. Osyth, and Waltham do not have income breakdowns in the Valor, and so consequently it would be risky to assume that the value of Plympton's *spiritualia* exceeded those of these houses (Robinson, Geography, pt. 2, Appendix 14, pp. 382-388).

seen in previous chapters, Plympton, like many other Augustinian houses,² benefited from the twelfth-century lay movement to renounce ownership of churches, as well as from the generosity of its episcopal patrons, who were well-placed to transfer the advowsons of churches and pensions to the Priory. We have examined, too, the importance of appropriation for religious houses who wished to make the most of their spiritual endowment. Now let us consider how Plympton Priory met the difficulties of the fourteenth century with attempts to capitalize on its spiritual inheritance.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century, Plympton Priory had appropriated the churches of St. Kew, Sutton, Tamerton Foliot, Marystowe, Maker, Egg Buckland, and Dean Prior. This can be discerned by an examination of the institutions to benefices recorded in the earliest surviving episcopal records for the diocese, those of Bishops Walter Bronescombe, Peter Quivel, and Thomas Bitton. In the instances when the Priory is listed as presenting someone to a rectory, it is clear that the church has not been appropriated. In the instances when the prior presented someone to a vicarage, the church has been appropriated and hence converted from a rectory into a perpetual vicarage. In the cases of Dean Prior and Egg Buckland, as we have seen, there were difficulties with the canons' initial attempts to appropriate these churches, but these were overcome shortly thereafter: Bishop Bronescombe allowed the appropriation of Dean Prior on October 15, 1261,³ and by 1275 and 1283 respectively Plympton Priory was presenting vicars to Egg

² Robinson calculated that according to the *Valor*, 36% of the income of the entire order in England in 1535 came from *spiritualia* (Robinson, *Geography*, p. 172).

³ *Reg. Bronescombe*, p. 65.

Buckland and St. Kew.⁴ As there is no record of Plympton Priory attempting to obtain papal permission to appropriate St. Kew before the troubles of the 1260s, the appropriation may well have occurred before the surviving papal registers begin in 1198.

Similarly, no entries survive from the thirteenth-century episcopal registers to indicate efforts by the canons to appropriate the churches of Sutton, Maker, Marystowe, and Tamerton Foliot. With Sutton, we have evidence that the Priory was presenting vicars from a quite early period, the decades immediately after the foundation of the Priory in 1121.⁵ There is no such evidence for the other three churches, but they were likely appropriated at an early stage as well. We first encounter presentations of vicars at Tamerton Foliot, Marystowe, and Maker in 1283-4, 1266, and 1264 respectively.⁶

That Plympton Priory had indeed appropriated all of these churches by March, 1335, is indicated by an episcopal confirmation of the Priory's *spiritualia* issued that year by Bishop Grandisson.⁷ Grandisson, exasperated by the Priory's indebtedness, had made a visitation to the house and had noted Plympton's possession of numerous *spiritualia*.⁸ Subsequently he summoned a representative of the Priory to come to him and prove

⁴ Ibid., pp. 134, 354. There are no entries in the episcopal registers for these two churches as for Dean Prior indicating when exactly Plympton Priory regained possession of them after the sequestration of 1261. Similarly, there are no records indicating when the bishops of Exeter accepted or allowed their appropriations by Plympton.

⁵ EEAE #23n..

⁶ Reg. Bronescombe, pp. 357, 154, 152.

⁷ Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 775-776.

⁸ Ibid., p. 775. Although the bishop issued a mandate for visitation on Sept. 29, 1328, this was revoked the next day (Reg. Grandisson I, pp. 403-4). As Grandisson is known to have been at Plympton on November 18, 1330 (Reg. Grandisson III, p. 1526), this is most likely the time when the visitation occurred, even though no record of a mandate survives. Bishop Grandisson also established a commission of inquiry into the state of the Priory on July 24, 1331 on account of its indebtedness and poor government. He stated

Plympton's title to its appropriated churches, chapels, pensions, and portion of tithes. All of these were listed, the churches being grouped with their dependent chapels⁹ and the pensions being listed by value.¹⁰ The sub-prior (and later prior) Robert Forde appeared as Proctor, and proved to the Bishop that Plympton Priory legitimately owned and possessed its *spiritualia*, with the knowledge and approval of the bishops of Exeter, from time out of mind.¹¹ He obviously established his case, as Bishop Grandisson decreed in a definitive sentence that Plympton Priory had legitimate title to all of its churches, chapels, pensions, as well as its portion of tithes.

The timing of the confirmation may not have been entirely unrelated to Bishop Grandisson's plan to create and endow a new collegiate church at Ottery St. Mary in East Devon. Grandisson had begun his negotiations to buy the manor and church of Ottery St.

that in the months since his visit, the mismanagement had gotten worse rather than better (Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 620-1).

⁹ The churches and chapels are: the conventual church of Saints Peter and Paul, Plympton, with its dependent chapels of Plympton St. Mary and Plympton St. Thomas, Brixton, Wembury, Plymstock, Shaugh, and Sampford Spiney; the church of St. Anthony-in-Roseland with the chapel of St. Gerrans; St. Kew and Maker; Sutton with the chapel of St. Budeaux; Egg Buckland and Dean; Tamerton Foliot with its chapel of Martynstowe; Marystowe with its chapels of Thrushelton and St. James in the Wode (also known as St. James Inchewode). The cell of Marsh Barton is referred to as a chapel. The chapel of St. John-in-Arcubus, Exeter, is omitted from this list, even though it appeared in the Taxatio of 1291 as providing the Priory with 20s a year (Reg. Bronescombe, p. 452). There is a copy of this confirmation in the British Library which differs from the copy in the episcopal register only in that it omits the chapel of Sampford Spiney (BM Add Ch. 67571).

¹⁰ The annual pensions were: 12 marks from Ugborough, 5 marks from Exminster, 40s from Newton St. Cyrs, 100s from Ilsington, 40s from Stoke-in-Teignhead, 10 marks from Blackawton, 10 marks from Bridestowe, 2 marks from St. Mawgan-in-Pydar, 1 mark each from Bratton, Meavy, and St. Just-in-Roseland, and five pounds of wax from Peter Tavy. The payment due to the Priory from the prebend of each canon of Exeter Cathedral who died or became a member of a religious order was also mentioned. The one portion was the moiety of the tithes--excepting those from episcopal demesne--at Gerrans.

Mary in January, 1334, and on December 15, 1337, the king granted a licence for the foundation of the new collegiate church.¹² On January 12, 1338, the Bishop appointed the first warden and canons of Ottery St. Mary, and soon after they petitioned him for financial assistance.¹³ He obliged by allowing them to appropriate Ilsington church in May, 1338, and by writing the Pope for confirmation of the appropriation.¹⁴ Plympton Priory had possessed the advowson of this church since 1186x1188,¹⁵ and had received a pension of £5 a year from it.¹⁶ One might suspect that the Bishop, in asking the Priory to prove its rights to its spiritual possessions, had been hoping that the canons would fail to do so in regard to certain of its churches or pensions. Should this have occurred, then the Bishop could have claimed them for his new foundation.

Still, Grandisson had not challenged the Priory's possession of any of its churches, so why would he have them give up Ilsington, and--more to the point--why would Prior John of Englebourne and the canons of Plympton agree to give up one of their churches? As we have seen, they had staunchly defended their rights to their *spiritualia* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. What could account for their change of attitude now? And moreover, why would the prior of Plympton suddenly decide, as he stated in his letter to

¹¹ Reg. Grandisson II, p. 776. Forde produced letters, sworn testimony, and various other documents to support his case.

¹² John Neale Dalton, The Collegiate Church of Ottery St. Mary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), pp. viii, 263n.

¹³ Ibid., p. 263n.

¹⁴ Reg. Grandisson I, pp. 133-137. Pope Clement VI confirmed the appropriation in 1343.

¹⁵ Oliver MDE #14.

¹⁶ "Taxatio of Pope Nicholas IV," Reg. Bronescombe, p. 459.

the Pope supporting the appropriation, that the advowson of Ilsington was useless (“inutile”) to the Priory?¹⁷

The situation is complicated further upon consulting the Calendar of Patent Rolls, which reveals that a mere few months after Grandisson’s confirmation of the Priory’s *spiritualia*, the king issued a licence to the Priory to alienate in mortmain the advowsons¹⁸ of the churches of Ilsington, Stoke-in-Teignhead, Bridestowe, Bratton, and Peter Tavy.¹⁹ Why would the prior and canons give up the advowsons of all these churches? One reason may have been that as long as they continued to receive their pensions, the canons were willing to assist the Bishop, their patron. For indeed, the appropriation document for Ilsington specified that the Priory would continue to receive its £5 a year.²⁰ One must also not rule out the possibility that some understanding existed between Bishop Grandisson and the canons of Plympton, involving either unrecorded payments or concessions which would have served as incentives for them to help the Bishop in his project. The Priory may have been quite willing to bargain, given its difficulties with debt in this period,²¹ a fact which caused Grandisson great annoyance.²²

¹⁷ Reg. Grandisson I, pp. 133-137

¹⁸ As advowsons of churches were considered in England to be temporal property, they fell under the limitations on conveyances of property to religious houses imposed by the Statute of Mortmain of 1279 (Kathleen Wood-Legh, Studies in Church Life in England under Edward III [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934], p. 127).

¹⁹ CPR, Edward III vol. 3, 1334-1338, p. 114.

²⁰ Reg. Grandisson I, pp. 133-137. The Priory stopped getting its pension from Ilsington at some point in the next two hundred years, as it does not occur in Bodl. Tanner MS Tanner 342 f. 178v (see Table 1) or in the Valor Ecclesiasticus.

²¹ Other references to the debts and neediness of the Priory in the 1330s--aside from those relating to the visitation of 1331--can be found in Reg. Grandisson I, 231-2, II, 775-6, and II, 872-3. Grandisson had to deal with financial problems and debts at most of the religious houses in the diocese in the 1330s and 1340s, which he tended to blame on

The new prior may also have wished to re-establish good relations with Grandisson after an incident in 1329 which resulted in the imposition of episcopal sanctions on the Priory and the Bishop's collation of a poor clerk to the church of Ilsington.²³

Bratton, Bridestowe, and Stoke-in-Teignhead were, as will be recalled, some of the "episcopally-dominated" benefices in Plympton Priory's patronage. Consequently, the canons may have felt that by handing over the advowsons, while retaining the pensions, they were not losing anything but merely acknowledging a *fait accompli*. And in the cases of Bratton and Bridestowe, Plympton Priory was still receiving pensions from them in 1535.²⁴ For some reason, the alienation of the advowson of Stoke-in-Teignhead seems not

maladministration. Finberg suggests that the houses may just as easily have been suffering from "deep-seated economic ills," however (Finberg, Tavistock Abbey, p. 262).

²² Relations do not seem to have been good between the Priory and Bishop Grandisson from 1328 to 1332, probably because the priorate was in the hands of the rather difficult Matthew de Mimminglond in these years (he died in 1332). One suspects that the responsibility for the mismanagement of the Priory fell on his shoulders. Perhaps during the episcopate of Bishop Stapledon--who, as treasurer for the Crown, was often absent from the diocese-- Mimminglond came to feel that he had the freedom to run the Priory as he wished without interference. Grandisson was a much more dedicated shepherd to his flock, however, and had a low tolerance for what he perceived to be moral laxity.

²³ Acting on a papal mandate, Grandisson had summoned the prior and canons to his presence to hear witnesses swear to the good character of Richard Langacre, a poor clerk, and to present any reason for not proceeding with his provision to a benefice in their gift (Reg. Grandisson I, p. 439). They did not appear on the specified date. Grandisson sent them a very strongly-worded letter, citing them to come to him for the imposition of sanctions (Reg. Grandisson I, pp. 459-59). In May, 1329, he collated Richard Langacre to the rectory of Ilsington (Reg. Grandisson I, p. 500). Presumably the Priory had not bothered to present anyone within six months of the previous incumbent's death. In 1331, John XXII issued a mandate to Grandisson and two canons of Exeter to give Langacre the church of Ilsington, as the original provision of it as a poor clerk's benefice was rendered invalid by the addition to the rector's share of 2 marks of the 100s pension due to Plympton (CPL vol. 2, 1305-1342, p. 360). On the same day the pope remitted to Langacre the first two years' fruits of the benefice (CPL, vol. 2 1305-1342, p. 368).

²⁴ Oliver MDE #28. The amounts--£5 6s 8d from Bratton, and £6 13s 4d from Bridestowe--are the same as those which appear in the Taxatio of 1291. Pensions could sometimes be difficult to collect, however: in 1384-5 Plympton Priory won a court

to have proceeded, as indicated by presentations made by Plympton Priory to the benefice later on in the fourteenth century. It is not clear whether the incumbent of Peter Tavy continued to give the Priory five pounds of wax a year; perhaps because this was a pension paid in kind, the recorders of the Valor Ecclesiasticus did not bother to list it. Interestingly, at around the same time that Plympton Priory was alienating advowsons to the Bishop of Exeter, it seems that the canons alienated one to a secular lord: by 1328-9, the advowson of the Cornish church of St. Mawgan-in-Pydar had passed to the Arundell lords of Lanherne.²⁵ In this case as well, the Valor Ecclesiasticus shows that the Priory continued to receive its pension of £1 6s 8d until the Dissolution.

