CHAPTER 1

What Is a Local Priest?

This book is about 'local priests'. By this term, we mean ordained clergy who were responsible for liturgy and pastoral care beyond the cathedral, in a place of worship with a lay congregation, whether that church was located in a rural settlement, as most of them were, or in one of the towns and cities that began to expand dramatically in some regions of Europe from the late tenth century onwards. These priests were embedded in the lay communities they served, and lived amongst them, often a long distance away from the bishop, and indeed from other clergy.

The sources of our period of study do not distinguish this type of priest from others in their terminology, labelling them all simply as *presbyteri*, priests. This word encompassed people with widely varying ways of life, responsibilities and lived experiences because it referred not to a role but to a level of ordination. To reach the rank of priest was to achieve the second highest degree in the Latin Church; above the degree of priest was only that of bishop. More rarely, we encounter the word *sacerdos* used to identify the priests that are the subject of this book. This term refers to a key task of the priest, his ability to celebrate Mass, the central liturgical rite for Christians. But Mass was also performed by bishops, and authors used *sacerdos* not just to describe priests (wherever they performed their ministries) but also bishops.

The tension between the people treated in this book and the words that describe them gives rise to the methodological problem considered in this chapter. There was no term for 'local priest', so how can we identify them in these sources? And how clearly was this type of priest distinguished on the page from other priests who also appear in our sources as *presbyteri* or *sacerdotes*? To address these questions, the chapter first introduces the degree of ordination that the priest possessed and its normative framing in canons and papal decretals. Section 1.2 of the chapter discusses the sources and challenges of identifying local priests in the extant evidence. Finally, Section 1.3 highlights differentiation and variety. Local priests

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were not a homogenous group in the post-Carolingian world of the tenth and eleventh centuries; there were significant differences in social status, wealth and agency. To give an idea of the spectrum of this lived experience, we conclude with four vignettes of local priests from different regions of the post-Carolingian world.

1.1 One Degree of Ordination, Many Ways of Life

The word *presbyter* denoted a grade or degree of ordination in the Western, Rome-centred Church. While the total number of degrees varied over the centuries (some authors counted seven degrees, others eight or nine), the *presbyter* was always near the top of this hierarchy.[1] To be a priest was to be second only to the bishop, immediately above the deacon (*diaconus*) and above all the minor clerical grades, such as exorcist, reader and subdeacon.[2] The priest's degree of ordination gave him important powers that deacons and clergy at lower degrees did not possess: he could administer baptism and the last sacraments, hear confessions and impose penance. Perhaps most importantly, the priest could perform the Mass. This duty was emphasised by the ritual of priestly ordination, which from the late tenth or early eleventh century began to be symbolised by the ceremonial handing over of a chalice and a paten.[3] Priests, through the degree of ordination they had achieved, possessed (but also had responsibility for using) the essential means of salvation necessary to lead people's souls to God.

By the tenth century, the degrees of ordination, as well as the tasks and competencies they required, were part of a firmly established body of knowledge in Western Europe. The relevant information could be read in Isidore of Seville's widely copied treatise *De officiis ecclesiasticis*,[4] first written in seventh-century Visigothic Spain but with around ten

[1] Cf. R. E. Reynolds, '"At Sixes and Sevens" – and Eights and Nines: The Sacred Mathematics of Sacred Orders in the Early Middle Ages' in R. E. Reynolds *Clerics in the Early Middle Ages. Hierarchy and Image*, Variorum Collected Studies Series 669 (Aldershot: Routledge, 1999), pp. 669–84.

[2] See further R. Godding, *Prêtres en Gaule mérovingienne*, Subsidia hagiographica 82 (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 2001), pp. 3–49 and 155–68; Barrow, *Clergy in the Medieval World*, pp. 27–70.

[3] A. Rauwel, *Rites et société dans l'Occident médiéval,* Les médiévistes français 13 (Paris: A. Picard, 2016), pp. 91–2 (cf. C. Vogel and R. Elze (eds.), *Le Pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle* 1, Studi e testi 226 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1963), p. 35).

[4] Isidore of Seville, *De ecclesiasticis officiis*, C. M. Lawson (ed.), CCSL 113 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1989).

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manuscripts copied in the tenth century,[5] or in *De institutione clericorum*,[6] a treatise authored by the Carolingian cleric Hrabanus Maurus in 819 and still used and copied in the tenth and eleventh centuries.[7] A separate genre of texts, now known as the 'Ordinals of Christ', related the various degrees of ordination to moments in the life of Jesus, to show how every clerical office followed in Jesus' footsteps.[8]

This knowledge would have been imparted to many priests as part of their basic education in monastic or cathedral schools, where they would learn to read, write and acquire knowledge of the Psalms and Scripture. After becoming minor clerics, they could then serve as apprentices to local priests to learn the ropes of the office.[9] Their education continued after their ordination, however. Knowledge about priestly competencies also lived in the numerous books for priests that had been created in the ninth-century Carolingian Empire and that still circulated in the tenth century, texts that could be used to train local priests or to instruct and support them in their ministry.[10] In Chapters 4 and 5, we examine evidence for ongoing efforts by bishops to ensure that priests were educated enough for their role and knew how to administer baptism or how to explain the Creed. Consequently, if we are to consider Carolingian local priests religious experts or representatives of the local elite due to their knowledge, then we should think of the clergymen ordained as priests examined here in the same way.[11]

In the tenth and eleventh centuries, bishops, priests and secular elites were all convinced that the essential normative foundations for the priestly

[5] Ibid., pp. 19–33.

[6] Hrabanus Maurus, *De institutione clericorum libri tres*, D. Zimpel (ed.), Freiburger Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Geschichte 7 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), lib. I, ch. 4, p. 295: 'Sunt autem gradus ecclesiastici octo, quorum *nomina haec sunt: ostiarius, psalmista* sive *lector, exorcista, acolytus, subdiaconus, presbiter* atque *episcopus*' (the passage in italics is based on Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, W. M. Lindsay (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1911), lib. VII, ch.12, 3).

[7] Around half a dozen surviving copies of Hrabanus' work date from the tenth century, such as Angers, Médiathèque Toussaint, 301 (292) (and with many more from the eleventh century). See A. B. Sánchez Prieto, 'The Transmission and Reception of the *De Institutione Clericorum*', *Millars* 46 (2019), pp. 17–40.

[8] R. E. Reynolds, *The Ordinals of Christ from Their Origins to the Twelfth Century*, Beiträge zur Geschichte und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters 7 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1978).

[9] Hamilton, 'Educating the Local Clergy', pp. 85–6; Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 306–35.

[10] See Waagmeester, *Pastoral Works*, chapter 3.

[11] C. van Rhijn, 'Carolingian Rural Priests as Local (Religious) Experts' in S. Patzold (eds.), *Gott handhaben. Religiöses Wissen im Konflikt um Mythisierung und Rationalisierung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 131–46; S. Patzold, 'Bildung und Wissen einer lokalen Elite des Frühmittelalters: Das Beispiel der Landpfarrer im Frankenreich des 9. Jahrhunderts' in F. Bougard, R. Le Jan and R. McKitterick (eds.), *La culture du haut Moyen Âge, une question d'élites?*, Collection Haut Moyen Âge 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), pp. 377–92.

