

The Medieval World

Series Editor: Julia Smith, The University of Glasgow

- | | |
|---|---|
| Alfred the Great
<i>Richard Abels</i> | Church and People in the Medieval West, 900–1200
<i>Sarah Hamilton</i> |
| Christian-Jewish Relations, 1000–1300
<i>Anna Sapir Abulafia</i> | Bastard Feudalism
<i>M. Hicks</i> |
| The Western Mediterranean Kingdoms
<i>David Abulafia</i> | The Formation of English Common Law
<i>John Hudson</i> |
| The Fourth Crusade
<i>Michael Angold</i> | The Mongols and the West
<i>Peter Jackson</i> |
| The Cathars
<i>Malcolm Barber</i> | Europe's Barbarians, AD 200–600
<i>Edward James</i> |
| The Godwins
<i>Frank Barlow</i> | Cnut
<i>K. Lawson</i> |
| Phillip Augustus
<i>Jim Brabury</i> | The Age of Robert Guiscard
<i>Graham Loud</i> |
| Violence in Medieval Europe
<i>Warren Brown</i> | The English Church, 940–1154
<i>H.R. Lown</i> |
| Medieval Canon Law
<i>J.A. Brundage</i> | Justinian
<i>John Moorhead</i> |
| Crime in Medieval Europe
<i>Trevor Dean</i> | Ambrose
<i>John Moorhead</i> |
| Charles I of Anjou
<i>Jean Dunbabin</i> | The Devil's World
<i>Andrew P. Roach</i> |
| The Age of Charles Martel
<i>Paul Fournier</i> | The Reign of Richard Lionheart
<i>Ralph Turner/Richard Heiser</i> |
| Margery Kempe
<i>A.E. Goodman</i> | The Welsh Princes
<i>Roger Turvey</i> |
| Edward the Black Prince
<i>Darid Green</i> | English Noblewomen in the Late Middle Ages
<i>J. Ward</i> |

Church and People in the Medieval West, 900–1200

Sarah Hamilton

PEARSON

Harlow, England • London • New York • Boston • San Francisco • Toronto • Sydney • Auckland • Singapore • Hong Kong
Tokyo • Seoul • Taipei • New Delhi • Cape Town • São Paulo • Mexico City • Madrid • Amsterdam • Munich • Paris • Milan

and S. A. Epstein, eds, *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living: Essays in Memory of David Herlihy* (Ann Arbor, 1995), 233–44 at p. 240; L. le Grand, *Statuts d'hôtels-Dieu et de léproseries: Recueil de textes du XII^e au XIV^e siècle* (Paris, 1901), 16–21. See also the statutes of the mid-twelfth-century leper house in Montpellier drawn up by the bishop which decreed that those entering the house who were unlearned (illiterate) must go to church daily for the office, and pray for their benefactors and the sins of all, and recite the *Our Father* each time a member of the community died; the literate should recite the seven penitential psalms each day and read the whole psalter at the death of a brother; *ibid.*, 181–84.

54 Meerseman, *Ordo fraternitatis*, 109–110.

55 *The Letters of Arnulf of Lisieux*, ed. F. Barlow, Camden Society 3r ser. 61 (London, 1939), trans. *The Letter Collections of Arnulf of Lisieux*, trans. C. P. Schiber (Lewisston, NY, 1997), no. 63.

56 E. Coornaert, 'Les guildes médiévales (Ve–XIV^e siècles: définition et évolution', *Revue historique* 199 (1948), 22–55, 208–43; on twelfth- and thirteenth-century attempts to prohibit guilds as a source of public disorder in France, German and the Low Countries, see V. R. Bainbridge, *Gilds in the Medieval Countryside: Social and Religious Change in Cambridgeshire c.1350–1558* (Woodbridge, 1996), 1–21.

57 Bedwyn, Exeter I, Abbotisbury, Cambridge, and Exeter (England); Ivrea, Modena, Sant'Appiano in Valdesa, Santa Felicità, Verona, Sancta Croce, Verona, S. Cassiano d'Imola (Italy); Arras, Toulouse x 2, Lisieux, Bèthune (E. Gubert, *Histoire de l'antique confrérie des charitables de Saint-Eloi de Bèthune fondée en l'an 1188* (Bèthune, 1934), Urgel. For an estimate of fifteen autonomous corporations from the eleventh- and twelfth-century Southern Low Countries, of which four were associated with parish churches, and eight with monasteries, see A.-J. Bijsterveld, 'Looking for Common Ground: From Monastic Fraternitas to Lay Confraternity in the Southern Low Countries in the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries', in E. Jamrozak and J. Burton, eds, *Religious and Laity in Western Europe 1000–1400* (Turnhout, 2006), 287–314.

58 Rosser, 'Going to the Fraternal Feast'; *idem*, 'Communities of Parish and Guild in the Late Middle Ages', in S. J. Wright, ed., *Parish, Church and People: Local Studies in Lay Religion 1350–1750* (London, 1988), 29–55.

59 For the argument for expansion in the tenth and eleventh centuries in the Latin West, see: P. Horden, 'The Confraternities of Byzantium', in W. J. Sheils and D. Wood, eds, *Voluntary Religion*, Studies in Church History 23 (Oxford, 1986), 25–45.

chapter 7

Local piety: Saints' cults and religious movements

Suger, the twelfth-century abbot of Saint-Denis, told the following story to explain how his house came to establish a priory at Champ, Essonne in the Île-de-France. Reports came to the monks at Saint-Denis that local people living near the site of an abandoned chapel on the monastery's land at Champ had witnessed candles burning in it every Saturday, although the roof of the building had long since collapsed and the altar was so covered in plants that sheep and goats were grazing on it. The miraculous light gradually drew the attention of the sick of the area, who came there in hope of a cure. Suger explained the miracle thus: the chapel was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and Saturday was the day of the week dedicated to the Virgin. The Mother of God thus made it known, through the miraculous light, her desire for the chapel to be brought back into use. Suger therefore sent two monks 'to re-establish religion there', and the chapel later became the site of the priory.¹ According to Suger, the Virgin revealed her presence initially not to the clergy but to the common people, first through light, then through cures. The clergy took over the cult subsequently, which is suggestive of a belated attempt to regulate and control this expression of lay piety. But, crucially, Suger relied on the evidence of popular cult as testimony to explain how and why the monastic community at Saint-Denis came to establish a priory at this particular site.

Tales such as this one highlight the importance of local topography and local lay audiences in the establishment of a new site for a cult, and the construction of a new building in which to house it. As such they provide

a contrast to most surviving writings about cults, be they *Lives*, miracle accounts, or accounts of translation, which tend to reveal much more about the interests of the community who acted as custodians of the site or relics of the cult, than about those of their audience. Suger's narrative is not, however, unusual in linking a saint's cult, in this case that of the Virgin Mary, to both a popular religious revivalist movement and the rebuilding of a church in a locality. Accounts of such movements often made much of their popularity with the laity, and associated them with the reconstruction of church buildings; at the same time the surviving physical remains of local chapels, churches, priories, monasteries and cathedrals serve as powerful witnesses to the hopes and investments of the wider community in centres dedicated to the cult of a particular saint. For one of the most interesting features of this period is the role awarded in clerical writings to the agency of lay groups in the establishment of the sites for the cult of saints and the building of churches to accommodate particular cults. This chapter seeks to explore this aspect of the evidence for saints' cults further.

Suger's tale also points to the tensions between clergy and laity inherent in such cults, as churchmen sought to direct popular enthusiasm by bringing such sites under their control. For the focus for religious cult and expression was never just confined within the walls of the local church or local monastery: rather natural features throughout the landscape of Europe, such as springs, wells and trees, and other sites, were suffused with religious associations. The cults associated with such natural sites have long been viewed as evidence of lay popular religion, and their popularity as due to the opportunities they provided for the laity to beseech the aid and support of particular saints directly. The cult of the saints from this perspective points at one and the same time to the remnants of pre-Christian pantheistic cults, in which particular places had associations with particular spirits; and to the projection of contemporary views of intercessory lordship on to the court of heaven; just as earthly men and women would approach their earthly ruler with a request via an intermediary, so medieval people approached the heavenly Lord via His intermediaries, the saints. For saints had known what it was to be human, but attained their place in heaven either through their steadfastness to the faith in death (martyrs) or in life (confessors): they thus provided the ideal intercessor between the earthly and heavenly spheres. Where they existed it was their relics which acted as vectors between heaven and earth, that is their physical remains, be it their

bones, their clothes or other objects associated with the saint, such as books written or owned by them. But, as Suger's story demonstrates, cults did not always require relics to be successful: the association of the saint with a particular site, when combined with miraculous events, sufficed to attest to its holiness.

