Introduction

Why write a book about tenth-century local priests in the lands of the former Carolingian empire? These clerics in the countryside beyond the episcopal see, entrusted with the pastoral care of the rural population, have certainly been relatively neglected. Yet a lack of previous attention, however conspicuous, does not in itself justify a research topic. The goal of this book is not only to fill a gap in the scholarship, glaring though it is, but also and primarily to use a study of these little-known figures to offer a new perspective on a major historiographical problem. The conventional narrative of church history, which takes its cue from elites, has traditionally been shaped by two major waves of perceived change: one in the Carolingian period, with a high point under the Carolingian rulers Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, and the other in the decades following 1050, with a high point under Pope Gregory VII in the 1070s and early 1080s. Each of these moments has long benefited from intense and productive research interest, but the period between them, as a result of this narrative, has been left in the shadows, and their relation to one another remains uncertain. We propose that a focus on local priests in the tenth and early eleventh centuries not only illuminates a topic of interest in its own right, but also allows us to explore this historiographical problem in new and productive ways, in the process shedding light on the 'high points' too.

What lends the figure of the local priest to this enquiry is, on the one hand, his centrality – for these men were the face of Christianity for the overwhelming bulk of the population – but also how the historiography has developed. Research on the Carolingian empire of the ninth century has over recent years generated a fundamentally new image of 'local priests'.[1] However, we know little about what happened to this group of

[1] See C. van Rhijn, 'Priests and the Carolingian Reforms: The Bottle-necks of Local Correctio' in R. Corradini, R. Means, C. U. Pössel and P. Shaw (eds.), *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*

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people after the end of the ninth century. At the same time, and in parallel, there has been intense discussion in recent years amongst international researchers over the alterations to ecclesiastical structures from around the middle of the eleventh century, traditionally gathered under the label of 'Gregorian reform'.[2] This discussion, however, is almost entirely

(Vienna: Verlag der ÖAW, 2006), pp. 219–37; C. van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord. Priests and Episcopal Statutes in the Carolingian Period*, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); C. Mériaux, 'Ordre et hiérarchie au sein du clergé rural pendant le haut Moyen Âge' in D. Iogna-Prat, F. Bougard and R. Le Jan (eds.), *Hiérarchie et stratification sociale dans l'Occident médiéval (400–1100)*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 6 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), pp. 117–36; C. van Rhijn, 'The Local Church, Priests' Handbooks and Pastoral Care in the Carolingian Period' and C. Mériaux, 'Consacerdotes et cooperatores. L'évêque et ses prêtres dans le monde franc (VI^{e}–X^{e} siècles)' in *Chiese locali e chiese regionali nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 61 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2014), respectively, pp. 689–706 and 865–94; C. Mériaux, 'L'"entrée en scène" du clergé rural à l'époque carolingienne' in M. Gaillard (ed.), *L'empreinte chrétienne en Gaule du IV^{e} au IX^{e} siècle,* Culture et société médiévale 26 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), pp. 469–90; C. Mériaux, 'La compétition autour des églises locales dans le monde franc' in P. Depreux, F. Bougard and R. Le Jan (eds.), *Compétition et sacré au haut Moyen Âge. Entre médiation et exclusion*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 21 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), pp. 85–102; S. Patzold and C. van Rhijn (eds.), *Men in the Middle. Local Priests in Early Medieval Europe*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 93 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); R. Stone, 'Exploring Minor Clerics in Early Medieval Tuscany', *Reti Medievali Rivista* 18.1 (2017), pp. 67–97; C. van Rhijn, 'Royal Politics in Small Worlds. Local Priests and the Implementation of Carolingian Correctio' in T. Kohl, S. Patzold and B. Zeller (eds.), *Kleine Welten. Ländliche Gesellschaften im Karolingerreich*, Vorträge und Forschungen 87 (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2019), pp. 237–52; S. Patzold, 'Verortung in einer mobilen Welt. Zum Zusammenhang zwischen Kirchenzehnt und der Einhegung von Mobilität im Karolingerreich', *Historische Zeitschrift* 309 (2019), pp. 285–312; S. Patzold, *Presbyter. Moral, Mobilität und die Kirchenorganisation im Karolingerreich*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 68 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2020); B. Zeller, C. West, F. Tinti, M. Stoffella, N. Schroeder, C. van Rhijn, S. Patzold, T. Kohl, W. Davies and M. Czock, *Neighbours and Strangers. Local Societies in Early Medieval Europe*, Manchester Medieval Studies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), pp. 120–49; C. van Rhijn, *Leading the Way to Heaven. Pastoral Care and Salvation in the Carolingian Period*, The Medieval World (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022); S. Patzold, 'Bishops, Power and Local Churches in the Frankish Countryside' in *I Franchi*, Settimane di studio della fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 69 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2023), pp. 651–84; R. Stone, 'On Criminal Priests: Illicit Desires and Clerical Masculinity (400–900)' in F. Borri, C. La Rocca and F. Veronese (eds.), *Masculinities in Early Medieval Europe: Tradition and Innovation 450–1050*, Seminari del Centro interuniversitario per la storia e l'archeologia dell' alto medioevo 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023), pp. 163–82; B. Waagmeester, *Pastoral Works. Priests, Books and Compilatory Practices in the Carolingian Period* (in press).

[2] See the recent debate between Barthélemy, Lauwers, Henriet and Mazel in *Le Moyen Age* 129 (2023), pp. 75–213. In addition: F. Mazel, 'Pour une redéfinition de la réforme "grégorienne". Éléments d'introduction' in M. Fournié (ed.), *La réforme "grégorienne" dans le Midi (milieu XI^{e}–début XIII^{e} siècle)*, Cahiers de Fanjeaux 48 (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 2013), pp. 9–40; T. Martine and J. Winandy (eds.), *La réforme grégorienne, une "révolution totale"?*, Rencontres Série "Civilisation médiévale" 42 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2021); F. Mazel, 'La réforme grégorienne. Un tournant fondateur (milieu XI^{e} – début XIII^{e} siècle)' in F. Mazel (ed.), *Nouvelle histoire du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Seuil, 2021), pp. 291–306.

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decoupled from the more recent early medieval research and has heavily focused (as we shall see) on clerical elites.

Extending the enquiry into local priests forwards into the tenth century allows us to connect these two fields of research that are currently notable in their lack of interaction; we can explain in new ways which paths led, directly or indirectly, from the Carolingian period to the enormous changes that took place in society and church from around 1050 onwards. In this introduction, we set out the specific questions and fields of research with which this book engages. In addition, over the following pages, we shall introduce the structure of this book and explain the geographical space in which our investigation is rooted.

