

# Power, Politics and Episcopal Authority



# Power, Politics and Episcopal Authority

*The Bishops of Cremona  
and Lincoln in the Middle Ages  
(1066-1340)*

By

Angelo Silvestri

Cambridge  
Scholars  
Publishing



Power, Politics and Episcopal Authority:  
The Bishops of Cremona and Lincoln in the Middle Ages (1066-1340)

By Angelo Silvestri

This book first published 2015

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2015 by Angelo Silvestri

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-4438-7065-X

ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7065-8

# CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations .....	vii
List of Maps and Illustrations .....	x
Acknowledgements .....	xi
Introduction .....	1

## **Part One: The Dimensions of Episcopal Power in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries**

Chapter One.....	14
Episcopal Authority in England and Italy	
1.1 Bishops of Lincoln and Cremona: mid-eleventh to mid-twelfth century	
1.2 The political power of the bishops	
1.3 The military power of the bishops	
1.4 Economic power and control of the dioceses	
Chapter Two.....	57
Restrictions on Episcopal Power	
2.1 Political opposition to the bishops	
2.2 The declining military power of the bishops	
2.3 Challenges from within the diocese	

## **Part Two: ‘Politicized’ Religion versus Episcopal Tradition**

Chapter Three.....	88
Power and Appeasement	
3.1 Bishops of Lincoln and Cremona: mid-twelfth to mid-thirteenth century	
3.2 Bishop Sicardo and Hugh of Avalon: the paths diverge	
3.3 Robert Grosseteste’s approach to politics	

Chapter Four .....	129
Holding and Crossing the Line	
4.1 The relationship between the bishops and the chapter	
4.2 Italian political religion and English religious policy	
4.3 The bishops in their dioceses in the wake of the Lateran Council (1200-1253)	
<b>Part Three: Standing and Falling: The Outcome in Lincoln and Cremona</b>	
Chapter Five .....	178
Decline and Fall: The Bishop at Cremona	
5.1 The tide changed	
5.2 The bishop in crisis: steady descent through the power of factions	
5.3 The end of the independent commune	
Chapter Six .....	215
Lincoln: The Legacy of Grosseteste	
6.1 Origins and careers	
6.2 The bishops' deeds in relations to the Cathedral Chapter	
6.3 The bishop in his diocese	
6.4 Politics and Royal Service	
6.5 The Episcopate of Henry Burghersh	
Conclusions .....	262
Select Bibliography .....	274
Index .....	296

# LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

## Archives

ASCr	Archivio di Stato di Cremona
ASDCr	Archivio Storico Diocesano di Cremona
ASMi	Archivio di Stato di Milano
BSCr	Biblioteca Statale di Cremona

## Books

<i>AM</i>	<i>Annales Monastici</i> , ed. Henry Richards Luard, <i>RS</i> , XXXVI, 5 vols. (London: Longman, 1864-1869).
<i>CC</i>	<i>Le Carte Cremonesi dei secoli VIII – XII</i> , ed. Ettore Falconi, 4 vols. (Cremona: Biblioteca Statale di Cremona, 1979).
<i>CDC</i>	<i>Codex Diplomaticus Cremonae</i> , ed. Lorenzo Astegiano, 2 vols. (Turin, 1895).
<i>CPR, Edward I</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward I</i> , ed. H.C. Maxwell Lyte, 4 vols. (London: H.M.S.O., 1893-1901).
<i>CPR, Edward II</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls, Edward II</i> , ed. H.C. Maxwell Lyte, 5 vols. (London: H.M.S.O., 1894-1904).
<i>DBI</i>	<i>Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani</i> , ed. Lorenzo Bianconi and Francesco Caglioti, 77 vols. (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1992).

- EEA, I*                      *English Episcopal Acta I, Lincoln 1067-1185*, ed. David M. Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1980).
- EEA, IV*                     *English Episcopal Acta IV, Lincoln 1186-1206*, ed. David M. Smith (London: Oxford University Press, 1986).
- EEA, VII*                    *English Episcopal Acta VII. Hereford 1079 – 1234*, ed. Julia Barrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- EEA, X*                     *English Episcopal Acta X. Bath and Wells 1061 – 1205*, ed. Frances M.R. Ramsey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
- Fasti*                        *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae, or a Calendar of the Principal Ecclesiastical Dignitaries in England and Wales*, Vols. I, II, III, compiled by John Le Neve and by T. Duffus Hardy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1854);  
Vol. IV, compiled by Diana Greenway (London: University of London, 1991).  
Vol. VIII, compiled by J.S. Barrow (London: University of London, 2002).
- HH*                         Henry of Huntingdon. *Historia Anglorum*, ed. and trans. by Diana Greenway (New York- Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

- M. Paris, *Chron. Maj*      Matthew Paris. *Matthæi Parisiensis Monachi Sancti Albani Chronica Majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, RS, LVII, 7 vols. (London: Longman, 1872-83).
- MGH SS      *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptorum.*
- ODNB      *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Henry C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison, 60 vols. (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- RA      *Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln*, ed. C. W. Foster and Kathleen Major, Vols. I - IV (Hereford: The Lincoln Record Society, 1931-1948);  
Vol. IX, ed. Kathleen Major (Durham: Lincoln Record Society, 1968);  
Vol. X, ed. Kathleen Major (Durham: Lincoln Record Society, 1973).
- RS      *Rolls series. Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores or Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland during the Middle Ages.*

## LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

- Fig. I            Map of Lincoln Minster and Castle in relation  
to the Roman walls
- Fig. II           Drawing of the “probable” XI century Lincoln Cathedral
- Fig. III          Lincoln Cathedral, west side
- Fig. IV          Diplomatic seal, commune of Cremona
- Fig. V           The cathedral of Cremona (Graphic Reconstruction)
- Fig. VI          The cathedral of Cremona (Graphic reconstruction)
- Fig. VII         Lincoln Cathedral – Prebend of Stow
- Fig. VIII        The borghi franchi of Cremona
- Fig. IX          Cremona, Cathedral of St. Mary
- Fig. X           Cremona, Church of St. Agatha
- Fig. XI          Cremona, Palazzo Cittanova
- Fig. XII         The Episcopal Register John de Dalderby, Reel 4 f 169

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family for their support and for having given me the possibility to complete this achievement; Prof Peter Coss for having brilliantly introduced me to British Medieval History, for his guidance, his assistance and for having given me the privilege to share his friendship. I would like to thank Dr William Aird for his help and his advice, Angela Coss for her counsel and her priceless suggestion, Luciano Visigalli for his constant support and help throughout these years. I would like also to tribute a special thanks to Cardiff University History Department for having given me the opportunity to study medieval history, all the Cardiff University's Art and Social Studies Library staff for their perhaps not visible, but undoubtedly irreplaceable work in finding books and manuscripts. I would also like to thank Dr Richard Gem, Mr Antonio Davò, Ms Dorella Molo Azzolini, the Museo Civico of Cremona, and the Lincolnshire Archives for granting me permission to publish their parchments, pictures and graphic reconstruction. I am grateful to all my friends who have shared this "adventure" with me and to all the people who directly and indirectly have made this possible. This book could have been done even without my contribution, but certainly not without theirs.



## INTRODUCTION

In recent times medieval historians have begun to turn towards comparative history. With very considerable empirical study now undertaken across many specific societies and cultures and questions posed and answered on the basis of individual experiences, the time is opportune for a more comparative approach, not only in terms of broad surveys but also in terms of more specific and more focused undertakings. The great virtue of comparative studies is that they can enable us to understand more profoundly the dynamics of particular societies at particular times by juxtaposing others that are in some ways very similar but at the same time illustrate considerable divergences. This approach should enable us to understand more fully the direction of change in a given place and era. For this study I have chosen a comparison between an Italian and an English society from the mid eleventh to the mid fourteenth centuries. This is an appropriate choice because although both countries were subjected to the same broad influences that were common to the medieval world, there are some very obvious differences between the two which will make comparison and contrast especially valuable. The most obvious of these are, of course, the existence of a centralised state in England as opposed to the politically fractured Italian peninsula and the far greater significance of the city within Italian society, economy and culture. The choice of period is perhaps more arbitrary and the reasons for deciding on these particular centuries will become more apparent shortly. What is important to stress at the outset is the necessity of taking a span of time that on the one hand is manageable in terms of mastering the evidence and on the other of sufficient duration to allow some real understanding of the dynamics of change. Equally it is essential that a comparative study should not be too wide spatially but should cover an area that has some internal coherence, at least administratively and socially. It is obvious that in order to enter into the dynamics of a society we need a point of entry, a means of tearing the fabric aside so that we can enter into the heart of its beliefs and operations. What better point of entry could there be into the Christian societies of the middle ages than through the key figure of the bishop and the *raison d'être* for his operations, the diocese. My comparison will therefore be between the diocese of Lincoln and the diocese of Cremona.

Cremona and Lincoln have been chosen because they present immediate similarities. As cities they are, of course, the centres of dioceses and therefore the primary sites of episcopal power and authority. Within their respective countries they may both be considered as middle-sized cities in this period, although in absolute terms the Italian city is considerably bigger than the English one. Needless to say, they contain the standard elements that define a city: division of labour, artisan activities, markets, a relatively autonomous political organisation, together with the presence of the bishop, cathedral and cathedral chapter. Their economies were similarly based, mainly on exchange with agricultural communities and river-borne trade. Thus located, the bishops of Cremona and Lincoln were significant figures within their societies but not normally of the highest ecclesiastical rank. Their study on a comparative basis should allow us to see and to understand the evolution of episcopal power and authority in political, institutional, social, economic and cultural terms across the long period of growth from the middle of the eleventh century until the mid-fourteenth when plague and demographic collapse altered many of the contours of life in the medieval West. The year 1067 is a convenient moment at which to begin since in both cases it saw the appointment of a bishop of more than local significance. Remigius was appointed to the see of Dorchester (later Lincoln) and Arnolfo to that of Cremona. Before turning to these figures, however, we need to set the scene by saying something in general terms of the power of bishops in the West and by outlining the state of the church and the rule of the bishop in each of the two countries around 1067.