Tales such as Suger's have usually been read as attempts by churchmen to take over the direction of existing popular devotions. Yet the evidence for such lay popular cults only survives largely because clerical communities, such as that at Saint-Denis, sought to control and promote them. The laity's role as initiators of the cult is embedded within a wider narrative of monastic authority. This familiar tension between rhetoric and reality is played out in other churchmen's writings too: for the popularity of a cult served as a tool through which clerical communities promoted their authority within a local area. Lay popularity functioned as both a rhetorical trope which churchmen relied upon in their accounts to suggest widespread support for the cult, and as the physical means through which communities of professional religious sought to interact with other communities, both lay and clerical, living in the locality.² It cannot therefore be dismissed as a literary device: the very success of cults depended on lay support.

Taking up these tensions, this chapter will explore the limitations and potential of the evidence for local lay piety. Beginning with the nature of the evidence for local saints' shrines, it will then extend its focus to consider some of the other ways in which clerics used saints' cults to attract and harness popular support for movements to support reform, promoting both peace and, later, the rebuilding of churches. Investigating the problems posed by the literary conventions governing such accounts allows us to examine the degree to which lay people rather than religious communities used these local movements to shape their own religious lives.

Local saints' cults

As mentioned above, saints' cults were never confined just to ecclesiastical shrines, be they in cathedrals, monasteries or local churches. Shrines to saints peppered the European landscape: many springs, wells, trees and caves became associated with individual saints and were often attributed with healing properties. In England, for example, a healing spring at Clent, Worcestershire became linked to St Kenelm, a young ninth-century

Mercian prince murdered on the orders of his sister by her lover. His eleventh-century *Life* records two legends associated with the site: first that a spring sprung up on the site of his grave, and secondly that the ash tree there had sprouted from the staff planted in the ground by the boy just before his death.³ Similarly the healing well at Binsey near Oxford had become associated with the cult of St Frideswide, an early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon princess, by the time her *vita* came to be written in the early twelfth century.⁴ Not all shrines were confined to the natural realm. Local churches also often became the site of local cults, usually of the founder or patron, like that of St Milred, an eighth-century bishop of Worcester, whose cult was maintained only at Berkswell in Warwickshire, or St Wulfic, a tenth-century hermit, whose cult was located only at the minster he founded at Holme in Norfolk.⁵ Yet the documentation for the majority of these local shrines is fragmentary, and usually late. In some areas with poor records for the central Middle Ages, such as Cornwall, the only evidence of local cult is the mention of otherwise unheard of saints in place names.⁶ Such names are powerful testimony to what Julia Smith has described as a 'landscape of intense religious particularism' reflecting local interests and traditions.⁷ They are the result of the processes of early medieval Christianisation and seek to commemorate the figures behind the foundation of local churches, but the mechanisms by which such sites became associated with particular cults are, for the most part, unrecorded. These *lacunae* mean we need to ask how far these local cults owe their origins to lay enthusiasm or whether they are, as in tales like that of Abbot Suger, the result of clerical attempts to harness and direct local piety? Eleventh- and twelfth-century accounts of these cults suggest the latter but they are a product of their time, and cannot be used as evidence for the forces at work when the cult first began in, say, the eighth century.

Such sites – be they local features or local churches – are interesting because they are not always associated with the possession of the physical relics of a saint, as was the case for the great central medieval shrines built in monastic or cathedral churches. Rather they owed their reputation to oral traditions linking the saint to that particular place as, for example, Julia Smith shows to have been the case for several local Breton cults. As such they are testimony to vibrant traditions of local piety. The clergy of Quimper removed the relics of St Corentin, the patron saint of this Breton see, to inland France in the face of Viking attacks in the ninth century, and

distributed them to other monasteries in Paris and the Loire. His cult in central medieval Brittany therefore could not be based on his physical remains, which were now elsewhere, but rather on his association with certain local features in the landscape. For example, St Corentin's healing spring at Kerfeunteun, which is known from a thirteenth-century account of a man who had the temerity to fish in it, had a chapel associated with it which regularly attracted crowds of local people. As the presence of this chapel suggests, such local cults may not have been established independently of the clergy but rather in conjunction with them. Such an alliance of lay and clerical interests is clearly reported as at work in another example, this time from an eleventh-century account of the origins of a particular cult site in Lille in northern France. It occurs in a text recording the miracles worked by the relics of St Ursmer when the monks of Lobbes toured Flanders and northern France in the mid-eleventh century. The townspeople of Lille, we are told, set up a cross at the crossroads where the monks had set down the relics of St Ursmer when they visited the town; the cross later became a site for miracle cures. Relics, monastic initiative and lay support all contributed to the establishment of this particular site of divine power within the local urban landscape.⁸

The story of why this particular cross became the site for local piety does not survive, and its omission from the monks' miracle account points to a wider problem with the evidence for local cults. Detailed contemporary written documentation in the form of saints' lives, accounts of the translation of their relics, and posthumous miracle collections, is limited to those cults under the control of religious communities anxious to defend their cults in particular circumstances. Thus there is an inherent evidential bias in the written record in favour of the conclusion that lay piety came under the control of religious communities rather than existing as an autonomous phenomenon. The clergy of the cathedral at Quimper, for example, only recorded the miracle which took place at the spring at Kerfeunteun because of the attempt to violate the spring's claim to holiness, and to treat it like any other spring as a source of fish rather than recognising its distinctive status.⁹ Other communities' accounts of the successful miracles worked at their shrines also sought, in their different ways, to promote and protect the interests of their custodian communities, demonstrating the efficacy of their patron in the wake of challenges to their property and jurisdictional privileges. They are evidence for clerical ambitions and interests, rather

than for those of the lay audience for the cult. Such narratives are also formulaic and often drew on literary tropes and earlier textual precedents. At the same time they demonstrate the attempts made by religious communities to reach out to establish authority over, and make links with, the wider lay communities alongside whom they lived. Moreover, as we shall see, their authors often had reasons for portraying support for these cults as numerous, socially diverse and voluntary.

Such accounts usually record the crowds which attended the cult. As we have already seen, in thirteenth-century Brittany crowds attended the healing spring at Kerfeunteun. But such crowds are a common trope within the literature. In tenth-century Winchester 'more and more of the faithful', as well as the clergy, attended the translation of the relics of St Swithun from his grave to the minister church in 971, joining the clergy in an all-night vigil by the tomb, having kept a three-day fast, before witnessing the translation of the relics to the cathedral the following day.¹⁰ Each person from Winchester, of all ages, and both sexes, free and unfree, was ordered to process barefoot three miles outside the city to meet a crowd (*turba*) accompanying a new gold and silver reliquary, commissioned by the king for the relics of St Swithun, from its place of manufacture on a royal estate; a relic of St Swithun had already been placed in the new reliquary, and when the two groups met they accompanied the relic into the city.¹¹ The language of the account echoed that of the Gospel's description of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday when he was met by a crowd.¹² Thus the presence of the laity is an essential feature of a text describing St Swithun's triumphant entry into the town, and through its language links St Swithun to Christ. Yet, clerical hyperbole also refers to such crowds sometimes getting out of hand. Writing in c.1030 in south-western France, Adhemar of Chabannes, recorded how the crowd (*multitudine populi*) attending the night vigil at the tomb of St Martial in Limoges some twelve years earlier had been so large that more than fifty people, men and women, were trampled to death in the crush.¹³ A century later, Abbot Suger described the crush which had built up in the old church of Saint-Denis on feast days, as the density of the crowds of men and women who came 'to worship and kiss the holy relics, the Nail and the Crown of the Lord' meant no one 'could do anything but stand like a marble statue, stay benumbed or, as a last resort, scream'.¹⁴ In all four of these cases the crowd's presence serves to demonstrate the cult's popularity, and also, at least in Suger's

case, the need to rebuild the church. It also allows writers, and readers, to echo the language of the Gospels and thus to reinforce, in their audience's mind, the link between Christ's mission and the appeal of their own saint. Popularity in all these accounts is essential testimony to the cult's success.