I.1 Historiography

The conventional picture of the local priest in this period was elegantly summarised in Heinrich Fichtenau's classic book on tenth-century western Europe, *Living in the Tenth Century: Mentalities and Social Orders*, a pioneering work first published as *Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts* some forty years ago. Fichtenau wrote expressly to demolish old myths about the tenth century as a 'dark age'; to the contrary, he showed it was a time full of creativity, energy and innovation. Yet when it came to local priests, Fichtenau's analysis remained sombre. While he acknowledged the fundamental importance of local priests to the everyday spiritual well-being of the general population, he emphasised their subjection to lay lords and minimised their level of education. He lamented how little could be said of:

> The common clerics who served in parish churches, performed duties as scribes or stewards for secular lords, worked their land with the help of a few servants, and often attempted to establish families. Only service to their lords offered the possibility of expanding the narrow horizons of this semi-peasant existence [. . .]. And yet these poorly educated rural churchmen, burdened with so many bad habits, were the fundamental element of Christendom. Most of what our sources say about them is negative. Their positive contribution can only be supposed; it escapes our knowledge as does so much about the middle and lower levels of society.[3]

[3] H. Fichtenau, *Living in the Tenth Century. Mentalities and Social Orders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 221 (= *Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts. Studien über Denkart und Existenz im einstigen Karolingerreich* 1, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 30.1 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1984), p. 297).

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The judgement that Fichtenau pronounces here is largely shared by the wider historiography, in which these priests are in any case for the most part merely background figures, of interest chiefly for being married,[4] with only a few exceptions.[5] In an earlier generation, Marc Bloch, for instance, wrote little about such priests in his great *Feudal Society*, except to say that 'those serving rural parishes, poorly educated and endowed with slender revenues, lived a life that differed only little, overall, from that of their flock'.[6]

These pessimistic views find some support in contemporary critiques. For instance, the vitriolic mid eleventh-century writer Peter Damian attacked secular priests for their supposed educational, moral and spiritual failings:

> There is something else that displeases me regarding secular priests, namely, that since they associate with laymen by living among the citizens of a region, many of them are no different from their neighbours in their way of

[4] J. Dhondt, *Das frühe Mittelalter* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1968), p. 235; G. Tellenbach and T. Reuter (eds.), *The Church in Western Europe from the Tenth to the Early Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 33, p. 77, pp. 88–9 and p. 125 (though Tellenbach is always nuanced); M. Aubrun, 'Le clergé rural dans le royaume franc du VI^{e} au XII^{e} siècle' in P. Bonnassie (ed.), *Le clergé rural dans l'Europe médiévale et moderne. Actes des XIII^{èmes} Journées Internationales d'Histoire de l'Abbaye de Flaran, 6–8 septembre 1991*, Flaran 13 (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Midi, 1995), pp. 15–27; W. Goez, *Kirchenreform und Investiturstreit 910–1122* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2000), p. 74–5: 'Um die Moral des Priesterstandes war es in weiten Teilen des Abendlandes nicht gut bestellt. Simonie war gang und gäbe; man wußte, daß sie ein schweres Vergehen darstellte, aber alle Verbote nützten anfangs nichts. Der Zölibat wurde oftmals nicht eingehalten [. . .]'; H. Wolf, *Krypta. Unterdrückte Traditionen der Kirchengeschichte* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2015), p. 148: 'Er [i.e. the local lord] und nicht der Bischof stellte einen Pfarrer, meist einen Leibeigenen, an und konnte ihn jederzeit wieder entlassen. Die Anstellungsdauer betrug in der Regel ohnehin nur ein Jahr. Dem Grundherrn oblag auch die geistliche Leitung seiner Eigenkirche. Es ging an dieser Kirche weniger um Katechese oder Predigt als um den notwendigen Kult, wobei der Pfarrer dabei die heilsrelevanten Handlungen sicherstellen musste'. For a comparable view in Anglophone scholarship, see K. G. Cushing, *Reform and Papacy in the Eleventh Century. Spirituality and Social Change*, Manchester Medieval Studies (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 14: 'More often than not, the local priest may have been barely adequate for his duties, though this impression may reflect the rhetoric of later church reformers. Perhaps having only a rudimentary knowledge of Latin, little formal theological training, often married with a family, the local priest may effectively have presided over a congregation that had little (perhaps no) theological understanding, but one that worshipped in a largely ritualistic way through the following of the Church's liturgical year.'

[5] Such an exception is A. Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands* 2 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1906), pp. 244–96, who considers priests important tools for development of the Church. Rather than a group in need for reform, Hauck paints priests as victims of a meddlesome papacy: see ibid. 3, pp. 563–8.

[6] M. Bloch, *La société féodale. Les classes et le gouvernement des hommes* 2 (Paris: Albin, 1949), p. 100: '[. . .] les desservants des paroisses rurales, médiocrement instruits et dotés de maigres revenus, mènent une vie assez peu différente, en somme, de celle de leurs ouailles'; he goes on immediately to note that they were mostly married. On p. 101 he talks about their 'pauvres rentes', and on p. 108 about their subjection to 'la domination seigneuriale'; these are the only references to local priests in the book.

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> life and irregular morals. They normally involve themselves in secular affairs, and show no restraint in taking part in idle and senseless conversation. Moreover, because of disputes and arguments (*lites et iurgia*), they are often wanting in charity toward their neighbours, and while unable to control the flames of malice or earthy desire in their hearts, shamelessly involve themselves at the sacred altars [. . .].[7]

Yet the exact target of Peter Damian's polemic is hard to identify, and overt criticism of local priests (as opposed, for instance, to generic condemnations of sinful clerics) by contemporaries is harder to find in the sources of this period than one might suppose from the wider literature. For instance, Pope Gregory VII sent around a dozen letters criticising simoniac and fornicating priests across the Latin West, but in no case are these priests more specifically defined.[8] Gregory may well have had cathedral canons in mind, or simply have been thinking of the degree of ordination, not the social function, and so we cannot assume these critiques were aimed at local priests, let alone reflected anything of their lives; and in general, papal efforts at reform were not aimed at the local level.[9] Earlier critiques by tenth-century Italian bishops, such as Atto of Vercelli, may not be generalisable across the whole of the Latin West, and in any case are mostly generic moral pieties.[10] The imagination of these priests as impoverished, ignorant, and hardly different from their lay neighbours stems chiefly from modern preconceptions and assumptions, which has lured some historians into slightly artificial readings of the evidence.[11]

[7] Peter Damian, Letter no. 47, K. Reindel (ed.), MGH Briefe d. dt. Kaiserzeit 4.2 (München: Harrassowitz, 1988), pp. 45–56, at p. 45. For the English translation, see Peter Damian, *Peter Damian, Letters 31–60*, O. J. Blum (ed.), The Fathers of the Church. Mediaeval Continuation 2 (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990), pp. 254–5.