Clearly during these centuries the continuous alternation of political leaders in Italy and the severe struggle for power which brought England to the brink of civil war are not political spin-offs but main factors that have been taken into consideration as the political and social backdrop when studying the evolution of the bishop's power. The position of the bishop in the history of Christianity has deep and ancient roots. Certainly from the second century AD, the overseer or bishop (*episkopos*), associated with priests and deacons, became the key figure in the local organization of the church, the resident authority in matters of the faith. In the first Christian era the bishop and the city had formed an inseparable binomial; one term cannot be considered without the other and historically they could barely exist separately<sup>1</sup>. In the Roman world there was one ubiquitous administrative unit, the *civitas* in which the city (the

---

<sup>1</sup> Eugenio Duprè Theseider, 'Vescovi e città nell'Italia precomunale', in *Vescovi e Diocesi nel medioevo, sec IX – XIII*, ed. M. Maccarone; G. C. Meeserman; E. Passarin d'Entres; P. Sambin (Padua, 1964), p. 57.

*municipium* or *urbs*) was only a part. With the coming of Christianity there was a completely new relationship between the town, the house of the bishop and the “diocese” that was his territory<sup>2</sup>. In the West, following the decline of imperial power, the bishop emerged as a powerful leading force. Slowly but steadily he was to become a major figure within European society as a whole<sup>3</sup>. Noblemen who wished to direct their communities turned increasingly to the church and principally to the episcopate. Gregory of Tours has shown us in sixth-century Gaul, for example, how the bishops led in government and administration as the social and political as well as spiritual leaders of the city-territories. Bishops were also regarded as high examples of morality, or at least this is what St Paul seems to have had in mind for the first bishops<sup>4</sup> when he described them as blameless, prudent, sober and men of good behaviour. They were also among the major champions of the monasteries that were spreading throughout Western Christian society. They played a major role, too, in conjunction with the aristocracy, in the extension of Christian belief outwards from the city to the countryside. In each district there was a mother-church, often founded at a royal estate. “Such a church (the minster in England or the *plebs* or *pieve* in Italy) was a meeting-place for worship and centre for baptism and burial”<sup>5</sup>.

In the Carolingian era the hierarchical nature of ecclesiastical culture meshed perfectly with the king’s or emperor’s needs to politically unify the empire<sup>6</sup>. In the ninth century, and even before, the Frankish Empire needed to divide the land into dioceses because the diocese was the perfect way to control the territory, from the religious and especially from the political and social point of view<sup>7</sup>. It is probably not a coincidence that out of the three great Catholic saints who were the patrons of the Frankish dynasty two, Martin (of Tours) and Dionysius (Denys), were bishops<sup>8</sup>. Bishops were one of the lynchpins of the Carolingian polity and cultural

---

<sup>2</sup> Theseider, ‘Vescovi e città nell’Italia precomunale’, p. 58.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Palazzo, ‘The Image of the Bishop in the Middle Ages’, in, *The Bishop reformed. Studies of Episcopal power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. John S. Ott, Anna Trumbore Jones (Aldershot, 2007), p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> Everett U. Crosby, *The King’s Bishops*, (New York, 2013), p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Colin Morris, *The papal monarchy. The Western Church from 1050 to 1250* (Oxford, 1989), p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Tabacco, *Egemonie sociali e strutture del potere nel medioevo Italiano* (Torino, 1979), p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> Cristina La Rocca, ‘La cristianizzazione dei Barbari e la nascita dell’Europa’, *Reti Medievali*, 5 (2004), p. 26.

<sup>8</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, *A History of Christianity* (London, 2009), pp. 324-325.

renaissance. Their importance was underscored, however, by the Carolingian legislation for the church. As the Carolingian empire crumbled, the position of bishops continued to evolve. When royal power began to falter the bishop, as the main leading figure within lay and religious society, inherited the power previously associated with the lay authority. He began to act as a proper ruler, administering justice in ecclesiastical courts. A perfect example of this situation could be found, as Greta Austin suggested, in the Reichskirchensystem (“Imperial church system”) where the bishops enjoyed religious and political power with the support of local magnates<sup>9</sup>. Further west and south, as power increasingly devolved, the bishops had one distinct advantage which the lay inheritors of the Carolingian order tended not to share. As Dupré Theseider has stated: “The bishop had a sacramental influence over the population”<sup>10</sup>. In some respects, as a force for order, the bishops were also a force for conservatism. However, they had also to change with the times. The twilight of Carolingian power had determined a reorganisation and redistribution of powers. Although the pace and extent of change is debated, it can hardly be denied that one of the main consequences of the crumbling of the Carolingian empire was the localisation of power in the hands of lords and magnates and the partial disruption of what had been a centralized, jurisdictional power. Starting from the mid-eleventh century, in France, Germany and particularly in the north of Italy local families began to replace the royal or imperial officials, creating and administering their own local jurisdiction and exerting almost absolute power. The most important demonstration of this shift of control was the systematic erection of private castles, or fortified places, a clear symbol of influence, power and supremacy<sup>11</sup>. Increasingly the bishops had to deal not only with the consequences of “privatization” but also with the tension created by resurgent lay rulers and by an increasingly directive papacy fired by the movement known as Gregorian Reform.

What was the situation of the Italian church and its bishops in 1067? The first point to make is that the situation in Italy in the mid eleventh century was very varied. The ninth – eleventh centuries was a time of extreme political and religious instability across Europe and this is particularly true for the north of Italy, where a series of political breakdowns undermined the stability of the region. It was in these

---

<sup>9</sup> Greta Austin, ‘Bishops and Religious Law, 900 – 1050’, in, *The Bishop Reformed. Studies of Episcopal power and Culture in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. John S. Ott, Anna Trumbore Jones (Aldershot, 2007), p. 42.