The writers of such accounts looked to stress not only their popular appeal, but also the universality and generally voluntary nature of the audience for the cult. Their saint should attract support from across the social spectrum, ranging from kings and nobles to merchants and peasants, from the free to the unfree. Writing in the late ninth century, for example, Adrevald recorded how the beneficiaries of miracles worked by the relics of St Benedict at the monastery of Fleury in the Loire valley ranged from the viscount of Tonnerre to an unnamed poor man.¹⁵ He carefully emphasised how, although the relics were housed in the church within the monastic enclosure, and thus out of bounds to all women, the abbot and monks listened to the pleas of women and nobles to be allowed access to them, and set up a pavilion

*outside the gate of the monastery... [to which] the relics of the saints were brought at a certain time, that is on the vigil of the Lord's day, and remained there under the reverent guard of both monks and clerks until the same hour on the Lord's day, when they were taken back to the sacred building. When this was done, multitudes of common people, not only from the neighbourhood, but from faraway places, flocked there to seek remedy for body and soul.*¹⁶

Half a century later, Odo of Cluny took up the same theme when he recorded in a sermon on St Benedict that the miracles worked by that saint's relics meant that 'Not just country folk (*pugenses*), but even people (*plebs*) from the city, a mingling of noblemen and distinguished clerics' came together to seek the saint's patronage not just on the feast of his translation but also on other feasts dedicated to him.¹⁷

Yet later in our period the imagined constituency for these cults became less socially diverse. Modern scholars investigating the audience for eleventh- and twelfth-century cults in France and England have suggested that clerics in this period began to target very particular groups within the community. Pierre André Sigal's analysis of the miracle collections generated by fundraising tours in northern France and Flanders and southern England

in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, for example, suggests that 65 per cent of miracles were experienced by members of the bourgeoisie rather than the clergy.¹⁸ Simon Yarrow has similarly noted that many beneficiaries of twelfth-century English miracle collections were members of the new, and growing, urban communities.¹⁹ Their researches suggest that this bias towards townspeople reflects the attempt by their monastic authors to recognise the burgeoning power and influence of the new urban elite.²⁰ The old certainties of a world dominated by nobles, at one end of the spectrum, and peasants at the other, were giving way to a new one in which townspeople had much greater independence. Monks trod their way carefully in this new world, but used established methods, promoting their authority over this increasingly important social group through their particular saint's miracle-working powers.

Such accounts thus tell us much more about the needs and aspirations of their custodian clerical communities than about those of their clientele. Nowhere is this more clear than in the miracle story, found in many collections, in which a pilgrim is described as visiting many other shrines unsuccessfully, before being cured at that particular shrine. A version of it is recorded in an account written in the Loire monastery at Micy in the late eleventh century. It records how a man called Henry, who suffered severe pain, had a vision in which he was told to 'search for the tomb of St Maximinus . . . You will return to health there through God's mercy'. He set out for the tomb going first to Trier, but despite keeping vigil there at the tomb of their St Maximinus, was not cured, and thence to St Maximinus of Chinon, near Tours, where he was also unsuccessful, before visiting Micy where he was cured on the saint's feast day.²¹ This text demonstrates the problems covered by shrines dedicated to saints with the same name, and seeks to assert Micy's primacy. Sometimes the accounts demonstrate the shine's superiority to more recent rivals which might challenge its influence within a particular area; for example, a late twelfth-century collection of miracles worked at Durtam by the seventh-century monk and hermit, St Cuthbert, mentions the cure of four sick men who had first visited the nearby shrine of the twelfth-century hermit Godric of Finchale, some four miles away, but had been referred to St Cuthbert by Godric himself.²² Nor need rivals come from within the immediate vicinity: further miracles in the same account assert St Cuthbert's superiority over the new shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury in Kent.

Their monastic authors composed these texts with multiple audiences in mind. The primary one was usually the clerical community which served as guardians of that particular shrine, but many miracle accounts seem to have been composed with a much wider audience in mind, judging from the didactic agenda behind many of these stories. Punishment and vengeance miracles are a frequent feature of such accounts, especially in the tenth and early eleventh centuries. Such miracles generally seem to be part of an attempt to defend the community's claims to property against those of rival lay claimants. Thus the eleventh-century collection of miracles for the shrine of Ste Foy at Conques, in south-western France, included the following miracle:

In the province of Quercy there was a noblewoman . . . [who] obsessively coveted the holy martyr's lands that adjoined her own fields. Therefore she subjected the farmworkers ploughing the monks' field to a great deal of abuse and succeeded in driving them away. The next day she arranged to have this field ploughed with her own ploughshare, and she dared to make it part of her own property. And so divine power brought it about that, while she was ordering that her property line be extended to include the field and insisting strenuously, her whole body shrivelled instantly and she croaked and hissed horribly as she sent her miserable soul down to Orcus [Hell]. The ploughmen were terrified by her horrendous death and fled the field, leaving the plough behind. Out of breath and completely distraught, they scarcely managed to tell their lord what had happened. He grieved over his wife's death, sent for her body, and had it buried. And after she was destroyed in this way, the holy martyr's land was henceforth safe from all who had designs on it, and remained afterwards the property of the monks.²³

This account works on several levels and points to several different audiences. First, this miracle may have been intended for preaching to an audience of lay nobles who might, otherwise, have been similarly tempted to maintain their claims to lands owned by the monastery. Monastic charter collections are full of disputes between monasteries and their lay neighbours about the ownership of particular properties. It also therefore spoke to monks who felt vulnerable to attack, and in its written form the tale presumes a learned audience; it is likely that only highly educated churchmen would recognise the reference to Orcus, a Roman god of the underworld and punisher of perjurers. The manuscript evidence supports this

assumption, for the collection is found in the libraries of several northern French institutions. But for the occurrence of the miracle to have been witnessed, and thus a record of it made, the ploughmen also needed to be there. The tale therefore required, and spoke to, a varied audience. The whole process of reporting, recording and listening to this tale points to the socially diverse constituency for this particular miracle.

Healing miracles, which are an even more dominant feature of such accounts, similarly testify to the complicity of the wider community in the process, for they too require independent witnesses to the occurrence of the miracle. Sick people seldom visited shrines alone and unsupported: rather accounts in collections from both England and France suggest friends and family usually accompanied them. Lantfred's late tenth-century account of the miracles worked by St Swithun after the translation of his relics to the new church at Winchester records, for example, how a London man, who was paralysed in all his limbs, having heard of the miracles taking place at St Swithun's tomb, 'was taken – in accordance with his wishes – by his kinsmen to Winchester . . . [where] he was cured on the night of his arrival by heavenly agency'.²⁴ In the mid-eleventh century the parents of a paralysed man from the Agenais took him to the shrine of Ste Foy in Conques, where he was cured.²⁵ In the late twelfth century Edilda of Canterbury, who was paralysed from the knee down, was carried to the shrine of St Thomas by three women, where she was cured; Robert, a blacksmith from the Isle of Thanet, who was blind for two years, journeyed to the same shrine with the guidance of his wife and daughter, where he was cured after daubing his eyes in St Thomas's blood.²⁶ These travelling companions served as witnesses; that they usually comprised family or neighbours conjures up a world in which a much wider community participated in one individual's experience. Both punishment and healing miracles thus promoted a similar message about the judgment of the omniscient Lord, and the possibility of redemption for all. In order to ensure this message's pastoral success, however, such miracles had to be depicted as taking place in familiar contexts, in the field, or at the shrine but with the support of family and friends.