[8] For instance, Gregory VII, Epistola II.61 in E. Caspar (ed.), *Das Register Gregors VII.*, MGH Epp. sel. 2.1 (Weidmannsche Buchhandlung: Berlin, 1920), p. 216, in which Gregory urges the bishop of Liège to 'admonish and compel all kinds of ministers of sacred orders to live chastely' ('ut admoneas et coherceas quoscunque sacri ordinis ministros caste vivere', transl. H. E. J. Cowdrey, *The Register of Pope Gregory VII, 1073–1085: An English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 155). Only one of his letters, IX.5 (in E. Caspar (ed.), *Das Register Gregors VII.*, MGH Epp. sel. 2.2 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1920), pp. 579–80, sent in 1081), could be read as referring specifically to local priests since it also discusses tithes, but the matter is hardly clear-cut. It may be noted that Gregory never referred to a 'parish' in any of his letters, using *parrochia* only to refer to a bishopric, which perhaps reveals something about his focus.

[9] As already noted by Bloch, *Société féodale* 2, p. 108: 'Ce n'était pas du côté du système paroissial que s'était dirigé le principal effort des réformateurs'.

[10] Atto of Vercelli, *The Letters of Atto, Bishop of Vercelli. Text, Translation and Commentary*, G. A. Willhauck (ed.) (Ann Arbor, MI: Routledge, 1990), nos. 9 and 10, pp. 95–113 and 122–7.

[11] E.g. B. Töpfer, 'The Cult of Relics and Pilgrimage in Burgundy and Aquitaine at the Time of the Monastic Reform' in T. F. Head and R. A. Landes (eds.), *The Peace of God. Social Violence and*

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How far, then, and in what ways, had the position of these priests changed in the period following the collapse of the Carolingian empire? It might seem surprising that an empirical answer to this question has not yet been proposed. After all, since Fichtenau wrote in the 1980s, our view of the Church in the tenth and eleventh centuries has been transformed. Building on pioneering work by Timothy Reuter, historians have worked hard to uncover how episcopal authority developed in both theory and practice. Much of this work has centred on the East Frankish kingdom ruled by the Ottonian dynasty, demolishing old certainties about the 'imperial church system' of the empire.[12] We also now have a more nuanced understanding of monasticism in this period, from the patronage and spiritual networks that reshaped it to the charismatic abbots, such as Richard of St. Vanne, Poppo of Stablo and Odilo of Cluny, who played key roles in bringing about change.[13] The concept of reform has itself come under criticism, at least in parts of the field.[14] Yet the role of local

Religious Response in France Around the Year 1000 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 41–57, at p. 42, who argues that communication between the Church and the people broke down on the basis of a 1031 council at Limoges that encouraged priests to preach regularly, in line with long-standing tradition (the council record is in any case of dubious authenticity: see D. F. Callahan, 'Ademar of Chabannes, Apocalypticism and the Peace Council of Limoges of 1031', *Revue bénédictine* 101 (1991), pp. 32–49).

[12] Fundamental contributions were made by T. Reuter, 'The "Imperial Church System" of the Ottonian and Salian Rulers. A Reconsideration', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), pp. 347–74, and T. Reuter, 'Ein Europa der Bischöfe. Das Zeitalter Burchards von Worms' in W. Hartmann (ed.), *Bischof Burchard von Worms 1000–1025*, Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelrheinischen Kirchengeschichte 100 (Mainz: Selbstverlag der Gesellschaft für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, 2001), pp. 1–28; for an overview of research since then, see A. Bihrer, 'Vom "Reichsbischof" zum "Diözesanbischof": Die Erforschung von Bischöfen in ottonisch-salischer Zeit' in A. Bihrer and S. Bruhn (eds.), *Jenseits des Königshofs. Bischöfe und ihre Diözesen im nachkarolingischen ostfränkisch-deutschen Reich (850–1100)*, Studien zur Germania Sacra NF 10 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), pp. 21–55 and A. Bihrer, 'Bishop and Diocese in the Early and High Middle Ages. The "Episcopalization of the Church" in European Comparison' in A. Bihrer and H. Röckelein (eds.), *Die 'Episkopalisierung der Kirche' im europäischen Vergleich*, Studien zur Germania Sacra NF 13 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), pp. 1–22. For a monographic treatment integrating the French evidence, see L. Jégou, *L'évêque, juge de paix. L'autorité épiscopale et le règlement des conflits entre Loire et Elbe (milieu VIII^{e}–milieu XI^{e} siècle)*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011). For a wider angle, R. McKitterick, 'The Church' in T. Reuter (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 130–62.

[13] S. Vanderputten, *Imagining Religious Leadership in the Middle Ages: Richard of Saint-Vanne and the Politics of Reform* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015); I. Rosé, *Construire une société seigneuriale: itinéraire et ecclésiologie de l'abbé Odon de Cluny, fin du IX^{e}–milieu du X^{e} siècle*, Collection d'études médiévales de Nice 8 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008).

[14] For a classic evaluation, see already G. Tellenbach, '"Gregorianische Reform": Kritische Besinnungen' in K. Schmid (ed.), *Reich und Kirche vor dem Investiturstreit. Vorträge beim wissenschaftlichen Kolloquium aus Anlaß des 80. Geburtstags von Gerd Tellenbach* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1985), pp. 99–113; see now J. S. Barrow, 'Ideas and Applications of Reform' in

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priests has barely featured in any of this revisionist work, which has focused on the structure of church hierarchies, individual figures and the importance of bishops and abbots. Since relatively little attention has been paid to priests in the tenth and earlier eleventh centuries in other fields of study, the historical understanding of these figures has, as a result, changed little in the last forty years in comparison to that of their socially elevated contemporaries.[15]

There are several reasons for this relative neglect. One is simply the changing volume and nature of evidence for these men between the ninth and tenth centuries. The surge of Carolingian material dealing with local priests, on which a whole new historiography has been built in recent decades, began to ebb from ca. 900, in particular, the ordinances issued by bishops, known as episcopal capitularies or statutes.[16] In contrast, a wide range of evidence continued to be produced and even flourished that illuminates the role and status of bishops of the period: episcopal hagiography and historiography (especially the genre of episcopal histories known as *gesta episcoporum*) and royal charters, through which kings and emperors bestowed land and privileges upon bishops. These sources tend to shed light on how bishops moved through the world and on their relationships with their peers, the nobles of their day, their rulers and God. Following the grain of this material, which focuses essentially on strategies for episcopal representation, tends to obscure the day-to-day aspects of bishops' role, including their responsibilities for local priests. Where the humble priest does appear in such material, in hagiography and