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grade had been laid down by popes and synods in the time of the Church Fathers. Bishops and priests alike could find and read about these norms in diverse collections of canons and papal decrees. The most widely distributed collection was known as the *Collectio Dionysio-Hadriana*, extant in more than eighty manuscripts produced in the ninth century and over a dozen from the tenth and earlier eleventh centuries: in our period, a copy of this work was probably available at almost every episcopal see in the former Frankish lands.[12] To its readers it offered the canons of twelve Greek and African councils from Late Antiquity, as well as a collection of important papal letters from the fourth to the early sixth centuries, and the canons of the Roman synod of 721.

Basing their knowledge on collections such as the *Dionysio-Hadriana*, bishops and priests of our period considered the statute that priestly ordination could only be given to men to be long established,[13] and that the canonical age for ordination had been fixed at thirty years, because this was the age at which Jesus started preaching; anyone younger than this was not to be ordained.[14] The bishop of the diocese in which the priest would minister had to perform the ordination, and the Council of Chalcedon (451) also stipulated that no priest should be ordained 'absolutely' (*absolute*); rather, a priest should always be ordained for a specific *titulus*, that is church, at which he must perform his spiritual service.[15]

Numerous further prerequisites for ordination to the priesthood had been outlined in canons and decrees over the centuries. Councils and popes sought to ensure that the men appointed to this role were socially and spiritually equipped to deal with the heavy pastoral responsibilities of

[12] For the manuscript transmission of the *Dionysio-Hadriana*, see L. Kéry, *Canonical Collections of the Early Middle Ages (ca. 400–1140). A Bibliographical Guide to the Manuscripts and Literature*, History of Medieval Canon Law (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999), pp. 13–18; as there is no modern critical edition of the *Dionysio-Hadriana*, we cite this collection as it is transmitted in Verdun, Bibliothèque municipale, 46 (VD), dating from the tenth century.

[13] The *Dionysio-Hadriana* does not mention the ordination of women as priestesses; it does mention the ordination of *diaconissae*, though, cf. Council of Chalcedon (451), c. 15 (versio *Dionysio-Hadriana*), VD, ff. 36v–37r: 'Diaconissam non ordinandam ante annum quadragesimum, et hanc cum summo libramine'.

[14] Council of Neocaesarea (314/15?), c. 9 (versio *Dionysio-Hadriana*), VD, f. 23r: 'Presbyter ante tricesimum annum aetatis suae nullatenus ordinetur, licet valde sit dignus, sed hoc tempus observetur. Nam dominus noster tricesimo aetatis suae anno baptizatus est et sic coepit docere'.

[15] Council of Chalcedon (451), c. 6 (versio *Dionysio-Hadriana*), VD, f. 35v: 'Quod non oporteat absolute quoslibet ordinari. Nullum absolute ordinari debere presbyterum aut diaconum nec quemlibet in gradu ecclesiastico, nisi specialiter ecclesiae civitatis aut possessionis aut martyrii aut monasterii [. . .]'. The ordination ritual for priests in the late tenth century still insisted that priests were ordained 'ad ecclesiam que est in pago Ill.', see Vogel, *Le Pontifical romano-germanique* 1, p. 21.

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the office and able to devote themselves to it fully. These requirements ranged from physical integrity (the Council of Nicaea in 325 stipulated that candidates for the priesthood could not have castrated themselves)[16] to legal status (Pope Leo I stated in a letter to the bishops in Campania in Southern Italy that only freeborn men could become priests).[17] In contrast, and unlike the requirements of the Roman Catholic Church today, neither marriage nor fatherhood prevented ordination to the priesthood in this period.[18] It was perfectly acceptable for clerics in minor orders to enter into marriage,[19] and existing marriages were not dissolved when clergymen climbed up the grades of ordination and were ordained as deacons. Following their entrance into major orders, however, they were required to live apart from their wives and were no longer to have sexual intercourse with them (or with anyone else, for that matter!). Men who had married a second time or broken their marriage, on the other hand, could not be ordained.[20]

This list of legal norms that emanated from council decisions or papal decrees and regulated the ordination of priests could be further elaborated, but it cannot provide a picture of the quotidian experiences of local priests in the tenth and eleventh centuries when viewed in isolation. This is due in part to the nature of canon law before the twelfth century and how this tradition was interpreted and applied. The tangle of norms that formed the whole had accumulated over the centuries, made up of individual canons and decrees created at different times, in different places and for different societies. Consequently, we find numerous contradictions and inconsistencies within the corpus, and yet, in principle, every norm was considered to be divinely inspired and therefore permanently binding within Latin, Rome-oriented Christendom. In practice, this necessitated a certain flexibility in the application and implementation of canons and decrees. Much of what had been laid down in the fourth and fifth centuries by church councils in Greece and Northern Africa or by bishops in Rome had been

[16] Council of Nicaea (325), c. 1 (versio *Dionysio-Hadriana*), VD, f. 15v: 'De eunuchis et qui se ipsos absciderunt. Si quis a medicis per languorem defectus est aut a barbaris abscisus hic in clero permaneat. Si quis autem se sanus abscidit hunc et in clero constitutum abstineri convenit et deinceps nullum debere talium promoveri [. . .]'.

[17] *Leo I ad episcopos per Campaniam*, ch. 1 (versio *Dionysio-Hadriana*), VD, f. 107r.

[18] See Griffiths and Kurdziel (eds.), *Clerics' Wives and Women* for a set of studies on this issue.

[19] Canones apostolorum, c. 27 (versio *Dionysio-Hadriana*), VD, f. 13v: 'Innuptis autem, qui ad clerum provecti sunt, praecipimus, ut – si voluerint – uxores accipiant, sed lectores cantoresque tantummodo'.

[20] Cf., e.g., Council of Neocaesarea (314/15?), c. 1 and c. 8 (versio Dionysio Hadriana), VD, ff. 22v–23r.

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designed for late antique urban societies, for example, and, even with the best will in the world, could not be transferred easily to rural areas of the Ottonian Empire.[21]

Contemporaries themselves discussed this tension. The cleric and monk Bernold, born to a priest in the middle of the eleventh century and himself ordained as priest in 1084,[22] wrote a treatise on the purchase of churches in ca. 1090.[23] Bernold knew the *Dionysio-Hadriana* collection very well: he had combed through and annotated a ninth-century manuscript of it in the cathedral's library at Konstanz.[24] Bernold held the collection in especially high esteem because he (wrongly) believed it had been compiled by Pope Hadrian I. Yet Bernold could plainly see that in his lifetime, its rules were not always applied, since priests were no longer always ordained for a specific church, as had been stipulated by the 451 Council of Chalcedon and copied into the *Dionysio-Hadriana*. Instead, it had become common practice to perform these ordinations 'absolutely', regardless of where the priests would perform their service. It was for this reason, argued Bernold, that in the past, it had been sufficient only to prohibit the purchase of ordinations, which automatically also included the acquisition of churches. Now, however, Bernold believed it was necessary to add to the ancient canons and decretals by prohibiting the purchase of churches too, because there were many 'absolutely' ordained priests who had not been allocated to a specific church (*titulus*).[25]

Perhaps even more important for our purposes, however, was a second factor. The legal norms that applied to priestly ordination and the performance of the office still left plenty of room for different ways of life. Modern comparisons are inevitably clumsy, but in some ways, an

[21] On the relation between normative legacy and changing social structure between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, see D. L. D'Avray, *Papal Jurisprudence, c. 400: Sources of the Canon Law Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), p. 17 and pp. 176–7.

[22] For a detailed overview on Bernold's life and work, see D. Stöckly and D. Jasper in their edition: Bernold of Konstanz, *De excommunicatis vitandis, de reconciliatione lapsorum et de fontibus iuris ecclesiastici (Libellus X)*, MGH Fontes iuris 15 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2000), pp. 2–14.

