INTRODUCTION

Pastoral Care in the Thirteenth Century

On Friday, 13 May 1250, the aged, saintly and scholarly bishop Robert Grosseteste was admitted to an audience with the pope and cardinals. In his address, he reminded the curia that Christ had suffered death out of a zeal for the salvation of souls and had sent out the Apostles to found his church in order that this salvation might be spread to all the world. Grosseteste expressed concern, however, that the hierarchy of the church, from the local parish all the way up to the men he was addressing, was losing sight of its high purpose. The cause, fountainhead and origin of this disorder, he boldly proclaimed, was the papal curia, for in committing errors themselves its members provided justification for similar misbehaviour by kings and nobles. The symptom of this disease, which he saw in his own diocese of Lincoln, was the appointment of men as rectors and vicars of parish churches for reasons that had more to do with bureaucratic convenience, political expediency and family connexions than with the real business of saving souls from damnation. Such appointees often neglected their pastoral duties, entrusting them to 'hirelings' (*mercenarii*) – the term Jesus used for incompetent spiritual guides in his Good Shepherd discourse in the Gospel of John. Grosseteste, who believed that he would be personally accountable to God for each soul in his diocese, feared for them, for himself and for the welfare of the whole church.[1]

The concerns that Grosseteste enumerated that day were characteristic of his personal convictions and local circumstances. But they were also characteristic of the Western church as a whole throughout the century at whose midpoint he stood and indeed are central preoccupations of this book. In Grosseteste's theology, the Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy* was married to the ecclesiastical hierarchy as the conduit of authority and grace.[2] The ecclesiastical hierarchy's power was not merely theoretical, however. The papacy had reached new heights of power in Grosseteste's

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[1] Gieben, 'Grosseteste at the Curia'; Goering, 'Grosseteste at the Curia'; John 10:12–13 (Vulgate).
[2] Hoskin, *Grosseteste*, li; J. McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford, 1982); Wenzel, 'Deus est'.

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day. The practice of appealing ecclesiastical cases to Rome continued its
centuries-long growth.[3] In 1213, King John had formally submitted to
papal overlordship, rendering the throne of England a papal fief.[4] Within
England, royal government was increasingly bureaucratic and documen-
tary in nature and many of the kings' administrators were also clergy.
Bishops, aristocrats and knights were similarly served by clerks and cler-
ics who rapidly expanded the volume of business transacted in writing.[5]
These were the writers of many of the documents upon which this book
is built.

In theory, these features led to a church and a society that were more
effectively administered, which would seem all to the good. Grosseteste
reminded the curia, however, that it came at a two-fold cost. First, peo-
ple within the hierarchy disagreed over how much the superior ought to
meddle in the dealings of his inferiors rather than delegating responsibil-
ity. Grosseteste was a believer in delegation, up to a point. He personally
made official visitations of the parishes in his diocese, implying that he
did not entirely trust his inferiors, the archdeacons, rural deans and parish
priests, to act without his direct supervision.[6] And yet another of his con-
cerns at the curia in 1250 was overreach (as he saw it) by his immediate
superior, the archbishop of Canterbury, in the latter's attempts to enter
Grosseteste's diocese and investigate local conditions himself.[7] The peren-
nial anxiety of medieval churchmen to safeguard their exemptions and
privileges made any attempt at closer supervision a potential minefield.[8]
The introduction of the new orders of friars early in the century added
another dimension to such disputes, since they were sometimes empow-
ered by the bishop or even the pope to enter the parish church in order
to preach and hear confessions without regard for the wishes of the parish
priest, violating the delegation of pastoral authority to the local secular
clergy.[9]

The second cost was that all of these administrators somehow had to
be paid, but neither civil nor ecclesiastical structures existed to allow
for fair and regular taxation at a level that could provide their salaries.
Instead, a pope, monastery, bishop, king or noble appointed a cleric who
served him to a rectory and allowed him to take a share of the parish's
income without serving it in person. Since it was becoming progressively

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[3] Cheney, *Becket to Langton*, 42–86; Sayers, *Papal Judges Delegate*.   [4] *C&S II*, 13–19.
[5] Clanchy, *Memory to Written Record*; R. Britnell, ed., *Pragmatic Literacy, East and West, 1200–1330*
(Woodbridge, 1997).
[6] Hoskin, *Grosseteste*, li–lv.
[7] Gieben, 'Grosseteste at the Curia'; Goering, 'Grosseteste at the Curia'.
[8] This will be discussed more fully in Part III, particularly Chapter 8.
[9] We return to this problem repeatedly in the following pages. See in particular Chapters 3, 5 and 7.

