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INTRODUCTION

The history of religious culture in medieval England has been dominated in recent decades by studies dealing variously with the early missions and the Pre-Reformation church. The intervening period, especially that from c.900 to c.1200, has been the subject of rather less attention. The reasons for this are not hard to find. For historians of Anglo-Saxon religion the business of Christianisation can be seen as substantially complete by the early tenth century. Monastic reform and the 'Normanisation' of the church in England both form important historiographical pendants to narratives of Anglo-Saxon religious change, but in both cases the story has tended to be one of politics, institutions and 'high' cultural exchange.¹ Revisionist interpreters of the Reformation meanwhile have inevitably concentrated on the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in their efforts to rescue late medieval Catholicism from the condescension of Protestant posterity. Historians so engaged have stretched back to the thirteenth century where early forms of later offices and institutions such as churchwardens and chantries are dimly visible, but they seldom reached out deeper into time.² Such reluctance is in part a result of scarce resources: the rich harvest of fifteenth-century evidence – wills, letters, churchwardens' accounts, visitation returns, sermons, instruction manuals, church art and objects – is wholly vanished or much diminished by the time we get back to the twelfth. Julia Smith has put the perceived problem in a nutshell: 'there simply is not adequate evidence to pursue the questions that interest historians of lay religiosity

¹ An important exception, which also reaches as far as the twelfth century, is J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005).

² For example see A. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: the Diocese of Salisbury, 1250–1550* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 19–46. On chantries see K. L. Wood-Legh, *Perpetual Chantries in Britain* (Cambridge, 1965). On churchwardens see J. R. H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1945), p. 143; B. Kümin, *The Shaping of a Community: the Rise and Reformation of the English Parish, c.1400–1560* (Aldershot, 1996).

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before c.1200'.³ Diffidence about this earlier period is also fostered by the assumption that the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 in some sense marks a break with the past and that the religious landscape was transformed by a revolution which it accelerated or even inaugurated. The agenda of the council epitomizes a slow transformation which reformers were eager to bring about, now identified by historians as a shift from a church defined by cult, liturgy and right praxis to a 'pastoral' church ever more concerned with surveillance and shaping of belief through preaching and catechesis.⁴ So in respect of evidence left to us, and more deeply, in respect of the social realities determining what was written and preserved, the twelfth century has come, for historians of later medieval religion, to be 'another country, another world'.⁵

Neglect of this period is, of course, relative rather than absolute. There is a long and immensely distinguished scholarly tradition of works of institutional history and ecclesiastical biography dealing with the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The scope of recent work has also broadened beyond this. We are now far better informed about the parish, as John Blair and others have explored the development of local churches and proto-parochial structures from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries using textual traces and archaeological investigations.⁶ Others have begun to write about the religious lives of the ordinary faithful. Ronald Finucane, Simon Yarrow and Christopher Harper-Bill have delved into saints' lives, miracle collections and charter evidence to engage in this enterprise.⁷ The picture that they have constructed is valuable but inevitably fragmentary because of the limitations of what can be achieved

³ J. M. H. Smith, 'Regarding Medievalists: Contexts and Approaches', in M. Bentley (ed.), *A Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), pp. 105–15 at p. 108.

⁴ J. M. H. Smith, 'Religion and Lay Society', in R. McKitterick (ed.), *New Cambridge Medieval History*, II: (700–900) (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 654–78 at p. 661; P. Biller, 'Popular Religion in the Central and Later Middle Ages', in Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography*, pp. 221–46.

⁵ To borrow a phrase used in a very different context in E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400–1580* (London, 1992), p. 593.

⁶ See for example J. Blair (ed.), *Minsters and Parish Churches: the Local Church in Transition 950–1250* (Oxford, 1988); J. Blair and R. Sharpe (eds.), *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992); J. Blair and C. Pyrah (eds.), *Church Archaeology: Research Directions for the Future* (York, 1996).