[23] Bernold of Konstanz, *Libellus VII: De emptione ecclesiarum* in F. Thaner (ed.), *Libelli Bernaldo presbyteri monachi*, MGH Ldl 2 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1892), pp. 107–18.

[24] Today Freiburg i.Br., Universitätsbibliothek, Hs. 8. On Bernold's use of this manuscript, see the foundational study by J. Autenrieth, *Die Domschule von Konstanz zur Zeit des Investiturstreits. Die wissenschaftliche Arbeitsweise Bernolds von Konstanz und zweier Kleriker dargestellt auf Grund von Handschriftenstudien*, Forschungen zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte NF 3 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1956), pp. 68–75.

[25] Bernold of Konstanz, *Libellus VII: De emptione ecclesiarum*, F. Thaner (ed.), *Libelli Bernaldo presbyteri monachi*, MGH Ldl 2 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1892), pp. 107–18, at p. 107.

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ordination to the priesthood resembled obtaining the *Habilitation* at German universities, a qualification that turns the possessor of a PhD into a *Privatdozent*: that is to say, it gives them the right to lecture, just as ordination makes one a priest, with the right to say Mass. The *Privatdozenten* do not, however, receive any standardised income from the university, nor are they subject to any control of how they arrange their lives, from daily routines to the pursuit of particular positions. The same can be said of the ordination of priests: in the tenth century, possession of this ecclesiastical grade encompassed many different lived experiences.

Men ordained as priests in our period staffed diverse institutions, and each had his own tasks, functions, offices and lifestyle. In this book, we concentrate our investigation on local priests, who were responsible for liturgy and pastoral care at a church with its own congregation. How one cathedral provost wanted such men to live and the tasks they were to shoulder in everyday life is shown with unusual clarity in the *vita* of Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg, a text written by the provost Gerhard between 983 and 993 to promote Ulrich's canonisation in Rome. Gerhard described Bishop Ulrich's visits within his diocese: he held meetings (*concilia*) with the local congregation and sessions (*capitula*) with both the local clergy and the archpriests and deans of his episcopal diocesan administration. During these sessions, Gerhard reports in Ulrich's *vita*, the bishop asked the clergy 'how they fulfilled their daily service for God'. That meant asking a series of questions:

> How did they lead the congregation under their charge? What zeal did they display in preaching and teaching? With what care (*cautela*) did they baptise children, and visit and anoint the sick? With how much compassion did they bury the dead? How did they support widows and orphans in all their needs? With what zeal did they serve Christ in welcoming guests and strangers?[26]

The narrative of the *Vita Uodalrici*, for all its colour, is not an ethnographic description of social practice; the text formulates an ideal image of the priest and may be modelled on normative sources for how bishops

[26] Gerhard of Augsburg, *Vita sancti Uodalrici. Die älteste Lebensbeschreibung des heiligen Ulrich,* W. Berschin and A. Häse (eds.), Editiones Heidelbergenses 24 (Heidelberg: Winter Verlag, 1993), p. 148: '[. . .] qualiter cottidianum dei servitium impleretur · et qualiter illis populus subiectis ex eis referetur in studio praedicandi docendique quantaque cautela infantes baptizarentur · infirmi visitarentur et ungerentur · defunctorum etiam corpora quanta compassione sepulturus traderentur · viduis et orphanis in universis necessitatibus subvenirent · quantoque studio in hospitibus et advenis · christo ministrarent'.

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ought to monitor their clerics.[27] Nevertheless, the passage shows what expectations a senior clergyman in the Augsburg diocese may have had of local clergy in the late tenth century. These priests were responsible for the people entrusted to them, amongst whom they lived: they had to lead them to God through baptism, instruct them by preaching, anoint the sick and bury the dead. They were also expected to provide tangible economic support to those in their congregations who experienced hardship. It is local priests with these responsibilities who are the focus of our book.

Exactly how many of these priests there were is impossible to tell, but they were numerous. Already by the ninth century, there were an estimated 20,000 local priests in the Frankish lands north of the Alps; this number is likely to have increased over the tenth century.[28] In the early eleventh century, a monk in southern France thought that priests needed to be kept under control because of their sheer number (*tanta multitudo*).[29] A little earlier, the abbot Abbo of Fleury claimed that a diocese could have a thousand churches.[30] Evidence from various regions indeed suggests large numbers of rural churches. One study identified around eighty such churches in the diocese of Besançon by the mid eleventh century, but suggested the full number was probably in the hundreds; a study of Le Mans similarly proposed that most of the diocese's 220 known parish churches were established by 1050.[31] Further north, a recent study on the diocese of Utrecht has estimated that remarkably, over 300 new churches with pastoral duties were constructed in this diocese between 950 and 1025.[32]

Some of this material is rather impressionistic, but lists of local churches that were made by bishops in Sens, Orléans and Autun, in the decades around 1000, allow us to be more specific.[33] The purpose of these lists is

[27] Ibid., with the editorial suggestion of the *Augsburger Sendordnung*, see A. M. Koeniger, *Die Sendgerichte in Deutschland* (Munich: Verlag der J. J. Lentner'schen Buchhandlung, 1907), p. 192; or Regino of Prüm, *Sendhandbuch*, W. Hartmann (ed.), MGH CC 1.1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2023), qq. 20, 19, 35, 18, 25, 26, 40, 23, 62, pp. 60, 62 and 66.

[28] Patzold, *Presbyter*, p. 153.

[29] Ademar of Chabannes, *Les sermons d'Adémar de Chabannes: Édition du manuscrit de Berlin* 2, B. Bon (ed.) (Paris: École pratique des hautes études, 2009), p. 13.

[30] Abbo of Fleury, 'Epistolae' in L. Jégou and G. Labory (eds.), *Abbon de Fleury: Correspondance, Apologétique, Œuvres canoniques*, Sources d'histoire médiévale (Paris: CNRS éditions, 2023), p. 178: 'cumque in uno quolibet episcopio interdum mille sint aecclesiae'.

[31] B. De Vreville, *Hugues de Salins, archevêque de Besançon: 1031–1066* (Besançon: Cêtre, 1981), p. 306; Pichot, 'L'espace', p. 61 (though questioning whether these churches were all 'parish' churches).

[32] De Langen, 'Church Foundation', p. 52, n. 99.

[33] The Sens list names 145 churches, apparently from a single part of the diocese, under the heading 'Nomina ecclesiarum Senonum'. The text is copied into a sacramentary, Stockholm, Kungliga

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not quite clear, but they give us a good sense of the density of church networks at specific moments in time.[34] For example, though sadly incomplete, an early eleventh-century list from Autun records 144 local churches, each listed with a sum that probably denotes their annual dues to the bishop (see Figure 1.1).[35] This chance survival constitutes the earliest extant mention of around seventy per cent of these churches, a stark reminder of the incompleteness of the documentary record. Most, and perhaps all, of these churches were located within the diocese of Autun, and there are too many of them for this to be a list of the churches the bishop owned directly. Olivier Bruand has argued that this document should be interpreted as a copy of a register of parish churches (excluding chapels) and that it shows that by the year 1000, almost no one in the diocese of Autun would have lived more than an hour's walk from a parish church.[36] This level of precision may be unusual, but there is no particular reason to suppose that Autun was atypical in any other respect.