The fact that Plympton Priory made over advowsons not just to Bishop Grandisson but to the lords of Lanherne, both within the span of a few years, both at a time of serious indebtedness, strongly suggests that the Priory received some sort of financial benefits from these concessions. The transfer of advowsons by religious houses, who might not have taken the opportunity to fully make use of them, was by no means an unusual procedure at this time: as R. N. Swanson has pointed out, "alienations were common in

judgement against the rector of Bratton, Richard Bolham, over unpaid moneys owed to them. The judges ordered Bishop Brantingham to sell the fruits and revenues of the church, which the bishop had sequestered, in order to make up the 23 marks owed to the Priory, as well as 5 marks in damages. See Year Books of Richard II: 8-10 Richard II 1385-1387, eds. L. C. Hector and M. J. Hager (Cambridge, Mass.: Ames Foundation, 1987), pp. 148-151 and L. C. Hector, "Reports, Writs and Records in the Common Bench in the Reign of Richard II," in Medieval Legal Records edited in Memory of C. A. F. Meekings, eds. R. F. Hunnisett and J. B. Post (London: HMSO, 1978), pp. 280-82.

²⁵ Reg. Grandisson III, pp. 1272, 1314, 1449. In the Cornwall Record Office, there is a group of receipts issued by David Berce, prior of Plympton, to the rector of St. Mawgan-in-Pydar for payment of the installments of the pension in 1498-99 (CRO AR 16/9-16/14).

late medieval England.”²⁶ And of course, one must be cautious about assuming that because the Crown issued licences for alienation or appropriation these were necessarily implemented. As we have seen in the case of Stoke-in-Teignhead, the parties involved may have decided for some reason not to take the process further.²⁷

One way in which Bishop Grandisson may have hoped to compensate Plympton Priory for the loss of these advowsons was by allowing it to appropriate several churches. Oddly, even though the Priory had alienated the advowson of Bridestowe church to Grandisson in 1335, in October, 1338, the king granted the Bishop a licence to alienate in mortmain this same advowson to the Priory and to allow the Priory to appropriate Bridestowe.²⁸ At the same time, the king allowed Grandisson to alienate the advowson of Bratton to the chapter of Exeter Cathedral and that of Ilsington--although this was really more of a confirmation by this point--to Ottery St. Mary.²⁹ However, only the transfer of Ilsington, which we know to have occurred by this point, actually seems to have come about. There are no further records in the fourteenth century of Plympton Priory making presentations to Bridestowe church, and the fact that the pension they received was the same amount in 1535 as it had been in 1291 indicates that no appropriation occurred.³⁰ As well, the

²⁶ R. N. Swanson, Religion and Devotion in Europe, c. 1215-c. 1515 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 246.

²⁷ Another example of a failed alienation occurred in 1292, when Bishop Bitton obtained a royal licence to give Plympton Priory the advowson of a moiety of the church of St. Gerrans, Cornwall (CPR, Edward I, vol. 2, p. 496). There is no indication that this indeed was implemented.

²⁸ CPR, Edward III, vol. 4 1338-1340, p. 151 (also MDE #22). The royal licence stated that this alienation would allow for the support, performance, and increase of divine worship and other works of piety at the Priory.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 151-152.

³⁰ Appropriations, as one would expect, usually resulted in substantial increases of income. For example, when Plympton Priory appropriated the church of Blackawton,

institution records from the episcopal registers for the remainder of the fourteenth century indicate that the chapter of Exeter did not make presentations to Bratton church; rather, the bishops collated men themselves to the benefice. Consequently, it would seem that Grandisson's plan to assist Plympton by allowing the canons to regain and appropriate Bridestowe came to naught.

However, another attempt at appropriation in 1338 was more successful. Prior John of Englebourne and the canons petitioned Grandisson to allow them to appropriate their church of Newton St. Cyrs on account of the serious financial difficulties they were experiencing.³¹ The document illustrates the range of reasons religious houses might supply to justify why they needed extra income. The canons stated that they were being persecuted by several temporal lords and their bailiffs; they were greatly burdened by the cost of providing hospitality to travellers, a fact made worse by their proximity to the port of Plymouth; and finally, they needed to repair their cell at St. Anthony-in-Roseland, which had been damaged by fire during a raid by the French. Grandisson and the dean and chapter of the cathedral gave their consent to the appropriation of Newton St. Cyrs and its dependent chapel of Norton on May 25, 1338.³² That the appropriation went ahead is indicated by the increase in income--from £2 in 1291 to £15 in 1535--and the

from which it had previously obtained a pension of £6 13s 4d, its income from the benefice rose to £26 13s 4d in 1535.

³¹ Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 872-3.

³² Ibid.

fact that when the Priory next made a presentation to the church of Newton St. Cyrs, the canons were presenting a vicar rather than a rector.³³

This was not the only attempt by Plympton Priory to increase its spiritual income in this period. As the town of Plymouth expanded and prospered in the later Middle Ages, so the Priory could not help but be aware of the growth in titheable products and income in the parish. However, because of the arrangement with the perpetual vicars of St. Andrew, Plymouth, the vicars received tithes from the mills, fisheries, increase of animals, as well as the income of the parishioners.³⁴ The canons repeatedly asked Bishop Grandisson to augment their portion of the tithes,³⁵ which presumably was limited to the tithes of grain--an income source which would decline as the town grew. On October 10, 1333, the Bishop ordered an inquiry to be established at Plymouth church--at which clergy, laity, and the better-known residents of Plymouth would be present--to investigate the shares of the tithes due to the vicar and the Priory.³⁶ At the same time, he summoned the prior and canons to him and to bring evidence of their rights to the church and asked the vicar, William of Woollegh, who at this time was in the process of becoming a canon at Plympton,³⁷ to show up as well. The inquiry seems not to have yielded results

³³ Reg. Grandisson III, p. 1335. Subsequent presentations in Grandisson's register are to the vicarage rather than to the rectory of Newton St. Cyrs (Reg. Grandisson III, pp. 1375, 1498).

³⁴ Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 714-15.

³⁵ Grandisson refers to the augmentation having been demanded frequently and incessantly by the canons ("augmentacionem frequenter et assidue postulatam"). Ibid.

³⁶ Reg. Grandisson II, p. 715.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 674. Woollegh resigned by December, 1334, when Master Nicholas de Weylonde, canon of Plympton, was instituted (Reg. Grandisson III, p. 1305).

satisfactory to the Priory, however, as they had initiated a cause against William of Woolleigh over the augmentation of the portion by January, 1333-34.³⁸

Nothing more is heard of these proceedings--William of Woolleigh died in the interim--until September, 1347, when Pope Clement VI sent a mandate to the dean of Exeter asking him to confirm the arrangement concerning the portion at Plymouth. This letter stated that William of Crowthorn "by special commission from the bishop," had increased the portion of the tithes to the Priory, and that afterwards the bishop had added fifty marks (£33 6s 8d) to this and had taxed the vicarage.³⁹ William "acquiesced," and he and one or two of his successors made the payments to the Priory. Still, the most recent incumbent, Robert de Middelond, and Thomas of Donne, canon of Plympton, continued to engage in litigation at the Roman curia over the augmentation. Despite this situation, the Pope agreed to the Priory's request to confirm the arrangement.

Robert de Middelond's attempt to thwart Plympton Priory's attempt to increase its portion from Plymouth resulted in more difficulties for the Priory, however. At the request of Robert, Clement VI had issued a mandate to the Abbot of Buckland and Walter de Botriax, a canon of Exeter Cathedral, to sequester the fruits of the vicarage of St. Andrew, Plymouth, until the issue had been resolved once and for all at the curia.⁴⁰ These two men displayed a reluctance to yield to the Priory a sequestered quarterly payment of 12.5 marks even after the case had been decided at Rome. Bishop Grandisson was

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 734. Grandisson committed the cause to Thomas of Nassington, archdeacon of Exeter, and William of Crowthorne, another episcopal official.

³⁹ *CPL* vol. 3, 1342-1362, p. 263. The sum was to be paid to the Priory in portions at four times during the year.

⁴⁰ *Reg. Grandisson II*, p. 1071.

enraged at this violation of the episcopally-approved augmentation, and cited the two men to appear before him and explain their actions.⁴¹

Ultimately, it seems that some sort of compromise was reached whereby Plympton Priory received an increase in the amount it received from Plymouth, although not as much as Bishop Grandisson had tried to obtain for them. According to the Valor Ecclesiasticus, Plympton Priory received £23 in 1535 from the church of Sutton, a sum which consisted of £15 from tithes and an annual pension of £8 from the vicar.⁴² The figures which appeared in the Taxatio of 1291 were £5 6s 8d from the church and £4 6s 8d from the vicar of Sutton. These latter amounts must be viewed with caution, however, given the unreliability of information on appropriated churches in the Taxatio.⁴³

Challenges to the Authority of the Priory

During the fourteenth century, the desire for greater local autonomy which was growing all over England at this time manifested itself in the diocese of Exeter in a number of ways. Firstly, the citizens of towns which were monastic boroughs--that is, which had monasteries as their lords--began to chafe at the restrictions imposed on them. Secondly, parishioners who attended chapels of ease--chapels dependent on a mother church--began to agitate for full parochial rights for their chapels, including the performance of the Mass and the creation of burial grounds. Connected to the latter trend was an increased willingness on the part of parishioners to complain to the courts and to

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² In addition, Plympton received £9 in tithes from Sutton's dependent chapel of St. Budeaux.

⁴³ See Appendix 2.

the bishops about neglect on the part of those charged with their spiritual care. As R. N. Swanson has pointed out,⁴⁴ between the Black Death and the Reformation, challenges by parishioners of chapels to the rights of the mother church increased and court cases became common. According to Swanson, this indicates a growth of “local loyalty” and the slow evolution of “popular control” at the parochial level.⁴⁵

St. Kew

An early example of this popular willingness to challenge the authority of religious institutions in the diocese was the court case brought by a group of Cornishmen against Plympton Priory in the first years of the fourteenth century. The church in question was St. Kew, which has been previously discussed as the source of troubles for Plympton in the 1260s.⁴⁶ As has been mentioned in Chapter One, at the Cornish Eyre of 1302 a group of Cornishmen complained that the prior of Plympton was not fulfilling his duties to the church of St. Kew.⁴⁷ According to Cornish tradition, King Edgar had given the church to the canons with two carucates of land and a hundred shillings’ rent “for the purpose of supporting two of them in perpetual residence at Lanow in order to offer hospitality, distribute alms, and celebrate divine service for the souls of the donor and his

⁴⁴ R. N. Swanson, Church and Society in England in the Later Middle Ages, p. 219.

⁴⁵ Other indications of growing popular control in the period between 1350 and 1540 are the willingness of parishioners to criticize priests at episcopal visitations, the right of parishioners to nominate the chaplain if their priest were non-resident, the establishment of chantries and the retention in lay hands of the patronage, the employment of stipendiary priests by guilds and fraternities, and the increasing authority of churchwardens (Swanson, Church and Society, p. 219).

⁴⁶ See Chapter Three.

⁴⁷ W. M. Picken, “The “Landochou” Charter,” p. 36.

successors.”⁴⁸ The Cornishmen contended that for the last fifteen years there had been no canons at St. Kew and hence no services had been performed there. The prior responded that the Priory had received St. Kew as a gift from William Warelwast, and he produced William’s charter and Henry II’s *in peximus* charter as proof. Since presumably no conditions regarding services were mentioned in these documents, the case against the prior would seem to have lacked validity.

The assize court of 1305 found the traditional account of the Cornishmen more convincing than that of the prior nonetheless, and the court ordered the prior to re-institute the two canons at St. Kew.⁴⁹ The prior appealed this judgement to the king, but in 1307 Edward I only conceded that secular clergy (the vicar as well as a chaplain) might be allowed to take the place of regular canons obliged to serve at St. Kew.⁵⁰ This was not the last of this matter, however. Throughout the fourteenth century, Plympton Priory endured challenges to its ownership of land at St. Kew,⁵¹ challenges which were sometimes explicitly linked with the Priory’s duties to maintain divine services at the church.

At first, the entries in the Calendar of Inquisitions Miscellaneous seem to refer to straightforward allegations of violation of the Statute of Mortmain by the Priory. This statute had been passed in 1279 in order to control the transfer of property into the “dead

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 37.

⁵⁰ CPR, Edward I, vol. 4 1301-7, p. 512.