⁷ Recent work which makes use of the charter evidence includes C. Harper-Bill, 'Searching for Salvation in Anglo-Norman East Anglia', in C. Harper-Bill, C. Rawcliffe and R. G. Wilson (eds.), *East Anglia's History: Studies in Honour of Norman Scarfe* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 19–40; C. Harper-Bill, 'Church and Society in Twelfth-Century Suffolk: the Charter Evidence', *Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History*, 35 (1983), pp. 203–12; R. C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977); S. Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-Century England* (Oxford, 2006); D. Postles, 'Religious Houses and the Laity in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century England: an Overview', *Haskins Society Journal*, 12 (2002), pp. 1–13; J. Burton, *The Monastic Order in Yorkshire, 1069–1215* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 193–5.

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with scattered and often unpromising evidence. Charters can disclose much about the piety of the aristocracy, but reveal far less about wider society. Miracle collections brightly illuminate relations between devotees and their saints, but they can also be treacherous, encouraging us to dwell on the cults at the expense of other features of belief and praxis.

Therefore this book will try to do something new. It deals with one aspect of religious culture, beliefs about the supernatural, in what we might think about as a (very) long twelfth century running from c.1050 to c.1215. But, as this period is, in historiographical terms, ‘another country, another world’, it will also use a different body of evidence to begin the business of exploration. Where others have drawn on archaeology, miracle collections and charters to offer a framework for their analysis, I intend to turn to a source which, paradoxically, is both the most obvious and the least used by historians for this sort of work: chronicles. The period encompassed by this book coincides with a profusion of historical writing in England and Normandy and so the archive is rich. It is my suggestion, and a central argument of this book, that chronicles have much to contribute to our understanding of religious culture for an age in which other resources are thin on the ground. Portents, signs, miracles, demons, angels, saints, ghosts, magical practices and even ritual sacrifices emerge in these narratives. While many historians have used the chronicles as staples of political history, few have made much of this curious exotica scattered through the more humdrum narrative of kings, battles and ecclesiastical affairs. Robert Bartlett is unusual in this respect.⁸ In choosing to draw heavily on chronicles for the chapters of his history of Norman and Angevin England dealing with religion, Bartlett has been able to evoke the richness and variety of that aspect of culture in a way others have seldom managed. In doing this, he illustrates what might be achieved with this material.

Yet some further justification for putting the chronicles centre-stage in a monograph is needed. In essence, the intellectual reasons for making such ‘narrative’ sources the scaffold for this book about religion are not much different from the reasons for using them as a skeleton for political history. But, in thinking about the value of chronicles, there are also issues more specific to this sort of inquiry which demand attention. We need to consider the problems of studying religious culture using sources generated by a learned elite and the dangers of approaching medieval religion using the concept of the supernatural. Before addressing either of these issues however, we shall turn first to the phenomenon which makes this book possible: the proliferation of historical writing in the Anglo-Norman realm.

⁸ R. Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075–1225* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 442–81, 616–92.

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HISTORY IN THE TWELFTH CENTURY

The reasons for the 'twelfth-century history boom' need only the briefest treatment here as they have been much discussed elsewhere. Some of the earliest historical writing produced in the wake of the Norman Conquest may well have been defensive in purpose. English monasteries may have anticipated that their landed assets might be expropriated or the claims of their saintly patrons contested and so produced historical and hagiographical texts to justify both.⁹ Recent research has also tended to stress more positive reasons for churchmen picking up their pens after 1066.¹⁰ Anglo-Saxon nostalgia and Norman curiosity both played an initial part here, but the steady formation of a distinctively 'Anglo-Norman' sensibility, awakened in chroniclers such as Orderic Vitalis and William of Malmesbury a deeper interest in fitting Norman and Anglo-Saxon pasts together.¹¹ These men wrote massive synchronising histories which erased many of the contours of ethnic hostility which are so evident in first-generation narratives.

