1 Introduction

Opening remarks

How did clerics build their careers in the western church in the Middle Ages? At what stage in their lives was the decision taken that they should enter the clergy, and who made this decision? Did they continue to maintain ties with their families, and if so, how? How were they trained for their roles in the Church? Attempting to answer these questions sheds light on central aspects of western European society: family networks, education, administration, pastoral care and ecclesiastical institutions. Unlike monks and nuns, however, whose career patterns and family background have attracted considerable attention,¹ the clergy of the period from 800 to 1200 have suffered neglect, but unjustly so, on several counts: they were numerous, and their lives and activities were woven into those of the laity of the societies in which they lived. Moreover, though the majority had significance only as part of a larger whole, a sizeable minority were doers and thinkers, many at the forefront of the whole range of cultural developments. No history of Europe in the central Middle Ages could overlook the contributions of – to take a few examples – Gerbert of Aurillac, Peter Abelard, Stephen Langton or Robert Grosseteste, all of them the products of a clerical formation and education.² At the highest level of the clergy, all bishops, most of whom had built up their ecclesiastical careers as secular clerics, had at least

¹ For some idea of the range of literature on monks and nuns, see NCMH, II, 995–1002; III, 759–62; IV (2), 817–22; Thomas F.X. Noble and Julia M.H. Smith, eds., The Cambridge History of Christianity, III: Early Medieval Christianities, c.600–c.1100 (Cambridge, 2008), 704–12.

Introduction

some political influence, and many had appreciable political power. Rulers expected bishops to assist them as political advisers, and employed numerous other clerics lower down the hierarchy to act for them as scribes, attendants, envoys, propagandists, chaplains, physicians and almsgivers. The educational training undergone by clergy is also a necessary subject of investigation for those studying the culture and society of medieval Europe, and, while the intellectual, scholarly and literary dimensions of the process have been worked on by scholars for centuries and are reasonably well understood, the more practical aspects of obtaining an education have attracted rather less attention, even though they too helped to shape the careers of young clerics. Although ordination was what principally distinguished clergy from laity, education was another distinguishing feature, since it was required for clergy but not for laity. Here, however, (unlike ordination) the difference was not absolute, since laity could be educated, and even, in some cases, learned. Beyond this, clergy were visibly different, marked out from the rest of society by tonsure and dress. These visual and cultural differences between clergy and laity helped to underline the importance of the Eucharist. Only bishops and priests, members of the senior ranks of the clergy, could celebrate this, though clerics in lower grades assisted them.


4 For debate on lay literacy, see e.g. Rosamond McKitterick, ed., The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe (Cambridge, 1990); Rosamond McKitterick, The Carolingians and the Written World (Cambridge, 1989), 211–70; Patrick Wormald and Janet Nelson, eds., Lay Intellectuals in the Carolingian World (Cambridge, 2007).

5 See literature cited in Chapter 6 below.

6 On royal household clergy, see Chapter 8 below.

7 On tonsure and dress see Chapter 2 below.
Clerics are often confused with monks (an understandable confusion, given that monks can be ordained within the clerical grades), but the two are not synonymous. Clergy are those members of the Church who perform sacraments, or assist in their performance; their origins lie in the very earliest beginnings of the Church. From early on, clerical office was, to all intents and purposes, restricted to men; in the western church, although the grade of deaconess survived in a shadowy form and rites for it were copied into pontificals, it was in practice restricted to abbesses and did not allow them access to the altar. Monks make vows of obedience, stability and conversion, live under a Rule, renounce personal property and are supposed to withdraw from the world, but clergy can own property, do not necessarily have to live under a rule, and can engage with the world. The adjective ‘secular’, or ‘worldly’, began to be applied to the bulk of the clergy in the twelfth century, and at first it was used as a pejorative term to mark them off from those clerics who were trying to live a more monastic existence, following a rule, and who thus were called ‘regular clergy’, from the