⁵¹ For the remaining records, “Lannow” is the name more frequently used for this area, but for the sake of preventing confusion “St. Kew” will continue to be used here.

hands”⁵² of religious houses. While the statute forbade the conveyance of property to religious houses, the Crown could still issue licences permitting alienations. Indeed, the actual aim of the statute was likely not the prohibition of the transferral of all lands and advowsons to the religious houses--an unrealistic goal--but the requirement that all such transferrals be sanctioned by royal licences.⁵³ In Plympton Priory’s case, one of the royal escheators, William Trussel, after holding an inquisition of office, found that the prior and convent had acquired two acres in fee in “Talkogon”⁵⁴ from one Richard Fot, without a licence, after the statute had been passed.⁵⁵ On October 14, 1331, Edward III wrote Trussel in regard to his seizing of the lands of St. Kew and Talkogon from the Priory.⁵⁶ Trussel’s version was that he had not done so, but that he had only confiscated certain chattels belonging to the Priory as he had found by inquisition that the canons of Plympton had not taken care to distribute bread to the poor there for twenty years.⁵⁷ It seems that Trussel had been following normal procedures concerning violations in mortmain: the escheator, upon discovering that a religious house had acquired land without a licence, would seize the property, hold an inquisition to determine its worth,

⁵² Such land was considered “dead” to the rest of society because the religious houses, as theoretically immortal institutions, would possess it for eternity.

⁵³ K. L. Wood-Legh, Studies in Church Life in England under Edward III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), pp. 61, 69. Wood-Legh’s conclusion was that the law, according to this interpretation, was “rigorously enforced” and that “the obtaining of a royal licence was a real necessity.”

⁵⁴ The land, also called “Taltogon” and “Talcogow,” was located near St. Kew.

⁵⁵ CCR Edward III vol. 2, 1330-1333, p. 469.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 349. It seems that the prior had written to the king in the interim about this matter, as Edward III’s letter of May 27, 1332 makes reference to having found out from the prior that the lands had not been acquired after the statute of Mortmain (CCR Edward III vol. 2, 1330-1333, p. 469).

⁵⁷ CCR Edward III vol. 2, 1330-1333, p. 349. Trussel claimed that the Priory was obliged to give out 4.5d worth of bread at St. Kew twice a week.

and “collect this sum annually until he was ordered to surrender the holding into other hands.”⁵⁸

In his letter, the king cited the decision of his grandfather to allow the canons to appoint secular clergy “to celebrate divine service, distribute alms, and exercise hospitality in the name of the prior and canons” as such service “could be more honestly and suitably celebrated by secular priests than by men of religion dwelling outside the convent in a private place.”⁵⁹ He ordered the escheator to cease interfering with the land or goods of the Prior.⁶⁰ The immediate result, however, was that another inquisition was made on December 14, 1331, into the Priory’s alleged acquisition of land at Talkogon near St. Kew.⁶¹ It was found that the Priory was “seised thereof before the publication of the statute from time before memory.”⁶² The Priory seems not to have received immediate satisfaction, however, as Edward III was writing to William Trussel again on May 27, 1332, telling him not to meddle any further with the Priory’s lands at St. Kew and Talkogon and to restore the issues of the lands.⁶³ In 1332 the Priory also received a

⁵⁸ Sandra Raban, Mortmain Legislation and the English Church, 1279-1500 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 73.

⁵⁹ CCR Edward III vol. 2, 1330-1333, p. 349.

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 349-50.

⁶¹ CIM vol. 2 (1307-1349), #1265, p.309.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ CCR Edward III vol. 2, 1330-1333, p. 469. The king reiterated that the Priory had owned this land from before the statute of Mortmain, according to the findings of the 1331 inquisition. Edward III sent this order again to the new escheator, Henry le Gulden, on February 3, 1333, as William Trussel had been removed from office before it could be carried out (CCR Edward III vol. 3, 1333-1337, p. 14).

pardon for having acquired land at Trevynek--a village near St. Kew--from a Nicholas de Tregellast without a licence, in violation of the statute.⁶⁴

Fifty years would pass before royal intervention was required again in the matter of St. Kew. In 1361, Prior Robert Forde--who likely thought that the matter had been resolved--granted two carucates of land at St. Kew to John Treury and his sons Richard and Roger, as well as William Caly and Parnell Persoun, for their lives.⁶⁵ Since the prior had neglected to obtain a royal licence to do this, the king's escheator, John de Aston, again seized the lands. Even though Edward III pardoned the prior for this action in 1376-77, the seizure seems to have been in effect until at least 1383, when Richard II had to order his escheator, William of Brightleigh, to cease bothering Plympton Priory about the St. Kew land and to deliver to the prior any issues from it.⁶⁶

Less than a decade later, however, the troubles sprang up again: an inquisition was taken *ex officio* in April, 1391 and found, once again, that King Edgar had given the manor and advowson of St. Kew to the canons of Plympton for the support of two canons

⁶⁴ CPR Edward III vol. 2, 1330-34, p. 304. Problems regarding this land seem to have recurred several decades later, when the prior petitioned the Black Prince, who was staying at Plympton at this time, regarding it in 1355: according to the Prior, Prior Matthew de Mimminglond had acquired a ferling of land at Trevynek without licence, which constituted a violation of the statute of Mortmain. As a consequence William Trussel seized it, "extending" the land back to the Priory for a rent of 5s a year. The prior complained that even though he had been pardoned by the king for violation of the statute, the Priory was still being forced to pay the 5s. The Black Prince ordered his auditors to look into this. They found that the exaction of the money was indeed unjust, and recommended that the Prince order his men to make restitution to the Priory. The Black Prince was Duke of Cornwall (The Register of Edward, The Black Prince Vol. 2: "The White Book of Cornwall, 1351-1365" [London: HMSO, 1931], pp. 85, 91-2).

⁶⁵ CCR, Richard II, vol.2, 1381-85, p. 316. The land at Talkogon near St. Kew, which is variously said to have been two Cornish acres or a messuage and a Cornish acre. The standard carucate in Devon was 64 acres; a Cornish acre was about 40-60 acres.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

to say Masses for the souls of the king and his ancestors and for the distribution of alms to the poor.⁶⁷ The inquisitors found that the Priory had withdrawn the canons, as well as alms and the maintenance of the chapel⁶⁸ for the previous sixty years. As a consequence, it was declared that Plympton Priory had to forfeit the manor and the advowson of St. Kew to the king. This indeed occurred, but the prior quickly appealed the case: on June 28, 1391, Richard II wrote his escheator, John Haule, to tell him to return the issues of the manor and advowson to Plympton Priory, as justices in chancery had found that the seizure had been “insufficient and unlawful.”⁶⁹ Whether this was the resolution of the issue is not entirely clear: on July 10, the lands of Talkogon and Trevynek and their issues were committed to the prior at Westminster by mainprise of John Tille and John Lecche of Devon.⁷⁰ The justices allowed the Priory’s enjoyment of these lands until a court decision was reached as to whether they belonged to the Crown or the Prior.⁷¹ However,

⁶⁷ CIM vol. 5, 1387-1393, p. 175. The value of the manor was stated to be £5, and the advowson £50.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* The record of the inquisition states that the canons were obliged to give alms to forty poor every Wednesday and Friday. One of the canons was supposed to hold services in the chapel in the churchyard, and the chapel was to be maintained at the Priory’s expense. In addition to withdrawing the canons and the alms, the prior had ceased to repair the chancel. Traditionally, maintenance of chancels fell to the holder of the benefice, whereas the parishioners were expected to care for the nave of their church. This is exemplified by a visitation of the archdeaconry of Totnes in 1342, when the parishioners at Dean Prior (another church appropriated to Plympton Priory) were enjoined to fix poorly-painted images, a bad roof, and broken windows, under pain of a 40s penalty. The chancel, the responsibility of the Prior, was in such a poor condition that it could not be repaired for fewer than 16 marks. The prior had given the vicar, Sir Simon Stibbe, a mark towards the repair of his home, although the visitor felt that two marks were needed (G. G. Coulton, “A Visitation of the Archdeaconry of Totnes in 1342,” English Historical Review, vol. 26 [1911], p. 110).

⁶⁹ CCR Richard II, vol. 4 1389-1392, p. 366.

⁷⁰ Calendar of Fine Rolls, Richard II vol. XI, 1391-1399, pp. 4-5.

⁷¹ The justices had the option to allow recovery of the lands in question by the alleged violators of the statute until a judgement was rendered, but “more often, especially as

in 1393, a plea was still pending in Chancery between the Crown and the prior as to whom the land at St. Kew, as well as that at Trevynek, belonged.⁷²

In this complicated case, it is not always easy to identify the true reasons behind the harassment of the Priory, for this is what seems to have been occurring. Despite the finding of the inquisition of 1331 that the Priory had possessed the land at Talkogon from time immemorial, and despite Edward III's orders to his escheators to stop bothering the Priory about this land, attempts to challenge the Priory's rights recurred. Similarly, even though one might have assumed that the matter of the canons' obligations at St. Kew would have been settled in 1305 and 1307, by the end of the century they were back in court asserting their entitlement to St. Kew.

One must wonder to what extent the canons' alleged laxity about fulfilling the conditions of service supposedly attached to their tenure of St. Kew motivated these legal challenges. The court case of the Cornishmen in 1305 seems to have been the origin of the idea that Plympton Priory had been given the land and church of St. Kew by a king of England and that these could be regained. An ever cash-strapped Crown and over-zealous royal bureaucrats might have found such a temptation hard to resist. The accusation of 1391 that divine services were not being carried out strikes one as unconvincing, as the prior was presenting secular priests in the fourteenth century--most recently in 1362⁷³--and the Priory had made an agreement with the vicar in 1354-55, Sir Henry Tresodorne,

time went on, the property remained in the king's hands" (Raban, Mortmain Legislation, p. 74).

⁷² CCR Richard II, vol. 5, 1392-96, p. 145.

⁷³ Reg. Grandisson III, p. 1480.

regarding the provision for support of a chaplain as well as the vicar at St. Kew.⁷⁴ There is no evidence in the episcopal registers that the canons were derelict in their pastoral responsibilities.

However, there might have been more to this situation than is apparent. While we tend to hear only of the involvement of the escheators, these men may well have been acting upon the complaints of local inhabitants. Consequently, this may have been a case of people in Cornwall who wished to make difficulties for the Priory, and possibly gain access to the lands in question for themselves. Raban found that “the escheators’ powers were a godsend to those with grievances against churchmen” and that religious houses were at some considerable risk of losing lands due to false accusations of violation of the statute.⁷⁵ Simple ignorance or confusion as to chronology on the part of the jurors at the inquisitions could also lead to unjust verdicts against accused religious houses.⁷⁶

However, the unrelenting challenges to Plympton Priory’s rights to St. Kew, Talkogon, and Trevynek over the course of the fourteenth century suggest that parties either in Cornwall or at Westminster--or both--were making concerted efforts to deprive the Priory of its lands. In the case of the church and land at St. Kew, the accusations of neglect on

⁷⁴ Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 1141-2. According to the terms of the agreement, the vicar and his successors would provide for the chaplain and his expenses, and they would also bear the responsibilities of repairing the chancel and maintaining the books of the church, as well as paying all episcopal and archdiaconal dues (all duties which had traditionally fallen to the Priory as corporate rector). As a subsidy of these expenses, the Priory granted to the vicar and his successors the great tithes of Bethbolegh, Tretheven, Tywartheny, Croppyng, Hille, Dale, Nywetone, Redsmythe, and Penlengaron, all in the parish of St. Kew. This was in addition to what the vicar received from the manse and glebe-land (Reg. Grandisson III, 1141-2).

⁷⁵ Raban, Mortmain Legislation, pp. 74-6.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

the part of the canons may simply have served as a smokescreen for the real motivations of the accusers.

Plymouth

In the fourteenth century, the Priory also began to experience difficulties regarding its spiritual and temporal authority in Plymouth.⁷⁷ The beginnings of Plympton Priory's rights over Plymouth are rather obscure, although they likely came about at some point in the twelfth century, probably as a result of benefactions from the Valletorts.⁷⁸ As lords of the town, the priors were entitled to hold courts and views of frankpledge, the annual gathering of men of the vill for the purpose of ensuring good behaviour.⁷⁹ An inquisition into the rights of the prior of Plympton over Plymouth in 1385 demonstrates the range of seignorial rights the lord of the borough could exercise: he was entitled to the assize of bread and beer and assay of weights and measures (which meant the right to enforce standards). His authority consequently covered millers, bakers, butchers, sellers of wine

⁷⁷ Over the course of the fourteenth century, the name "Sutton" or "Sutton Prior" came to be replaced by the name "Plymouth". For the remainder of this chapter, "Plymouth" will be used.

⁷⁸ An inquisition made in 1281 at Exeter found that the manors of Maker, Plymouth, and Kings Tamerton had been given to Roger de Valletort by Henry I. The prior of Plympton testified that the vill of Sutton with the assize of bread and beer had belonged to the priors of the house "for many years", having been granted by a charter of Henry III. Another inquisition in the same year found that the Prior, aside from the assize of bread and beer, had had £14 9s 6.5d in rents from free tenants of Sutton "from time immemorial." In another part of the town (Sutton Vautort), John de Valletort received certain rents and the Abbot of Buckland had the assize of bread and beer. The Crown received £4 from the port of Plymouth each year. (CPMR, pp. 10-11).