<sup>10</sup> Theseider, ‘Vescovi e città nell’Italia precomunale’, pp. 71 - 72. (My translation).

<sup>11</sup> Morris, *The papal monarchy. The Western Church from 1050 to 1250*, p. 50.

centuries that the type of society which historians call feudal took shape, a world of increasingly private power. The bishops stood for public authority but at the same time much of their power in this feudal world was also feudal. They had, indeed, their own vassals and “clientele”. The action of Pope Leo IX from 1049 against simony and married priests paved the way for the movement known as Gregorian Reform; a series of “overlapping initiatives”<sup>12</sup> which had the main aim of reforming the church and especially correcting the behaviour of the ecclesiastics. In Cremona, as well as in the north of Italy more generally, the malpractice of simony and concubinage often went together and were followed by the privatization of the church, lay encroachment on religious privileges and bishops’ attempts at increasing their temporal power. In this undertaking the bishops had been aided from the second half of the tenth century onwards by the emperors, who moved toward a genuine promotion of the episcopate. The reason for this was very simple: they supported the civil power of the bishops in order to have a series of faithful, loyal “servants” in their territories. Exemplary from this point of view is the case of Archbishop Aribert of Milan who, in the mid-eleventh century, accumulated so much political and military power in his own hands that he became a threat even to Emperor Conrad II, who was forced to fight and imprison him. If the case of Bishop Aribert might be seen as quite unusual, what was certainly not unusual was the fact that the bishops governed towns on behalf of kings and emperors but with the implicit approval of the well-off citizens who represented the richest and most powerful families in towns. This implicit support gave them the backing for their interests and for their security.

This concentration of powers in the hands of the bishops worked in two different ways in the cities in the north of Italy: powerful bishops, like the bishop of Milan or Pavia, tended to accumulate power in their own hands, preventing the city from developing an autonomous form of government; relatively less powerful bishops tended (or were forced, as in Cremona) to transfer some power to local communities, allowing therefore the formation of independent city-government. In either case the bishop was an important referral point for the citizens because in Elisa Occhipinti’s words, “it was under his cloak that the new ruling class would take shape”<sup>13</sup>. The peace and the political stability of the Italian cities ruled by episcopal power was threatened, however, by the continuous struggle between the aristocracy and nobility on one side and the bishops

---

<sup>12</sup> Morris, *The papal monarchy. The Western Church from 1050 to 1250*, p. 82.

<sup>13</sup> Elisa Occhipinti, *L'Italia dei comuni. Secoli XI-XIII* (Rome, 2000), p. 16.

and their clientele on the other. It is not a coincidence that the emperor Conrad II conceded the famous *Constitutio de feudis* in 1037, which gave ample guarantee to the minor nobility over the transmission of their lands to their sons, in order to try to settle the fights between factions in cities like Milan or Pavia. The Italian communal city can therefore be seen not as an achievement in itself, but rather as a side effect of the struggles between the different factions within the walls of a town. If it is true that the citizens needed peace and stability in order to make their activities flourish, it is at the same time true that the citizens were no longer keen to be governed by bishops and by clergy who were often considered religiously unworthy and dishonest or greedy by contemporary political standards. It is not necessary to share with Elisa Occhipinti the view that the communal Italian city was a stark necessity<sup>14</sup> to agree that it was the only possible solution to end the internal tensions among different classes. What this solution brought about, however, was yet another internal division, even more dangerous, between the interests of the church and the interests of the lay aristocracy, a division which in Cremona would explode with great force in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

What by way of comparison was the role of the bishop at the time when Remigius was appointed to the see of Dorchester? Or, to put the same question another way, what part had the bishop played in the society of late Anglo-Saxon England? What had the new Norman rulers inherited? Bishops played a central role in the development of Christian life and institutions in Anglo-Saxon England as they did elsewhere. And yet, despite the central role of the tenth-century reformers and of Bishop Wulfstan, England was a country where the power of bishops was comparatively weak compared with many parts of continental Europe. This was primarily, although not solely, due to the strength of kingship. Other interests had to be accommodated. Ecclesiastical governance owed its strength in England to its alliance with other local interests. When it came to controlling local churches and supervising local clergy and parish life, bishops before the Norman Conquest do not appear on the whole to have been energetic in the way they were in, for example, contemporary France<sup>15</sup>. As John Blair has pointed out: “With Lanfranc and the next generation of bishops, the growth of canon-law definitions and diocesan administration set the seal on the new order”<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless, the role of

---

<sup>14</sup> Occhipinti, *L'Italia dei comuni. Secoli XI-XIII*, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup> These points are made strongly by John Blair in *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), p. 394, p. 422, and pp. 490-97.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 498.

the English bishops and their position in society provided the essential platform from which episcopal authority could take off. The work of Anglophone scholars, in particular the late Frank Barlow and more recently Mary Frances Giandrea, affords us a clear picture of the functions they exercised. As the former emphasized, the dominant tone of the English church, even by the time of the Norman Conquest, was monastic and this was “an aberration from the general pattern of western Christendom”<sup>17</sup>. Although Edward the Confessor had appointed secular clerks, many of them foreigners, the phenomenon of the monk bishop remained very much alive<sup>18</sup>. At the end of his reign there were fourteen bishops holding the seventeen dioceses and half of them were monks<sup>19</sup>. Similarly the cathedral clergy were either monks or clerks. Bishops were nominated by the king and the alliance between church and state was “probably more intimate than anywhere else in Europe”<sup>20</sup>.