This historiographical renaissance, however we interpret its causes, brought not only quantitative but also qualitative change.¹² Where Anglo-Saxon historical writing had been characterised by the spare annalistic format, the twelfth century witnessed the composition of much fuller narratives. Black monks led the way. Orderic styled himself as Bede's heir and promised the same kind of expansive 'ecclesiastical' history; William of Malmesbury patterned his writing on a variety of classical archetypes, wearing his knowledge of dozens of classical texts on his sleeve as he wrote monumental history on a similar scale to Orderic. History also came to be written by an increasingly diverse range of authors. Beyond the cloister, seculars wrote about the past inside different frames of

⁹ For the English dimension see J. Campbell, 'Some Views of the Anglo-Saxon Past', in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986), pp. 209–28; M. Brett, 'John of Worcester and his Contemporaries', in R. H. C. Davis and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.), *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: essays presented to Richard William Southern* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 101–26; J. Barrow, 'How the Twelfth-Century Monks of Worcester Perceived their Past', in P. Magdalino (ed.), *Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London, 1992), pp. 53–74; A. Gransden, *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England* (London, 1992), pp. 1–30, 81–106, 107–24, 153–74.

¹⁰ See for example S. J. Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio: post-Conquest attitudes to the saints of the Anglo-Saxons', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 9 (1986), pp. 179–206.

¹¹ This is visible in a resurgent interest in Bede. See for example *Melrose Chronicle*, pp. 1–3; WN, I, pp. 11–19; HH, pp. 6–7; WM, GR, I, p. 1. On this point see also A. Gransden, *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England* (London, 1992), pp. 138–41. For the later development and diversification of historiography in England see J. Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 113–44. For the Norman historiographers see also L. Shopkow, *History and Community: Norman Historical Writing in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Washington, DC, 1997).

¹² See N. F. Partner, *Serious Entertainments: the Writing of History in Twelfth-Century England* (Chicago and London, 1977).

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reference from the early Benedictine historiographers. Diocesan clergy such as Henry of Huntingdon and Gerald of Wales were joined by clerical *curiales* like Walter Map and Roger of Howden. Even within the ranks of monastic chroniclers, historical writing evolved during the course of the century and often acquired a more worldly edge, with, for example, Jocelin of Brakelond's belt and braces narrative of Bury St Edmunds savouring more of administrative than sacred history.

Variety is also to be observed in the increasingly eclectic subject matter of otherwise conventional histories. Geography, natural history and extended discussions of wonders all spilled out of them. This broadening of interest was also reflected in new genres growing around the edges of the established literary forms. Gerald of Wales's reflections on Ireland and Wales blended history, geography and what some have termed 'ethnography'; Walter Map mixed history and *fabula* with moralising anecdote and political satire in his *De Nugis Curialium*; Gervase of Tilbury compiled a great tripartite encyclopedia of history, geography and wonders designed for the recreation of his patron, the German emperor Otto IV. With this diversification of content there came also a diversification of intellectual approach. Astrological and magical learning, cosmological speculations, mathematical and medical knowledge, the fruits of herbal, bestiary and lapidary, were absorbed into 'historical' writings during the course of the twelfth century. This was not simply description: these technical discourses supplied alternative ways of rationalising the world, often in terms of physical causes, which jostled the moralising explanations which had previously predominated.

This profusion of writing, its expanding scope and ambition and the growing diversity of genre and explanatory approach, ensure that chronicles have the potential to be every bit as valuable to the historian of religious culture as they are to the historian of politics. Yet the word *potential* is an important qualifier. There remain significant methodological obstacles in the way of using the chronicles as I have just proposed. The chroniclers were still a small and exclusive social group distinguished by their learning and their clerical status. How far we think this left chroniclers unable or unwilling to engage with 'unlearned' lay culture beyond the cloister or school room is the key to assessing their ultimate value. Here much depends on the historiographical assumptions with which we operate. It is to these that we must now turn.