⁷⁹ At the view, the representative of the lord would check to see if every men who ought to be in frankpledge actually was. If one of the group of men was accused of a crime and did not present himself at the view, the town would be fined (Pollock and Maitland, vol. i, p. 570).

and mead, and cooks, and people who made bread outside the town but brought it into the borough to sell.⁸⁰ Aside from the extensive control over a significant number of people which these rights implied, these privileges also served as sources of income for the priors, as they received set dues at the views of frankpledge and fines from transgressors at their courts and at the assizes. Plympton Priory administered its rights and properties in the town through a reeve, who was chosen by 12 tenants of the Priory in Plymouth each year and presented by them to the Priory's steward, who swore him into office.⁸¹ The reeve collected tolls and fines due to the Priory, while the steward presided over the court each Monday. Henry III had granted Plympton Priory permission to hold a weekly market and an annual fair in Plymouth on the feast of St. John the Baptist.⁸²

As Norman Trenholme explained in his monograph on English monastic boroughs, there were two main phases of discontent with monastic overlords in the fourteenth century. Resistance first broke out in various towns such as St. Albans and Bury St. Edmunds in the 1320s to 1340s, and then broke out again in the wake of the Peasants' Revolt in 1381. In Trenholme's view, the sources of these conflicts tended to be "the failure of the monastic corporations to recognize the growing corporate spirit of the townsmen and to concede them rights of self-government and of commercial control such as were obtained by royal boroughs."⁸³ Of course, the monasteries were disinclined to make any such concessions if this meant a loss of income, and consequently tended to be

⁸⁰ CPMR pp. 11-12. See also CIM vol. 4 1377-1388 #279, p. 160.

⁸¹ CIM vol. 4 1377-1388 #279, p. 160.

⁸² CPR, Henry III vol. 4, 1247-58, p. 263.

⁸³ Norman M. Trenholme, English Monastic Boroughs: A Study in Medieval History (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1927), p. 1.

intransigent in the face of demands for greater liberties on the part of the inhabitants of the boroughs.

At Plymouth, the first flare-up was in 1311, when burgesses tried to erect stalls in the market for the sale of fish, meat, and other goods without licence from the prior of Plympton.⁸⁴ The two parties agreed that the erection of unlicensed stalls would cease, and that the prior would build eighteen stalls to be rented out for a penny each to the burgesses. Perhaps this agreement gave the burgesses confidence, for a few years later, in 1317, they were seeking a royal inquisition into the jurisdictions of Plymouth, seemingly in the hope that if certain waste places in the town belonged to the king, Plymouth might be made a free borough and the burgesses would be allowed to run their own market and fair.⁸⁵ This did not come to pass, but discontent towards Plympton Priory continued to simmer.⁸⁶

In 1335, Plympton Priory's bailiff for Plymouth and the collector of the Priory's rents in the town became a target of this hostility. John Hayward was attacked by people unknown who were "burning with demonic rage".⁸⁷ The bailiff sought sanctuary in the church of St. Andrew's in Plymouth, but the men broke down the doors, dragged him out, wounded him with swords, and beat him badly with cudgels, breaking his legs. It is not

⁸⁴ CPMR, p. 37. It seems that the issue of whether Plymouth might be made a free borough came up during the inquisition of 1281, when "Matthew de Clynedon found that it would neither prejudice the king nor any others if Plymouth were made a free borough, and the inhabitants free burgesses, saving the service to the lords" (CPMR p. 11).

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-6.

⁸⁶ Another possible outbreak may have occurred at Plympton in 1333, when Prior John of Englebourne had to obtain episcopal permission to reconcile the chapel of Plympton St. Mary after it was polluted by the spilling of blood. Grandisson ordered an inquiry into the incident (Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 714, 769).

⁸⁷ Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 788-9.

clear whether there was a specific or general grievance against the bailiff as rent-collector, or whether the attackers were attempting to vent their dissatisfaction with the overlordship of the Priory by assaulting the representative of their authority in the town. Bishop Grandisson excommunicated the still-unknown assailants, but this seems not to have deterred those in Plymouth who were resentful of the Priory's authority in the town.

The next year the ire of certain townsmen focused on the figure who represented the Priory's spiritual influence in Plymouth, the vicar of St. Andrew's. It is perhaps no coincidence that at this time the vicar, Nicholas de Weylonde, was a canon of Plympton Priory. In 1336, a band of parishioners forcibly ejected the vicar from office and installed the cleric Roger de Trevelyiaux instead.⁸⁸ The mob broke into Weylonde's house, stole the contents⁸⁹ as well as £20 in cash, and imprisoned Weylonde in Buckland Abbey, with the collusion of the abbot. When Bishop Grandisson sent one of his officials, a priest named Walter de Kynelond, to read out letters on the bishop's behalf, he was attacked and driven away. On June 26, Grandisson charged the Abbot of Tavistock to put the town of Plymouth under an interdict, since the citizenry had failed to prevent these crimes and indeed had kept silent about them, a fact which suggests that the discontent against the Priory was not confined to a small group of rabble-rousers. Grandisson also

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 814-15, 817-19, 823-4. Roger de Trevelyiaux was probably the same Roger de Trevikau of Sutton who, on January 10, 1335, obtained from the Pope the reservation of a benefice in the gift of Plympton Priory--worth 20 marks with the cure of souls, and 15 marks without--at the request of Cardinal Matthew of SS. John and Paul, "whose cleric he is" (CPL vol. 2 1305-1342, p. 516). Needless to say, after this incident, the Priory did not present him to a benefice. Roger seems to have felt that the Priory should have presented him to St. Andrew's when it became vacant in 1334: Grandisson, in his mandate of May 28, 1336, dared him to prove his entitlement to the church.

⁸⁹ Cups, silver spoons, vessels, provisions, and bedding are specified (Reg. Grandisson II, p. 818).

excommunicated the assailants, amongst whom were the vicar's assistant priest and two chantry priests at St. Andrew's.

Bishop Grandisson relaxed the sentence of excommunication against the rebels on August 9, 1336, when Trevelyaux and the others threw themselves at his feet, begging for absolution and for the interdict to be lifted.⁹⁰ Grandisson postponed the relaxation of the interdict, instead ordering John of Englebourne, prior of Plympton, to assemble the vicar, Nicholas de Weylonde, some other priests, respectable citizens of the town, and the other parishioners at the church of St. Andrew's in Plymouth.⁹¹ The prior was to remind the parishioners of their crimes against God, the Church, their vicar, and the episcopal office, and exhort them to mend their ways. After this, the Prior, acting under episcopal authority, was to lift the interdict and solemnly celebrate Mass. The laying of the interdict seems to have had a sobering effect upon the populace, as there are no further records of violent outbursts against the Priory. Nonetheless, by the end of the fourteenth century, dissatisfaction with the overlordship of the Priory manifested itself again, this time in the form of a quest for a borough charter for Plymouth.

At Plymouth, the townspeople were successful at an earlier date than at other towns in obtaining freedom from monastic lordship,⁹² although the process of gaining corporate status was still far from speedy. In the 1380s, one of the burgesses, Humphrey Passour, fraudulently obtained a royal writ, was elected mayor of Plymouth by certain people, and usurped the rights of the Priory's reeve. Passour also took over the Monday court,

⁹⁰ Reg. Grandisson II, pp. 823-4.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Many monastic boroughs, such as Bodmin (controlled by another Augustinian priory), had to wait until the dissolution to gain their charters (Trenholme, p. 77).

keeping the steward away by force.⁹³ The royal inquisition of 1385, summoned at the request of the aggrieved Prior, found that Passour had acted illegally, and that furthermore, his election as mayor was invalid because such a position had never existed at Plymouth.⁹⁴ While the rights of Plympton Priory in the town were re-asserted, tensions between religious and townsfolk continued until the canons decided to rid themselves of these troubles.⁹⁵ In 1439, the Priory divested itself of most of its lands and its lordship over Plymouth in return for an annual fee-farm rent of £41.⁹⁶ It retained three messuages with gardens in Plymouth, St. Nicholas Island, the church of St. Andrew, and all of its lands and possessions in the parish of Maker.⁹⁷ Plymouth received its borough charter in the same year.⁹⁸

The resistance of the canons of Plympton to relinquishing their rights over their borough of Plymouth was the typical response of religious in similar positions. In the later Middle Ages, after the initial flood of donations had dwindled to a trickle at many

⁹³ CIM vol. 4, 1377-88, #279, p. 160; see also CCR Richard II vol. 2, 1381-5, p. 507 and CPR Richard II vol. 2, 1381-5, p. 597.

⁹⁴ CIM vol. 4 1377-1388, #279, p. 160.

⁹⁵ CPMR pp. 11-12.

⁹⁶ Oliver MDE #25 and 26. The fee-farm rent was reduced to £29 6s 8d in 1463-64 because of "the poverty into which the borough has fallen" (CPMR, p. 27). In 1533-34 an act of Parliament declared that the fee-farm rent would be discharged altogether in return for the appropriation of the churches of Ugborough and Blackawton to Plympton Priory (CPMR pp. 12-13, 41-2).

⁹⁷ Rotuli Parliamentorum; ut et petitiones, et placita in parlamento, eds. Richard Blyke, John Strachey (London: [n.p.], 1780-1832), vol. 5, p. 19.

⁹⁸ Interestingly, in 1440, the mayor and commonalty of Plymouth rewarded Richard Trenode, a Bristol merchant, and Thomasine Venour of Plymouth, his sister and widow of William Venour, for the expenses and work they put into the gaining of the borough charter by making an agreement with the prior and convent of St. Germans. The mayor and burgesses paid the canons--for St. Germans was also an Augustinian priory--£200 to support a chaplain to say Masses for Trenode and Venour and their families at the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the parish church of St. Andrew (CPMR pp. 36-7).

older houses, religious houses were reluctant to transfer to burgesses privileges which yielded dues, fines, and other forms of income. Perusing English episcopal registers of the fourteenth century shows that this was a time when many religious houses--Plympton Priory was hardly alone--were suffering from chronic indebtedness. This might well have rendered them even less willing to concede anything to the burgesses of their boroughs. The complaints of the townspeople regarding their rights should not be viewed in isolation from contemporary attempts by the laity to assert greater control over their spiritual lives, however: the two appear to be complementary trends which had a significant impact on religion and society in late medieval England.

Disturbances at Chapels

Resistance to lay aspirations for greater self-government is especially evident in the dealings of Plympton Priory with the parishioners of its dependent chapels. These chapels were scattered around the area surrounding Plympton, ranging from Plymstock, a mere three miles away, to Sampford Spiney, about sixteen miles away on the edge of Dartmoor. Plympton Priory experienced more difficulties with parishioners of its chapels than the other Augustinian houses in the diocese. This was largely because, as an ancient mother-church in the district, it had a greater number of chapels. Neither Hartland Abbey, Frithelstock Priory,⁹⁹ Bodmin Priory, nor St. Germans Priory seem to have possessed

⁹⁹ The canons of Frithelstock were involved in an attempt to establish a chapel to house an image of the Virgin Mary in the fourteenth century, but Bishop Grandisson had grave doubts about this cult and ordered it suppressed and the chapel destroyed. See Nicholas Orme, "Bishop Grandisson and Popular Religion," *TDA*, vol. 124 (1992), pp. 109-113.

well-established chapels.¹⁰⁰ Most of Plympton's chapels were located in the prosperous South Hams region of Devon, and as the villages in which they were located expanded, so the desire for local autonomy developed. The prosperity of the region is reflected in the chapel values listed in the Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535 for Plympton Priory: it received annually £30 from Brixton, £62 from Plymstock, and over £43 from Wembury.¹⁰¹ These incomes exceed those of many English parish churches, and even of smaller Augustinian houses.¹⁰² In total, Plympton Priory received more than £195 from its chapels in 1535, a significant portion of its income from *spiritualia*, which was listed as £454 7s 2.5d in the Valor Ecclesiasticus. With such large amounts at stake, it is no wonder that Plympton Priory tried its best to resist the agitation of its parishioners.

There were several types of chapels in the medieval parochial landscape. Firstly, there were domestic chapels, mostly in the homes of the gentry and nobility, for which episcopal licences had to be obtained.¹⁰³ Secondly, there were cult chapels, such as the one the canons of Frithelstock tried to set up, which housed images of saints and attracted pilgrims.¹⁰⁴ Thirdly, there were "chapels-of-ease," those centres of worship established to serve people in hamlets, villages, and towns who lived some distance from their parish

¹⁰⁰ Of course, since chapels did not constitute benefices and thus did not appear in records of institutions in the episcopal registers, knowledge of their existence is often sketchy. The dissolution records which specify *spiritualia* are most helpful in this regard. Along with the Valor Ecclesiasticus, as printed in Oliver MDE, the lists of contents from the Minister's Accounts identify chapels of each religious house. See Lands of Dissolved Religious Houses, Lists and Indexes Society Supplementary Series no. III vol. 1 (New York: Kraus Reprints, 1964), *passim*.