An increasing number of churches implies an increasing number of priests to staff them, and there is some evidence in support of this

biblioteket, MS A 136, ff. 3v–4r, and is edited (most recently) in A. Longnon, *Pouillés de la province de Sens*, Recueil des historiens de la France. Pouillés 4 (Paris: C. Klincksieck, 1904), pp. 1–2. It has been dated on palaeographical grounds to the eleventh century. The Orléans list names 36 churches, under the heading 'De ministerio Arnulfi', including the sum each one owed (interestingly, one church owed nothing, 'nihil'). The text is copied in Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 4929, f. 196v, and is edited in Longnon, *Pouillés Sens*, pp. 323–4. C. W. Barlow, 'Codex Vaticanus Latinus 4929', *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 15 (1938), pp. 87–124, at pp. 99–100 suggested the script might be tenth- rather than eleventh-century, as originally proposed by Léopold Delisle (and *contra* a dating to the late eleventh century in Mazel, *L'évêque*, pp. 311 and 327). For Autun, see below, n. 35. A list of some thirty churches made by the bishop of Laon in the early tenth century has recently been published for the first time in I. Garipzanov, 'A Polyptych in the Margins: Accounting Notes from Early Tenth-Century Laon', *Early Medieval Europe* 32.4 (2024), pp. 1–25.

[34] Mazel, *L'évêque*, pp. 327–8, suggests that the Autun and Orléans lists were for *parata* or visitation payments ('recensant les sommes dues à l'évêché au titre de l'exercise de la visite'), but O. Bruand, *Les origines de la société féodale: l'exemple de l'Autunois: France, Bourgogne* (Dijon: Ed. universitaires de Dijon, 2009), reads the Autun list as recording 'la redevance synodale' (p. 42); the Sens list is not mentioned in recent discussion.

[35] The Autun list, made around 1000, names 144 churches; the number can be supplemented by a slightly later list, which names sixteen, twelve of which are mentioned in the first list. Of the 144 churches in the first list, 101 are first attested in this list, twenty-six are first attested in tenth-century charters, twelve are attested from the ninth century, and four from the eighth century, while five remain uncertain. Edition: A. de Charmasse, *Cartulaire de l'évêché d'Autun, connu sous le nom de Cartulaire rouge*, Publication de la société Éduenne (Autun: Dejussieu, 1880), pp. 365–8, on the basis of two now-lost manuscript fragments. The list is available as a dataset at https://doi.org/10.7488/ds/7774. For commentary and analysis, see Bruand, *Autunnois*, pp. 41–57. The Romanesque architecture of the surviving churches in part of the diocese (the Brionnais) has been intensively studied by Anelise Nicolier, for instance, 'Édifier une église pour construire sa renommée. L'église Saint-Hilaire des seigneurs de Semur-en-Brionnais', *Questes* 42 (2021), pp. 123–37.

[36] Bruand, *Autunnois*, p. 43 (copy) and p. 54 (hour's walk).

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Fig. 1.1 Local churches in the diocese of Autun, ca. 1000, with diocesan borders based on Destemberg, Atlas. The map shows churches named in a list made ca. 1000; the list is fragmentary for the north and the south of the diocese. Some churches appear to be outside the diocese, but the diocesan boundaries are only an approximation. Created by Erik Goosmann.

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implication. For instance, Bishop Adalbero II of Metz (d. 1005) was said by a near-contemporary to have ordained nearly 1000 priests over the twenty-one years of his episcopate (including some sons of priests, whom Adalbero refused to discriminate against).[37] The rate of around fifty priests a year could be an exaggeration, and not all of these priests would have been destined for rural churches. The figure is nevertheless suggestive. Even as an approximation, this would indicate a substantial increase from earlier practices of ordination.[38] A generation later, Bernhard of Hildesheim reported a claim that 3,600 priests and clerics had attended a synod in the diocese of Konstanz in 1075, held in response to the controversial decision to prohibit clerical marriage taken at the Roman Lenten synod the year before.[39] We cannot, of course, say how many of these 3,600 attendees were priests, nor what kind of priests they were, and the figure may have been exaggerated to demonstrate the consensus in Konstanz in opposition to the new measure, but Bernhard did not challenge it directly. With numbers such as these, rural priests, along with the rest of the rural clergy who supported their work, would have formed a sizeable part of the ordained clergy in every diocese, if not perhaps an overall majority.

[37] *Vita Adalberonis II Mettensis*, G.H. Pertz (ed.), MGH SS 4 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1841), c. 24, pp. 659–72, at p. 667: 'in tantum ut sacerdotum ab eo ordinatorum numerus ultra mille fere procedat, et reliquorum graduum numerositas comprehendi nequaquam possit'. K. Lamprecht, *Deutsches Wirtschaftsleben im Mittelalter: Untersuchungen über die Entwicklung der materiellen Kultur des platten Landes auf Grund der Quellen zunächst des Mosellandes* (Leipzig: Dürr, 1886), p. 846, extrapolated that such a rate would have meant around 1,600 priests were ordained each year in Germany. For comparison, in the thirteenth century, Archbishop Odo of Rouen ordained 2,012 (named) priests over a period of around twenty years, in other words around 100 a year: see A. J. Davis, *The Holy Bureaucrat: Eudes Rigaud and Religious Reform in Thirteenth-Century Normandy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 105.

[38] I. N. Wood, 'Entrusting Western Europe to the Church, 400–750', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 23 (2013), pp. 37–73, at p. 69, points to evidence that early medieval bishops at Le Mans ordained around ten priests a year; in the ninth century, Bishop Aldric of Le Mans ordained 800 priests over a period of 26 years (832–857), an average of thirty priests a year: *Gesta Aldrici*, M. Weidemann (ed.), *Geschichte des Bistums Le Mans von der Spätantike bis zur Karolingerzeit. Actus Pontificum Cenomannis in urbe degentium und Gesta Aldrici, Teil 1: Die erzählenden Texte*, Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum. Monographien 56.1 (Mainz: Verlag des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, 2002), pp. 115–79, there B sec. 44e, p. 150.

[39] Bernold of Konstanz, *Libellus II: De damnatione scismaticorum*, F. Thaner (ed.), *Libelli Bernaldo presbyteri monachi*, MGH Ldl 2 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1892), pp. 27–58, at p. 45 (quoting Bernhard's letter): 'a tribus milibus ac sexcentis inter presbiteros et reliquos gradus ecclesiasticis'; see I. S. Robinson, 'Bernold von Konstanz und der gregorianische Reformkreis um Bischof Gebhard III.', *Freiburger Diözesanarchiv* 109 (1989), pp. 155–88, at p. 177 (with n. 71), suggesting this might have constituted the diocese's entire clergy. The figure is sometimes wrongly read as applying to the 1075 Roman synod.

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Our focus on these priests necessarily excludes many other kinds of priests from the study. We are not investigating those priests who lived in the bishop's immediate environment, who performed their ministry at the episcopal cathedral church and who had by the ninth century coalesced into a distinct group within the Carolingian Empire.[40] Also omitted are those priests who lived as canons in collegiate churches elsewhere in the diocese, whether they lived by a written rule or not, since pastoral care was not their chief responsibility.[41] Nor do we deal with the monks of Latin Europe who first received lower ecclesiastical ordinations and finally rose to the rank of priest so that they could read the Mass; those priests who took on liturgical duties in the various communities of female religious are also set to one side. Finally, this book does not encompass those clergymen who served as chaplains in noble households or belonged to the ruler's closest entourage at a royal court – such as Avico, the chaplain of the Abodrite leader Mistui, whom Thietmar of Merseburg mentions in his *Chronicon* in the early eleventh century, or Heimerad, a contemporary priest in a noblewoman's service in Swabia.[42]

It would be foolhardy to see these diverse ways of life, each with its own social prestige, scope for action, wealth and networks, as being comparable merely because each of these individuals had been ordained as a *presbyter*. The daily routine of a cloistered monk looked very different from that of a local priest in a rural community, even if both had attained the same grade of ordination. We must acknowledge, however, that the boundaries between the lived experiences of priests, which could be distinguished from each other in principle, could become fluid in practice. How do we tackle, for example, a monk who had been ordained as a priest and who then took on tasks of pastoral care in a parish outside his community? Such priest-monks are well attested in the eleventh century; their lifeworld

[40] For Germany, cf. R. Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln in Deutschland*, Bonner historische Forschungen 43 (Bonn: Röhrscheid, 1976).