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more difficult in the thirteenth century to endow monasteries with additional land, monasteries hoping to increase their income looked instead to parochial tithes through the process of appropriation, in which the bishop to appointed the monastery itself as the rector. Such appropriations multiplied in the thirteenth century. Whether the rector was an absentee cleric or a monastery, a hired vicar or chaplain did the day-to-day work of pastoral care.[10] These were the hirelings, the *mercenarii*, of whom Grosseteste complained. Such a system was arguably the best available means of redistributing ecclesiastical wealth in a decentralised world, but 'the principles of the Gregorian Reform were difficult to reconcile with the demands of the administrative church.'[11] The parish, as Grosseteste reminded the curia, also had the material obligation to help the local poor, but the vicar's stipend was sometimes barely enough for him to live on, leaving him unable to discharge this important part of his pastoral responsibility. Indeed, one of the specific requests that Grosseteste sought from the pope in 1250 was papal authorisation to force monasteries and absentee rectors in his diocese to pay vicars a higher wage.

CURA ANIMARUM, CURA PASTORALIS

When medieval clerics referred to 'care of souls' or 'pastoral care' (terms they employed interchangeably, often simply shortened to *cura*), the literal meaning of *pastor* as 'shepherd' would have been as obvious to them as it had been to the biblical authors who so often employed the imagery of shepherding.[12] Medieval clerical authors were thoroughly familiar with these passages and cited them frequently. Each bishop carried a crozier, the shepherd's crook symbolic of his office; a silver band around Grosseteste's read, 'may you learn the rule of the prelate through the shape of this staff.'[13] Given the importance of the wool trade to the English economy, the non-symbolic, fully functional staff of shepherds, and the uses of guarding and guiding to which it was routinely put, were on display for all to see.[14]

  In asserting that the care of souls was the church's chief business, Grosseteste was hardly alone. Later in the century, John Pecham,

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[10] See Chapter 2.

[11] Burger, *Diocesan Governance*, 30; Cheney, *Becket to Langton*, 149.

[12] Select examples from *C&S II*: cura animarum: 374, 400, 408, 564, 589, 596, 702, 720; cura pastoralis: 470–71, 517, 552, 783, 808, 1016; cura: 170, 374, 519, 562, 706, 712; cura ecclesie, parochiarum or beneficiorum: 96, 298, 611, 657, 708; officium pastoralis: 499, 536, 564, 609, 615, 672, 743, 756, 808; parishioners described as sheep or flock, 176, 406, 439, 589, 626, 670, 770, 783, 842, 1016.

[13] *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of London*, 2nd ser. Vol. 12 (1887–89), 105.

[14] Hallam, *Agrarian History*, 755–56, 1083–84 *s.v.* 'sheep'.

archbishop of Canterbury, would insist that 'nothing in this world is more precious than the care of souls, since for this alone Christ offered his very self on the cross.'[15] Pastoral care usually dealt with individuals and local congregations, but it was also a part of the great project of the medieval Latin Church, the Christianisation of European life and thought. Pope Innocent III's summons to the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 expressed his aspirations for that meeting, embracing the reform not only of ecclesiastical structures but of all of Catholic society.[16] In doing so, Innocent was participating in a long process that took many forms over many centuries, but he was also giving papal support to the specific theological environment in which he himself had studied, that of Paris in the later twelfth century, where keen theological minds focused on questions of immediate practical relevance to priests and parishioners.[17] If we want to see the point where this movement gained the traction it needed to transform society, a pope's thundering letter to a king might be of lesser consequence than thousands of local priests in the kingdom outlining the appointed Gospel reading to their parishioners during mass on a typical Sunday morning.[18] We should look, in other words, at pastoral care, which was intended not only to inculcate ecclesiastical ideals in the laity but also to serve them in this world and to save them in the next.