T. F. X. Noble and J. M. H. Smith (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity* 3: *Early Medieval Christianities c. 600–c. 1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 345–62; J. S. Barrow, 'Rethinking Reform 900–1150. Conceptualising Change in Medieval Religious Institutions', *Revue Mabillon* 30 (2019), pp. 228–30; J. S. Barrow, 'Developing Definitions of Reform in the Church in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries' in R. Balzaretti, J. S. Barrow and P. Skinner (eds.), *Italy and Early Medieval Europe. Papers for Chris Wickham* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 501–11; for monastic 'reforms', see also H. Sellner, *Klöster zwischen Krise und correctio. Monastische "Reformen" im hochmittelalterlichen Flandern*, Klöster als Innovationslabore 3 (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2013), pp. 67–74; M. Krätschmer, *Die discretio des Abtes. Kloster und Außenwelt im hochmittelalterlichen Alemannien*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 66 (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2019), pp. 5–21 and 424–31; S. Vanderputten (ed.), *Rethinking Reform in the Latin West, 10th to early 12th century* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

[15] An example is H. Keller and G. Althoff, *Die Zeit der späten Karolinger und Ottonen: Krisen und Konsolidierungen, 888–1024*, Gebhardt. Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte 3 (Stuttgart: Klett Cotta, 2008), a book that touches upon ecclesiastical structures without mentioning local priests; another example is H.-W. Goetz, *Leben im Mittelalter vom 7. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1986, 7th ed. 2002), who describes the parish in chapter IV.3.b, p. 136, without mentioning local priests at all.

[16] An overview is provided by van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, pp. 229–31.

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historiography alike, he often serves as an anecdotal interlude or a foil for the author to show the bishop's qualities.

Work into the tenth- and eleventh-century priesthood has been limited more significantly, however, by the conceptual models historians use for thinking about the church in this period, which tend to marginalise these men. Because of their importance to much of the scholarship that this book builds on, in what follows, we outline three important models of this kind: the notion of the proprietary church, the question of space and territorialisation and the issue of papal-led church reform.

The issue of ownership has often been used as a lens for thinking about local churches. It is a particularly pertinent question for this period, since the ownership of many churches passed into monastic hands from the tenth century onwards, with increasing volume and detailed evidence as the eleventh century progressed.[17] In her magisterial *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West*, published in 2006, Susan Wood surveyed a vast body of evidence (predominantly charters and associated documentary sources, but including narrative historiography) to see how churches at all levels were considered, and treated as property, including local churches, in a study stretching from late antiquity into the twelfth century.[18] If we assume that a priest in a church owned by a lay lord was not subject to the same level of episcopal control as a priest in an episcopally owned church, this would have had major implications for parish organisation.

Wood's extraordinary empirical grasp of the issue makes her monumental book an enduring resource for historians, including those interested chiefly in the tenth century, but the premise behind this work, which goes back to the influential theories of the nineteenth-century German legal historian Ulrich Stutz, has been recently reassessed by Steffen Patzold for the eighth and ninth centuries.[19] In any case, work in the field of the 'proprietary church' is fundamentally a line of research about institutions, in which the priests who served these churches feature only tangentially (see Chapter 2 for more discussion). As the personnel required to staff the

[17] G. Constable, *Monastic Tithes from Their Origins to the Twelfth Century*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought NS 10 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964); G. Constable, 'Monasteries, Rural Churches and the Cura Animarum in the Early Middle Ages' in *Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 28 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1982), pp. 349–89; for a more recent perspective on the English evidence, see F. Tinti, 'Benedictine Reform and Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Early Medieval Europe* 23 (2015), pp. 229–51.

[18] S. Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

[19] Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 477–92, and see Chapter 1, p. 50.

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asset on behalf of its owners, they could in this approach be credited with little or no capacity of action of their own, and have often been assumed (rather than demonstrated) to have been generally poor, or even unfree.[20]

A second approach to the church in this period has been to focus on space, or more accurately, processes of spatialisation or 'territorialisation'. This approach is particularly visible in Francophone scholarship, particularly the work of historians such as Michel Lauwers and Florian Mazel.[21] This process of territorialisation concerned the diocese, but it also related to the parish, and indeed to smaller spaces within the parish, such as the cemetery.[22] In all these areas, it has been argued, we see a greater interest in spaces being precisely defined by their boundaries, rather than as zones loosely focused on a centre (or *pôle*). Much of this argument has been around the timing of this process, now often thought to be a feature of the period from the tenth century onwards, but accelerating in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[23] The debates about the extent to

[20] E.g. Tellenbach, *Church*, p. 80: 'The financial situation of the isolated country clergy probably also varied from country to country and period to period, but in general it was a modest or even a needy one. The office of parish priest was therefore not a very attractive one materially'.

[21] M. Lauwers, 'Circuit, cimetière, paroisse. Réflexions sur l'ancrage ecclésial des sites d'habitat (VII^{e}–XIII^{e} siècle)' in J.-M. Yante and A.-M. Bultot-Verleysen (eds.), *Autour du "village". Établissements humains, finages et communautés rurales*, Publications de l'Institut d'Études Médiévales. Textes, études, congrès 25 (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain. Institut d'Études Médiévales, 2010), pp. 301–24; M. Lauwers, 'De l'incastellamento à l'inecclesiamento: Monachisme et logiques spatiales du féodalisme' in D. Russo, C. Sapin, D. Iogna-Prat, M. Lauwers, F. Mazel and I. Rosé (eds.), *Cluny. Les moines et la société au premier âge féodal* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013), pp. 315–38; F. Mazel, *L'évêque et le territoire. L'invention médiévale de l'espace*, L'univers historique (Paris: La Seuil, 2016); D. Pichot, 'L'espace des paroissiens: construction du territoire paroissial dans le Bas-Maine au Moyen Âge' in B. Merdrignac, D. Pichot, G. Provost and L. Plouchart (eds.), *La paroisse, communauté et territoire: Constitution et recomposition du maillage paroissial* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2013), pp. 369–402; F. Hautefeuille, 'Cartographier les territoires paroissiaux dans le Sud-Ouest de la France (Moyen Âge, époque moderne)', *Siècles* 52 (2022), pp. 109–25. A similar spatial methodology is applied to Frisia by G. de Langen and J. Mol, 'Church Foundation and Parish Formation in Frisia in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', *Medieval Low Countries* 4 (2017), pp. 1–55.

[22] C. Treffort, 'Du cimiterium christianorum au cimetière paroissial: évolution des espaces funéraires en Gaule du VI^{e} au X^{e} siècle' in H. Galinié and E. Zadora-Rio (eds.), *Archéologie du cimetière chrétien: Actes du 2^{e} colloque A.R.C.H.E.A. (Orléans, 29 septembre – 1er octobre 1994)*, Revue Archéologique du Centre de la France. Supplément 11 (Tours: FÉRACF, 1996), pp. 55–63; E. Zadora-Rio, 'The Making of Churchyards and Parish Territories in the Early-Medieval Landscape of France and England in the 7th–12th Centuries: a Reconsideration', *Medieval Archaeology* 47 (2003), pp. 1–19.