[41] For a recent introduction to these clerical communities in the Carolingian and post-Carolingian period, see É. Kurdziel, 'Ordonner l'Église. Communautés cléricales et communautés monastiques dans le monde carolingien (VIII^{e}–X^{e} siècle). Introduction', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 265 (2024), pp. 5–20.

[42] Thietmar of Merseburg, *Chronicon*, R. Holtzmann (ed.), MGH SS rer. Germ. n.s. 9 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1935), III, p. 120: 'Hoc admiratur exercitus, hoc stupet Mistuwoi timoratus. Et id mihi indicavit Avico, capellanus tunc eius et spiritualis frater meus postea effectus'. For Heimerad, see Ekkebert of Hersfeld, *Das Leben des heiligen Heimerad*, M. Fleck (ed.), Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Hessen. Kleine Texte mit Übersetzungen 5 (Marburg a. d. Lahn: J.C. Hinrichs, 2014), ch. 2, p. 86: 'Denique cum esset in obsequio cuiusdam matrone, et illa alterum quoque presbiterum haberet, ipse libertate se donari petiit, sicubi rebus suis melius proficere posset'. A study of early medieval chaplains and domestic priests is a *desideratum*.

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undoubtedly overlapped with that of local priests.[43] We wish to keep such fluidity in mind throughout the book, paying attention to variety and nuance in the lives of local priests.

1.2 Finding Local Priests: A Methodological Challenge

The focus on local priests entails an acute methodological problem: out of the many different priests in our records, all of whom were referred to as *presbyteri* or *sacerdotes*, how can we identify specifically those who performed liturgy and pastoral care for a lay community in places of worship that lay beyond the episcopal centres of the Church? In all our texts, local priests were simply called *presbyteri* or *sacerdotes*, labels that do not allow us to distinguish them from the clergymen who lived as chaplains, priest-monks or canons at a cathedral or a collegiate church.

Context is therefore key. In normative texts, it is the nature of the instruction that reveals whether the intended audience included local priests. For instance, the *Admonitio Synodalis* commands that priests should ensure swineherds attend Mass on Sundays. The text, therefore, assumes an imagined audience of priests who lived amongst swineherds and had responsibility for their spiritual care, which clearly meets our criteria for local priests.[44] Narrative texts also sometimes fleshed out in more detail the place in which events occurred, sometimes providing circumstantial evidence that the clergyman in question was a local priest along the way.

The problem is more challenging when it comes to documentary archives. Charters record thousands of named priests, as neighbours or tenants listed in boundary clauses, transacting possessions individually, with their family or members of the community, or in requests for souls to be prayed for made by the donors. Determining what kind of priests these were can be difficult. Even when priests are connected to a particular village or church, such as those described as being 'of' a particular place, it does not follow that they served their priestly office in that location. Nor does ownership of a church guarantee that priests performed pastoral duties for local communities: while a priest might have sung Mass and given pastoral care to a community without owning the church, the same cannot necessarily be said for the reverse. A priest handing over a church to a cathedral or a monastery for his soul and those of his family may not have any responsibilities of the office for that place.

[43] Cf. the examples given by Constable, 'Monasteries', pp. 349–89. [44] See app. 3, c. 80.

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Each case must therefore be judged on its own merits, with an eye firmly on the tendencies of the scribes and archivists who wrote up, copied, edited and preserved these records. Securing the status of a priest as local is often a case of ruling out other possibilities or assembling hints from multiple documents. We can exclude those priests who were also described as monks or members of cathedral communities, or in the service of ecclesiastical and royal households. Similarly, if a priest appeared many times in the archive of a particular institution acting as a witness or some other kind of guarantor, especially for geographically scattered estates, we might also suspect that his principal sphere of operation was the cathedral or monastery rather than a specific village or area. While we often cannot conclusively state that a particular priest served a particular local community, it is important not to take an overly pessimistic view of the value of charters and similar documents for understanding local priests. The unparalleled quantity of documents and their geographical and chronological range allows us to see change or continuity over time, regional variation in practices and institutional interests or attitudes to those in the office. Charters can tell us something about how priests interacted with local communities. Where their ties were more profound, whether through family connections, church ownership or performance of duties, these records allow us to uncover the lived experiences of local priests and those around them.

1.3 Differences and Variance: Four Case Studies of Local Priests

Local priests were men with different experiences of wealth, education and independence. Similarly, local churches and congregations were of different sizes and were differently endowed; it follows that the income local priests received from their churches and attached lands was also quite different. In addition, there were undoubtedly regional differences between the discrete kingdoms that had until 888 made up the Carolingian Empire. We present in detail below four case studies of local priests in the tenth and earlier eleventh centuries to give a sense of this diversity and the spectrum of possibilities, to illustrate the differences of genre and to highlight the methodological complexities of identifying local priests in practice.

Geltmar

Our first example is Geltmar, a priest working in the earlier tenth century who lived in the place that came to be known as Quedlinburg, on the

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eastern side of the Harz mountains in Saxony (present-day Sachsen-Anhalt). As the tenth century progressed, Quedlinburg became a key location for Ottonian power.[45] However, in Geltmar's time, its great female convent dedicated to Saint Servatius had not yet been founded, and there was as yet little indication of the site's future importance.[46] We should therefore imagine a very modest settlement, whose church helped with the Christianisation of the surrounding area. The fortified site on the hill, where the convent was constructed in 936, perhaps did not yet exist.[47]

Information about Geltmar survives only in a single hagiographic source, the *Miracula Wigperti*, written around 940 by an unnamed monk of the monastery dedicated to Saint Wigpert in Hersfeld, Hesse.[48] In the course of the Christianisation of Saxony in the ninth century, relics of Saint Wigpert were taken from Hersfeld and carried east of the Harz Mountains to a place which at that time may have not yet been known as 'Quedlinburg'. The bulk of the text concerns miracles Wigpert had worked in Hersfeld, but at the end of the text, the hagiographer noted that it might be appropriate to include accounts of miracles that Hersfeld's patron saint had performed in other places. The author begins his account of these other miracles with Quedlinburg:

> There is a place called Quedlinburg, which is now highly respected and famous in the kingdom of Saxony, since it has been granted the honour of becoming a royal seat; in former times, however, it was under the control of the monastery [Hersfeld], since it was the property of St. Wigpert, and so it still enjoys great veneration because of his relics.[49]

We are told that in this place there was once a certain priest (*presbiter quidam*) named Geltmar, who was still alive at the time of the writing of

[45] For a recent study, see S. Greer, *Commemorating Power in Early Medieval Saxony. Writing and Rewriting the Past at Gandersheim and Quedlinburg* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

[46] Cf. now S. Freund, 'Quedlinburg, 22. April 922 und die Folgen' in S. Freund, S. Groth and C. Mielzarek (eds.), *1100 Jahre Quedlinburg. Einblicke in das Leben auf einer Königspfalz*, Palatium 9 (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2023), pp. 9–40, at pp. 18–25.