During the thirteenth century, we can see an emerging consensus on the definition of 'pastoral care'. In 1287, Pecham wrote to the parish clergy of his diocese that the *cura animarum* operated through the preaching of sermons and the celebration of the sacraments, most especially the hearing of confessions.[19] Pecham's formulation was not original and, even when other authors gave different lists of the duties of the care of souls, they fitted comfortably into this matrix. Grosseteste's friend and contemporary, the Oxford Franciscan Adam Marsh, described the pastor's three-fold office as preaching, setting a good example and administering the sacraments. The second of these was frequently discussed as preaching by example and confession would be one of the sacraments which he described as 'bestow[ing] the grace of reconciliation'.[20] Grosseteste himself wrote that 'the duty of a priest is to confect the body of Christ worthily [in the mass], to enjoin penances, and (so far as he can) to recall his flock from errors; to baptise little ones, and to anoint the sick with

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[15] *C&S* II, 1078.
[16] C. R. Cheney and W. H. Semple, eds, *Selected Letters of Pope Innocent III* (London, 1953), 144–47.
[17] Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants*; and see further below in Chapter 1.
[18] Mayr-Harting calls parish priests the 'hinge-men' as the most important mediators between the local village community, on the one hand, and the wider world, including their social superiors, on the other: *Religion*, 108–10.
[19] *C&S* II, 1078–80 (=*Epist. Pecham* III, 948–49).   [20] *LAM*, 194–95; cf. 309.

Cura Animarum, Cura Pastoralis

extreme unction.[21] The three elements also appear in the first chapter of his statutes for parish clergy.[22] Grosseteste had given a similar definition in his address of 1250 to the papal curia:

The work of pastoral care consists not only in administration of the sacraments and saying the canonical hours and celebration of masses … but also in the true teaching of the truth of life, in terrifying condemnation of vices, in tough and masterful cutting-off and inflexible castigation of vices when that is needed.[23]

Correction and castigation indicate confession and penance, though they also belonged to preaching. Each of Grosseteste's descriptions, even if differently ordered, fits neatly within Pecham's three-fold division.

The author of an anonymous sermon on the text *Ego sum pastor bonus* (I am the Good Shepherd: John 10:11), recorded in a thirteenth-century English Franciscan sermon collection, included as many biblical references to shepherds, sheep, wolves, pasturing and flocks as possible. The first and longest part of the sermon dwells on the pastor's responsibility to feed his sheep by word and example, not neglecting the literal feeding and clothing of the poor – for charity was both a general Christian duty and a responsibility specifically incumbent upon beneficed parish priests, as Grosseteste's address to the curia had pointed out. Secondly, the author wrote, it was necessary to feed the flock sacramentally, in the reception of Christ's body and blood.[24] Confession as such did not fit the schema of this sermon but that theme is taken up in other sermons in the same manuscript, particularly the sermon for the third Sunday in Epiphanytide, in the season of confession just before Lent, on the text *Ostende te sacerdoti* (Go, show yourself to a priest: Matthew 8:4 and Luke 5:14), a sermon concerned entirely with confession.[25]

Another description comes from the *Communiloquium*, a preacher's handbook by the Franciscan scholar John of Wales, probably dating to the 1270s. This too fits neatly with Pecham's description:

Their [priestly] office is higher than the angels, and higher even than the Mother of God: to confect the sacrament of the body of Christ; to speak prayers; to bless the gifts of God … Their office is, furthermore, to dispense the sacraments, such as to baptise, and to catechise; to preach the word in the church; to call sinners to penitence; and to bring them before God, through the petitions of prayers, for the remission that is to be secured.[26]

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[21] Wenzel, 'Deus est', 254.   [22] *C&S* II, 268.   [23] Gieben, 'Grosseteste at the Curia', 358–59.
[24] For date and provenance of this manuscript, see pp. 108–9 below. Cambridge, St John's College, MS. 255/S19, pp. 134–39.
[25] Ibid., pp. 85–93.
[26] John of Wales, *Communiloquium* 4.2.8 (British Library, Harley MS. 632); Swanson, *John of Wales*, 144.