[23] Though cf. the nuanced view of W. Petke, 'Die Pfarrei in Mitteleuropa im Wandel vom Früh- zum Hochmittelalter' in E. Bünz and G. Fouquet (eds.), *Die Pfarrei im späten Mittelalter*, Vorträge und Forschungen 77 (Ostfildern: Thorbecke, 2013), pp. 21–60, esp. pp. 46–54, concluding at p. 54: 'Die Territorialpfarrei ist also seit der Karolingerzeit existent und wurde im Laufe des Hochmittelalter so manifest, dass man seit dem 11. Jahrundert dazu übergehen konnte, die Lage

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which we can talk about the 'parish' before the year 1000 revolve around this issue of spatialisation, with many historians maintaining that the bounded territory implied by the term was at best developing in this period, rather than being a fully formed entity.[24] Important though this strand of work certainly has been (and doubtless will continue to be), it has focused on institutions, practices and conceptualisations of space, rather than on the priests who staffed these institutions and lived and worked within this space.

Finally, there is the question of 'papal reform', a towering subject in the historiography of the medieval church and the eleventh century alike. Scholars have long focused on the debates that took off as the second half of the eleventh century progressed that concerned the 'correct' clerical way of life and the Church's independence from the laity. Of particular importance for local priests are the decrees issued by popes and their legates on the subject of clerical sexuality, and the debates that these decrees provoked. The debates focused on clerical continence and celibacy, on the legal status of priests' sons (and whether these men could themselves become priests) and on whether priests could cohabit at all with any women. Implementation of these rules was patchy and often met with overt resistance.[25] Even in the diocese of the committed papal supporter

von Ländereien, zehntpflichtigen Höfen und sogar Grafschaften nach Parochien zu bestimmen'. Cf. also W. Petke, 'Urpfarrei und Pfarreinetz, über zwei Begriffe der Pfarreiforschung' in S. Pätzold and R. Haas (eds.), *Pro cura animarum. Mittelalterliche Pfarreien und Pfarrkirchen an Rhein und Ruhr*, Studien zur Kölner Kirchengeschichte 43 (Siegburg: Franz Schmitt, 2016), pp. 27–44, at pp. 39–40; R. Schieffer, 'Die Anfänge des Pfarrwesens in der Karolingerzeit' in S. Pätzold and R. Haas (eds.), *Pro cura animarum. Mittelalterliche Pfarreien und Pfarrkirchen an Rhein und Ruhr*, Studien zur Kölner Kirchengeschichte 43 (Siegburg: Franz Schmitt, 2016), pp. 17–26, at pp. 24–6; Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 498–501; in this line, also P. Henriet, 'Le pangrégorianisme et ses excès. À propos d'une nouvelle histoire du Moyen Âge', *Le Moyen Âge* 129 (2023), pp. 149–79.

[24] Though for an example of an early territorially bounded parish, see below, Chapter 2, p. 72, on Hohenegglkofen; and for further tenth-century examples of this kind from the Middle Rhine region, see R. Deutinger, 'Die ältesten mittelrheinischen Zehntterminationen', *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 54 (2002), pp. 11–36. Note that the Latin term *parrochia* retained an ambiguity throughout this period, sometimes clearly meaning 'parish' (in a sense already used by Carolingian authors and amply demonstrated in tenth-century sources north of the Alps, too), but sometimes equally clearly meaning 'diocese': see p. 5, n. 8 on Gregory VII, above; cf. also M. Lauwers, 'Paroisse, paroissiens et territoire: Remarques sur "parochia" dans les textes latins du Moyen Âge', *Médiévales* 49 (2005), pp. 11–31 and S. M. Hamilton, *Church and People in the Medieval West: 900–1200*, The Medieval World (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 33–6.

[25] On which resistance, see E. Frauenknecht, *Die Verteidigung der Priesterehe in der Reformzeit*, MGH Studien und Texte 16 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1997), who examines several texts dating from the 1070s onwards; cf. B. Meijns, 'Opposition to Clerical Continence and the Gregorian Celibacy Legislation in the Diocese of Thérouanne: The "Tractatus Pro Clericorum Conubio" (c. 1077–1078)', *Sacris erudiri* 47 (2008), pp. 223–90.

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Archbishop Hugh of Besançon, the oath that priests had to swear on their ordination in the mid-eleventh century left some room for negotiation:

> From this moment henceforth, I promise in the presence of Lord Hugh the archbishop that I will preserve my chastity for God, according to the possibility of my senses, and that if by the devil's persuasion I sin with some woman, I will not enter into sacred orders without the advice and command of the archbishop of Besançon.[26]

Historians have long devoted much effort to understanding how, and why, this development came to pass, and how radical it really was.[27] In her 2023 monograph, Isabelle Rosé argued that the key development lay in contemporaries' increasingly fervent identification of priestly marriage as not only undesirable and in certain circumstances illicit and sinful, but as a form of clerical heresy, because it was this that justified the popes in taking dramatic action against it from the mid eleventh century.[28]

These contemporary debates, however, seldom centred on the lived experiences of actual priests with pastoral responsibilities, since they were conducted for the most part amongst clerical elites, often at quite a high level of abstraction. For the most part, historians have analysed these concerns in this vein too, looking – not unreasonably – at how these debates served to buttress (or weaken) papal claims for authority over the church.[29] Only in recent years, building on earlier work by historians such as Gabriella Rossetti, have some historians attempted to track in more detail what these arguments about priests and wives and mistresses meant on the ground. The results have been exciting.[30] Yet the scope of enquiry

[26] As cited and discussed by S. M. Hamilton, 'The Early Pontificals: The Anglo-Saxon Evidence Reconsidered from a Continental Perspective' in C. Leyser, D. W. Rollason and H. Williams (eds.), *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876–1947)*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 37 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), pp. 411–428, at p. 421: 'Ab hac hora in antea promitto me servaturum castitatem deo in presentia domni hugonis archiepiscopi secundum mei sensus possibilitatem et si forte suadente diabolo in aliquam mulierem lapsus fuero non me intromittam de ordinibus sacris nisi cum consilio et iussione archiepiscopi bisunticensis'.

[27] The bibliography is very large. For a recent survey, see H. L. Parish, *Clerical Celibacy in the West: c. 1100–1700*, Catholic christendom 1300–1700 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010); more recently, see the work of F. Griffiths, such as 'Wives, Concubines, or Slaves? Peter Damian and Clerics' Women', *Early Medieval Europe* 30 (2022), pp. 266–90.

[28] I. Rosé, *Le mariage des prêtres, une hérésie? Genèse du nicolaïsme I^er^–XI^e^ siècle* (Paris: PUF, 2023).