[47] Ibid., pp. 14–15.

[48] For an edition and German translation, see M. Fleck, *Leben und Wundertaten des heiligen Wigbert*, Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Hessen. Kleine Texte mit Übersetzungen 67.4 (Marburg a. d. Lahn: Historische Komm. für Hessen, 2010), pp. 112–58; for the dating of the text, see p. 22; see also U. von Damaros and T. Wozniak, 'St. Wiperti in Quedlinburg' in K. G. Beuckers, J. Cramer and M. Imhof (eds.), *Die Ottonen. Kunst, Architektur, Geschichte* (Petersberg: Imhof Verlag, 2006), pp. 285–92, at p. 286.

[49] *Leben des heiligen Wigbert*, Fleck, c. 19, p. 154: 'Est locus Quidiligonburch nominatus, nunc in Saxonum regno propter regalis sedis honorem sublimis et famosus, quondam autem istius congregationis utilitati subditus, videlicet quia sancti Wigberhti extitit proprius, atque ideo etiam adhuc ex eius reliquiis habetur a multis honorandus'.

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the text, but had, in the meantime, left Quedlinburg and taken over the leadership of another church (*alius ecclesię regimini presidens*). The hagiographer made a point of stating that his information about the miracles that followed, which had happened to Geltmar in the church in Quedlinburg, was based on the priest's own account.

The story goes that Geltmar was accustomed to spending his nights awake in the church. We also learn that in a remote corner of this church, there slept a religious woman (*sanctimonialis*) 'born from the people of the Angles over the sea' (*de transmarina Anglorum gente progenita*). In the narrative, Geltmar's ascetic insomnia comes across less as a requirement of his priestly office than an indication of his personal fortitude. This insomnia is central to the first miracle story: when Geltmar finally lay down one night to rest a little, Saint Wigpert appeared to him before he fell asleep and asked him who the other person was in the church. When Geltmar explained, Wigpert ordered the priest to exhort the *religiosa* to live a thoughtful and chaste life and prophesied (correctly) that she would die on the eve of the feast of St. Andrew the Apostle.[50]

The hagiographer also knew of a second miracle that occurred at the same place. Geltmar had once forgotten to pour the wine into the chalice and consecrate it before the celebration of Mass. It was only during the liturgy of the Mass (after the *Sanctus* was sung and the sign of the cross was made over the chalice) that he noticed his mistake. Geltmar anxiously pondered what to do and decided to pray and ask God to have mercy on Saint Wigpert. And indeed, at that moment, Geltmar found the chalice filled not only with wine but the exact amount that he would have normally poured.[51]

The anonymous Hersfeld monk assumed that these miracles had occurred before Quedlinburg had risen to the status of a *sedes regalis*, a central place of royal power. If we take this seriously, we can roughly date them to the beginning of the tenth century: Geltmar was still alive at the time of writing around 940, placing his date of birth in ca. 860 at the earliest if we assume that he was unlikely to be much older than eighty. This would have meant he was over thirty years old at the beginning of the century and could have been ordained a priest then, entirely in accordance with the canons.

We see in Geltmar a local priest in Saxony who, remarkably, lived with a veiled English woman in a church where he regularly said Mass and often spent the night performing vigils. We hear nothing of fellow priests, other

[50] Ibid., c. 19, pp. 154–6. [51] Ibid., c. 19, pp. 156–8.

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local clerics or even a religious community, and there is no mention of a parish for this church in the *Miracula Wigperti*. Nevertheless, we know that Geltmar's church was founded in the ninth century by the monastery of Hersfeld and furnished with relics of Hersfeld's patron saint. It is, therefore, a small step to link the foundation of what became Geltmar's church with the Christianisation of Saxony, and consequently to assign to that church and its priest duties of local pastoral care.

Older researchers had little hesitation in regarding the church dedicated to Wigpert as a collegiate church, and consequently concluding that Geltmar was a canon. Carl Erdmann argued that the bestowal of Wigpert's relics to an ordinary pastoral church was hardly conceivable and that it must therefore have been a collegiate church from the very beginning.[52] However, these assertions are not supported by the text. Several decades later, we hear of benefices for twelve canons established in St. Wigpert's church in Quedlinburg, but both the account of this in the *Vita* of Queen Matilda and a royal charter in question suggest this foundation was a new institution.[53] Moreover, at the time our hagiographer composed the *Miracula Wigperti*, Geltmar had already taken over as priest of another (unidentified) church. If this second church had been a monastery or a convent, the author could have introduced his hero as an abbot or at least described the spiritual institution more concretely. Finally, there is as yet no archaeological evidence for a larger church for several canons (with corresponding further buildings) for the first years of the tenth century in Quedlinburg.[54]

Of course, it is possible that attempting to define the character of the Quedlinburg *ecclesia* where Geltmar performed his spiritual service is placing emphasis on a taxonomy that did not exist at the time. When Hersfeld founded the church east of the Harz Mountains sometime in the later ninth century and endowed it with Wigpert's relics, it may have had the character of a local spiritual centre in an ecclesiastical landscape that

[52] C. Erdmann, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte Heinrichs I.' in H. Beumann (ed.), *Ottonische Studien* (Darmstadt: E. S. Mittler & Sohn, 1968), pp. 83–130, at p. 87.

[53] *Vita Mathildis reginae antiquior*, B. Schütte (ed.), MGH SS rer. Germ. 66 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1994), pp. 107–42, ch. 8, p. 127: 'Postea Quidilingaburg in valle ea disponente alia succrevit fratrum congregatio [. . .]', which implies a foundation of a religious community at St. Wiperti after 936; and see T. Sickel (ed.), MGH DD O I. (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1879–84), no. 1, pp. 89–91 (13 September 936), mentioning *clerici* at Quedlinburg for the first time.

[54] Cf. T. Gärtner, 'Quedlinburg – Zur Genese eines königlichen Zentralorts', *Germania* 95 (2017), pp. 145–80.

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had barely been institutionalised.[55] The lines between a small monastery and a local church for pastoral care may initially have been rather blurred in this region, with little practical significance. The strange cohabitation of the *sanctimonialis* and the *presbyter*, and the sleeping place 'in a corner' (*anguli secreto*) of the church, could be further indications of this initially still weakly institutionalised way of life. It was not until Quedlinburg became a central place of royal power first under King Henry I († 936) and then more firmly under Otto I († 973) that local ecclesiastical conditions became so institutionalised that the categorical distinction between a centre of pastoral care and a collegiate church became meaningful.[56] After all, the miracle report written around 940 had to justify that a priest and a female religious had been able to live together 'cautiously and chastely' (*caute et caste*).

Geltmar's example shows very concretely the methodological difficulties of identifying a local priest in a narrative source. Yet it also reveals that in some regions during the period under investigation here, a church structure in the countryside had to be built up, thickened out and institutionalised more firmly in the first place. In this developmental phase, grey areas, shades and transitions are to be expected.