10 Deaconesses were rare in the western church and the office appears to have survived in the west only within female monastic communities, and without any sacramental role: see Gisela Muschiol, Famula Dei: Zur Liturgie in merowingischen Frauenklöstern (Münster, 1994), 293–300; indeed, several church councils in fifth- and sixth-century Gaul forbade bishops to ordain deaconesses (ibid., 296–7); women were not supposed to place items on the altar or touch the altar cloth (ibid., 203–7). Deaconesses were more common in the eastern church, but there was ambivalence among eastern ecclesiastical authorities as to their precise status; see Valerie A. Karras, ‘Female deacons in the Byzantine church’, Church History, 73 (2004), 272–316; see also J.G. Davies, ‘Deacons, deaconesses and the minor orders in the patristic period’, JEH, 14 (1963), 1–15. The recent attempt by Gary Macy (The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination (New York, 2008)) to prove that women were ordained as clergy in the western church down to the era of the Gregorian reform builds too ambitious a case on sparse and ambiguous evidence.

Latin word *regula*, meaning rule, though the ‘worldly’ jibe lost some of its edge after it had become widely accepted.13

Clergy faced criticism, often savage, from monks, who were irked by what they saw as clerical laxity (as opposed to monastic asceticism) and clerical disobedience (as opposed to monastic discipline). The harshest outbursts of criticism occurred at times when monasticism was being redefined, notably in the mid-tenth century and over the period from the end of the eleventh century to the early twelfth, but in general, throughout the entire period of existence of the Church, monastic authors have proclaimed their superior spiritual qualities vis-à-vis those of the clergy.14

The reason for this is easy to grasp: monks were members of communities with a strong sense of identity, to join which they had had to sacrifice individual freedom. Self-justification helped them to maintain morale, and an effective way of doing this was to attack possible rivals.

12 Alain Boureau, ‘Hypothèses sur l’émergence lexicale et théorique de la catégorie de séculier au XIIe siècle’, in *Le clerc séculier au Moyen Âge*, ed. Francis Rapp, Publications de la Sorbonne, Série histoire ancienne et médiévale, 27 (Paris, 1993), 35–43. Gerhoch of Reichersberg’s *Epistola cuiusdam presbyteri missa ad Innocentium papam quid dictum secularis et regulares*, ed. Ernst Sackur, in *Libelli de Lite*, III, ed. Ernst Dünmiller, MGH (Hanover, 1897), 202–39, is a dialogue between a secular and a regular canon defending the latter’s position. For an example of the continuing tradition of criticism of seculars, see *The Historia Occidentalis of Jacques de Vitry: A Critical Edition*, ed. John Frederick Hinnebusch, O.P. (Fribourg, 1972), 152: ‘Sicut enim homo pictus non est homo, et denarius falsus denarius non est, ita qui huiusmodi sunt canonici seculares non sunt canonici’. The term ‘secular cleric’ does occur before the high Middle Ages, in a seventh-century exchange of poems between Bishop Frodebert of Tours and Bishop Importunus of Paris: *Formulae Merovingici et Karolini Aevi*, ed. Karl Zeumer, MGH Leges (Hanover, 1886), 220–6, 222, but here the distinction might be between a cleric brought up at court and a cleric brought up in an episcopal household: I am grateful to Danuta Shanzer for informing me about this passage and for discussing it with me.