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In the 1320s, the parish priest William of Pagula used Pecham's three-fold division of the parts of pastoral care as the structure of his *Oculus Sacerdotis*.[27] Clearly by now we are dealing with a traditional commonplace.

Pecham, Marsh and (probably) the anonymous sermon author were friars concerned especially with preaching, which they placed first in their lists. In addition to formal preaching, catechesis by clergy occurred both formally and informally. Moreover, in the centuries since the first missionaries, the basic tenets of Christianity had become common knowledge passed on independently of clerical teaching. Preachers still sought to expand upon their listeners' knowledge, but as is so often the case, the preacher also reminded the congregation of what they already knew and exhorted them to act accordingly.[28]

The celebration of the sacraments referred to baptism, confirmation (performed only by bishops), the mass, the blessing of matrimony and extreme unction. The sacrament of ordination had only secondary effects for the laity in supplying them with clergy. Sacramental and liturgical pastoral care has been described as a conversation, lifting up the people's praises and petitions to God, and mediating God's blessings back to the people.[29] Liturgical and extra-liturgical devotions of many kinds were also encouraged by the clergy: devotions to particular saints, most notably Mary and the patron saint of the parish, and a variety of devotions to Jesus, especially in the form of the consecrated host at the Eucharist, continued to develop during the thirteenth century and beyond. The laity played a major role in the spread of devotions, leading by demand; but the official structures of the Church could also shape that demand, as by issuing indulgences to visitors to a shrine or by suppressing unapproved nascent cults.[30]

The practice of confession, known as the sacrament of penance, was the primary setting for individual examination, instruction and exhortation, for correction of life and training in moral thought. Our sources for confession are almost exclusively prescriptive ones in which the priest is told how to elicit and respond to confessions, though there are a few texts from thirteenth-century England that instruct the penitent on how to confess. Confession was a well-known expectation and a well-established institution in England by 1200, even if that qualitative judgement cannot be

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[27] Boyle, 'William of Pagula'.

[28] J. Blair and R. Sharpe, eds, *Pastoral Care before the Parish* (Leicester, 1992); F. Tinti, ed., *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2005); d'Avray, *Preaching*. See also Chapter 5 below.

[29] C. Burgess, 'Intersecting Spheres: The Agents of Intercession'. Paper delivered at the Harlaxton Symposium, Grantham, Lincolnshire, July 2002.

[30] Swanson, *Religion and Devotion*, 9ff. See also Chapter 6 below.

made quantitative. While confession was less obviously communal than hearing sermons or attending mass, many of the sins discussed in confessors' manuals were social in nature. The fact that Pecham singled out this sacrament ('and especially') shows how important he considered it to be.[31]

THE PROBLEM OF 'REFORM'

It has become customary to refer to the developments in thirteenth-century pastoral care as 'reform', or to single out bishops such as Grosseteste as 'reformers'.[32] It is, of course, perfectly legitimate for historians with the benefit of hindsight to describe an era or movement as having a reforming character even if people of that age did not see it as such, just as it may be fair to speak of the twelfth century as a period of renaissance, reform or even reformation even if twelfth-century intellectuals did not use those words.[33] Thirteenth-century churchmen did use the word 'reform', but we should think carefully about what they meant. Richard Poore, bishop of Salisbury, used it in the statutes he issued for his diocesan clergy around 1217, ordering his archdeacons to enforce them 'for the correction of excesses and the reform of morals'.[34] In 1237, the papal legate Otto, in a council in London, discussed the 'correction and reform' of the English Benedictines and stated that he expected bishops to set a good example of liturgical celebration in order to 'reform' their clergy.[35] A later legate, Ottobuono, summoned bishops to a council in 1268 to confer regarding the 'reform' of many matters.[36] In the preface to his 1247 diocesan statutes, Giles of Bridport, bishop of Salisbury, described canon law as directing how the church of God ought to be 'reformed' in faith and morals, noting that these statutes were part of this body of law in giving direction for 'reform and reparation', and requiring that previous diocesan and provincial statutes be rehearsed for 'correction and reform'.[37] As Giles' terms suggest, many uses of 'reform' with regard to the church at this time do not carry our modern sense of 'progress': phrases such as *ordinatum est quod status ecclesie Anglicane in statum debitum reformetur* (it was ordered that the state of the English church should be reformed to its appropriate state)[38] and *pax reformaretur* (peace was to be