[29] Cf. G. Combalbert, *Sauf le droit épiscopal: évêques, paroisses et société dans la province ecclésiastique de Rouen (XI^e^–milieu du XIII^e^ siècle)* (Caen: Presses universitaires de Caen, 2021), pp. 26–7, on the relative lack of interest that historians have had for local clergy in this historiographical context.

[30] G. Rossetti, 'Il matrimonio del clero nella società altomedievale' in *Il matrimonio nella società altomedievale*, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 24 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1977), pp. 473–567 (focusing on Lucca); T. di Carpegna Falconieri, 'Il matrimonio e il concubinato presso il clero romano (secoli VIII–XII)',

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for these studies has usually been simultaneously narrow – in focusing specifically on demonstrating that many clerics prior to (and often after) the efforts of the late eleventh-century popes were married men or parents – and broad – in including all clerics, not just priests (and still less local priests in particular).

All three of these models for thinking about ecclesiastical change – the proprietary church, the conceptualisation of space and the question of 'papal reform' – have tended to marginalise the experience of local priests, rather than seeing things from their point of view. It is perhaps therefore not surprising that even when historians have centred the figure of the priest in their analysis for this period, these priests appear almost as projections of wider structural concerns, rather than as living and breathing people with their own interests, agency and capacities for action. For instance, Arnold Angenendt argued that medieval liturgy became formalised and ritualised because priests were so poorly educated that otherwise the sacraments, and the salvation of the laity, were at risk; to reach this conclusion, however, Angenendt did not study the evidence for the education of these priests at first-hand.[31] For Johannes Laudage, it was changes in the priestly ideal or image (the *Priesterbild*) that accounted for the transformation of the church in the later eleventh century; yet again, Laudage has very little to say about local priests as individuals who would have experienced and embodied this shift.[32] Finally, local priests feature prominently in a celebrated argument by R. I. Moore, which proposes that they were called on to play a new role as intermediaries as structures of public order broke down, increasing their importance while raising

Studi storici 41 (2000), pp. 943–71 (on Rome); H. Freestone, 'Evidence of the Ordinary: Wives and Children of the Clergy in Normandy and England, 1050–1150' in E. M. C. van Houts (ed.), *Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2018*, Anglo-Norman Studies 41 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2019), pp. 39–57; J. D. Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest: Clerical Celibacy, Masculinity, and Reform in England and Normandy, 1066–1300*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, PA.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); F. J. Griffiths and É. Kurdziel (eds.), *Clerics' Wives and Women in the Medieval Latin West (800–1200)* (in press).

[31] A. Angenendt, 'Die Liturgie und die Organisation des kirchlichen Lebens auf dem Lande' in *Cristianizzazione ed organizzazione ecclesiastica delle campagne nell'alto medioevo*, Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo 28 (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 1981), pp. 169–226, at pp. 170–9; A. Angenendt, 'Libelli bene correcti. Der "richtige Kult" als ein Motiv der karolingischen Reform' in P. Ganz (ed.), *Das Buch als magisches und als Repräsentationsobjekt*, Wolfenbütteler Mittelalter-Studien 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), pp. 117–36, at pp. 118–21. A classic source for this view is Boniface's letter no. 68, M. Tangl (ed.), MGH Epp. sel. 1 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1916), pp. 140–2, at p. 141.

[32] J. Laudage, *Priesterbild und Reformpapsttum im 11. Jahrhundert*, Beihefte zum Archiv für Kulturgeschichte 22 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1984).

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expectations around their conduct.[33] Here, local priests are recognised as key parts of the social fabric; but Moore's interests are in the power games dominated by elites, in which they served as tokens, rather than in the priests themselves.

Of course, we do not want to exaggerate the novelty of the approach that we are taking in this book. In addition to building on the work already done on Carolingian Francia by historians such as Carine van Rhijn, and on clerics and their wives by historians such as Hazel Freestone and Fiona Griffiths, we have also drawn inspiration from historians such as Julia Barrow and Sarah Hamilton who have worked to highlight realities on the ground rather than simply exploring the rhetorical and legal battles of clerical elites.[34] None of these historians, however, has written a full-length study that foregrounds the local priest, as we seek to do over the pages that follow.

I.2 Aim and Themes of the Book

In summary, then, when local priests do appear in dominant historiographical narratives that deal with the tenth- and eleventh-century church, it has been as the supporting cast behind other people's initiatives. By focusing on the priests themselves, we adopt a different perspective, opening up potential for fresh insight into the historical processes that led from the late Carolingian period into the dynamics of the second half of the eleventh century, and for a novel view of central elements of the traditional view of the 'Gregorian reform'. We can reassess the disputes over lay control of churches and church property if we take seriously that local priests had interests and room for manoeuvre in this regard. We can redefine the impression of bishops' control over their dioceses if we no longer focus only on bishops as lords over church property and royal aides but rather examine the management of dioceses from the perspective of

[33] R. I. Moore, 'Family, Community and Cult on the Eve of the Gregorian Reform', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 30 (1980), pp. 49–69; cf. R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution, c. 970–1215*, The Making of Europe (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2007), pp. 60–2.

[34] J. S. Barrow, *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, Their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, c. 800–c. 1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); J. S. Barrow, 'Bishops, Clergy and Patronage Networks Within and Beyond the Diocese in Tenth and Eleventh-Century England' in A. Bihrer and H. Röckelein (eds.), *Die "Episkopalisierung der Kirche" im europäischen Vergleich*, Studien zur Germania Sacra NF 13 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), pp. 265–84; S. M. Hamilton, 'Educating the Local Clergy, c. 900–c. 1150' in M. Ludlow, C. Methuen and A. Spicer (eds.), *Churches and Education*, Studies in Church History 55 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 83–113; Hamilton, *Church and People*, esp. Chapter 2, 'Local churches and their communities', pp. 31–59.

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priests and their individual, as well as collective interests. We can tell a different story about the emergence of the parish and questions of territorialization if we do not conceptualize this process exclusively from the perspective of bishops and lay church owners and their interests, but rather understand priests as actors with their own *Spielraum* (room for manoeuvre). And we can rethink clerical marriages and the problem of simony if we do not start from the texts of zealous reformers in the vicinity of the Curia in Rome, but rather from documents of practice that show us priests amongst their friends, neighbours and communities.

To achieve these aims, this book is structured around three key themes: property, kinship and priests' relations with the bishop. These themes reflect the fields on which the classic research on the 'Gregorian reform' has focused: namely from the mid eleventh century debates over simony, clerical marriage and the freedom of the church from lay influence, the last of which led to the institutionalisation of the parish under the bishop's oversight. Instead of simply thinking about how appointments to churches were bought and sold, we begin by examining the assets and resources available to priests, because how these developed in and after the ninth century is critical for understanding the priests' parameters of action. To what extent is the long-standing image of local priests as impoverished figures at the mercy of powerful lords justified? Can we discern changes in how the revenues that accrued to churches were distributed and in the share that went to the local priest?