RELIGIOUS CULTURE IN THE CENTRAL MIDDLE AGES:
PROBLEMS AND SOURCES

Historians who have analysed religion in essentially sociological terms, and hence have tended to associate distinctive patterns of belief with

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particular social groups, have been among those most inclined to doubt that the beliefs of the majority might be approached at all straightforwardly through texts written by learned, clerical elites. For these scholars, many of whom have taken their cue from the important work of Jacques Le Goff, three things tend to follow from this fundamental assumption. First, medieval religion was characterised by significant tensions between the beliefs of different groups within it, elite and masses, clergy and laity, learned and unlearned.¹³ Secondly, exploration of ‘popular’, ‘folkloric’ or ‘unlearned’ culture demands methodologies which permit clerical texts to be read ‘against the grain’ of their prevailing learned values. Thirdly, the most useful sources for this enterprise are those formed on cultural interfaces, for example *exempla*-collections, sermons and penitential manuals designed by the clergy to engage with, and reshape, popular or unlearned belief.¹⁴

These approaches have yielded tremendously rich and insightful research but they also seem to me to pose real problems for the study of medieval religion. The idea that the social group to which a person belongs might have such a determining effect on his or her religious convictions seems contestable.¹⁵ Even where the cultural breaks between ways of believing should be sharp, for example between monks and the aristocracy, it is in practice difficult to discern clear lines. Aristocratic families supplied the cloisters with recruits, were bound to them by the frequent exchange of gifts for prayers, and celebrated association with the life of renunciation because it seemed so valuable to the sinner in the world.¹⁶ Monk and warrior were not marooned on either side of a cultural divide and so, I would argue, it becomes harder to accept that the monastic writer cannot bear witness to the warrior’s beliefs. The case

¹³ J. Delumeau, *La Catholicisme entre Luther et Voltaire* (Paris, 1977). And for more recent versions: A. Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. J.M. Bak and P. A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1988), pp. xiii–xvi; J. Le Goff, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. A. Goldhammer (London, 1980); J. Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. A. Goldhammer (London, 1988); J. C. Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: the Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (Chicago, 1994).

¹⁴ J. C. Schmitt, ‘Religion populaire et culture folklorique’, *Annales, ESC*, 31 (1976), pp. 941–53.

¹⁵ The dichotomy of popular and elite was problematised in the 1980s: M. R. O’Neill, ‘From “Popular” to “Local” Religion: Issues in Early Modern European History’, *Religious Studies Review*, 12 (1986), pp. 222–6; also see P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints: its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (London, 1981), pp. 18–20; C. N. L. and R. Brooke, *Popular Religion in the Middle Ages: Western Europe 1000–1300* (London, 1984), esp. pp. 9–10, 12–13; A. Murray, *Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 14–17, 237–41, 244–57, 319; and for more recent criticisms see M. Mansfield, *Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, 1995), esp. pp. 130–58; M. Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 7; S. F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 16.

¹⁶ On this see Murray, *Reason*, and on appeal of the ascetic life to a nobility recoiling from war and wealth *ibid.*, pp. 319–404.

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for the absence of a clear line of cultural demarcation seems still more compelling at lower levels of the social hierarchy. The parish priest, escapes easy categorisation in any 'two cultures' model. On the face of it he belongs in the clerical box but how much meaning should be attached to that easy judgement is open to doubt. The aspirations of Gregorian reformers are clear enough. Their sacerdotalism demanded a celibate, non-hereditary, educated clergy more closely aligned with diocesan agendas. But priests were still, in the twelfth century, drawn largely from the peasant communities they served. They probably soaked up from the community many ideas which were local and 'unofficial' and mixed these into the formal teachings of the church. Few parish priests will serve as our witnesses in this study, and so the methodological implications of that claim are restricted. But it needs to be stressed that even archdeacons, though more learned and more closely tied to bishop and diocese than the parish clergy, were not, as we shall see, straightforwardly the champions of 'official' teaching in the localities. Their writings will loom large in what follows and, as we shall see, reveal more complex cultural formations, affinities and sympathies than one might initially expect.

We also need to address a further problem of 'two cultures' approaches to the exploration of religion. This concerns evidence. Much use has been made of *exempla* by Jean-Claude Schmitt and Aron Gurevich because they contend that in such texts churchmen appropriated elements of 'popular' or 'folkloric' culture, incorporated them into didactic stories, thus pressing them into the service of dominant clerical ideologies.¹⁷ Gurevich for example, has argued that 'folk' stories reworked by churchmen were turned into bearers of official clerical teachings as the two were combined in improving tales rich in cultural detail recognisable to the audience. The extension of this line of reasoning is that careful study might allow the historian to reconstruct from fragments in these normative texts the beliefs and values of the unlearned masses.