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[31] Murray, 'Counselling'; Cornett, 'Form of Confession'. See also Chapter 7 below.
[32] M. C. Miller, 'Reform, Clerical Culture, and Politics', in Arnold, *Medieval Christianity*, 305–22.
[33] G. Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996).
[34] *C&S* II, 96; cf. 655.   [35] *C&S* II, 254, 255.   [36] *C&S* II, 744.
[37] *C&S* II, 552. Cf. the prologues to the statutes of Wells (1258) on p. 589 and of Winchester (1262 × 1265) on p. 702.
[38] *C&S* II, 694–95; for similar uses, cf. 532, 569n, 572, 585, 696, 726.

re-formed)[39] imply not the creation of something new, but the restoration of a former state (or, perhaps, restoring matters to the way they always should have been, even if they never quite were).

'Reform' and its cognates will appear below, used with care but without qualms. The primary contention of this book is that there was indeed a reform in the care of souls in thirteenth-century England, though it was confined neither to that century nor to England; and it is the primary goal of this book to illustrate the various forms that reform took. At the same time, however, as the preceding remarks suggest, we will miss our mark if we assume that thirteenth-century churchmen, particularly the ones we think of as reformers, shared a Whiggish notion of progress. They looked not forward but back, building their arguments – whether for clerical celibacy or for lay piety or for ecclesiastical liberty from the secular arm – not on aspiration but on real or imagined precedent. There does not seem, however, to be a single identifiable golden age to which they appealed: this may have been entirely *ad hoc*, thinking of a different time prior to each perceived disorder.

And there was no doubt that it was a time of disorder. English church-men were divided by the baronial struggles against John and Henry III.[40] When Adam Marsh heard tales of great fireballs flying out of a whirlpool in the sea near Guernsey, followed by the mysterious appearance and dis-appearance of armed men fighting a ghostly battle, it was only natural that he should regard it as a 'portent' to be interpreted in the context of apoc-alyptic passages from the Gospel of Matthew.[41] Roger Bacon was con-vinced that he saw signs of the impending Apocalypse, as did some of his fellow Franciscans who had fallen under the influence of the prophecies of Abbot Joachim of Fiore.[42] William of Saint-Amour also argued that church reform was necessary to stave off the end times, though in his view, the friars were part of the problem, not part of the solution.[43] Grosseteste's address to the papal curia cited the schism with the Greeks, and heresy and sin among Catholics, as symptoms of the evils within the church.[44] None of these men was unusual in making associations between present disasters and the coming of Antichrist. If Muslims occupied the Holy Land, Greek Christians remained disobedient to Rome, heretics spread their errors through Mediterranean Europe, comets crossed the sky and church and state were in turmoil, these were thought by many to be the

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[39] *C&S* II, 468, 527; cf. 737.
[40] Vincent, *Peter des Roches*, *passim*; S. Ambler, 'The Montfortian Bishops', in A. Jobson, ed., *Baronial Reform and Revolution in England 1258–1267* (Woodbridge, 2016), 139–51.
[41] *LAM*, 47.
[42] A. Power, *Roger Bacon and the Defense of Christendom* (Cambridge, 2013), 164–208.
[43] William of Saint-Amour, *De periculis*, 1–15.   [44] Gieben, 'Grosseteste at the Curia', 353.

direct results of human sin, which needed to be rooted out.[45] A reform in pastoral care was needed not just for the eternal salvation of each but for the temporal salvation of all.