Anglo-Saxon bishops, like all early medieval bishops, regularly exercised power in a variety of ways and the fact that it was normal for ecclesiastics to share the lay culture is proven by “the tract known as the Northumbrian Priest’s Law that fined priests for bringing weapons into the church”<sup>21</sup>. This should not surprise us because many continental bishops were active warriors fighting at the head of their armies against other territorial lords for private or “national” reasons. Bishops could be, and always were, political leaders. Wulfstan, archbishop of York 1002-1023, for instance, was a busy statesman as well as pastor and canonist. His political theology is contained in his books. The first, the *Polity* concerns the responsibility of the church’s various members to promote its laws and to lead by example. Another text, the so called *Episcopus* or *Bishop’s Duties*, is a vigorous defence of the participation of bishops in secular justice<sup>22</sup>. Bishops were vital from the point of view of royal power because of the social control they exercised and because they consecrated the king, a practice which raised his status. Because of their functions in this context the bishops could influence policy through their membership of the

---

<sup>17</sup> Frank Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066* (London, 1963; 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. 1976), p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> For a comparison with the situation after the Norman Conquest with regard to episcopal appointments, episcopal translations and recruitment of bishops from 1066 to 1216, see: Crosby, *The King’s Bishops*, pp. 36-38.

<sup>19</sup> Barlow, *The English Church 1000-1066*, p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 152.

<sup>21</sup> Mary Frances Giandrea, *Episcopal Culture in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2008), p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Giandrea, *Episcopal Culture in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 40.

*witan*<sup>23</sup>. Apart from the *witan* there were other assemblies where bishops played a major role: the meeting of a public court - shire, hundred or borough - was, in Robin Fleming's words, a "moment when royal power manifested itself in the localities, since the neighbourhood judgements made there were produced under the aegis of king's men, his ealdormen, bishops, sheriffs and hundred reeves"<sup>24</sup>. The king's role in local assemblies was limited to matters that concerned him directly; for everything else local courts almost always operated through local magnates and their followings. So bishops were both the king's representatives and local magnates themselves and their participation in local assemblies reflects both of these roles. We do not really know how justice was administered or how the different courts properly worked; what is clear is that the bishop had great power not only in the main assembly but also in the local ones as the running and supervision of justice, at least by archbishop Wulfstan's day, was considered a pastoral duty of significant importance. Royal writs, for example of the reign of Cnut, were often sent to diocesan bishops as shire court presidents<sup>25</sup>. The English church was, at least in structural terms, apolitical. There were no episcopal dynasties such as flourished on the Continent and a king wise enough could use episcopal appointments to construct his ecclesiastical support. As members of an international institution, however, bishops were also useful in representing royal interests abroad, not just with other clerics but with laymen who might be more inclined to trust men of God before the armed men of enemy kings<sup>26</sup>.

The bishop's local power was centred on the cathedral. The English cathedral could be monastic or secular. All the people who served the cathedral whether monks or canons, were supposed to live under a rule. Whether monastic or secular, the English church was founded for the purpose of saving souls and the cathedral was the epicentre of pastoral activity. Despite the fact that it is not possible to talk about a typical Anglo-Saxon bishopric, in the community the bishop's word was law. He could, however, delegate authority to archdeacons and provosts. Only the bishop should ordain a priest, who was supposed to be a man highly competent in the matters of faith and canon law. The bishop should confirm adults by using the chrism on the head and reciting a formula. Confirmation was a significant event in a person's life because it was

---

<sup>23</sup> Giandrea, *Episcopal Culture in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 55.

<sup>24</sup> Giandrea, *Episcopal Culture in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 171, quoting from Robin Fleming, *Domesday Book and Law* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 28

<sup>25</sup> Giandrea, *Episcopal Culture in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 169.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 63.

probably one of the few opportunities where an ordinary Christian was in the presence of a bishop. The bishop also consecrated churches, particularly the churches he founded or rebuilt. The control of territory was another important role which Anglo-Saxon bishops were perfectly able to exercise. John Blair has pointed out that “The basic unit of Anglo-Saxon social organization was the province, region, lathe or small shire, *territories* smaller than later counties and often comparable in scale and extent to hundreds”<sup>27</sup>. This fact, as he himself has admitted, does not authorize us to think about a parallel system of parishes and dioceses, but certainly allows us to assume an early (perhaps rudimentary) form of parochial organisation with “daughter” churches directly linked to the mother churches<sup>28</sup>. This distinction, though not so sharp, is nonetheless important because the parish system of independent churches in charge and control of the pastoral activities in a specific part of the territory, which developed after the eleventh century, would be much more compact and effective than its predecessor – the Anglo-Saxon scheme of mother churches controlling sub-districts each of them stretching across large and diverse territories<sup>29</sup>. It is difficult to convey an adequate picture of the religious situation in the Anglo-Saxon countryside. We commonly refer to these internal ecclesiastical subdivisions as parishes (from Latin *parochiae*), but Blair has shown that, “no genuine surviving Anglo-Saxon documents use the word in this way”; moreover, the Normans “who had been referring to the *parochiae* of local churches in Normandy since 1020s almost never did so in England and when they did, they used *parochia* to refer to minsters and mother-parishes”<sup>30</sup>. Whatever the truth about the parishes might be, what is certain is that in the cathedral as well as in the major churches the liturgy of the Mass was celebrated regularly and yearly feasts took place at Christmas, Candlemas and Easter, and there were also occasional celebrations such as the translation of a saint. Together these practices reinforced bonds already created through baptism, confirmation and regular participation in the spiritual life of the church.