At the same time as many clerical authors sought to universalise the audience for their cults, by recording their wide appeal, as well by recording the size of the crowds which attended particular shrines, some also described the very specific lay practices followed at the shrine. Can such accounts be used as evidence for the nature of popular devotion? Or are

they too part of a clerical rhetoric in support of the shrine's popularity? What are we to make of stories such as that told by Bernard of Angers about how the pilgrims to Ste Foy chose to worship at her shrine? A northern Frenchman, Bernard visited the monastery of Ste Foy at Conques in south-western France and compiled two books of miracles worked at her shrine in c.1010. In them he records his shock at witnessing how the local peasants kept their vigils in their own ways:

*It has been the custom since the old days that pilgrims always keep vigils in Ste Foy's church with candles and lights, while clerics and those who are literate chant psalms and the office of the vigil. But those who are illiterate relieve the weariness of the long night with little peasant songs and other frivolities. This seemed to ruin utterly the solemn dignity and decency of the sacred vigil.*²⁷

Bernard went on to describe how he had preached about this 'detestable and absurd custom' to the monks of the custodian community in chapter. They, however, had defended the practice, saying that they had previously tried to forbid 'the unsuitable commotion made by the wild outcries of the peasants and their unruly singing, but they were unable to enforce silence', and had decided to shut the doors to the church at night so that the peasants could not attend the vigils but that, when shut out, the pilgrims had stood outside the monastery begging to be let in, and whilst the monks were sleeping, the bars of the doors of the church had opened of their own accord, so that when the monks rose for matins, they 'found the church so full of people keeping the vigil that each one of us had difficulty forcing his way forward to his station' in choir. In the light of this miracle, the monks, and subsequently Bernard of Angers, reconsidered their initial dismissal of the peasants' songs. In the words of Bernard:

I am satisfied that on account of the simplicity of those people, an innocent little song, even a peasant song, can be tolerated somehow. For it may be that if this custom were abolished, the crowds that frequent the sanctuary would also disappear. Nevertheless, we should not believe that God rejoices over a little song; it is the hardship of keeping vigil and the good will of simple people that please Him . . . these peasants are permitted to sing the songs that they know while their celebration is directed towards the One God Himself.

Bernard self-consciously constructed the peasants' practices as different: he defended them not because he accepted the validity of an alternative 'lay liturgy' but because he wished to make the point that God is interested in the intentions of all Christians, not just those of 'high learning'.²⁸ He thus made a rhetorical distinction between the rites of the learned monks and those of the peasant audience in order to support his arguments about universality and intention.²⁹ Knowledge of this strategy need not, however, prohibit us from accepting it as having some relationship to 'popular' practice, for his tale would probably not have convinced his readers if it did not.

Accounts from other shrines similarly testify to lay practices at the shrine which are independent of the liturgical rites conducted by the custodian clergy. Their authors recounted each of them for a different reason but taken together they suggest a very clear and distinctive image of lay devotions independent of those of the clergy. The author of a sermon, '*Veneranda dies*', which survives now in a twelfth-century manuscript of various materials about the cult of St James of Compostella, records the practices of the pilgrims of diverse nationalities who made the journey to Compostella:

Whoever sees these choruses of pilgrims keeping vigil around the venerable altar of Blessed James marvels with extreme delight: Germans remain in one area, French in another, Italians in a throng in another, holding burning candles in their hands from which the whole church is lit up like the sun on the brightest of days. Each one sagaciously carries out his vigils by himself with his countrymen. Some sing with lutes, some with byres, some with drums, some with flutes, some with pipes, some with trumpets, some with harps, some with violas, some with British or Gallic wheels, some with psalteries. Some keep vigil by singing to the various kinds of music; some lament their sins; some read psalms; and some give alms to the blind.³⁰

Whilst the author's main aim is to convey the international nature of the pilgrimage, he also suggests the active devotion of the laity, through portraying their participation in a liturgy independent of that of the clergy of the church of Compostella. This codex also contains a collection of miracles which includes an account of the pilgrimage by the count of Saint-Gilles and his brother from Provence. When the two arrived the count requested permission to keep the vigil in front of Saint James's tomb, but the clergy refused his request as it was the custom to close the gates of the oratory from sunset until sunrise. The count returned to his lodgings and

'said to all those present that he wanted to go to Saint James with those of a similar mind accompanying him, if, by chance, the place should deign to open for them all by itself'. A large group of some two hundred people thus approached the church with lamps, and as they did so they prayed to Saint James to allow them in to keep the vigil; as they did so the locks and chains on the gates became undone 'by an invisible power', allowing them to enter, just as the doors of the church in Conques had opened to allow the laity to keep the vigil by Ste Foy's relics in their own manner.³¹ The trope of the miraculously opening doors thus testifies to the voluntary nature of the cult, as well as its popularity. Similarly, other accounts report pilgrims making up their own songs. The collection of miracles compiled for the shrine of Our Lady of Rocamadour (1172-73) describe how it was the custom of a minstrel, Peter Ivern, on arrival at churches to 'pour out his prayers to the Lord, after which he would play upon the strings of his lute and sing the Lord's praises'. He followed this practice when he came to the shrine of the Virgin Mary at Rocamadour, and after a while he asked the Virgin that she grant him a piece from the measures of waxes hanging there, perhaps as *ex voto* offerings, if his playing and singing pleased her, and 'as he played and sang in this way, and in the full view of those who were present, a little piece of wax dropped onto his instrument'. This upset the guardian of the church, the monk Gerard, who put the valuable wax back on the altar, but Peter carried on singing and the wax dropped down again, and Gerard again restored it to its proper place; it happened a third time, and amazed all those present. Peter then returned the wax to the altar, praising God, and throughout the rest of his life gave an annual offering of a pound of wax to the shrine.³² Here the tale of lay devotion is used to account for, and promote, gifts to the shrine, as well as indicating the importance of each praising the Virgin in his or her own way. No doubt this account of the tension between Gerard and Peter captures something of the complicated nature of relations between custodians and pilgrims at such shrines.

All three accounts – those from Conques, Compostella and Rocamadour – share the idea that the laity had their own way of celebrating the saint with their own chants. The extent to which they are a portrait of a specific lay experience is harder to judge, for the popularity of, and popular features of, these cults are both a necessary part of their authors' argument.

But these texts contain other hints which suggest that the clergy were anxious to ensure their shrines appealed to a lay audience. In many collections

miracles seem to have been deliberately pitched to reflect the concerns of the laity in the immediate vicinity of the shrine: thus in the Auvergne and Rouergue Ste Foy freed local knights imprisoned by their enemies, reflecting the acrimonious politics of that region in the eleventh century; men and women from Winchester, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight formed the main constituency for the cult of St Swithun; and the towns-men and women of Oxford feature prominently amongst the beneficiaries of miracles at the shrine of St Frideswide in the late twelfth century, although others came from further afield.³³ The gaudy nature of many reliquaries no doubt appealed to lay as well as clerical taste. Bernard of Angers defended the inhabitants of the Auvergne, Rouergue and Toulouse against the charge of idolatry because they erected gold statues to their saints, decorated with precious stones:

*The image [of Ste Foy] represents the pious memory of the holy virgin before which, quite properly and with abundant remorse, the faithful implore her intercession for their sins.*³⁴

The metalwork required considerable investment: Ste Foy's crown was donated by a Carolingian prince; in England King Edgar commissioned the reliquary of St Swithun from a goldsmith. Such examples of elaborate metalwork reflect an attempt to make the shrine distinctive and to reflect the esteem in which the faithful held the saint.

But how far did the services at such shrines offer the laity a different religious experience to that provided by their own local church? It is clear that local communities might be expected to attend the shrine itself on feast days, especially if their usual local church lay on the estates of the guardian community for the shrine. One miracle in the Rocamadour collection, for example, describes how one priest took his parishioners to the shrine of Our Lady of Rocamadour every year on the feast of the nativity of the Virgin.³⁵ Is this because of the nature of the religious experience or is it a statement of the monks' authority within the area? Given how little we know about the liturgy on offer in local churches, it is impossible to establish how far the liturgy of popular shrines might be designed to appeal to the laity more than that of their home church.³⁶ Rather such evidence as we have presents the shrine as a complement to existing local religious services.