Kinship too is essential for understanding the worlds in which these priests lived. As already mentioned, historians have long studied the norms around clerical marriage in view of the fierce debates that erupted around it from the mid eleventh century and sometimes have carried out research into the evidence for practice, but the question of priests' wider kinship relations has hardly been posed before. How did these priests relate to their parents, siblings and other relatives? Did these family ties cement their position in the locality and insulate them from the formal church authorities, or did they rather link them into networks that reached into the cathedrals themselves?

If property and kinship represented two key strands of the priest's world, a third crucial dimension was his relationship with the bishop. This was, after all, the relationship that confirmed and certified the sacrality that separated them from their lay neighbours in the settlements in which they all lived. Much previous scholarship, influenced by the *Eigenkirche*/proprietary church model, has presumed that the influence of this relationship on tenth-century priests was very limited until the

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'Gregorian reform' worked to break the laity's grip.[35] This book reassesses this relationship in two ways. On the one hand, it looks into how bishops organised and ordered priests' collective activity through diocesan synods, repositioning these meetings as not only a vehicle for the exercise and projection of episcopal authority but also as occasions for priestly solidarity and collaboration that brought these usually dispersed figures together. On the other hand, it uses manuscript evidence to study how bishops in much – though not all – of post-Carolingian Europe sought to develop an increasingly coherent body of material by which these priests could be assessed. This body of material can be read as suggestive of an increasingly determined and effective episcopal surveillance and enforcement of discipline of priests in their localities, in a way that cannot be paralleled in the more fragmentary Carolingian-period sources and does not fit a narrative of a growing crisis to which reform was the only response.

Before we start to address these four main themes, however, Chapter 1 presents our definition of the local priest. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, writers and churchmen had no word to designate precisely those clerics with whom our book is concerned, instead talking simply of *presbyteri* and *sacerdotes*, with only the context allowing us to determine what kind of priest they had in mind. We address the methodological challenges that result from this and use four case studies to illustrate the broad spectrum of lived experiences for local priests that we must keep in mind, even as we limit ourselves to this specific group.

Chapter 2 looks at property and the other sources of revenue available to local priests. Fichtenau imagined these priests eked out a meagre living, but as we shall see, many of them were clearly relatively well-off, a consequence of the processes of endowment promoted by Carolingian-period rulers. More than that, though, this chapter also aims to uncover the dynamics that affected the income of priests, as their hold on tithe income in particular was challenged by competing actors. The result was not mass impoverishment, but a growing differentiation and complexity of the situation on the ground.

In Chapter 3, we turn to priests and their families. As already mentioned, the extent and nature of priests' continence and celibacy have been much discussed. This chapter does address this question too, but sets it in a much wider frame, looking at their parents, siblings and other relatives,

[35] For a recent discussion, see Combalbert, *Sauf le droit épiscopal*, pp. 35–119.

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who are much more commonly mentioned in the charter evidence than wives or female companions. It argues that priests were indeed embedded in families in a stable way, with no obvious change visible over the tenth and eleventh centuries studied here. It moreover shows how these family ties did root priests in their localities, but also provided some of them with connections to episcopal and monastic centres.

Chapter 4 tackles the question of how priests came together for the diocesan synod. It draws on liturgical evidence, alongside charters, sermons and hagiography, to consider how these synods worked and what role priests played within them. It suggests that these synods were held more regularly than many have supposed, but that the role and profile of local priests within them diminished over time, as they became more audience-spectators than participants. Nevertheless, these synods remained important moments for priestly collectivity.

Chapter 5 looks at a largely untapped body of material for studying how priests were inspected by their bishops in their own locality, as part of an itinerant synodal court of law, also known as the *Sendgericht*. Much of the historiography has focused here on the celebrated set of canon-law material put together by Regino of Prüm in the early tenth century (which is often cited in this book, too). However, this chapter looks beyond Regino to examine a group of linked and overlapping tenth- and early eleventh-century manuscripts that were plausibly designed expressly to facilitate these inspections, and analyses their contents to see what kinds of standards priests were being held and how they experienced ecclesiastical discipline.

I.3 Overview of the Sources

It is important to remember that all these sources we rely on were not written *by* local priests or *for* them, but include them incidentally, or else are focused on normative control. The lived experience of a local priest, what it meant to be one and how they spent their time, has to be assembled like a mosaic from lots of little pieces of evidence and can only be seen holistically by stepping back to assemble fragmented material. Four genres form the foundation of our investigations: normative, documentary, narrative and liturgical.

1. One important strand is formed of normative texts: works setting out instructions for and expectations of priests. The last so-called *capitula episcoporum*, normative texts produced by individual bishops for the priests of their diocese, known in the scholarship as episcopal capitularies

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or episcopal statutes, were written in the first third of the tenth century.[36] Although old Carolingian *capitula episcoporum* were still copied here and there, we no longer have the lively, multifaceted production of these texts as in the previous century.[37] Nor can we see manuscripts being produced for local priests in the same way that can be documented for the ninth century. Instead, a new tradition emerged of producing large manuals for bishops, which served in part to help their readers oversee the local clergy, and not infrequently contained copies of older *capitula episcoporum*. These manuscripts also often contained sermons addressed by bishops to local priests, though these can be found elsewhere too. Pre-eminent amongst these sermons is the 'Admonitio Synodalis', which has survived to this day in over 100 manuscripts, and was placed by its scribes in both legal and liturgical contexts (an English translation of the earliest version is provided as app. 3).[38]

2. Documentary culture flourished across much of western Europe in the late tenth and eleventh centuries, and many extant texts record priests who participated in transactions of land or rights to land. Some of these texts, known as charters, have come down to us in their original form (single sheets), others survive only in later versions, collated, copied and edited by ecclesiastical institutions in collections known as cartularies. Strong regional differences shape the availability of texts in this important genre. In some areas, such as Redon in Brittany,[39] and in much of the East-Frankish Ottonian realm (919–1024), the rich Carolingian-period archives dry up, while in (what is now) France and northern Italy, the numbers of 'private' documents continued to grow from the mid tenth century to the extent that towards the end of our period of investigation (ca. 1050), this corpus is so enormous that it cannot be surveyed and evaluated in its entirety.

[36] Several statutes (*Reginensia*, *Antwerpensia*, *Sangallensia*, *Ottoboniana*, *Cottoniana* and *Trecensia*) date from around the year 900: see R. Pokorny (ed.), MGH Capit. episc. 4 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2005), p. 14. But only three capitularies were certainly made in the tenth century: Ruotger of Trier, Atto of Vercelli and *Helmstadensia*. See R. Pokorny (ed.), MGH Capit. episc. 3 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1995), p. 182, and MGH Capit. episc. 4, p. 59.