Although Bede thought paganism was dead in the eighth century, Anglo-Saxon society was still riddled with magical practice and fraught with religious traditions which usually encompassed the adoration of idols, sacrifices and an a host of practices which had basically nothing to do with Christianity. These rituals, customs and ceremonies were mostly related to agriculture and performed by peasants who had inherited them as

---

<sup>27</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 154.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 154, 155.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 426.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 427, 428.

traditions. It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that little had been done to change this situation and that the church did basically nothing to stop these practices or to fight them in any appropriate way. According to Blair, we should speak about two separate cultures which shared, however, many common characteristics, two ways of seeing and experiencing the Christian religion. On one side were the leaders' rules (for instance Aldhelm, Bede, Wilfrid<sup>31</sup>) and on the other the monks and clergy who "drank themselves senseless, or local minster-priests who performed magic for their flocks with Christian amulets and relics"<sup>32</sup>. No matter how pagan the church could still be, the Christian church impinged upon the life of people living in the society. The control over lay society was most of the time exerted by punishment derived from the Christian idea of sin. All Christians, including the bishops, were supposed to be humble and to express their humility through penance and in their care for the poor. Penance during the middle ages could be public or private, but private penance was probably more common than public penance in the Anglo-Saxon period. In order to be effective and to implement its religious and cultural practices, the church needed to be able to reach its faithful wherever they were. Indeed, in the eleventh century the western church in general and the English church in particular were slowly developing in terms of administrative infrastructure. Clearly in order to function this structure needed people, priests, bishops etc. but also money. Although it has always been part of the Church's doctrine of salvation that the rich could not get to heaven without the poor, it is also clear that without land donations, contributions in money and/or gifts of various sorts, the church could not sustain itself. The bulk of Anglo-Saxon episcopal wealth was indeed acquired during the first centuries of the Anglo-Saxon period and was primarily the result of benefaction. Moreover, whoever donated land to the church could rest assured that the beneficiaries would pray for them, linking therefore more and more the material society with the spiritual one. However, as in the course of the Anglo-Saxon period England became a more rigid society and the socio-economic form of the society shifted

---

<sup>31</sup> **Wilfrid** (sometimes written **Wilfrith**) – c. 634 – c. 709, was an English bishop and Saint. Born a Northumbrian nobleman, he entered the religious life as a teenager, studying at Lindisfarne, Canterbury, Gaul and Rome, before returning to Northumbria around 660 to become abbot of a newly founded monastery at Ripon. He was the spokesman for the Roman "party" at the Council of Whitby, gaining fame for his speech advocating the adoption of the Roman practice for figuring the date of Easter. His success led the King's son, Alfrith, to appoint him to the episcopate.

<sup>32</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon society*, p. 179.

using Chris Wickham's words, "from a peasant-mode society towards a feudal-mode society"<sup>33</sup>, churches came to receive donations and experience full control over the lands they possessed as well as exerting rights and privileges which were once lay prerogatives only. The growth of the economic importance of the church was matched by the increase of its political magnitude and the bishops benefited from this situation, becoming significant economic and political subjects.

An examination of Domesday Book reveals that the episcopal Church controlled 8% of the kingdom's landed wealth in 1066. The king was certainly one of the main sources of income for the bishop through gift and endowment. However, many other lay men and women in many different ways contributed to the well-being of the prelates, monks and canons, creating a tangible link between patrons and community. However, in the tenth and eleventh centuries English bishops, like many other bishops and ecclesiastics on the continent, had to deal with the reduction of patronage. In reaction to the competition from the abbots of great Benedictine houses and to the "manorialization" of the English landscape that were affecting their patrimony, the bishops maintained and sometimes reinforced their presence and their power in the towns. Indeed many bishops, like their secular counterparts, acquired rights to the profits of justice associated with burgesses and urban properties. The bishop of Dorchester, for instance, was entitled to toll and team as well as sake and soke on his land outside Lincoln. Some lands, such as the bishop of Worcester's triple hundred of Oswaldslow, were held so freely that the bishop was virtually the only authority in the area. The acquisition of royal and comital rights doubtless made it more difficult for the laity to distinguish between secular and ecclesiastical authority. The defence of the land in Anglo-Saxon society was a collective responsibility generally based on landholding. Hence bishops were assessed like other landowners for the maintenance of public services, the so-called "*Trinoda necessitas*" a threefold obligation comprising bridge-bote (repairing bridges and roads) burgh-bote (building and maintaining fortifications) and fyrd-bote (serving in the militia, known as the fyrd). These roles were very important communally and territorially, particularly the last two, as they clearly included military responsibility.