The success of shrines such as Rocamadour and Conques manifests itself in the churches built and rebuilt to house them. The considerable financial

support they received from pilgrims made them possible. That at Conques, for example, was rebuilt in the second half of the eleventh and twelfth centuries in the Romanesque style. Abbot Suger rebuilt that at Saint-Denis in the mid-twelfth century in the new Gothic style. Both churches were extended to accommodate pilgrim congregations, and ambulatories were built so that pilgrims could progress around behind the high altar where the shrine was located. They manifest in stone the popularity of these cults.

But pilgrims left more mundane traces too. The popularity of such shrines is also testified to by the extent to which these sites became market centres. The author of the *Veneranda vis* sermon lists the range of goods on sale in the market place outside the church in Compostella – food, medicines, belts and other leather goods, cloth, and candles – before warning of the dangers pilgrims might face from merchants anxious to make a profit from them.³⁷ Lesser shrines also attracted markets. The Cluniac priory of Bromholm in Norfolk acquired a relic of the True Cross sometime in the late twelfth century; it soon became the centre of a local cult. Recent archaeological investigation has uncovered evidence that markets were regularly held within the precincts of the monastery itself, presumably to cater for the pilgrims who came to the church.³⁸ It is useful evidence of the role that such cults played within their local environment.

The laity's presence at such shrines thus served several different functions within the rhetoric of different authors' accounts. The ways in which lay supporters are depicted therefore have a good deal to tell us about the ambitions of the clerical custodians of these cults. Whilst the laity's participation is usually cited to attest to the success of a particular cult, the specific demographic features which writers chose to emphasise – the age, class, and gender of lay participants – indicate the ambitions of the clerical guardians of the cult rather than the nature of the actual audience. By focusing on the people of Winchester and Hampshire, for example, Lanfrid tells us more about how the community at Winchester cathedral wished to assert its authority over the town and its lands than the devotional preferences of people living in that area. Similarly the focus of many of the Ste Foy miracles on local landowners suggests the importance of that particular constituency for the support of the monastic community guarding her shrine at Conques in the Rouergue. It might be thought that the local loyalty of Hampshire people to their local saint, St Swithun, could be relied upon, but, as Simon Yarrow has shown in his study of English twelfth-century

cults, the allegiance of local communities could be more fickle. The canons of Laon visited the town of Christchurch in Dorset, for example, as part of their fundraising relic tour of southern England to support the rebuilding of their cathedral; the clergy of Christchurch minster refused them hospitality but the burghers of the town took them in, giving them support and lodging. In this case the canons of Laon benefited from an otherwise unknown dispute between the townspeople of Christchurch and the established clergy.³⁹ This story hints at what may have been more widespread tensions, and the fact that local support could not be presumed helps explain why churchmen invested so much energy in defining and recording the constituency for their particular cult. But they cited lay devotion for other reasons as well: to justify the locus of a particular local cult, as that of the Virgin Mary at Champ, Essonne or St Ursmer at Lille; to endorse the practice of giving very specific gifts to the shrine, such as that of wax to Our Lady of Rocamadour; to attest to the importance of the voluntary nature of such cults, as in the miraculously opening doors at Conques and Compostella; and to substantiate the theological argument that God is mindful of all Christians, not just educated ones, as in the case of Bernard of Anger's account of the 'peasant' liturgy to Ste Foy. Cumulatively, all these different tropes point to the underlying importance of lay popularity to written accounts of such cults. The laity's presence at such shrines had become a rhetorical necessity. It was also a physical reality. The survival of elaborate reliquaries wrought in precious metal, of substantial church buildings built to accommodate considerable crowds of visiting pilgrims, and the mundane remains of markets at such shrines all testify to the actuality of lay involvement. But such participation could not be presumed, it had to be fought for and won. Consequently the surviving evidence for cults often testifies to the tensions between churchmen and laity, but such anxieties and wranglings are, in themselves, evidence of ways in which particular ecclesiastical and lay communities came together to provide particular local focuses for their devotions.

Local religious movements: Peacemaking and rebuilding

It is only by understanding the ways in which monks thought about the laity that we can begin to understand one of the newer features of the three

centuries between 900 and 1200, that is the various reports of the appearance of mass popular movements of lay people, all of which focused upon the renewal and promotion of Christian values which constitute one of the newer features of central medieval religious thought. Men and women are reported as coming together in groups which transcended class for very specific religiously inspired purposes, namely the promotion of peace and the physical rebuilding of specific churches. These movements are all reported from the French-speaking world of France, Flanders and southern England in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Two, focused on peacemaking, originated in the south-west of France: the Peace of God movement which began in the late tenth century, and the Capuciani peacemaking brotherhood established in the Auvergne in the 1180s, almost two centuries later. The movements which originated in the north focused instead on church rebuilding: they comprise the fundraising relic tours for church rebuilding from the second half of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and the 'Cult of the Carts' from the 1140s. Each of these movements, taken on its own, is suggestive of new developments in popular piety and of growing enthusiasm for religious causes amongst the laity. Large groups of people came together for pious purposes, apparently on their own initiative, testifying to the successful internalisation of Christian values.

These movements are usually treated in isolation from each other as autonomous movements, which makes it easy to neglect their many shared features. Scholars have long acknowledged the debts these movements owed to the cult of the saints. Churchmen are described as using ritual elements drawn from the liturgical commemoration of the saints to direct these lay assemblies: the public display of relics, mass meetings of the laity, collective vows and prayers. It is thus not surprising to discover that clerical accounts of these movements are themselves heavily indebted to hagiographical conventions, as we shall see. But like the reports of saints' cults, the descriptions of these popular movements can tell us a good deal about the ways in which the clergy interacted with the laity on these occasions. Exploring the relationship between church and people on such occasions allows us to ask, on the one hand, how far the clergy harnessed lay support for particular cults to promote particular messages about reform and renewal and, on the other, the extent to which lay communities actively participated in such movements and employed features of the cult for their own ends. By investigating the parallels these movements share with each

other and with features of the cult of the saints more generally we can reconsider their apparent novelty and ask how far they instead represent a continuum of ideas and practices across these centuries. They thus offer another prism through which it is possible to explore the tensions in the relationship between clergy and laity surrounding saints' cults.

We will treat them in chronological order. The earliest example of a popular movement in this period is the series of some twenty-six councils collectively known to modern scholars as the Peace of God movement. In recent years some scholars have suggested these councils represent a unique alliance of the clergy and the laity in favour of reform ideals. As we shall see, the written accounts built on existing conventions surrounding lay support for cults and, at the same time, paved the way for those for other movements. Beginning in south-western France – in Poitou, the Limousin and the Berry – in the late tenth century, these councils, attended by bishops, abbots, and secular magnates, sought to restrict violence against churchmen and ecclesiastical property, and against others unable to defend themselves: peasants and women. Those attending these councils swore oaths to abstain from such attacks on pain of anathema, the worst ecclesiastical sanction in the episcopal spiritual armoury. From 1027 the direction of the movement began to evolve into what is now known as the Truce of God as those present swore an oath to keep the peace on certain days of the week for certain periods. At the same time the movement itself began to spread outwards from south-western France into northern France, Flanders, the German Reich and central Italy.⁴⁰

The evidence for these councils survives in a variety of different forms, but the authors of narrative accounts are anxious to depict them as mass occasions attended by large audiences of lay people. In the words of Rodulfus Glaber:

At the millennium of the Lord's Passion . . . the bishops and abbots and other devout men of Aquitaine first summoned great councils of the whole people (ex universa plebe) to which were borne the bodies of many saints and innumerable caskets of holy relics. The movement spread to Arles and Lyons, then across all Burgundy into the furthest corner of the French realm. Throughout the dioceses it was decreed that in fixed places the bishops and magnates of the entire patria should convene councils for restoring the peace and celebrating the institution of the holy faith. When the entire

*populace heard this, great, middling and poor, they came rejoicing and ready, one and all, to obey the commands of the clergy no less than if they had been given by a voice from heaven speaking to men on earth.*⁴¹