14 For a few examples of monastic authors critical of clerks, cf Æthelwold (*CS*, I, i, 125–6, 136, 150); Bernard of Clairvaux, *Ep. 2*, in *Opera di San Bernardo*, ed. Ferruccio Gastaldelli, 5 vols. in 7 parts to date (Rome, 1984–), VI, part 1, 26–45, addressed to Fulk, a regular canon who had been persuaded by his uncle, a dean, to become a (secular) canon at the Cathedral of Langres. On Fulk (of Agremont, later archdeacon of Langres), see *Cartulaire de Langres*, nos 18–19, 38, 299; for an English translation of Bernard’s letter, see *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, tr. Bruno Scott James (London, 1953), 10–18, no 2; Bernard, *De conversione ad clericos*, PL 182: 833–56; for a twelfth-century debate between Master Theobald of Étampes and an anonymous monk in which the monk is critical of clergy, see Raymonde Foreville and Dom Jean Leclercq, ‘Un débat sur le sacerdoce des moines au XIIe siècle’, in *Analecta Monastica*, 4 (*Studia Anselmiana*, 41) (Rome, 1957), 8–118.
Clerics, more likely even when living in communities to have some individual existence of their own, produced a much smaller quantity of apologetic literature than monks, and these texts tended to explain the various features of the liturgy, a branch of writing to which monks themselves also made a sizeable contribution.\footnote{On the genre of De ecclesiasticis officiis, see Chapter 2 below, at nn. 58–64. By the twelfth century, much of this was being written by monks or by regular canons. Monastic writers had also made a contribution to commentary on the clerical life earlier on, notably Hrabanus Maurus (d. 856) with his De Institutione Clericorum (Hrabanus Maurus, \textit{De institutione clericorum libri tres}, ed. Detlev Zimpel (Frankfurt am Main, 1996)).} The twelfth century produced considerable debate literature as monks and regular canons tried to define their own positions vis-à-vis each other and the rest of the clergy (the ‘secular’ clergy).\footnote{On the courtier–cleric Walter Map (d. 1209/10) wrote a counterblast against monkdom (\textit{monachia}) and included this in his \textit{De Nugis Curialium}. It should be noted, however, that a surprisingly large number of monastic leaders, especially ones active in foundations and refoundations, had enjoyed a clerical formation, opting to become monks only in adulthood; evidently a clerical formation was better at encouraging initiative and qualities of leadership than a monastic one.} Few clerics attacked monks in a sustained way, though the courtier–cleric Walter Map (d. 1209/10) wrote a counterblast against monkdom (\textit{monachia}) and included this in his \textit{De Nugis Curialium}.

The opening date chosen for this book, the turn of the eighth and ninth centuries, makes it possible to examine how the Carolingians shaped ecclesiastical institutions in western Europe for the rest of the Middle Ages. As far as a history of the clergy is concerned, the tenth century and much of the eleventh century can, indeed, be viewed as a continuation of...
the Carolingian era, the time when we can observe the full implementa-
tion of Carolingian innovations over the long term. However, sources for
the clergy began to diversify from the tenth century on. Whereas for the
pre-900 period the fullest sources tend to be prescriptive, for example
the diocesan statutes of Hincmar (archbishop of Rheims 845–882) and his
episcopal colleagues, after about 900 the range of charter material,
especially charters issued by people other than rulers, begins to increase,
almost imperceptibly in the tenth century but more noticeably in the
eleventh and massively in the twelfth. The steep rise in documentation
coincides roughly with the period when the process known as the ‘Greg-
orian Reform’ slowly got put into effect within the ecclesiastical insti-
tutions. The Gregorian Reform was the eleventh-century movement
which demanded clerical celibacy and an end to the sale of ecclesiastical
office, and in a wider sense (but this was an aim which was much less
capable of achievement) the separation of the sacred from the secular.
One of the principal results of this, though it was not one intended or
desired by the leaders of the movement, was the tightening up of legal
structures in the Church, which in turn necessitated a great increase in
documentation and in education, especially in law. Although the

19 Rudolf Schieffer, *Die Entstehung von Domkapiteln in Deutschland*, Bonner historische
Forschungen, 43 (Bonn, 1976), passim, but esp. 254–5, on how and when the Rule of
Aachen came to be applied in East Frankish cathedral communities: in the ninth century
in the valleys of the Rhine, Meuse and Moselle but not until the turn of the tenth and
eleventh centuries further east.

20 MGH *Capit. ep.*; Alain Dierkens, ’La christianisation des campagnes de l’Empire de
Louis le Pieux: L’exemple du diocèse de Liège sous l’épiscopat de Waljual (c.809–
c.831)’, in Charlemagne’s Heir: New Perspectives on the Reign of Louis the Pious (814–840),
ed. Peter Godman and Roger Collins (Oxford, 1990), 309–29; Wilfried Hartmann,
*Kirche und Kirchenrecht um 900*, Schriftenreihe MGH, 58 (Hanover, 2008), 78–83; for
application of Carolingian episcopal statutes as a group to the study of the clergy see
Carine van Rhijn, *Shepherds of the Lord: Priests and Episcopal Statutes in the Carolingian
Period*, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, 6 (Turnhout, 2007).

21 On the rise in charter output see e.g. M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 2nd

22 I.S. Robinson, ’Reform and the Church, 1073–1122’, in NCMMH, IV, part 1, 268–334; 
Kathleen G. Cushing, *Reform and the Popacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and
Social Change* (Manchester, 2005); on debate over whether ‘reform’ is a suitable term,
see Julia Barrow, ’The ideas and application of reform’, in *Cambridge History of
Christianity*, III, 345–62.