In the chapters that follow we will be focusing on the power of the bishops and how it evolved from the middle of the eleventh century to the

---

<sup>33</sup> "In the peasant-mode societies, peasants are mostly independent producers and the local rich and powerful are dominant only over a minority of the peasantry or are partly direct producers themselves; in the feudal-mode societies landlords dominate over peasants and live off the surpluses of dependent tenant cultivators": Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 304-305.

mid fourteenth. How did the power, the role and the responsibility of the bishop change? Why did the power of the bishop change in the way it did? What do these directions of change tell us about Italian society both in its own right and in comparison with England? To try to provide answers to these questions, I have divided the span of time considered into three equal periods:

1. from the middle of the eleventh century until the middle of the twelfth
2. from the middle of the twelfth century until the first half of the thirteenth
3. from the middle of the thirteenth century until the middle of the fourteenth.

The sources on which the study is based are naturally varied, given the time span covered. However, it is necessary to make certain observations at the outset. For Cremona I have relied, necessarily, upon the *Codex Sicardi* accessible in the State Library, the collections of documents included in “Le Carte Cremonesi”, and in “Codex Diplomaticus Cremonae”. These have been studied in detail by historians such as Giancarlo Andenna and Valeria Leoni, although from a more local or at least Italian perspective, and I have in consequence integrated my findings with theirs. I have studied the research of Daniele Piazzi and Maria Rosa Cortesi, who have depicted the life and deeds of St Homobonus based on sixteenth century sources, and medieval texts such as “*Cum orbita solis*”, “*Labentibus annis*”, “*Quonian historiae*”. For the diocese of Lincoln we are fortunate in having such detailed sources as the rolls and registers of the bishops, “English Episcopal Acta”, the “Registrum Antiquissimum”, “The book of John de Schalby” and the letters of Robert Grosseteste in “*Roberti Grosseteste. Episcopi quondam Lincolniensis epistolarum*” as well as a wealth of chronicle sources. All of these have, of course, their own strengths and weaknesses. It has to be admitted, however, that the sources for Lincoln allow for a more detailed examination of diocesan administration than is available for Cremona, and that this imposes some limitations for this study. Even so, it is not necessarily easier to penetrate beneath the surface when it comes to matters of motivation and in both cases we need to reconstruct probabilities in the various contexts and to exercise some historical imagination. Nonetheless, the sources are I believe sufficient, both separately and together, to allow for a detailed and informed discussion of the differing evolution of the two dioceses.

**PART ONE:**

**THE DIMENSIONS OF EPISCOPAL POWER  
IN THE ELEVENTH AND TWELFTH  
CENTURIES**

# CHAPTER ONE

## EPISCOPAL AUTHORITY IN ENGLAND AND ITALY

In England and in Italy, as in the rest of Western Europe generally, in the tenth and eleventh centuries a series of changes shook the foundations of medieval society. The population grew exponentially thanks to new agricultural techniques and land reclamation. New towns were founded and others expanded in size, new routes for trade and commerce were opened creating new professions, jobs and new opportunities for social advancement. The urban development began as early as the ninth century, but exploded, thanks to the increased food supplies and the renewal of trading, in the eleventh century, studding Europe with cities and urban settlements. The church generally benefited from this social and economic revival through expanded frontiers, through pilgrimage routes across Europe and through crusades to the Holy Land; moreover it underwent massive changes and reorganization and experienced bitter inner contradictions in the struggle between orthodoxy and heresy.

Northern Italian society of the eleventh century conformed to this general pattern. It was a pyramidal social order in which the majority of the people at the bottom were peasants living in the countryside with a few local or regional lords at the top dominating the lives and organizing the work of the rest of the population on behalf of the ultimate *dominus* of the land: the emperor or the king. The ninth to eleventh centuries, however, saw the development and growth of the cities. This new urban society was a different world, linked to, but also completely dissimilar from rural society. Urban society needed new political and commercial institutions; it needed economic and juridical policies that were different from the countryside and more especially it needed, in Antonio Pini's words, "a new (and up till then completely unknown) form of personal and collective freedom"<sup>1</sup>. Meanwhile open farms disappeared rapidly around the

---

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Ivan Pini, *Città e corporazioni nel medioevo Italiano* (Bologna, 1986), p. 15. (My translation).

eleventh century and were replaced by fortified villages or small castles ruled by local lords who, by offering protection to the farmers, exercised legal and jurisdictional powers<sup>2</sup>, creating a series of islands which even the king or the emperor was not able to rule directly. It is important for our purposes to underline the existence of a series of ecclesiastical seigneuries run by the bishops and cathedral chapters who, just as the lay seigneurs, could extend their feudal and seigneurial rights over territories and the people living there<sup>3</sup>. This continuous overlapping between public and private, lay and religious, created what has been called “reciprocal opposition”<sup>4</sup> between the king and the authority of the bishop who, as any other magnate, was deeply involved in the struggle for power. Cities tended to be under the control of bishops. As they expanded they benefited from peasants immigration which provided the work force and the human resources needed to develop artisan and trading activities. In this fluid political and economic climate it should not come as any surprise that social and political ideas intermingled and overlapped with religious beliefs challenging the established hierarchical order of society. Challenging the hierarchical order in a town meant contesting the power, the role and the position of the bishop. Indeed during the tenth and the eleventh centuries the bishops had basically seized (or received) political control of each town and its surrounding countryside (*contado*), partly through their role as feudal lords, partly because kings or emperors gave to them administrative and political control of the territory<sup>5</sup>.