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF REFORM

The thirteenth century appears as an era of betwixt and between in the historiography of the English church, not quite belonging to the 'high Middle Ages' before it nor the 'late Middle Ages' after. The twelfth century has long been recognised as a period of intellectual and spiritual vigour in Latin Christendom; the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are well known as an era of English lay piety, producing lay mystics and guilds, processions and plays and countless Perpendicular parish churches. It was largely in the thirteenth century that the initiative passed from the clerical hierarchy, the Church in the narrow sense, to the laity, the church in the broad sense. Yet the means by which this happened are not well understood. The use of written English for pastoral texts such as sermons gradually declined after the Norman Conquest and re-emerged in the fourteenth century. By surrendering claims on manorial churches as private property and donating some advowsons to religious houses, local lay elites yielded much control over parish churches in the twelfth century; lay peasants and townsmen once again exercised significant responsibility in their parishes in the fourteenth century with the rise of churchwardens, but we know much less about the local relationships between clergy and parishioners in the thirteenth century.[46]

This book is an attempt to recover some of these lost realities of pastoral care, the institutional church's most significant point of contact with its lay members, in England between 1200 and 1300. While important questions remain, the English church in this period has hardly been neglected. Understanding this historiographical tradition will help to contextualise this present book.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Protestant and Catholic historians still often wrote as apologists for their churches, and many of them were clergy themselves. The study of the later medieval church was a natural battleground. Protestants, especially those of Whiggish historical inclinations, saw it as an ignorant dark age from which the Reformation liberated England. To Catholics, Anglo-Catholics and Romantics,

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[45] B. E. Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), 152–54.

[46] Cragoe, 'Written in Stone', 55–58; on the active role of the laity in maintaining church buildings during the thirteenth century, see 119–23.

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however, it represented genuine Christianity; what appeared to naysay-
ers as superstition was rather the authentic and holistic religious heritage
of the English people. As we will see, the Whig/Protestant view came to
predominate in English historiography. The reining in of its excesses con-
tributed to its durability without fundamentally undermining it: despite
sympathetic portrayals of the pre-Reformation English church such as
Jack Scarisbrick's *The Reformation and the English People* (1984) and Robert
Swanson's *Church and Society in Late Medieval England* (1989), the level of
controversy generated by Eamon Duffy's distinctly Catholic *The Strip-
ping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400–1580* (1992) shows
how pervasive the Protestant view remained.

   The historiographical debates of a century ago can be seen most
sharply in the figures of Abbot (later Cardinal) Gasquet and his nemesis G.
G. Coulton.[47] Gasquet was a prolific English writer on the later medieval
church, though he 'was no scholar at all, but gathered material with a
pitchfork'.[48] The material he gathered presented the pre-Reformation
church, and by implication the Catholic church in general, in the best
possible light. Coulton, a meticulous scholar and controversialist, called
Gasquet out in a series of tracts on his errors and obfuscations.[49] As a
Whig historian and a low church Anglican, Coulton had no patience
for Romantic notions of a culturally superior medieval world or church.
His tracts included 'The Truth about the Monasteries' ('The evidence of
monastic decay, long before the Reformation, is simply embarrassing in
its mass and variety'),[50] 'Priests and People before the Reformation' ('The
priest, for his part, had the partial consolation of knowing that such pre-
varicators of tithes were destined to find their part in hell with Cain, and
of proclaiming this solemnly four times a year from the pulpit'),[51] 'The
Failure of the Friars' ('The friar, whom you can no more keep out of
your private affairs than you can keep a fly off your plate, is often so
unpopular already [by the 1260s] that the country-folk attribute the fail-
ure of their crops to the malign influence of these sons of Francis and
Dominic'),[52] and 'The Plain Man's Religion in the Middle Ages' ('At the
bottom of the scale, of course, the jostle for salvation was gross and frankly
immoral. The vulgar caught inevitably at what was least defensible in the
official religion').[53] Coulton was the founding editor of *Cambridge Studies
in Medieval Life and Thought*. Hartridge, the author of one early volume

47 E. Duffy, 'A.G. Dickens and the Late Medieval Church', *BIHR* 77 (2004), 99–110.
48 C. Brooke et al., *David Knowles Remembered* (Cambridge, 1991), 51. A. Morey was more sympa-
    thetic: 'Cardinal Gasquet the Historian', *Catholic Historical Review* 15 (1929), 262–74.
49 Powicke, *Historians*, 136–41; G. G. Coulton, *Fourscore Years: An Autobiography* (Cambridge, 1943),
    317–37; G. G. Coulton, *Ten Medieval Studies* (3rd edn, Boston, 1959).
50 Ibid., 88.   51 Ibid., 125.   52 Ibid., 168.   53 Ibid., 192.