Other reports testify to the 'crowds of common people without number of every age and both genders [who] hurried' to the site of the council, where monks brought their relics.⁴² It is clear that these reports built on the universalist rhetoric which we have seen is a feature of the literature surrounding saints' cults; yet a contemporary critic of the movement, Andrew of Fleury, cited the rabble's involvement as one of his reasons for disliking the movement, suggesting that real phenomena underlay these descriptions.⁴³

Recent scholars, however, have emphasised that the individual councils should be seen as much as a response to specific events or particular political contexts as part of a self-conscious movement.⁴⁴ They have acknowledged how the councils are less about the alliance of the Church with the masses than about the reassertion of local authority, both secular and ecclesiastical, in what was a far from peaceful world with weak royal rule. In the ninth century it had been the duty of Frankish kings to defend the persons and property of the poor and the weak, including clerics, peasants, widows and orphans, from attack; in the late tenth and eleventh centuries local lords assumed these duties, and in doing so enhanced their own lordship. In the words of the eleventh-century chronicler of much of this movement, at the council of Limoges in 994 the nobles present 'took peace oaths in the presence of both the duke [William V of Aquitaine] and of the assembled masses on the relics of the saint'.⁴⁵ The duke held a similar council at Poitiers almost two decades later at which both spiritual and secular penalties were invoked against those who disregarded the duke's authority, and refused to submit disputes to his court.⁴⁶ Maintenance of the peace constituted an essential component of early medieval Christian models of rulership; espousing the promotion of peace at a time of weak royal rule thus helped nobles in the construction of their own authority. Nobles such as the duke of Aquitaine therefore used these councils to assert their authority and lordship in areas where it was well established, or where they wished to establish it.⁴⁷ For secular nobles played a significant role in orchestrating and directing such councils, often because, as we have already seen in Chapter 3, they cannot be easily distinguished from the ecclesiastical leadership. Geoffrey Greymanle, count of Anjou, and advocate of the

Sainte-Croix convent in Poitiers, was also the brother of Guy, bishop of Le Puy, who held a council in c.975 which is sometimes seen as a precursor to the 'first' peace council of Charroux in 989; Guy was in turn also related to Archbishop Gunbaldus who presided on that later occasion. And nobles frequently used their title of lay abbot to expand their authority in the region: Duke William used the title of lay abbot of the college of Saint-Hilaire in Poitou in his charters, for example.⁴⁸ That these councils continued to be directed at the nobility, rather than the wider populace, is clear from Adhemar of Chabannes' account of the council of Limoges in 1031 in which he records how Bishop Jordan addressed the *milites* specifically, calling on them to restore what they had stolen from the church and the poor, citing the example of Zacchaeus, a repentant sinner who is described in Luke 19.1–10 as a rich prince who submitted to Christ, returned what he had unjustly taken from the poor, and was saved.⁴⁹ The choice of subject here suggests the importance of a noble audience to this council.

Although it is possible that there was a popular lay presence at many of them, the Peace of God councils must therefore be viewed within the context of noble politics. Although clerical accounts of such occasions referred to popular participation, they adopted this feature from hagiography to testify to the success of these councils. They seem therefore to be movements of the elite, grounded in earlier ideas of the role of nobles in preserving the peace, rather than mass movements of the populace.

The next movement to appear in the records is comprised of the various accounts of the wide support given to particular communities of churchmen when they took the relics of their particular patron saint on a tour in order to raise funds for the rebuilding of the saint's church. Such accounts survive only from the late eleventh century onwards, but in all some eighteen accounts of successful fundraising relic tours conducted by existing religious communities exist from the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁵⁰ In their reports, churchmen depict the rebuilding of particular churches as being accompanied by populist religious revival movements. It is difficult for modern scholars to know what to make of such descriptions and whether they can be trusted: how far are their descriptions of large crowds turning out to witness the miracles wrought by the relics of the saint merely the result of the continuation of the rhetoric of a universal Church which was, as we have already seen, such a common component in accounts of particular saints' miracles? Or are they, rather, evidence for the importance

churchmen attributed to lay support for providing essential funds to underpin the costs of such reconstructions? And how far can we read across such accounts to distinguish clerical motives from those of the lay communities they encountered: can we use these descriptions to identify the extent to which these tours met the concerns and needs of those lay communities which chose to take part? Or do they tell us only about those of the guardians of these relics? Further investigation of two specific accounts allows us to begin to answer these questions.

The earliest reported example of such a movement dates to 1060 when some monks from the community at Lobbes took the relics of their founder, St Ursmer, on a tour around Flanders.⁵¹ The tour took place against a backdrop of a recent outbreak of plague, which had led many of Lobbes' surviving peasant tenants to flee their lands, and recent wars between the German emperor and count of Flanders which had led to the loss of various of the community's lands in Flanders. At the same time the monastery's church had been, we are told, reduced to being 'a decrepit ruin'. The tour thus had two objectives: to raise funds for the rebuilding of the church, and to obtain comital support for the restoration of their lands. At each place they visited, the monks set down the relics of St Ursmer, and used the occasion to call the feuding nobility together and to ask them to make peace with each other by swearing on the relics of St Ursmer. A revivalist Christian message thus accompanied fundraising but the focus of the tour was on the nobility rather than the peasantry. Here the universalist aspects of the account seem secondary to the more specific interests of the Lobbes community.

Other accounts, however, suggest some clerical promoters were alert to the money-raising potential of appealing to a socially broader audience. In his detailed study of twelfth-century saints' cults, Simon Yarrow demonstrates how the canons of Laon cathedral sought to translate the universalist rhetoric into specific support from both the urban bourgeoisie and the peasantry. They undertook a tour of relics of the Virgin Mary around central France and southern England in 1112 and 1113. Two records of the tour survive: that by Hermann, former abbot of Tournai, who wrote up his account in the mid-1140s, but seemingly based it on the canons' own records, and that by Guibert of Nogent, who wrote a more critical account in c.1115.⁵² The tour took place in the wake of an uprising by the citizens of Laon against the bishop which had resulted in his murder, and a fire which severely damaged the cathedral and twelve other churches within the

city. Hermann records how the canons raised some 120 marks, plus gifts of textiles and ornaments, on the English leg of the trip; this precision suggests his account is based on earlier records kept by the canons on tour.⁵³ As noted above, Hermann also records how the canons occasionally encountered objections from the clergy of churches in towns which they visited, as at Christchurch in Dorset. There the visiting canons were able to take advantage of the local townspeople's grievances against the local ecclesiastical elite to attract support for their cause.⁵⁴ But, as Hermann makes clear, the laity did not just provide funds for the rebuilding work; they also sometimes played an active part in it. He records how two cripples were cured when the canons visited the castle of Issoudun, and then joined those working on rebuilding the cathedral, encouraging the people by carrying stones and water, and preparing mortar. When the work on the church had been completed, one man went home, whilst the other joined the staff of the hospital in Laon as a servant. The implication is that although the men lacked the financial resources to contribute to the rebuilding fund, they could contribute in other ways.⁵⁵ It seems, given the specificity of Hermann's account, that the Laon canons deliberately set out to attract support from new constituencies. In this the requirements of the canons' ambitions met those of members of the laity who had become dissatisfied with current ecclesiastical provisions in new ways. Again the initiative came from the clergy but the laity were crucial to its success.

The involvement of peasants like those from the castle of Issoudun in the rebuilding of a church anticipates the next mass religious movement to be reported: that now known as 'the cult of the carts'.⁵⁶ This movement began in northern France in the 1140s as laymen and women came together as an act of physical devotion to drag the carts of materials needed for ecclesiastical rebuilding projects. Although this practice may have earlier origins, as we shall see, it seems to have begun at Chartres in 1144, where two reports survive which describe how men and women began to drag carts of stone and beams by hand for the construction of the new cathedral.⁵⁷ The words of one account emphasise how this activity was not confined to the lower orders:

Whoever saw, whoever heard in all the generations past [of such a thing], that kings, princes, potentates, puffed up with honours and riches, men and women of noble birth, should bind bridles upon their proud and

*swollen necks and submit them to wagons (plaustris) which, after the fashion of brute beasts, they dragged with their loads of wine, grain, oil, lime, stones, and beams, and whatever else is necessary to sustain life or for the construction of churches, even to Christ's abode.*⁵⁸

Haymo, abbot of the Norman house of St Pierre-sur-Dives, wrote this account in a letter addressed to his house's priory at Tetbury in Staffordshire promoting the practice. He goes on to describe how priests oversaw the work. Each priest presided over a 'cart of Christ' exhorting those taking part to penance, confession, lamentation and the resolution of a better life; at each halt they preached peace and forgiveness, and those who refused to join in the peacemaking were cast out from the group, and their offering removed from the cart as unclean. When the carts arrived at the church of Notre Dame in Chartres, those taking part submitted to flagellation from their priests, and, stripping off their clothes, lay on the ground, and crawled to the high altar to pray to the Mother of God, and patron of Chartres, for the answer to their prayers. This led to a mass healing of all the sick and infirm.