23 Paul Fournier, ’Un tournant de l’histoire du droit: 1060–1140’, in Paul Fournier,
Stephan Kuttner, ’The revival of jurisprudence’, in *Renaissance and Renewal in the
Twelfth Century*, ed. R.L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge, MA, 1982), 299–
323; Wilfried Hartmann and Kenneth Pennington, *The History of Medieval Canon Law in
the Classical Period, 1140–1234: From Gratian to the Decretals of Pope Gregory IX
(Washington, DC, 2008); Charles Duggan, *Twelfth-Century Decretal Collections and
Their Importance in English History* (London, 1963).
principles of the Gregorian ‘Reform’ movement were spelled out in the late eleventh century, it was a long time before they were generally and fully accepted. Ending hereditary succession among the clergy was a slow process.24 However, by the opening years of the thirteenth century, many of the changes demanded by Gregory VII had been put into practice, and the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 show how, over a huge range of issues and with great attention to detail, the papacy was directing the activities of the Church.25 Many of the decrees of the Fourth Lateran concerned the clergy, and encouraged the intensive production of diocesan statutes intended further to regulate the behaviour of clergy, in the following decades.26 The early thirteenth century is a suitable point to close this study, since it marks the end of a period of development in ecclesiastical administration.

In geographical terms, the areas studied here are principally France north of (roughly) the Massif Central, the kingdom of Germany, and England, with some attention to Scotland and Wales. The documentation available for southern Europe, particularly Italy, is vast, and the ratio of unpublished to published charters is much higher there than in more northerly areas of Europe. The time is not yet ripe for an overview of Italian clergy in the central Middle Ages, highly desirable though it would be.27 Apart from the volume of material, there are good reasons for splitting up the clergy of northern and southern Europe. Communities of cathedral clergy quite often became bodies of Augustinian, or regular, canons in southern France, Italy and Spain in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, but rarely did so in northern Europe.28 They thus

24 See Chapter 4 below.
27 But cf Emanuele Curzel, ‘Le quinte e il palcoscenico. Appunti storiografici sui capitoli delle cattedrali italiani’, in Canonici delle cattedrali nel medioevo, Quaderni di storia religiosa (Verona, 2003), 39–67; Emanuele Curzel, I canonici e il capitolo della cattedrale di Trento dal XII al XV secolo (Bologna, 2001). Southern Tirol, unsurprisingly, had many similarities with cathedrals in Austria and in southern Germany; see also Leo Santifaller, Das Brixner Domkapitel in seiner persönlichen Zusammensetzung im Mittelalter, Schelern-Schriften, 7 (Innsbruck, 1924).
28 For the few northern European exceptions (the Augustinian Salzburg, Gurk, Sées, Carlisle, St Andrews and Christ Church Dublin, and the Premonstratensian Ratzeburg, Havelberg, Brandenburg and Whithorn, see Chapter 3 at nn. 196–7, 228, 230–1, 234). In general on Augustinian cathedral chapters, see Dereine, ‘Chanoines’,
adopted a more monastic pattern of life and their inmates had much less scope to pursue individual careers. None of this is to argue, of course, that the two areas did not influence each other. Developments in Italy had a profound effect on northern Europe, and significant numbers of Italian clerics travelled there to find employment. Examples include Stephen of Novara in the tenth century, Lanfranc in the eleventh, Master Vacarius in the mid-twelfth century and many members of the chapter of York Minster in the late twelfth and the thirteenth centuries. Nor is it to argue that northern Europe itself formed a socially and culturally united whole; this was far from being the case, as will emerge in what follows.