Yet there are problems here. First, the very act of privileging *exempla* risks distorting our view of the relationship between laity and clergy. It reinforces the assumption that religious culture was characterised by difference and friction. *Exempla*, setting out to correct abuses and improve morals, inevitably sharpened the distinction between the preacher (with his official agenda) and the audience (which needed to be corrected and chivvied towards orthodoxy and orthopraxis). As revealed in such texts, the preacher and his congregation can easily be imagined as the representatives of two very different cultures caught in a tense embrace.

¹⁷ For a case study of this approach see J. C. Schmitt, *The Holy Greyhound: Guinefort, Healer of Children since the Thirteenth Century*, trans. M. Thom (Cambridge, 1983).

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Secondly, the idea that popular or folkloric culture might easily be excavated from *exempla* seems open to question. Everything suggests that Gurevich's 'folkloric' culture would have been locally varied (we would need good reasons to think it otherwise) and yet *exempla* writers engaged in producing materials for *ad status* preaching to the ordinary laity seldom aimed their collections at specific communities or localities. While they might well have appropriated elements of 'folkloric' culture for use in their tales, it seems doubtful that these could bear quite the didactic burdens Gurevich envisages. As *exempla* tended to enjoy more than a local currency, the need for 'authenticity' in the representation of appropriated folk belief would have diminished and the possibilities for stylised and imaginative reworking would grow. The effect of all this is to make the business of recovering the 'authentic' belief of 'the folk' from *exempla* collections much more difficult.

Recovery of this 'popular' or 'folkloric culture' from another seemingly rich source, the penitential, is also attended by problems. These manuals aspired to comprehensiveness in the advice offered to confessors about the unchristian beliefs and practices they were to root out. And yet they mixed very general moral prohibitions against murder, robbery, adultery, sacrilege and fornication with injunctions against 'folk' beliefs and practices which appear to have been much more specific.¹⁸ The problem here lies in measuring the significance of these very particular references. They might be quite widespread in the texts, surfacing in a variety of manuscripts over a considerable geographical area, but this might not mean that such beliefs and practices were widespread too. The snippets of text might travel not because they were applicable in the regions where the penitentials were put to use but because they kept the company of a host of general moral injunctions which *were* socially relevant and valuable to the confessor. The innate conservatism of canon law is important here: the recopying and stitching together of existing canons might ensure that local details were swept up and widely circulated even if their relevance was lost.

Exempla and penitentials can thus conjure up powerful illusions. But there is also a further difficulty about using them. It has long been axiomatic that *exempla* and penitential handbooks allow us to see the beliefs of those they were designed to instruct only through a glass darkly. But these texts might also be treacherous if used to reconstruct the

¹⁸ On the large part played by sexual morality in penitential literature see P.J. Payer, *Sex and the Penitentials: the Development of a Sexual Code 550–1150* (London, 1984), esp. pp. 52–3; J. A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London, 1995), pp. 72–96.

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thought of churchmen who wrote them. Conventions of particular didactic genres and the weight of legal and theological tradition shaped these writings to an unusual degree, complicating the relationship between author and text. The key question here is what happens when clerical authors were freed from the close constraints which govern normative genres. An exploration of the narrative sources allows us to pose tentative answers. In them, we get a chance to observe clerical authors – and on rare but precious occasions clerical authors who also produced normative writings – operating in a different literary context, subject to different ‘rules’ of genre. This exercise will be a major theme of this book.