This rite spread from Chartres to Normandy where it became associated with churches dedicated to Mary; in Normandy, too, much was made of the need for those taking part to confess their sins, and to make peace with their enemies.⁵⁹ The written account of the rebuilding of the cathedral of Châlons-sur-Marne, composed between 1162 and 1171, also owes much to Haymo's account.⁶⁰ The cult seems to have been revived again at Chartres when the cathedral was rebuilt again in 1194.⁶¹ Abbot Suger described similar lay efforts in his account of how devoted neighbours, both noble and ignoble, joined the abbey's men to haul classical columns out of a quarry for the rebuilding of the church of Saint-Denis.⁶² The old church had grown too small to accommodate increasing numbers of pilgrims; Suger thus made an explicit link between the need for a new church to house visiting pilgrims, and the rebuilding which was itself accomplished owing to the miraculous involvement of the laity. Suger wrote in c.1145 about events which had taken place before 1140; it is unclear whether events in Chartres and Normandy influenced his account, or whether it represents an earlier example of this practice.

All these accounts, but Haymo's in particular, bring together many of the elements found in accounts of both earlier mass movements and of lay devotion to the saints. The universalism of crowds of laymen and women

from every class coming together for a common purpose was fundamental to descriptions of all these movements. The role of mutual peacemaking amongst participants had been integral to accounts of both the Peace of God councils and those of some fundraising campaigns, like that of the Lobbes community. The religious value attributed to physical work had an immediate precedent in the Laon community's funding campaign, but its emphasis on the salutary effects of manual labour also drew upon the importance attached to such efforts in the rules for monastic life. As we saw in Chapter 4 the value that monastic orders such as the Cistercians placed on manual work led them to offer new opportunities to the laity to enter the religious life as labourers, *conversi*. But the significance they attribute to labour had its roots in the Rule of Benedict. The 'cult of the cart' thus seems to represent the extension of these general monastic values more widely to the laity. But the ways in which monastic writers like Haymo understood such contributions also owed something to earlier hagiographical traditions. For the significance they attributed to the practice also has its roots in the ways in which earlier churchmen understood distinct lay Christian practices as evidence for God's acceptance of the importance of the intentions of all Christians. Just as Bernard of Angers accepted the peasants' own ways of praising Ste Foy, so his successors came to value the physical contributions of twelfth-century men and women. Haymo built on earlier elements in his account of the 'cult', but he also identified a new element which is not mentioned in accounts of earlier mass religious movements: penance. Participation in the cult is treated as a form of penance: the participants confess their sins, undertake strenuous, demeaning work as a form of penance, and thus, renewed, vow to live a better life. Participation led to personal reform. Individual efforts collectively led to the rebuilding of the Church. Thus personal and institutional initiatives joined together in a single movement for the renewal of the Church itself.

As this analysis indicates, Haymo's account is a very self-conscious piece of ecclesiastical rhetoric. It seems unlikely, given the number of different examples, that the 'cult of the carts' was merely a literary trope, but it is worth noting that the accounts we have are also heavily influenced by earlier texts, starting with the Bible. The Latin word for cart, 'plaustra', is the term used in the Vulgate to refer to the vehicle on which the Ark of the Covenant was carried back to Jerusalem by King David, accompanied by singing and music, where it was housed in the temple built by his successor,

Solomon. Conventional medieval biblical exegesis interpreted the Ark of the Covenant as presaging Jesus Christ, and linked the drawing of the ark especially to church building.⁶³ The decision to promote the drawing of carts and link them to these building campaigns thus found powerful biblical resonances. Previous authors had made this link. A fifth-century Greek text, Mark the Deacon's *Life of St Porphyry*, bishop of Gaza, describes the faithful as dragging columns from the beach to build the cathedral in Gaza in 402–07.⁶⁴ A copy of this text certainly existed in eleventh-century Italy which may explain why the chronicler of Monte Cassino recorded in 1066 the faithful carrying the first column of the new abbey church 'on the strength of their necks and arms'.⁶⁵ Suger seems to have drawn on the Monte Cassino material for his own account. Monte Cassino may also have been the inspiration for the early twelfth-century account composed by a Belgian abbot, Roger of Saint-Trond, who described how the faithful contributed to the rebuilding of the abbey church between 1055 and 1082: they purchased building materials at their own expense and carried them on their shoulders and on carts, and dragged up columns without the use of carts.⁶⁶ Both biblical and earlier precedents lie behind surviving accounts of the efforts of participants in the 'cult of the carts'.

These accounts are self-conscious and highly literary creations. It is far from clear how far large numbers of lay men and women, motivated by the hope of forgiveness of their sins, and thus of increasing their chances of future salvation, took part in the 'cult of the carts' but the chances are that some of them did. It is a big leap from seeing the accounts as influenced by earlier texts to viewing them as fictional. Although it is impossible to identify the motives of lay participants except through the prism of clerical reporters it is important to recognise that the use of this rhetoric suggests that churchmen thought it important to portray this ecclesiastical rebuilding movement as the product of lay aspirations and effort.

Up to now we have focused on the ways in which clerical authors constructed their accounts of mass popular religious movements, and the reasons they might have had for portraying such movements as popular and socially diverse. In all the examples we have considered so far the clergy seem to have been firmly in control, albeit sometimes in conjunction with the secular elite, as is the case for the Peace of God councils. Seen through their eyes, the laity responded enthusiastically to clerical direction but did not initiate these new expressions of personal devotion. Sometimes, however,

as in our final example of the Capuciati, the sources allow us to investigate the interplay of relationships between the clergy and the laity in greater depth, and to begin to uncover the degree to which the clerical control only came to be applied rather belatedly to cults which had their origins in lay popular devotion.

The Capuciati is a more short-lived peacemaking movement which began in southern France in the late twelfth century. The accounts of it, some supportive, some much more negative, suggest that unlike the Peace of God movement a century and half earlier it began within the lower echelons of the lay community before being taken up by the local ecclesiastical hierarchy. Like the earlier peace movement, it used elements from saints' cults to promote its message. It started in the Auvergne in 1182 when a carpenter called Durand Dujardin had a vision of the Virgin who was holding a picture of herself with the Christ child in her arms which bore the inscription 'Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, grant us peace'. This text, the *Agnus dei*, was recited by the priest in the Mass during the breaking of the Host, and would thus have been familiar to both the laity and the clergy. The Virgin told Durand to go to the bishop of Le Puy and to set up a brotherhood to maintain the peace. This he did, and the brotherhood quickly became established; reports of it soon reached Saint-Denis and Laon in northern France and Canterbury in England.⁶⁷ Members of the brotherhood wore a uniform of a small white hood, from which hung two bands of cloth, one at the back, and one over the breast, and a pewter badge of the Virgin and Child with the words 'Lamb of God' on it. Each year at Pentecost members swore to go to Mass, and not to gamble, blaspheme, frequent taverns, wear foppish garments, or carry weapons; in other words they were to behave in a similar way to that expected of the secular clergy. In choosing this dress and way of life, members of the brotherhood sought to mark themselves off from their enemies, the brigands, against whom they swore to take action. They also swore to maintain the peace amongst themselves, even when one member of the brotherhood killed the relative of another. They even adopted the structures of a religious confraternity, paying an annual membership fee. The movement quickly spread from the Velay and the Auvergne, to Berry, Burgundy, Aquitaine and Provence.