¹⁰¹ Oliver MDE.#28.

¹⁰² For example, Beeston Priory had an income in 1535 of £43, Hempton Priory £32, and Wymondley Priory £29 (MRH, pp. 137-145 *passim*).

¹⁰³ N. Orme, "The Later Middle Ages and the Reformation," in Unity and Variety, p. 63. Domestic chapels became very common in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

churches.¹⁰⁵ Most of Plympton Priory's chapels belonged in the last-mentioned category, although they did have a cult chapel dedicated to St. Mary on Plym Bridge,¹⁰⁶ and seemingly some sort of cult chapel dedicated to St. Nicholas on what is now called Drake's Island off Plymouth.¹⁰⁷ Finally, there were chantry chapels, which could be free-standing buildings or altars in a church where priests, supported by an endowment, would say private masses in perpetuity for the souls of the founder and his or her family. Chantry chapels became increasingly popular from the thirteenth century onwards, and a "substantial minority" were served by the religious.¹⁰⁸ Plympton Priory may well have permitted chantry chapels to have been built in its conventual church, as archaeological excavations have revealed that several chapels were added to the south aisle in the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁹

The Church tried to legislate the proper relationships between mother churches and their chapels by carefully defining the privileges of the latter so as not to conflict with those of parish churches. Parishioners of chapels still had to pay tithes to the incumbent of their parish church and to contribute towards the upkeep of the church, and they

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ CPL vol. 5, 1396-1404, p. 304. The indulgence of the Portiuncula was granted in 1400 to penitents who gave alms for the repair and maintenance of the conventual church at Plympton, the chapel of Plympton St. Mary, and St. Mary Plymbridge. In 1450, the prior of Plympton obtained papal permission to appoint priests to be confessors at St. Mary Plymbridge (CPL vol. 10, 1447-1453, p. 63).

¹⁰⁷ Oliver, MDE, p. 129.

¹⁰⁸ K. L. Wood-Legh, Perpetual Chantries in Britain (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 5, 130.

¹⁰⁹ Cynthia Gaskell Brown, "Plympton Priory, Devon," Report for the Devon Religious Houses Project, 1986-1987, p. 4.

were required to attend Sunday services at the church.¹¹⁰ The chaplains who presided at the chapels had to take vows of obedience to rectors or mother-churches and pay them a small sum.¹¹¹ The lack of baptismal fonts and burial grounds¹¹² at chapels was also a mark of their subject status. The central issue was that the greater the number of rituals allowed to be performed at the chapels--such as burial, the Mass, celebration of feast-days, processions--the greater the likelihood was that the chapels-of-ease would become independent entities. The ultimate threat would be that the chapel might attain full parochial rights and consequently owe the mother church nothing from its offerings or tithes. As R. N. Swanson has noted, "Mother churches could rarely afford the secession of their chapelries, although such attempts were common [in the period 1350-1540]."¹¹³

An example of the kinds of obligations Plympton Priory might have to one of its chapels can be found in the 1429 agreement between Tavistock Abbey and the Priory concerning the chapel at Plymstock.¹¹⁴ The document required Plympton Priory to supply a secular or regular chaplain to say matins, Mass, and vespers on Sundays and on other days on which work was forbidden.¹¹⁵ The chaplain would provide the sacraments and

¹¹⁰ Orme, "Later Middle Ages," p. 63. Usually services could only be held at the chapels on weekdays or saints' days.

¹¹¹ Moorman, Church Life, pp. 12-13.

¹¹² According to the Winchester Statutes of 1262x1265, chapels with graveyards were to be built in every village more than two miles from the parish church (CS, vol. 2 pt. 1, p. 704) This was the ideal, however, and could hardly have been expected to have been implemented in the large parishes with low population densities of rural Devon.

¹¹³ Swanson, Church and Society, p. 219. In Swanson's article, "Standards of Livings" in Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers, he describes a prolonged "row" between Merton College and a dependent chapel of its appropriated church, Great Wolford, which began in 1400 (pp. 174-75).

¹¹⁴ For discussion of the Tavistock-Plympton conflict over Plymstock, see Chapter Three.

¹¹⁵ Reg. Lacy IV, p. 270.

sacramentals¹¹⁶ for the abbots' tenants at Plymstock and would perform Mass every Wednesday and Friday. This chaplain would also have to be present in the parish for Ash Wednesday and the three days following it, and for the two weeks before Easter. According to the agreement, Plympton Priory also had to supply a chaplain to stay overnight in a room next to the old chapel at the priory gate in order to administer the sacraments of Eucharist, baptism, and last rites when these were urgently required by the people of Plymstock.¹¹⁷ While these requirements may have been more strictly laid out at Plymstock than at other chapels which did not have the option of complaining to another powerful religious house, they are indicative of the kind of standards of service which chaplains could be expected to meet.

The first disturbances regarding the Priory's chapels occurred at Plympton in 1385, generally a time of social unrest in England as the country was still experiencing the aftermath of the Peasants' Revolt. Just as the townspeople of Plymouth resumed their attempts to gain borough status, the parishioners of Plympton St. Mary incurred episcopal disapproval for instituting a dedication feast at their chapel.¹¹⁸ The chapel of Plympton St. Mary, which is now the parish church of the community, was situated in the cemetery of Plympton Priory, a mere stone's throw from the conventual church. Bishop Brantyngham ordered the parishioners to stop infringing on his rights and those of the prior and cease

¹¹⁶ Sacramentals were rites lacking the status of sacraments but still approved by the Church, such as the blessing of wedding rings and baptismal water, as well as the purification (also known as churching) of women.

¹¹⁷ Reg. Lacy IV, pp. 270-271.

¹¹⁸ The point of a dedication feast was to commemorate the day on which the church had been dedicated by a bishop. Bishops often granted indulgences to those who came to the church as a means of helping the parishioners to remember the date. See Nicholas Orme,

the celebration of this Feast at their chapel or face excommunication.¹¹⁹ On the same day as the Bishop sent his mandate, November 10, 1385, Master John Lugans, Rector of Petrockstowe, also received a royal commission to “hear and determine a dispute which had arisen between the prior and convent of Plympton and the parishioners of Plympton St. Mary.”¹²⁰ The parishioners and their chaplain, Alfred Gyst, were undaunted; the next year, Bishop Brantyngham cited Gyst to appear before him for violating his original mandate.¹²¹ At the same time, in another mandate, the Bishop wrote to Gyst and the chaplains of Plympton St. Thomas, Wembury, Plymstock, Brixton, and Shaugh chapels, stating that it had come to his attention that some chaplains had celebrated divine services on Sundays and other feast days before Mass was celebrated at the Parish church and that some had also celebrated private Masses on such days.¹²² Bishop Brantyngham ordered them to stop these practices, or else they would be cited to appear before him at Exeter Cathedral.

That tensions were indeed running high at this time between the Priory and some members of the laity in the area is suggested by a memorandum of mainprise made in Chancery in 1387 under pain of £100 by various men for the good behaviour of four others, “that they shall not levy any armed force, nor make or procure to be made any unlawful assemblies contrary to the peace, especially against the prior and convent of Plympton or their house, nor do or procure anything tending to breach the peace or to the

English Church Dedications with a Survey of Cornwall and Devon (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1996), p. 8.

¹¹⁹ **Reg. Brantyngham** I, p. 593.

¹²⁰ **Ibid.**, p. 166.

¹²¹ **Ibid.**, p. 623.

¹²² **Ibid.**, p. 622.

terror of the said prior and convent or others of the people."¹²³ This effort to ensure good behaviour may not be directly connected to the actions of the parishioners and chaplain of Plympton St. Mary, but the possibility of a wider-spread hostility towards the Priory, including intimidation by threat of physical force, ought not to be ruled out.

Thwarted in their attempts to hold a dedication feast, the parishioners of Plympton St. Mary continued to incur the wrath of Prior John Shaldon by having their palms blessed on Palm Sunday by their own hired chaplain and holding their own procession rather than going to the conventual church for these purposes. The prior sought an archiepiscopal confirmation in 1386-7 of the obligation of the parishioners to attend the Priory for the Palm Sunday rituals, and subsequently obtained a papal confirmation as well.¹²⁴ The people of Plympton St. Mary continued to defy the Priors for decades, though, and in 1436-7 Prior Nicholas Selman appealed to Bishop Lacy to prevent the parishioners from persisting in this defiance.¹²⁵

Finally, in 1441, arbitrators drew up a composition between Plympton Priory and thirteen men of Plympton St. Mary to settle the problems between them.¹²⁶ The status of the chapel was a matter of compromise: it was to be a parochial and curate chapel dependent on the mother church (the conventual church of the Priory), and the

¹²³ CCR Richard II vol. 3, 1381-85, p. 315. The mainprise meant that the four men--Guy Brit, Thomas Sturte, John Wille, and John Gybbe of Chaddlewood--became bound for the appearance in court of the accused (John Newenham, Peter Silverloke, John Wogwille, and William Stone). On the same day the former made mainprise for another group, John Wille of Langage, John Puaus, Roger Pral, Thomas Jone, Robert Elys "tincler", William Porter, Ralph Baker, John Crokker, and Ralph Hille. Chaddlewood and Langage were villages to the east of Plympton.

¹²⁴ Referred to in Reg. Lacy II, pp. 36-8. The archiepiscopal confirmation was made when Archbishop William Courtenay undertook a visitation of the diocese of Exeter.

¹²⁵ Reg. Lacy II, pp. 36-8

parishioners would belong to both the chapel and the mother church. Except for the Priory's servants, who could use either church or chapel, the parishioners would receive the sacraments and sacramentals at the chapel from a chaplain chosen by the Priory. In addition, the Priory would send a canon to serve with the chaplain on Sundays and feast days, in continuance of another tradition.¹²⁷

The Palm Sunday problem was resolved by laying out very specifically the procedures to be followed on that day. Two churchwardens would go to Prime Mass at the Priory on that day and offer 7d to the canon celebrating the Mass in recognition of the Priory's status as mother church to the chapel. After that, the chaplain of Plympton St. Mary would carry the palms to the chapel, bless them, and distribute them to the parishioners, who would then process around the chapel. Their presence at the procession in the conventual church would no longer be required; they could also process in the chapel on Rogation Days, Ascension Day, and St. Mark's Day.¹²⁸

Further clauses of the 1441 composition specified that the Priory would repair the stalls and lecterns in the choir and chancel of Plympton St. Mary chapel.¹²⁹ As well, Prior Nicholas agreed that the Priory would no longer grant licences for burial within the chapel without consulting the chapel's wardens and without obtaining an indemnity of 6s 8d to cover the disturbance and the damage to walls, pavement, and furniture of the nave during interments. He also agreed that the Priory would not unreasonably withhold

¹²⁶ *Reg. Lacy III*, pp. 244-256.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 248-249.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

licence for burial.¹³⁰ Bishop Lacy ratified this agreement between the two parties, and set penalties to ensure co-operation: if the parishioners did not offer the 7d to the Priory each Palm Sunday, services would be suspended at the chapel. If Plympton Priory failed to perform its duties on Palm Sunday, offices and Prime Mass would be suspended on that day.¹³¹ In 1450, Pope Nicholas V confirmed this agreement.¹³²

The provision made in the 1441 agreement concerning burial within the chapel is notable, as the right to bury the dead locally seems to have been a major element in the movement for greater autonomy amongst chapel parishioners. There are numerous examples from the fifteenth century in the diocese of the laity petitioning the Bishops of Exeter for burial privileges for their chapels, rather than enduring the inconvenience of carrying the dead to the mother church for interment.

The people of Plymstock demonstrated their dissatisfaction with this tradition in 1448 by refusing to transport the body of one Thomas Walter to Plympton for funeral Mass and interment in the churchyard.¹³³ The distance was not great--about three miles--but it seems that distance was less of an issue than the desire to assert the community's independence of the Priory. Bishop Lacy intervened, asking Prior William Hyll to grant an exceptional licence, without prejudice to his rights, for Walter's burial in the chapel or churchyard at Plymstock, as he had by that point been lying unburied in the chapel for seven days and was in an advanced state of decomposition. Lacy pointed out that the

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp. 249-250.

¹³¹ Ibid., pp. 252-255. This was in addition to the staggeringly large penalty of 1,000 marks already stipulated in the composition.

¹³² CPL, vol. 10, 1447-1455, pp. 61-2.

¹³³ Reg. Lacy III, pp. 269-71. Walter was a Wembury man who had died while on a visit to Plymstock.

smell and condition of the body were such that the people of Plymstock could not be compelled to take it to Plympton without danger, scandal, and offence to human nature.

Whether Prior Hyll granted the licence is not known, but a few months later Bishop Lacy was writing him again to grant special licences for the burial of the deceased of Plymstock at their chapel “pending a delayed arbitration between the Priory and John Harry and fellow parishioners about right of burial there.”¹³⁴ The parishioners ended up initiating a lawsuit against the Priory in the Court of Arches, in the midst of which Plymstock suffered from a “severe pestilence.” The still-defiant parishioners “utterly refused” to bring the dead to Plympton, and once again the Priory granted special licences for burial at Plymstock.¹³⁵ The ultimate resolution of the court case is, unfortunately, not known.