If ‘two cultures’ models of religious culture, and the evidence which they depend upon, seem problematic, might an alternative approach help? Recent work on the religious history of England, particularly the rich historiography of the fifteenth century, has taken less account of the ‘two cultures’ thesis and many scholars in this field have tended to assume a more culturally homogeneous ‘Christian Middle Ages’.¹⁹ Historians such as Eamon Duffy and John Bossy have argued for the existence of a single community of Christian believers bound together by shared belief, ritual and practice.²⁰ Duffy in particular has suggested that systematic clerical teaching, the sacramental system of the church and the danger of damnation for those who stood outside it were compelling reasons for the laity to adhere to orthodoxy and orthopraxis which, in their parochial expressions, they had in any case been heavily involved in shaping. The spiritual bindings of this community were explicitly Christian. Life was marked by sacramental rites of passage. Time was marbled by the church’s annual pattern of feasts and fasts. Where the faithful needed supernatural aid, they turned not to ‘pagan’ or ‘magical’ remedies but to practices evolved from the liturgy.²¹ Duffy invites us to imagine medieval religion

¹⁹ For this idea see J. Van Engen, ‘The Christian Middle Ages as an Historiographical Problem’, *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), pp. 519–52; and the response in J. C. Schmitt, ‘Religion, Folklore and Society in the Medieval West’, in L. K. Little and B. H. Rosenwein (eds.), *Debating the Middle Ages: issues and readings* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 376–87.

²⁰ Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, pp. 2–6; J. Bossy, *Christianity in the Medieval West 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1985). For a contrary argument about the teasing apart of beliefs of (increasingly) learned social elites and ordinary parishioners in the later middle ages, see C. Richmond, ‘Religion and the Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman’, in R. B. Dobson (ed.), *The Church, Politics and Patronage in the Fifteenth-Century* (Gloucester, 1984), pp. 193–208; C. Richmond, ‘The English Gentry and Religion c.1500’, in C. Harper-Bill (ed.), *Religious Belief and Ecclesiastical Careers in Late Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1991), pp. 121–50.

²¹ For the view Duffy is challenging see K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971), pp. 27–57.

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not as separate boxes containing distinctive cultures but as a spectrum along which varied co-existing pieties were arrayed.

We might be tempted to apply this approach to religious culture in the central middle ages. Indeed, research into the cult of saints in the earlier period suggests that a version of this model has much to commend it. Despite the localism of many individual cults, studies of miracle collections suggest the existence of substantial unities. Saints might have particular clienteles, drawing their pilgrims primarily from the peasants of local parishes or the monks of a community which housed the shrine, but the communion ultimately transcended such divisions in the universality of its appeal. The help of the saints was sought by ordinary priest and prelate, monk and layman, knight and peasant and by men and women from the four corners of medieval England.²² The 'very special dead' were at the centre of twelfth-century religion and possessed a widespread imaginative power. Repertoires of ritual employed to draw down aid also resembled each other from shrine to shrine. Similar patterns of vowed coins and candles, pernoctation near to the tomb, even 'measuring' diseased limbs to the saint with a thread which was turned into a trindle emerged across England. And yet, just as it is dangerous to rely too exclusively on the witness of penitentials and *exempla*, so it is also risky to trust exclusively the testimony of miracle collections. In doing so, we might simply substitute for the tensions of 'two cultures' harmonies of a 'Christian Middle Ages' perhaps more appropriate to a later period.

For the fact is that, in thinking about religious belief and practice, we must be mindful of the otherness of that 'other country' which was twelfth-century England. First, England in c.1100 had only relatively recently been on the receiving end of the last in a series of transfusions of pagan blood (courtesy of the second phase of Viking incursions). In the eleventh century pagan practices were still the subject of legislative campaigns and even in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries ecclesiastical criticisms of these lingered.²³ This must inevitably raise questions about the character of twelfth-century religious culture that are less pressing when thinking about the later middle ages. We need to consider how these references should be evaluated and whether there was scope for the 'pagan' to linger within the formal structures of Christianity or beneath the surface of official observances. Secondly, we must also think about the connected issue of pastoral provision. If the faithful were bound into a

²² J. Sumption, *Pilgrimage: an Image of Medieval Religion* (London, 1975), pp. 54–8, 133. See also for a similar argument about late antiquity Brown, *Saints*, pp. 13–22.

²³ For legislation against non-Christian religious practice in the wake of these incursions see F. Barlow, *The English Church, 1000–1066: a history of the later Anglo-Saxon Church* (London, 1963), pp. 259–60.