The history of the British Isles in general and England in particular during the ninth to the eleventh centuries was dominated by Viking attacks. If it is true that the Vikings deeply changed the social and political life of the British Isles by destroying, ravaging and killing, the reaction to their invasions brought about the unification of the kingdom of England under the kings of Wessex. King Edgar set up a system of local government which was based on local officers who could control the

---

<sup>2</sup> For the feudal system see: Guy Bois, ‘Patrimones ecclésiastique et système féodal aux XI et XII siècles’, in, *Chiesa e mondo feudale nei secoli X – XII*, Vol. XIV, (Milan, 1995), pp. 45 – 60.

<sup>3</sup> Giancarlo Andenna, ‘La signoria ecclesiastica nell’Italia settentrionale’, In, *Chiesa e mondo feudale nei secoli X – XII*, Vol. XIV, (Milan, 1995), pp. 111 – 118.

<sup>4</sup> Giovanni Tabacco, *The struggle for power in medieval Italy* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 169.

<sup>5</sup> Giancarlo Andenna, ‘La centralità urbana della cattedrale nel passato millenio’ in, *Cremona una cattedrale, una città*, ed. Dario Cimorelli (Cinisello Balsamo, 2007), p.13.

countryside on behalf of the king linking the central government with the periphery. Equally important in this period is the connection between the English kingdom and the church: the clergy, the monks and especially the bishops were key elements in the cohesion of the realm, both at a religious and at a political level. Moreover, the clergy in general and the bishops in particular, were extremely important in converting the Danes and, at the same time, making them servant of the English crown<sup>6</sup>. The English crown was a mix of Danish and English elements. However, after Cnut had passed away in 1035, Norman influence began to make itself felt. A Norman element was already present within the English crown given that the second wife of Ethelred, Emma, was a Norman princess and was the aunt of Robert I of Normandy, William the Conqueror's father. Edward the Confessor, the son of Emma and Ethelred, had himself spent one year in exile in Normandy and in 1051 Robert of Jumieges, a Norman cousin of Edward the Confessor, was made archbishop of Canterbury. All of this contributed to making the Norman presence stronger in England even if its "influence" was as yet indirect. The very fact that William the Conqueror was the designated heir of Edward the Confessor made his conquest appear as if the throne had shifted, using Christopher Brooke's words "from one branch of the Norman ducal family to another"<sup>7</sup>. The Conqueror mistrusted the defeated English, particularly the ruling classes, and was unwilling to share power with them. Much of the land passed into the hands of the Norman aristocracy. This system of rewarding his servants included the clergy, and the church in England would undergo great modifications. It was almost entirely Normanized during the reigns of William and his descendants.

---

<sup>6</sup> C.N.L. Brooke, *Europe in the central Middle Ages* (London, 1964), pp 211-216.

<sup>7</sup> Brooke, *Europe in the central Middle Ages*, pp 224- 230.

## 1.1 Bishops of Lincoln and Cremona: mid-eleventh to mid-twelfth century

BISHOPS OF CREMONA	BISHOPS OF LINCOLN	POPES
		<b>Alexander II</b> (1061-73) opposed by <b>Honorius II</b> Anti Pope (1061-1072)
<b>Arnolfo</b> , elected 1067 - d. 1085	<b>Remigius</b> , elected (1067 as bishop of Dorchester, Leicester and Lincoln – d. 1092)	<b>Gregory VII</b> (1073 – 85), opposed by <b>Clement III</b> Anti Pope (1080-1100) <b>Victor III</b> (1086-87)
<b>Gualtiero</b> , elected (1086 – d. 1097)		<b>Urban II</b> (1088-99)
	<b>Robert Bloet</b> elected (1093 – d. 1123)	
<b>Vacancy</b> (1097-1110)		<b>Paschal II</b> , (1099- 1118), opposed by <b>Theodoric</b> (1100), <b>Aleric</b> (1102) and <b>Sylvester IV</b> (1105- 1111) Anti Popes
<b>Ugo</b> elected (1110 – d. 1117?)		
<b>Oberto</b> elected (1117 – d. 1162)		<b>Gelasius II</b> (1118-19) opposed by <b>Gregory VIII</b> Anti Pope 1118 <b>Callixtus II</b> (1119- 24)

---

**Alexander “the magnificent”**, elected  
(1123 – d. 1148)

**Honorius II** (1124-30), opposed by  
**Celestine II** Anti  
Pope (1124).

**Innocent II** (1130-43) opposed by  
**Anacletus II** (1130-1138) and Gregory  
Conti, **Victor IV**  
(1138), Anti Popes  
**Celestine II** (1143-44)

**Lucius II** (1144-45)  
**Eugene III** (1145-53)

**Robert de Chesney**  
elected (1148 - d. 1166)

**Anastasius IV** (1153-54)

**Adrian IV** (1154-59)  
**Alexander III** (1159-81), opposed by  
Octavius **Victor IV**  
(1159-64)

**Presbitero da  
Medolago**, elected  
1163 – left 1167

**Paschal III** (1165-68)  
Anti Pope

**Offredo**, elected 1168  
– d. 1185

**Callixtus III** (1168-77) Anti Pope

---

What kind of power did a bishop enjoy in the eleventh century? In general terms the influence of the bishop was felt in three main areas: political, economic and military. In order to ascertain his real power we need to break it down into these three main components. Of course the bishop was the main religious actor both in the town and in the