Other chapels attained the right of burial with seemingly less struggle. By the late fifteenth century, the canons of Plympton may have felt that the costs of court battles exceeded the sums given as burial-offerings, and consequently were willing to make peace with their parishioners. In 1477, the Priory granted the right of burial to their parochial chapel at Brixton.¹³⁶ This agreement defines the exact obligations of the prior to the chapel: once a year, he would send a canon or secular priest to the chapel for “all divine services and ministrations, all sacraments and sacramentals,” and every Sunday

¹³⁴ Ibid., pp. 271-2.

¹³⁵ Ibid., pp. 272-3.

¹³⁶ Montagu Evans, “Wembury,” *TDA*, Appendix III, p. 284. Evans does not mention the location of this document. That it did or does indeed exist is corroborated by Oliver, who mentions it in the *MDE*, p. 132. By its nature, it most likely would belong in the unpublished episcopal registers of Exeter of the latter fifteenth century. Further investigation at the Devon Record Office may yield results.

and feast day would perform Mass, matins, and evensong.¹³⁷ For these services, the parishioners would pay 13s 4d, five times a year, in even portions. Interestingly, in this case, the parties set out what would happen in the case of multiple burials on one day: the prior would receive 1s 6d if two men or women were brought to the chapel for burial on the same day, 9d if more than three servants or children were brought.

In 1482, Prior David Bercle and John Stubbes, perpetual vicar of Plymouth, sought episcopal permission to allow the chaplain of St. Budeaux, a chapel dependent of St. Andrew's, Plymouth, to perform burials and baptisms, and to continue to hold the traditional divine services there.¹³⁸ Bercle and Stubbes also agreed to pay the salary for the chaplain and build him a suitable manse, thirty feet long and sixteen feet wide, adjoining the chapel of St. Budeaux.

While the Priory relented with some chapels, it remained resistant to the demands of some parishioners until the end. In 1535, the churchwarden and a number of parishioners of Wembury wrote a letter of complaint to King Henry VIII, asserting that the prior of Plympton made £50 per annum from the parish, but the closest priest was at Plympton, four miles away.¹³⁹ They claimed that many people had died without the benefit of last rites or baptism. They cited a number of examples, such as John Weryn, who sent in great haste for a priest to christen a sick child, and waited at the church from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00

¹³⁷ Evans, "Wembury," p. 284. If the churchwardens and parishioners wished to have a second evensong on a Sunday afternoon--the first evensong being held right after Mass--they were to provide the priest with meat and drink.

¹³⁸ CPMR, p. 40. St. Budeaux is a neighbourhood of Plymouth, on the Devon side of the Royal Albert Bridge over the Tamar River from Saltash, Cornwall.

¹³⁹ Letters and Papers Foreign and Domestic of the Reign of Henry VIII, 1535, vol. IX, #1147, p. 391. The petitioners also said that the prior received 13s 4d as a fee-farm

p.m. The child died before the priest arrived. Also, on one Easter Monday when three women had come to make their purification, the prior did not send a priest for any divine services. The only services at the chapel were on Sunday, when a priest or canon would come from Plympton to say Mass, matins, and evensong before noon, then go back before dinner. The parishioners claimed that "the priest has often been sore sick and in great jeopardy of life from travelling through the rain, hail, or snow."¹⁴⁰ According to them, three priests died from making this trip.¹⁴¹ Further, the prior would not send a priest for burial for a fee of less than 7d.

A note of conspiracy and paranoia enters the petition when the writers began to discuss the mood of apprehension in the parish of Wembury. The petitioners said that there were 500 people in the parish, of whom more than 420 were communicants. Half the parish were tenants of the Priory. The bailiff of the Priory's steward had told these tenants when he was holding court that the prior had heard about the parishioners' plans to find their own priest and wanted the tenants to know that if they had any part in this, they would forfeit their holdings.¹⁴² So, the other half of the parish (to which the writers belonged) did not tell the Prior's tenants in Wembury what they, the non-tenants, were going to do, although the writers claimed that the tenants knew "all this to be true but did not speak." For ten years they had had a hired priest, who served them well, but the prior

payment as well as offerings from the parishioners in return for the celebration of the sacraments at Wembury chapel.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ One might suspect a certain amount of exaggeration for effect here, as Wembury is not very far from Plympton, the terrain is fairly gentle, and the climate of the South Hams very mild. The church at Wembury does stand on an exposed cliff overlooking the sea, however.

¹⁴² Letters and Papers, Henry VIII, vol. IX, #1147, p. 391.

had ordered his tenants not to contribute to his support. The chapels at Plymstock, Brixton, and Shaugh were, these parishioners contended, just as ill-served as Wembury, and none brought the prior less than £30 per annum.¹⁴³ The writers asked the king to remedy the situation. Whether the king took any immediate action is not known, but four years later he gave satisfaction to the discontented parishioners of Wembury, and perhaps of the rest of Plympton's chapels, by dissolving the Priory.

The accounts of the conflicts in the fourteenth century between Plympton Priory and those over whom it held temporal and spiritual authority provide insight into relations between the religious and the laity in the later Middle Ages. We gain some sense of the grievances of the laity, their increased desire for local control, and their frustrations with the authority exerted by religious houses. Whether they were dissatisfied Cornishmen at St. Kew, townspeople at Plymouth hoping for corporate status, or parishioners of chapels agitating for parochial rights, the laity connected to Plympton Priory came to display a greater willingness to challenge the influence the Priory had over their lives. It is well to remember, however, that the documents tend to record the tensions and conflicts between religious and laity, and are often silent about the day-to-day good relations that may often have prevailed. To oppose laity and religious as perpetually antagonistic to each other would be a serious distortion of their reality. Nevertheless, the sometimes difficult relations between the Augustinian canons and the laity in the later Middle Ages were symptomatic of tensions inherent in English society at this time. As communities came to define their identities and reconsider their primary loyalties, old affiliations and

¹⁴³ This was not quite accurate, as Shaugh, according to the Valor Ecclesiasticus, brought in only £21 (still, a not insubstantial sum).

obligations were often perceived as obstacles and restrictions. The Augustinian canons, as lords of boroughs, landowners, and rectors of churches and chapels, were probably not any more hostile to change than members of other religious orders, or other institutions, but neither, so it would seem, were they any the more welcoming of it.

Conclusion

A number of themes have predominated in this dissertation: the importance to Plympton Priory of early donations from the laity and the episcopacy, the close ties between the Priory and the bishops of Exeter, and the significance of *spiritualia* to Plympton Priory as a source of wealth. By engaging in a close analysis of an individual house of Augustinian canons, we have been able to learn much about the creation, endowment, difficulties, successes, and activities of the canons at this locale.

One theme which has recurred throughout this dissertation has been the question of whether the canons at Plympton undertook the cure of souls at their churches. Despite the traditional interpretation of the order's goals regarding their involvement in pastoral care, the evidence from Plympton Priory suggests that a cautious approach ought to be taken in regard to this issue. Plympton, like so many other English religious houses, lacks crucial documentation of institutions to benefices in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries which would enable scholars to track the participation of the regular canons in the parochial lives of their wider communities. Once records do become available for Plympton Priory, in the later thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the picture that emerges is of a religious institution largely monastic in character. The canons virtually never served at their churches as beneficed clergy, although they seem to have tended to some of the chapels near the Priory. We should be very careful about using a few instances from the twelfth century and some from the fifteenth to make the sweeping statement that

the Augustinians were involved in pastoral care because this was a defining element of their order.

Another theme of this dissertation has been the importance of the “networks of patronage” which surrounded Plympton Priory in its first few decades. By deriving broad-based support from a number of different circles in the diocese and county, the Priory was able to build up an endowment consisting of diverse sources of income and rights. Indeed, without the willingness of the magnates of Devon and their vassals to make benefactions to the episcopal foundation at Plympton, the Priory could never have become the wealthiest Augustinian foundation in the region and the second-wealthiest religious house in the diocese. The bishops of Exeter maintained their interest in this house of patronage over the centuries, generally--the notable exception being Bishop Bronescombe--intervening on behalf of the Priory when they could be of assistance, such as when the Priory’s rights to its churches were threatened. The tenacity displayed by the canons of Plympton when such disputes arose helps to explain how the Priory was able to maintain its entitlement to its *spiritualia* and *temporalia*.

Of course, as we have seen, the possession of spiritual and temporal rights by the Priory entailed responsibilities and obligations on the part of the canons of Plympton. As patrons of the advowsons of so many churches, they were in the position to assist a large number of clerics in need of benefices. Plympton Priory also assisted those seeking ordination by providing titles, the theoretical guarantees that the ordinands could rely on the Priory for support. Of course, the Priory benefitted as well from their rights to churches: throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the canons of Plympton displayed a keen interest in the management of their *spiritualia* and the maximization of

this form of income through appropriation and augmentation. The canons may have felt on occasion that some of their churches, lands, and privileges were hardly worth the troubles the Priory endured on their behalf. The recurring difficulties at St. Kew and Plymouth must have been serious irritants, and expensive ones if the legal expenses incurred in the canons' defence of their rights at these places are taken into account.

This dissertation concluded with a consideration of the responses of discontented laity, especially the parishioners of chapels, to the control Plympton Priory exercised over the practice of religion in their communities. We saw evidence from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries of the increased willingness of the laity to give voice to their concerns and take action to assert their feelings of local identity and loyalty. The passions engendered by this developing desire for greater control at the parochial level were apparent in the incidents at Plympton St. Mary, Plymstock, and Wembury. The canons of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries displayed the same determination to protect their rights as had their predecessors of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. However, the climate had indeed changed, and in some cases compromise rather than prolongation of legal struggles seemed the preferable course of action.

This dissertation has only covered some of the more striking aspects of the history of Plympton Priory in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Areas for future investigation remain. The dispute in the fourteenth century between the Crown and the bishops of Exeter over the patronage of Plympton Priory, which endured for so long and was of such complexity that it defies confinement within the scope of this dissertation, warrants examination. As well, in order to provide a more complete picture of the place of the Priory in the church life of fifteenth and early sixteenth-century Devon and Cornwall, the

institutions to benefices in the unpublished registers of the bishops of Exeter ought to be analyzed as those for the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries have been.

This dissertation has analyzed the history of one particular house of Augustinian canons from its foundation to the later Middle Ages. Of course, the experiences of other houses of Augustinian canons might have differed substantially from those of Plympton Priory. It is hoped, therefore, that other scholars will decide to make more Augustinian houses in England the subjects of study in order to extend our knowledge of this order. Only when there have been a sufficient number of investigations into local conditions, activities, and situations can we begin to speak of the general characteristics and nature of the order of the Augustinian canons.

Table 1

The *Spiritualia* of Plympton Priory

advwsn=advowson

Church	Episcopal Charter 1186x88 (MDE #14)	Taxatio 1291 (Bodl. MS Tanner 342)	Episcopal charter 1334 (MDE #21)	Valor Ecclesi- asticus 1535 (MDE #28)	Ministers' Accounts 1540-41 (MDE #30)
<i>Appropriated churches</i>			<i>Category, value</i>		
Blackawton Appropriated 1534/5	Yes	£6 13s 4d	£6 13s 4d (pension)	£26 13s 4d	-----
Dean Prior Appropriated 1261	Yes	£5	church	£8 10s	£8 10s
Egg Buckland Appropriated 1255	Yes	£3 6s 8d	church	£9	£9
Maker Appropriated by 1264?	Yes	£5	church	£11 6s 8d	£11 6s 8d
Marystowe Appropriated by 1266?	Yes	£12	church	£8	£8
Newton St. Cyrs Appropriated 1338	No	£2*	£2 (pension)	£15	£15
Plympton Priory Church and Plympton St. Mary	-----	£33 6s 8d	church	£80	£74
St. Kew Appropriated by 1283?	Yes	£8 6s 8d	church	£20	£20
Sutton/Plymouth Appropriated in 12th century	No	£5 13s 4d	church	£23 rectory:£15 pension from vicar: £8	£23 rectory:£15 pension from vicar: £8
Tamerton Foliot Appropriated by 1283-4	Yes	£6 6s 6d	church	£10 13s 4d	£9
<i>Chapels</i>					
Brixton	No	-----	chapel	£30	£30

Plymstock	No	-----	chapel	£62	£72
Plympton Thomas	No	-----	chapel	£11	£11
Sampford Spiney	No	-----	chapel	£9 6s 8d	£9 6s 8d
St. Budeaux (dependent on Sutton)	No	-----	chapel	£9	£9
St. John-in-Arcubus, Exeter	No	£1†	-----	£9 17s 2.5d	£9 19s 2.5d
Shaugh	No	-----	chapel	£21	£20
Wembury	No	-----	chapel	£43 13s 4d	£40 13s 4d
<i>Pensions</i>					
Bratton <i>Advwsn until c. 1330/40</i>	No	£5 6s 8d	£5 6s 8d	£5 6s 8d	£5 6s 8d
Bridestowe <i>Advwsn until c. 1330/40</i>	Yes	£6 13s 4d	£6 13s 4d	£6 13s 4d	£6 13s 4d
Exminster <i>Advwsn</i>		£3 6s 8d	£3 6s 8d	£3 6s 8d	£3 6s 8d
Ilington <i>Advwsn (transferred to Ottery St. Mary, 1337)</i>	Yes	£5†	£5	-----	-----
Mewy <i>Advwsn</i>	No	13s 4d	13s 4d	13s 4d	13s 4d
Peter Tavy <i>Moiety of advwsn</i>	No	-----	5 pounds of wax	-----	-----
St. Just-in-Roseland	Yes	13s 4d	13s 4d	13s 4d	13s 4d
St. Mawgan-in-Pydar <i>Advwsn until c. 1328</i>	Yes	£1 6s 8d	£1 6s 8d	£1 6s 8d	£1 6s 8d
Stoke-in-Teignhead <i>Advwsn</i>	Yes	£2	£2	£2	£2
Ugborough <i>Advwsn</i>	Yes	£8	£8	£8	£8
<i>Other</i>					
Exeter Cathedral Chapter: £4 on the death of each canon	Yes	-----	£4	-----	-----

Gerrans: moiety of tithes	No	-----	chapel dependent on St. Anthony	£13 6s 8d	-----
St. Anthony-in-Roseland: cell	Yes	-----	church	£5	£17

*This is the value in the copies of the Taxatio printed in Reg. Bronescombe and the Record Commission edition; the copy in Bodl. Tanner MS 342, which seems to have been a fourteenth-century updating of the Taxatio after the appropriation of Newton St. Cyrs, lists the amount as £8.