[37] For an analysis of this ninth-century material, see van Rhijn, *Shepherds*, pp. 101–70.

[38] C. West, 'The Earliest Form and Function of the "Admonitio synodalis"', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 57 (2023), pp. 347–80. A preliminary dataset listing 140 surviving manuscripts of the work is available online at https://doi.org/10.15131/shef.data.20474019. The *Admonitio* exercised influence on other texts too, for instance, serving as a source for Wulfstan of York's so-called *Canons of Edgar*, written ca. 1018.

[39] W. Davies, *Small Worlds: The Village Community in Early Medieval Brittany* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

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3. While the great annals and chronicles of the time mostly focus on rulers and nobles, narrative works nevertheless present an important collection of sources. For instance, hagiography can be very revealing, as local priests were mentioned with some frequency in stories of miracles performed by saints, where they functioned as witnesses to miracles or a foil for other ecclesiasts or, more rarely, as evidence for the pastoral efficacy of a bishop.[40] The image of priests gleaned from these and other narrative texts shows us outsiders' perspectives on local priests, refracted through traditions of narrative and genre.
4. Finally, this book draws on liturgical evidence, chiefly in the form of instructions for holding formal religious meetings, instructions known as *ordines*. The *ordines* indicate the readings and prayers that should be recited and give some details too on the choreography of the occasion. In one sense, these texts are normative, since they usually set down patterns which ought to be followed, rather than recording events that had happened – they set out idealised norms – but they have a distinct tradition and historiography from more conventional normative sources, and so should be considered separately.

Throughout the book, we therefore employ a range of different sources and methodologies. Chapters 2 (on church property and the material scope of priests) and 4 (on the collective actions of priests) each rely on a broad mixture of different genres. They bring together small fragments of information from various types of normative texts and documents of practice to form a comprehensive picture. However, for Chapters 3 (on the kinship of priests) and 5 (on the accountability of priests towards their bishop), we chose a different methodological approach. Both chapters focus on a single genre of sources that has so far often played only a peripheral role in the relevant research fields. Previous research on clerical marriages and on Nicolaitism in the eleventh century has been primarily based on scholarly treatises and texts known as 'polemical writings' (*Streitschriften*), as well as normative texts issued at synods or by the papacy; in light of this, the relevant chapter of our book consciously focuses on the numerous documents of practice preserved in ecclesiastical archives since the late tenth century. Conversely, the power of bishops has hitherto been described primarily based on charters – whether those

[40] For a useful overview, see P. Tomea, 'Agiografia come pastorale e pastorale nell'agiografia' in *La pastorale della Chiesa in occidente dall'età ottoniana al Concilio Lateranense IV: atti della Quindicesima Settimana Internazionale di Studio Mendola, 27–31 agosto 2001* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero Università, 2004), pp. 363–425, comparing German and Italian hagiographical traditions from the period covered in this book.

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documenting episcopal property or royal privileges granting bishops coinage, toll and market rights, as well as judicial rights extending to entire counties. Our chapter, on the other hand, examines episcopal administrative tasks through a group of manuscripts created to facilitate bishops' conduct of the *Sendgericht* at individual local churches in their dioceses.

I.4 Geography

Political borders had limited significance in the lives of local priests, and our study is therefore not organised around them. We have concentrated our attention on the lands of the former Carolingian empire, and our magnifying glass has been largely trained north of the Alps and Pyrenees. In the tenth and eleventh centuries, this area was divided into several kingdoms. This book is not a comprehensive survey, and certain parts of the region considered here are scrutinised more closely and at greater length than others, following the grain of the evidence. Our study of kinship, for instance, draws most heavily on the rich private charter collections from modern-day France and the Low Countries, while our study of the manuscripts that outlined how to assess priests focuses on the Rhineland and its neighbouring regions, where these books seem to have been chiefly compiled. Other spotlights are shone on the region around Limoges in central France, Trier in Lotharingia and Freising in Bavaria.

Our focus on the former Carolingian empire means we do not consider British, Irish or Byzantine evidence at all, and northern Iberia only in passing.[41] However, it is also worth noting that highlighting certain areas or pockets of evidence within the former empire naturally means that other areas are considered only intermittently in what follows, even in regions that were formerly subject to the Carolingian rulers. In particular, local priests from northern and central Italy and Catalonia, despite being part of the ninth-century Carolingian empire, feature in this book only sporadically. This is not because of a lack of material or thematic comparability: Maureen Miller, for instance, has shown in her work on the diocese of Verona that the number of rural churches, and presumably therefore also local priests, increased significantly from the second half of the tenth

[41] For Iberia, see W. Davies, 'Local Priests in Northern Iberia' in S. Patzold and C. van Rhijn (eds.), *Men in the Middle. Local Priests in Early Medieval Europe*, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 93 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 125–44; W. Davies, *Acts of Giving: Individual, Community, and Church in Tenth-Century Christian Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 45–50; W. Davies, *Windows on Justice in Northern Iberia: 800–1000* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 176–8 and 189–90.

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century onwards, though bishops perhaps exercised a more limited authority here than north of the Alps.[42]

The justification for this is two-fold. First, from a pragmatic perspective, there are distinctive historiographical traditions around priests in northern Italy and Catalonia, whose complete integration is impossible within the confines of a single study, or at least within this one. We hope our book may serve as inspiration for further work on this material, demonstrating more clearly its distinctive features and exploring potential commonalities. Second, our geographical focus is shaped by our research agenda. It has helped us to contextualise our findings more clearly, using recent scholarship that has enhanced our knowledge of the local priest in ninth-century Francia to track changes more precisely than a wider scope would allow. It is through pinpointing how the position and lifeworlds of local priests in the tenth and earlier eleventh centuries differed from that of the ninth century that our book seeks to shed light on larger questions around the changing organisation and impact of ecclesiastical infrastructures on early medieval societies. At the same time, it also helps us to side-step – or rather decentre – the critiques of Peter Damian and others that may have influenced more recent scholarship. Those critiques were generated in the context of the circumstances in Italy and Rome, rather than Freising, the Rhineland or the regions north of the Pyrenees. Our geographical scope has the advantage, we think, of helping us to avoid viewing the world of priests in western Europe only through the lens of the later eleventh-century Roman reformers.

Our argument is not that existing narratives around church reform are mistaken, but that, through their focus on the elite figures and learned discourses that dominated the conversation in certain parts of western Europe, they have only captured part of the picture. By placing local priests and their practices in different regions' centre stage, we restore a missing dimension to the story, which qualifies the stories of the struggles between popes, their allies and their opponents. A perspective that focuses on the clerical figure of most importance for the wider population reveals a different rhythm of change.

[42] M. C. Miller, *The Formation of a Medieval Church: Ecclesiastical Change in Verona, 950–1150* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 121 and pp. 132–5.

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