The Priest of Fontenoy-sur-Moselle

Another hagiographical work written a little later, some seven hundred kilometres south-west of Quedlinburg, further illustrates some of the methodological problems and complexities underlying our documentation. In the *Vita* of John of Gorze, written in the later tenth century, the hagiographer John of St. Arnulf recounts John's dealings with the early tenth-century church of Saint-Laurent of Fontenoy-sur-Moselle, located around ten kilometres outside the eastern French city of Toul (there is still a church there today). According to John of St-Arnulf, this church was owned by a layman named Warner, who in the 920s entrusted it to John of Gorze, while he was still a young cleric. John took care of this church 'with a special love' (*unica amor*). He spent many days and nights inside it,

[55] Cf. Damaros, 'St. Wiperti', p. 286: 'ein ungeregelter Klerikerverband' (but note that the *Miracula Wigperti* do not mention any clerics other than Geltmar).

[56] For these developments, see U. Reuling, 'Quedlinburg. Königspfalz, Reichsstift, Markt' in L. Fenske (ed.), *Deutsche Königspfalzen. Beiträge zu ihrer historischen und archäologischen Erforschung* 4: Pfalzen – Reichsgut – Königshöfe, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 11.4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), pp. 184–247; Freund, 'Quedlinburg'; from an archaeological perspective, see Gärtner, 'Quedlinburg'.

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wrapped in prayer, and ensured that it had all that was needed for ecclesiastical ministry. Moreover, he established a woman there as a sort of lone nun. Veiled, devoted to the divine office and living at the church's expense, she seems similar to the English woman who stayed in Geltmar's church (and one might also think here of the church *matricularii* – the 'registered poor' regularly fed and cared for by a priest – mentioned in some ninth-century normative sources, or the elderly religious women in northern Italy who kept churches clean, mentioned by Bishop Atto of Vercelli).[57]

However, our source reveals that Fontenoy was not John's only church, for he had another where he had grown up at Vandières (around forty kilometres north), entrusted to him by a second well-wishing patron, and he also served as a weekly service cleric (*hebdomadarius*) for the nuns of Saint-Pierre at Metz, some thirty kilometres along the Moselle.[58] John, moreover, spent a good deal of time at the city of Toul, a couple of hours' walk from Fontenoy, where he took lessons from one of the cathedral deacons, Berner, to supplement his earlier education, which he regarded as insufficient.

Perhaps because of these other commitments, and perhaps also because he may not yet have been ordained as a priest, John sheltered a somewhat eccentric figure in the Fontenoy church, alongside the veiled woman. This was an elderly man who claimed to be a priest. He reportedly talked to himself out loud and constantly recited the Psalms so mechanically 'that you might think he was counting the syllables'.[59] He was tormented by visions of demons and was sometimes bedridden for days. He liked to tell of how he had been captured by vikings in his home in the Beauce in western France, who threw him into first one deep pit and then another, before they let him go; he was miraculously spared from hunger by finding three loaves of bread on the road, and then somehow arrived at the church of Fontenoy, some 300 kilometres to the east. Some might have been suspicious of such a peculiar backstory, and even if they believed it, might have recalled that priests were not supposed to move between dioceses without episcopal permission and a piece of parchment known as a *littera formata* to do so[60] (indeed, there survives precisely such a document for a

[57] *Vita Johannis Gorziensis*, P.C. Jacobsen (ed.), MGH SS rer. Germ. 81 (Wiesbaden: Harassowitz, 2016), ch. 13–15, pp. 182–90.

[58] He may have had a third church too, but the evidence is ambiguous: *Vita Johannis Gorziensis*, Jacobsen, p. 182, n. 82.

[59] *Vita Johannis Gorziensis*, Jacobsen, ch. 14, p. 186: 'ut pene sillabas eum recensere putares'.

[60] Cf. L. Morelle, 'Sur les "papiers" du voyageur au haut Moyen Âge: lettres de recommandation et lettres dimissoires en faveur des clercs' in S. Curveiller and L. Buchard (eds.), *Se déplacer du Moyen Âge à nos jours* (Calais: Les amis du Vieux Calais, 2009), pp. 34–50.

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priest from near Amiens, named Hunfrid, who really had fled from the northmen in 859).[61] But for John, who had other calls on his time, this man was useful, perhaps not despite his dubious background but because of it, for there was little chance that he could threaten John's authority over the church while John was away on other business.

Who, then, was the local priest at Fontenoy in the early tenth century, a local church that had sufficient endowment and revenues to maintain an old priest and a woman, as well as presumably John himself? Who would have been named as its priest had some document been issued and preserved? John, a charismatic figure on a fast-track clerical career who later became the abbot of the major monastery of Gorze, was clearly treated as the de facto cleric in charge, both by the church's owner, Warner, and by the cathedral community at Toul. But John had another church under his care and busily cultivated connections with various ecclesiastical institutions in the region according to his *vita*. And as already mentioned, it is not certain that he was actually ordained as a priest at this point. Presumably, the person ensuring the divine offices were carried out at Fontenoy on a regular basis was the elderly man who claimed to be a priest, and who waved his arms around and shouted at demons that only he could see. Yet this man never left the Fontenoy church except for bodily necessities, and as we have seen, was often confined to his bed. One might wonder how much of the actual work of the local priest at Fontenoy in the 930s was in truth done by the unnamed veiled woman.

Anerius

Between 988 and 990, the monks of Sainte-Marie de Peyrissas, an abbey located near Toulouse, purchased two parcels of property. These transactions were each recorded in their own document. The sellers in 988 were four brothers: Garsias *presbiter*, Sancius, Radulf and Anerius; the second sale was made by a woman named Matrona as well as three men, Garsias the priest, Anerius and Radulf. That these were the same brothers is almost certain, based on other appearances in the cartulary, though we cannot say how the female seller, Matrona, was connected to the trio, since her relationship beyond being a co-vendor is not made explicit.[62] While Matrona does not reappear, we can trace Garsias and his brothers forward through time.

[61] See Patzold, *Presbyter*, pp. 79–80. [62] Lézat, nos. 389–90.

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Around the year 1000, another sale, this time to the monastery at Lézat, was witnessed by one Anerius, here described as priest of Samouillan, identifiable with the Anerius of our earlier documents.[63] Garsias was therefore not the only priest amongst the group of siblings. Whether he was already a priest or had been in training in 988, in the intervening ten years Anerius had begun to serve as a priest. In addition, we can (unusually) tie Anerius to a particular place: in this case, Samouillan, six kilometres south of Peyrissas, making it likely he was a local priest.

This was not the end of Anerius' story, as we learn from a very different contemporary charter. It is described by its editors as follows: 'The monks of Sainte-Marie de Peyrissas give to William a horse worth 30 *solidi* and 22 *solidi* in coin to buy back from Anerius, priest of Samouillan, half of an allod, a church and a mill in the region of Toulouse at *Obarcium*, a third of a mill at *Pugo*, some lands, vineyards and a church at *Forgas*'.[64] Yet the first lines of the charter document a rather more complex situation, which resembles a ransom payment:

> ABOUT FORGUES. In the name of God. William came to Anerius the priest of Samouillan, and he took Anerius the priest. The monks came and gave to redeem him one horse worth 30 *solidi* and 22 *solidi* of pennies, and they gave this to William. Anerius the priest came to St. Mary and gave his alod to God and Sainte-Marie de Peyrissas which is in the region of Toulouse, which is called *Obarcium*, half of its two parts and half of its church and again half of its mill.[65]

The case of Anerius, unusual in being identified as a local priest in a charter, shows in the first place how – like John in Lotharingia – a local priest might control more than one church. Indeed, insofar as the charter's idiosyncratic Latin can be construed, Anerius seems to have been wealthy enough both to suffer some kind of kidnapping and to compensate those who paid the ransom on his behalf, without losing his main asset. It is notable that the church of which Anerius was a priest, at Samouillan, does

[63] Lézat, no. 327.