†No values are given in the Bodl. MS Tanner 342 copy of the Taxatio for St. John-in-Arcubus or Ilsington; these are the amounts printed in the Reg. Bronescombe and the Record Commission editions.

Table 3

Names of Canons of Plympton Priory in the Fourteenth Century

1308-1321

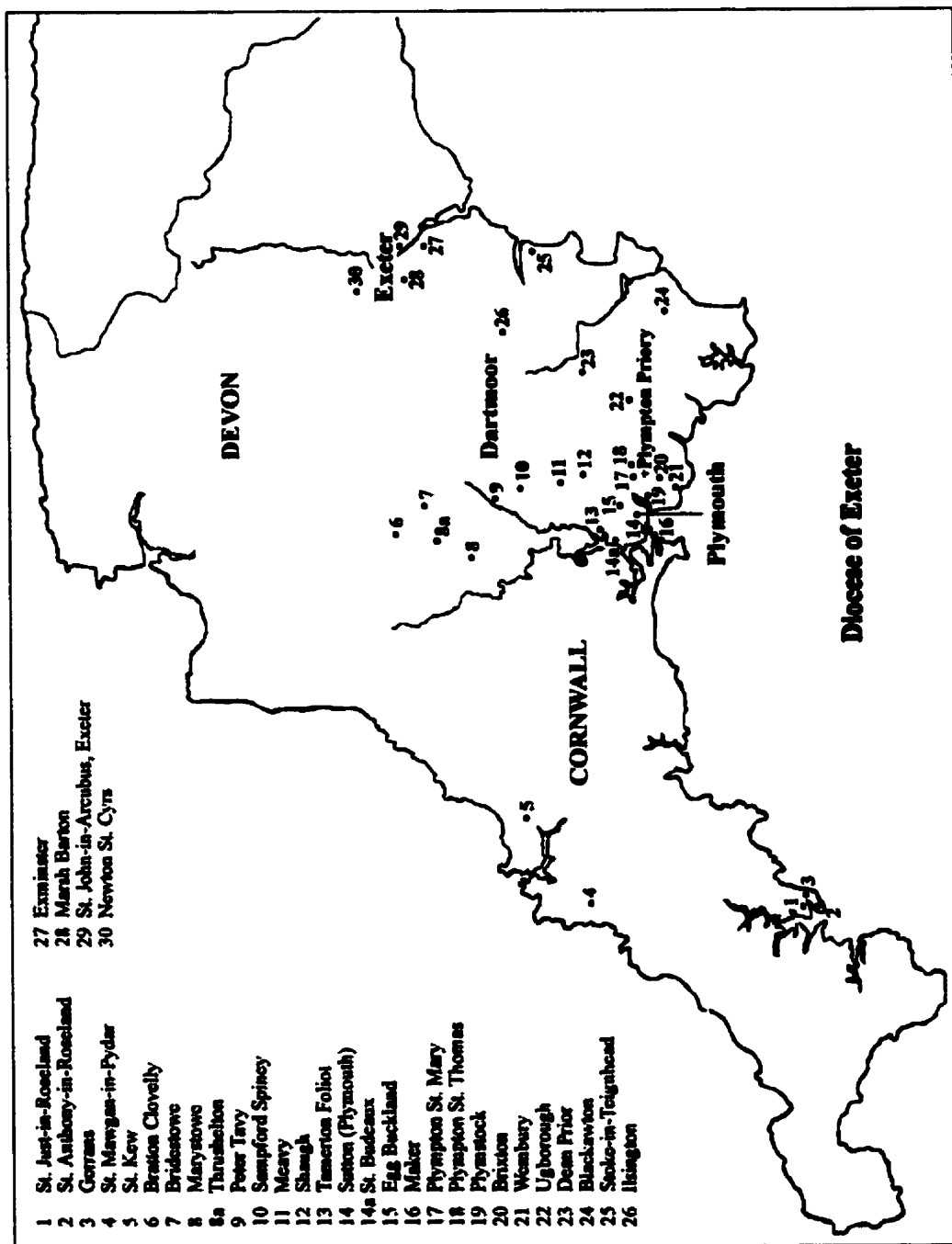
Nicholas of Leigh	Robert of Forde, later Prior	Nicholas de Pin
Herbert of Cheverstone	Richard of Buckland	Simon de Solers
Hugo of Exminster	Richard of Strashleigh	Robert de Wicheforde
John of Englebourne, later Prior	Matthew Mimminglond, Prior	Robert of Pruston

1328-1369

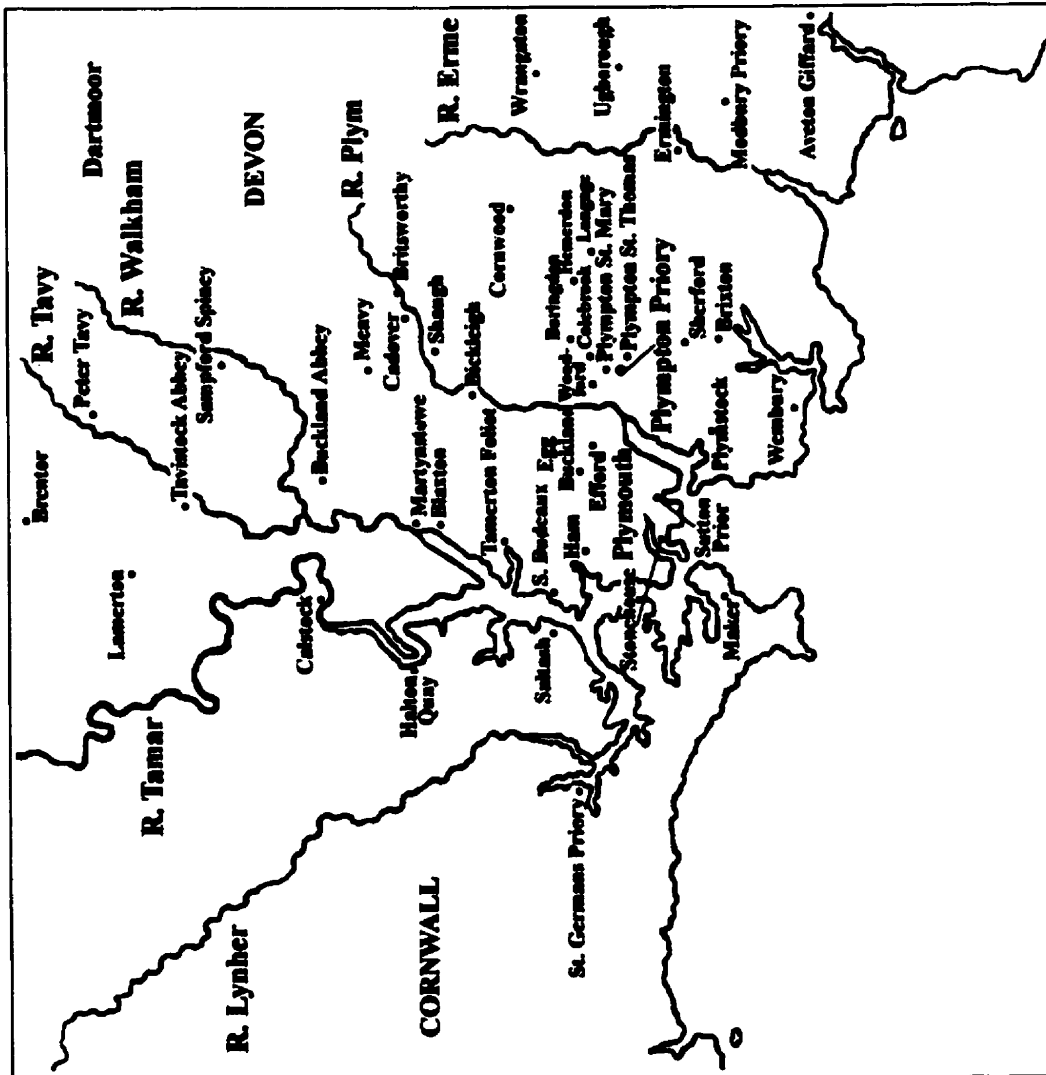
Master Nicholas de Weylonde	William of Woolleigh	John Bacoun
John de Wy of Meavy	Ralph Persoun, Prior	Robert Gyrard
Richard Fairwood	Richard de Gatepathe	Robert Hode
Thomas Doulish, Prior	Nicholas Wellesforde	Richard, brother of
Thomas Tokere	Thomas of Donne	John Crocke att Mille

1370-1392

John Shaldon, Prior	Roger Ros or Roche	Lucas Mathe
William Jarde	William Laurence	William Lywer
John Coryton	Thomas Marshall	John Holonde
Michael Combe	John Judde	Peter Sturt
John Dygoun	Robert Symon	Henry Carpenter
John Gripa	Thomas Morgan	Nicholas Selman,
Thomas Cokeworthy or	Walter	later Prior
Coleworthy	Nasman/Nansman/Nosman	



Map 1. The Churches, Chapels, and Cells of Plympton Priory



Map 2. Plymouth and its Environs

Appendix 1

Charters from the Courtenay Cartulary, Devon Record Office TD 51

1) pp. 63-4 June 7, 1305 *Plympton Priory concedes and quit-claims to Sir Hugh de Courtenay II the advowson and pension of "Bratlegh" (Brightleigh?) chapel and the land adjacent to it.*

Omnibus Christi fidelibus ad quos presens scriptum pervenerit frater Johannes Prior de Plimpton et eiusdem loci conventus salutem in Domino sempiternam. Noveritis nos concessisse remisisse et omnino quietum clamasse Domino Hugoni de Curtenay advocacionem capelle de Bratlegh que est de feodo suo, una cum terra adiacente et omnibus aliis pertinentiis suis; habendam et tenendam sibi et heredibus suis advocacionem predictam cum suis pertinentiis. sine aliquo retenemento nobis vel successoribus nostris in perpetuum. Remisimus etiam et quietum clamavimus eidem domino Hugoni et heredibus suis annuam pensionem trium solidorum quam de instituto in eadem capella percipere solebamus. Concessimus et presenti scripto confirmavimus quod quandocumque et quoscienscumque capellam predictam vacare contigerit liceat predicto Hugoni et heredibus suis capellanum ad eandem capellam presentare absque impedimento vel reclamacione nostri vel successorum nostrorum in perpetuum. In cuius rei testimonium presenti scripto sigillum nostrum commune apposuimus. Datum apud Plimpton septimo die Junii anno regni regis Edwardi tricesimo tercio; testibus Roberto abbate de Tavistok, domini Stephano de Hackumbe, Roberto Beaupeal, Thoma de Cyrecestre militibus, Helia Coffyn, Johanne Cadye, Roberto de Brodenymet, et aliis.