The structure of this book

The aim of this book is to examine the entry of boys and men into the clergy and the various stages of the careers they formed once there. Fundamental to these questions are, first, an understanding of the clerical office itself and, second, an understanding of the ways in which clerical life was influenced by monasticism. Accordingly, Chapter 2 deals with the clerical office and its relation to the clerical life cycle, and Chapter 3 with the creation of rules for clerical life and with the wider question of monastic attitudes to the clergy. These two chapters aim to explain the ground rules under which clerical careers operated. The remaining chapters deal with the relationship between clergy and their families, the fostering of young clerics, education, the work of clerics in courts and households, clergy in cathedrals and collegiate churches, and parish clergy.
The clerical office (Chapter 2) had been long established by the outset of our period, but some adjustments in how it operated and how it was bestowed are visible in the period from 800 to 1200, and these are worth exploring for the light they shed on clerical life cycles. Entry into the clergy was effected by ordination, which was not a one-off event but a series of rites conducted at intervals usually spread over about two decades, though canon law allowed that this could be greatly speeded up for adult recruits to the clergy. But although canon law allowed this and although entry of both children and adults is visible in late antiquity and the very early Middle Ages, by the outset of our period adult entry into the clergy had more or less disappeared. The reasons for this, and even more the consequences of this, are worth exploring for the light they shed on western medieval society between the eighth and the twelfth centuries, in particular the influence that parents could exercise over their children’s futures and also the consequences of child entry into the clergy for the pattern of education. Another shift is visible in the later eleventh century when grades of ordination cease to be mentioned as much as they had been in hagiographies, biographies and charters. Here too is a pointer to educational developments. Similarly, tonsure, the visible sign of being a cleric, ceases to be mentioned much in narrative sources from the later eleventh century onwards, though references to it in administrative sources continue. Also of significance when reflecting on grades of ordination is the question of which grade clerics found it convenient to remain in without attempting further progression (it was not necessary to progress through all the grades, and many clerics stopped before reaching the priesthood). Discussion of the opportunities open to priests, deacons, subdeacons and so on over the 800–1200 time span helps to explain some features of the internal organisation of churches and also of clerical careers.

Looking over the shoulders of the secular clergy were their regular colleagues, monks, and, from the mid-eleventh century, regular canons as well, and these are the subject of Chapter 3. Since it was normal for monks in the western church to be ordained from the ninth century onwards (indeed, there are several examples of monks being ordained before this point), there was much overlap between monks and clergy in terms of sacramental and liturgical provision; monks, who were more vigorous in promoting their own cause, found it useful to upbraid clergy for what they saw as failings, and at intervals throughout our period clergy came under pressure to be more like monks. This led to the creation of a variety of rules for clerics living in communities, some composed in the eighth and ninth centuries, and with further work in the eleventh century, when the fourth-century Rule of St Augustine was
revised and considerably expanded. Monastic pressure on clergy was also manifested in demands from the tenth century onwards for individual churches run by secular clergy to be taken over by monks, a process which (when successful) limited opportunities for secular clerics. Examining this development from the point of view of the latter rather than (as has been more normal hitherto) their adversaries helps to provide some fresh insights into the powers of patrons and pressure groups over the period from c.900 onwards. The chronology of the monastic pressure points on the clergy is also worth attention.

Having set out the clerical framework and the responses it excited among the regulars the book proceeds to examine three facets of the early careers of clergy. Chapter 4 examines the relationship of clerics with their immediate families. Unsurprisingly, parents were the relatives with the most influence over young clerics, including the decision about entry into the office. This was true whether the fathers of future clerics were themselves clerics or were laymen. This question needs careful reflection. First of all, is it safe to assume (as some recent general studies of the eleventh and twelfth centuries have done) that clerical marriage and hereditary succession were widely accepted down to the later eleventh century and beyond and that they did not meet with serious opposition until the Gregorian Reform? [30] After all, moves to prevent clergy from marrying after ordination in the higher grades had been routine in canon law since the early fifth century. Examination of the family networking of high-ranking clerics over the period from 800 to 1100 shows a rather different picture in Francia and most of its successor states, apart from some peripheral areas, notably Brittany. By and large, the secular aristocracy seems to have embraced clerical celibacy with enthusiasm as far as their younger sons were concerned, as a useful strategy for limiting the numbers of heirs in subsequent generations, and parents sought reinforcement from brothers already in ecclesiastical careers to guide the careers of their young nephews. The role of the clerical uncle was a significant one during the Middle Ages. Father–son clerical dynasties certainly existed – chiefly in the British Isles, Brittany and eleventh- and twelfth-century Normandy – but outside these areas not at a high enough social level to be influential. Clergy were influenced not only by their parents and their uncles but also by their siblings, and the relationships between clerics and their brothers and sisters help to shed light on the