[64] Lézat, no. 327: 'Les moines de Sainte-Marie de Peyrissas donnent à Guillaume un cheval de 30 sous et 22 sous en deniers pour racheter à Aneros, prêtre de Samouillan, la moitié d'un alleu, d'une église et d'un moulin dans le pagus de Toulouse, à Obarco, le tiers d'un moulin à Pugo, des terres, des vignes et une église à Forgas'.

[65] Lézat, no. 327: 'DE FORGUAS In Dei nomen. Anero, presbitero de Samolano, venit Guillelmus e prehendit Anero, presbitero, venuerunt monachi et dederunt redemptionem uno cavalo a .XXX. sol et .XXII. sol. de dinarios, et dederunt Guillelmo. Venit Aneros, presbiter, a Sancta Maria et dabit alodem suum a Deo et a Sancta Maria a Patrecensis qui est infra pauco tholosano, ubi dicitur Obarco, de ipsas duas partes illa medietate et de ipsa ecclesia similiter et de ipso molino ipsa medietate [. . .]'.

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not appear amongst the varied properties Anerius gives up, suggesting he had not been stripped of his office. As it happens, we know a little more about the church at *Obarco* that Anerius gave away: a later charter, dated to ca. 1030x1060 and issued by a priest named Dato, granted a third of the church of *Obarcium* to the monks of Lézat. Dato describes how he held the church just as his uncle, Anerius, had held it, perhaps suggesting that Anerius had retained some control over it even after his concession to Lézat in 1000.

Bermund

In around 1028, a charter preserved by the monastery of Saint-Pons, Nice, records a donation the monks received from a local family. They were headed by one Gisbern, who made the grant alongside his wife Adalaxa and his brothers John, Bermund the priest, and Peter, as well as Peter's unnamed wife and sons.[66] The family transferred ownership of a church dedicated to Saint Martin, which lay below the *castrum* of Roquette (now Roquette-sur-Var), to the abbey with all its appurtenances (*cum omnibus sibi pertinentibus).* Although we only have a transcription made in 1706, this records that the donation was attested by most of the family; Gisbern and his brother Bermund the priest also subscribed and confirmed the grant, suggesting that they were perhaps deemed most important by those drafting the documents, or that they were literate. The case serves as a demonstration of some of the methodological challenges of charter evidence, but also of the kind of information they do provide, and how it must be pieced together carefully to form a picture of the priest's family and assess his centrality to the family unit.

We know nothing about Bermund the priest beyond the above donation: no priest by that name witnessed contemporary documents made for or at Nice, making it less likely that he lived either at the monastery or amongst the cathedral canons. He may, of course, have served the church his family owned and handed over to the monks, though this is not made explicit; where Bermund ministered therefore remains a mystery. We can, however, fill out the picture we have both of his family and of the church they gave, giving us an idea both of their financial status and of the fate of the grant.

[66] E. Cais de Pierlas and G. Saige (eds.), *Chartrier de l'abbaye de Saint-Pons hors les murs de Nice* (Monaco: Imprimerie de Monaco, 1903), no. 4 (c. 1028), pp. 7–8.

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Unusually, Gisbern and his wife appear in a second archive, this time in the cartulary of the abbey of Lérins, thirty kilometres to the southwest. In a grant datable only to the eleventh century per the cartulary, Gisbern and his wife Adalaxa each granted portions of their own property to the abbey of Lérins: Gisbern gave all that he had in the *castrum* of Pujet-Malemorte for the souls of his father and mother, while Adalaxa made a grant of her portion of this property for the souls of her father and mother, which would only go to the abbey after her death.[67] Because of our Saint-Pons Nice document, we can date this grant made by Bermund's brother and sister-in-law little more accurately than only to the eleventh century, since it is unlikely to date to more than 50 years later. Other donations made from this *castrum* survive, but none mentions any members of the family.

What was Bermund and his family's relationship to the *castrum* of Roquette, which loomed above the church they donated in 1028? The earliest people to be explicitly described as owners of property there do not appear in the historical record until 1109, when a family headed by Peter Ismido handed a quarter of it over to Lérins. But we can say a little more of the church that the family collectively granted to Saint-Pons Nice. It is identifiable as that of Saint-Martin-du-Var, located in a small village some fifteen kilometres from Nice. There is a second reference to this church that has to date gone unnoticed. A charter issued for Lérins in 1144 by Raimund Dalmacii, his wife and four sons includes the renunciation of their claims to this same church: 'We furthermore renounce, for the complete remission of our sins, all violence and injustices which we used to commit in the house of Saint Martin below the *castrum* of Roquette, so that henceforth the said house may remain free to Saint Honoratus and his monks, and may not suffer any harm from us'.[68] This later charter suggests that between the donation of the church to the abbey in 1028 and its return in 1144, it had ended up in lay hands again.

As is often the case, then, we are left with numerous gaps in our knowledge of this local priest and his family. What we can say is that Bermund belonged to a family comprising two married brothers, the priest himself and his nephews and nieces. Bermund's brother Gisbern appears to have represented the family, given his prominence in the written record; that only he and Bermund subscribed the family's grant of their church

[67] Lérins, no. 187: 'Et ego Adalaxa, mulier Gisberno, dono Deo et sancto Honorato et ad sancta Maria medietatem honorem illam, post mortem meam [. . .]'.
[68] Lérins, no. 83.

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suggests prominence for both, however. Although we cannot say where Bermund served as a priest, no contemporary individual named Bermund found in the documentary record was a member of a larger church, nor of either of the monasteries to which his family gave land. The questions these documents raise – whether Bermund was a local priest and how his family were connected not only to his priesthood but to the local area – present in microcosm the complexities inherent in identifying local priests and their families in charter evidence.

1.4 Conclusion

These four case studies illustrate the challenges of identifying local priests in the evidence, in the absence of any specific term for the role. The local priest was a 'social fact' rather than a formal position within the church. As mentioned in the introduction, the tenth and early eleventh centuries were a period when the concept of the parish as a uniform spatial area was in the process of development in certain parts of the former empire, which meant that the role of the local priest was less clearly defined than it would be later. Indeed, the word *parrochianus* more often referred to the parishioners than the parish clergy.

The examples also illustrate the diversity of situations in which we can find people who we might consider local priests: Geltmar, almost a missionary priest in distant Saxony; John and his unnamed understudy, an eccentric elderly man of dubious background, not far from the Rhineland; Anerius, who seems to have been an active player in local politics near Toulouse; and Bermund, scion of a wealthy castellan family near Nice. Early medieval western Europe encompassed a wide range of local societies, and this necessarily meant a wide diversity in the local priests serving them.[69]

Nevertheless, this diversity of situations was framed by an underlying comparable position, as outlined at the beginning of this chapter: the duty to provide pastoral care, as defined in a range of normative texts, to the laity living in the scattered localities within an overwhelmingly rural and decentred population. In none of the four cases is this pastoral dimension foregrounded by the sources, but as holders of local churches, all four priests would have had, in principle, similar religious obligations, whether or not they actually fulfilled them. Our case studies therefore sharpen our

[69] Numerous examples are discussed in Kohl, *Kleine Welten* and Zeller, *Neighbours and Strangers.*

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grasp of this 'social fact', showing its range without exploding it. With all due methodological caution, and with reference to a wide range of genres of evidence, we can now begin to investigate what capacity for action priests like these four men had, how this picture compares to the priests imagined by Peter Damian and Heinrich Fichtenau and what implications this comparison might have for wider historical questions.

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