2) pp. 229-30 June 5, 1305 *Agreement between Plympton Priory and Sir Hugh de Courtenay II concerning a plot of land called "Le Sablon" in Plympton. Plympton Priory remits a half of the plot to Sir Hugh, who in turn quit-claims the residue of the plot with the part from the causeway to the land of Woodford.*

Cum aliquando inter dominum Hugonem de Curtenay dominum de Plymptone ex parte una et religiosos viros Johannem Priorem de Plymptone et eiusdem loci conventum ex altera calumpnie agitarentur super quadam placia terrae que vocatur Le Sablon que est in occidentali parte calcete qua itur de la Clapere ad ecclesiam Beate Marie de Plympton, cuius placie tam predictus dominus Hugo quam predicti religiosi hinc inde vocabant proprietatem tandem inter ipsos conquieverunt in hac forma, videlicet quod predicti prior et conventus pro se et suis successoribus remiserunt predicto Domino Hugoni et heredibus suis australem medietatem predictae placie imperpetuum, secundum quod bunde facte inter ipsos in vigilia Penthecostes anno regni regis Edwardi tricesimo tercio testantur, scilicet a dicta calceta linealiter versus occidentem usque ad metam que est in medio fluminis, salvo predictis religiosis et eorum successoribus quod libere possint mundare chanellum de latitudine septem pedum aque que dicitur Langebroke quando voluerint ab eorum clauso quantum voluerint versus mare. Et quod aqua de Coriz¹ currat in transversum utriusque partis placie predictae sicut fecit die confectionis presencium usque ad mare. Et predictus Dominus Hugo inspectis et intellectis munumentis predictorum religiosorum et eorum Jure et predictae placie possessione totum residuum predictae placie cum pertinentiis a predicta calceta usque ad terram de Wodeford pro se et heredibus suis predictis religiosis et eorum successoribus sicut ius ecclesie sue de

Plympton quiete clamat et tenore presencium confirmat imperpetuum tenendum sine aliqua calumpnia vel demanda. In cuius rei testimonium, hiis mutuis scriptis alternatim sigilla sua apposuerunt. Testibus Roberto abbate de Tavystok, domino Stephano de Hackumbe, Roberto Beaupeal, Thoma de Cyrecestre, Baldewyno le Bastard militibus, Willelmo de Niweton, Johanne de Colleham, Willelmo de Kemel et aliis. Datum [apud] Plympton die et anno predictis.

3) pp. 266-7 1219x1242² *Regrant and confirmation by Robert de Courtenay to Plympton Priory and canons of Marsh Barton of gifts of 21 acres of land at Marsh Barton called "Swynparroke," 11 acres of land called "Swynescastel," 30 acres of land called "Ocham" and all the land of "Lonedialond," and all the lands they held in the time of his mother Hawise de Courtenay. He also granted them a conduit of water in Alphington in exchange for a quit-claim of the canons regarding the churches of Kenn and Alphington, the prebends of Exeter castle chapel, and the mill of Marsh Barton.*

Sciant omnes ad quos presens scriptum pervenerit quod ego Robert de Courtenay reddidi Deo et ecclesie Beatorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli de Plymton et canonicis ibidem Deo servientibus et ecclesie Beate Marie de Marisco extra civitatem Exonie ad predictam ecclesiam de Plymton pertinenti viginti et unam acram terre in marisco meo de Alfington. Scilicet terram in australi parte gardini Sancte Marie de Marisco que dicitur Swynparroke in quo continentur decem acre prout bunde facte sunt sacramento legalium hominum meorum de Alfington. Et terram ex alia parte eiusdem gardini que dicitur

¹ Possibly Tory Brook in Plympton?

Swynscastel in quo continentur undecim acre per bundas suas sicut antiquum ius ecclesie eiusdem et dictorum canonicorum de Plymton. Insuper etiam dedi et concessi memoratis ecclesiis et canonicis pro salute anime mee et Marie uxoris [mee] et antecessorum meorum et successorum 30 acras terre scilicet totam terram que vocatur Ocham ex australi et boriali parte vie que tendit a ponte de Schepwalle usque ad terram Walteri de Fraxino per bundas factas sacramento hominum meorum. Et totam terram de Lonedialond in qua continentur 5 acre per bundas factas sacramento predictorum hominum meorum, que terre sunt in dominico meo de Alfington; has autem predictas terras dedi et concessi et hac presenti carta mea confirmavi Deo et memoratis ecclesiis de Plymton et de marisco et canonicis in eisdem ecclesiis Deo servientibus simul cum omnibus terris et possessionibus quas prius habuerunt tempore Hawise de Courtenay matris mee cum omnibus pertinentiis suis in viis et semitis in pratis et pascuis in aquis et exitibus et omnibus libertatibus, tenendas et habendas in liberam puram et perpetuam elemosinam et omnino quietam. Preterea dedi et concessi dictis canonicis conductum aque per terram meam et hominum meorum de Alfington a filo aquae descendente de Alfington usque ad eorum officinas de marisco sicut eis sufficere et expedire videbitur et conpetentem et liberum cursum aque ab eorum officinis usque ad proprium aque canalem; pro hac restitutione et donacione mea Antonius Prior de Plymton et eiusdem loci conventus remiserunt placitum et totum ius quod clamabant se habere in occlesiis [sic] de Ken et Alfington et prebendis castelli Exoniae et molendino de marisco unde traxerunt me in causam coram iudicibus a domino papa Honorio tercio delegatis scilicet Domino Jocelino

² Dating based on dates of deaths of Hawise de Courtenay (1219) and Robert de Courtenay (1242) (Sanders, Baronies, p. 70).

Bathonie Episcopo et Magistro Roberto de Berkeleya canonico Wellensi, renunciantes omnibus impetratis et impetrandis. In dicta causa hac predictas terras possessiones et libertates cum omnibus predictis per presens scriptum obtuli super altare Beate Marie de Marisco. Quas ego et heredes mei contra omnes homines warentizare tenemur. Quod ut ratum et inconcussum permaneat presens scriptum sigilli mei appositione duxi roborandum; hiis testibus. etc.

Note:

[] indicate additions, or, in the case of [*sic*], a correction

Appendix 2

The Taxatio of Pope Nicholas IV

The Taxatio Ecclesiastica was a valuation of all church income, both temporal and spiritual, carried out in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland in 1291-2. Pope Nicholas IV ordered the assessment so that a tenth of the income could be given to Edward I for the crusade he had promised to undertake. The assessors in each diocese were usually two clerics of the diocese who took sworn statements from incumbents as to their incomes.¹

There was some variation in practice amongst assessors in their recording practices: in the diocese of Exeter, for example, all benefices which had incomes of less than 6 marks and hence were not liable to be taxed were recorded nonetheless, whereas in other dioceses they were omitted.² However, the results listed in the Taxatio are problematic.

Robinson's investigation of the Taxatio for his study of the Augustinian canons demonstrated that because of the many inaccuracies and omissions in the assessment, the lists must be used with great caution.³ Appropriated churches--a significant source of income for religious houses--were not included in the returns of the majority of dioceses.⁴ The information is more reliable for some dioceses than for others: the diocese of Exeter, for example, was grossly under-assessed both in terms of spiritualia and temporalia.⁵

¹ J. H. Denton, "The Valuation of the Ecclesiastical Benefices of England and Wales in 1291-2," Historical Research, vol. 66 (1993), p. 234.

² Ibid., pp. 238, 244-45. Benefice holders who held a number of benefices worth singly 6 marks or less still had to pay a tenth of the sum total.

³ Robinson, Geography of Augustinian Settlement, pp. 110-120, 145.

⁴ Rose Graham, "The Taxation of Pope Nicholas IV," in English Ecclesiastical Studies (London: S. P. C. K., 1929), p. 296.

⁵ Robinson, pp. 119-20.

The text of the whole Taxatio Ecclesiastica was printed by the Record Commission in 1802 from the Exchequer copy in the Public Record Office. In 1889, as an appendix to his edition of the Register of Walter Bronescombe, F. C. Hingeston-Randolph printed a version of the Taxatio for the diocese of Exeter. The text came from what Hingeston-Randolph contended was a near-contemporaneous copy of the Taxatio.⁶ The information in these two texts of the assessment are virtually identical.

Finally, there survives in Bishop Tanner's copy of extracts from the lost Plympton cartulary a list of the Priory's spiritualia. The version from Bodleian MS. Tanner 342 seems to have been an incomplete fourteenth-century updating of the returns made in 1291. This is suggested by the fact that the value for Ilingston church is omitted on account of its transferral to Ottery St. Mary, and by the fact that the value for Newton St. Cyrs has increased, as one would expect after its appropriation by Plympton in 1338.

An examination of the information from the assesement on Plympton Priory's spiritualia, when compared with other sources such as the Valor Ecclesiasticus and Bishop Grandisson's confirmation of 1334-5, demonstrates that there are serious lacunae in the printed texts. The two largest sources of Plympton Priory's spiritual income according to the Valor--its appropriated churches and its chapels--have been almost entirely omitted from the printed texts of the survey. When values are given for Plympton Priory's appropriated churches, no mention is made of their connection with the Priory. Essentially, the Taxatio as it appears in the Record Commission edition and The Register of Walter Bronescombe are lists of Plympton Priory's pensions.

⁶ Reg. Bronescombe, p. 450.

The assessment as listed in the MS version is more complete than the printed texts, as it includes incomes from the Priory's appropriated churches. It is hard to gauge the accuracy of these figures, as they are quite different from those in the Valor Ecclesiasticus and the Ministers' Accounts. Then again, since these values were based on income sources--tithes, offerings, the yield of glebe land--which were subject to economic influences like inflation, increased or decreased productivity, and alterations in personal wealth, one would expect them to have changed over time. Conversely, the figures listed for the pensions in the MS copy are identical to those which appear in the Valor, with the exception of Blackawton, which was appropriated in the sixteenth century.

Table A: Values from the Different Copies of the Taxatio for the *Spiritualia* of Plympton Priory

x [] = The value given for a church in the printed texts of the Taxatio when no mention is made of its affiliation with Plympton Priory

vic=value of the vicarage

Name of Church	Taxatio (Record Commission)	Taxatio (Reg. Bronescombe)	Taxatio (Bodl. MS Tanner 342)
Church of Plympton	£33 6s 8d	£33 6s 8d	50 marks (£33 6s 8d)
Church of Dean	x [£5; vic: £1]	x [£5]	7.5 marks (£5)
Church of Sutton	x [£5 6s 8d; vic: £4 6s 8d]	x [£5 6s 8d; vic: £4 6s 8d]	8.5 marks (£5 13s 4d)
Church of Tamerton	x £4 vic: 3s 4d	x [£4]	6.5 marks (£6 6s 6d)
Church of Marystowe	x [£12]	x [£12]	18 marks (£12)
Church of Maker	x [£5] [sic: Sacre]	x [£5]	7.5 marks (£5)
Church of St. Kew	x [£8 13s 4d;	x [£8 13s 4d;	12.5 marks

	vic: £2]	vic: £2]	(£8 6s 8d)
Church of Gansted*	-----	-----	3 marks (£2)
Church of Egg Buckland	x [£3 6s 8d; vic: 6s 8d]	x [£3 6s 8d; vicarage: 6s 8d]	5 marks (£3 6s 8d)
Church of Newton St. Cyrs	£2 †	£2	12 marks (£8)
Pension from Ugborough	£8	£8	12 marks (£8)
Pension from Stoke-in- Teignhead	£2	£2	3 marks (£2)
Pension from Blackawton	£6 13s 4d	£6 13s 4d	10 marks (£6 13s 4d)
Pension from Ilsington	£5	£5	-----
Pension from Exminster	£3 6s 8d	£6 13s 4d	5 marks (£3 6s 8d)
Pension from Bratton	£5 6s 8d	£5 6s 8d	8 marks (£5 6s 8d)
Pension from Bridestowe	£6 13s 4d	£6 13s 4d	10 marks (£6 13s 4d)
Pension from Mewy	13s 4d	13s 4d	1 mark (13s 4d)
Pension from St. Just	13s 4d	13s 4d	1 mark (13s 4d)
Pension from St. Mawgan- in- Pydar	£1 6s 8d	£1 6s 8d	2 marks (£1 6s 8d)
Chapel of Sampford Spiney	x [£2]	x [£2]	-----
Church of St. Gerrans	x [rectorial portion: £2 6s 8d; portion of the Prior of St. Anthony: £2 6s 8d]	x [rectorial portion: £2 6s 8d; portion of the Prior of St. Anthony: £2 6s 8d]	
Church of St. Anthony	x [£3]	x [£3]	-----
Chapel of St. John in Arcubus, Exeter	£1	£1	-----
Total			£123 13s 6d

*This church does not appear elsewhere in the surviving records of Plympton Priory's *spiritualia*. There is no church of this name in Devon and Cornwall. A hamlet named Ganstead exists in Humberside, but it does not seem to have had a parish church in the

Middle Ages, and Plympton Priory is not otherwise known to have had any connections with this place.

† The Record Commission text of the Taxatio states that the Prior of “Plumpton” received £2 from the church of Donne in the deanery of Cadbury, but this seems to have been an error for Newton St. Cyrs, which was in the same deanery.

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TD 51

Courtenay Cartulary

W1258M/D74/4

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W1258M/D74/4(2) Another copy of the inspeximus charter of 1406 or 1420

W1258/D74/3

Composition between Tavistock Abbey and Plympton concerning Plymstock Chapel 1429

W1258M/D74/2

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