Although the movement initially seems to have received the support of the churchmen in the area, within two years the brotherhood had come to

be perceived as a challenge to lordly authority in the area, and the brotherhood is instead presented as a form of peasant rebellion against the excessive demands of lordship:

There was in Gaul a widespread enthusiasm which impelled people to revolt against the powerful. Though good at the outset the movement was nothing else than the work of the devil, disguised as an angel of light. The league of the sworn of Puy was only a diabolic invention. There was no longer fear or respect for superiors. All strove to acquire liberty, saying that it belonged to them from the time of Adam and Eve, from the very day of creation. They did not understand that servitude is punishment of sin! The result was that there was no longer any distinction between great and small, but a fatal confusion tending to ruin the institutions which rule us all, through the will of God and the agency of the powerful on this earth . . . this formidable pestilence began to spread in most parts of France, especially in Berry, Auxerre and Burgundy. The adherents of the sect reached such a height of folly that they were ready to take by force the fights and liberties they claimed.

This account goes on to describe how the newly appointed bishop of Auxerre, Hugh of Noyers (1183–1206) took armed action against members of the brotherhood, fining them and taking away their hoods, commanding them to go bareheaded for a year.⁶⁸ It is a panegyric to Bishop Hugh; what is portrayed by others as a pious, disciplined movement has become in this text a challenge to the social order by a mob which only the bishop was able to deal with effectively.

The earliest accounts to be written are by contrast much more supportive of the Capuciati, stressing the movement's order and organisation. They also emphasised its social diversity. Although founded by a carpenter, they report how bishops, counts and people of the middling sort as well as the poor all joined the sect. They clearly subscribe to the universalising norm which we have seen was usual in approving accounts of religious movements. It is thus not surprising that critics chose to invert these traits, portraying the movement as a rabble of 'stupid and undisciplined persons' who had the temerity to issue orders to their social superiors.⁶⁹ The rapid shift within one year from clerical approval to condemnation may hint at the failure of clerical attempts to prevent the radicalisation of a genuinely popular movement, or at their frustration of not being able to control it.

The movement clearly shared some features with the Peace of God councils two centuries earlier: participants swore to preserve the peace actively, and drew on the features of saints' cults for their origin and group identity. Yet, unlike the Peace of God meetings, the movement owed its inception to the actions of laymen. Whilst one account suggests that a canon of Le Puy had deceived Durand and acted as his puppet master, this report comes from a writer hostile to the Capucians, and perhaps sought to explain away how it initially received clerical support by blaming it on one renegade priest.

The ways in which different churchmen chose to report the activities of the Capucians point to the different tensions which clearly existed within the movement. The clergy never comprised a unity, but rather a series of rival groups, and the different accounts hint at the tensions between canons and bishop, and between different sees: the bishop of Le Puy authorised the movement, the bishop of Auxerre suppressed it. At the same time, the way in which a movement founded by a layman made use of the increasingly popular cult of the Virgin Mary, and adopted its structures and constitution from existing ecclesiastical organisations, points to the ways in which such devotion was never the monopoly of the clergy either.

Saints, and their cults, allowed the laity direct contact with the divine. Access to shrines, and participation in movements associated with saints' cults, thus offered individuals and local communities the chance to move beyond the contact mediated through the official rites of the Church presided over by clerics and monks.⁷⁰ Such opportunities help to explain their popularity, and their diversity.

But the evidence for such cults is highly problematic. As we have seen, the popularity of particular cults is a textual construct of their clerical custodians, anxious to promote individual shrines for their own purposes. Churchmen adduced examples of lay support and lay piety to create their claims for the importance of movements and cults in which they had an especial interest. In doing so they drew on a wealth of earlier textual precedents. Although we must acknowledge this, we also need to recognise that popularity is never an empty topos: rather clerical writers, as we have seen, chose to use it for very specific purposes. The examples of saints' cults and popular religious movements considered here, for example, are often treated in isolation, yet taken together they suggest the extent to which clergy could harness lay support for saints' cults to promote their own messages about the reform and renewal of the Church through the changes wrought

on the individual. At the same time they hint that lay communities often bought into such movements for their own, to us generally unknown, reasons. Control of particular cult sites or religiously inspired movements could be contested and, as we have seen, often was. It is an important feature of our source material that it is often only when the authority of their clerical custodians became challenged in some way that we learn about such cults. It is thus important to recognise how many other successful cults probably went unrecorded because no one contested them. Those we know about probably represent a rather atypical sample of those on offer to the people living in the medieval west. These problems notwithstanding, it is also clear that such cults served as an important focus for the piety for both the laity and the clergy living near them.

Notes and references

- 1 *Abbot Suger on the Abbey Church of St Denis and its Art Treasures*, ed. and trans. Erwin Panofsky (Princeton, NJ, 1946), 9–10.
- 2 In general, see P. Brown, *The Cult of Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (London, 1981); J. Howard-Johnston and P. A. Hayward, eds, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1999); S. Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth-century England* (Oxford, 2006); J. M. H. Smith, 'Saints and Their Cults', in Noble and Smith, eds, *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Early Medieval Christianity c. 600–c. 1100*, 581–605.
- 3 *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi*, in *Three Eleventh-century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumoldi*, ed. R. Love (Oxford, 1996), 50–73; on places and landmarks associated with the saint recorded in later writings, see J. Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England', in A. Thacker and R. Sharpe, eds, *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West* (Oxford, 2002), 455–94 at p. 483, n. 81.
- 4 Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, 169–88.
- 5 Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', 473, 477; idem, 'A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints', in Thacker and Sharpe, eds, *Local Saints*, 495–565 at pp. 545–47, 562.
- 6 O. J. Padel, 'Local Saints and Place-names in Cornwall', in Thacker and Sharpe, eds, *Local Saints*, 303–60.

- 7 J. M. H. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles and Relics in Brittany, c.850–1250', *Speculum* 65 (1990), 309–43 at p. 337.
- 8 'The Miracles of St Ursmer and His Journey through Flanders', c. 3, ed. and trans. G. Koziol in Head, *Medieval Hagiography*, 346.
- 9 Smith, 'Oral and Written', 329.
- 10 Wulfstan of Winchester, *Narratio metrica de S. Swithuno*, i, v, in M. Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun* (Oxford, 2003), 455–61 at p. 457.
- 11 Ibid., ii, i, 492–97.
- 12 Matt. 21.8–9.
- 13 Adhemar, *Chronicon*, III 49, 169.
- 14 *Abbot Suger*, ed. and trans. Panošky, 87–89.
- 15 *Les miracles de Saint Benoît*, ed. E. de Certain (Paris, 1858), I, 31, I, 32, 68–69.
- 16 Ibid., I, 28, 64–65.
- 17 'Sermo de S. Benedictio', PL 133, 722, translated by T. Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of the Saints*, p. 136.
- 18 P.-A. Sigal, 'Les Voyages de reliques aux onzième et douzième siècles,' in *Voyage, quête, pèlerinage dans la littérature et la civilisation médiévale* (Paris, 1976), 75–103.
- 19 Yarrow, *Saints*, 216–18.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 *The Miracle of St Maximinus*, trans. T. Head in Head, *Medieval Hagiography*, 287–92.
- 22 Reginald of Durham, *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus*, Surtees Society (London, 1835), cc. 113, 121, 124, 126, pp. 254–55, 266–68, 270–72.
- 23 Trans. P. Sheingorn, *The Book of Sainte Foy* (Philadelphia, 1995), 165–66.
- 24 Lantfred, *Translatio et miracula s. Swithuni*, c. 11, in Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, 297.
- 25 *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, IV.13, trans. Sheingorn, 200–01.
- 26 J. C. Robertson, *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, Rolls series 67 (London, 1876), vol. II, 61–62, 65.
- 27 *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, trans. Sheingorn, 61–62, 65, 137–38.
- 28 *Liber miraculorum sancte Fidis*, II, 12, trans. Sheingorn, 138.
- 29 On the importance of recognising the popular-elite distinction as a self-conscious one made by medieval authors in support of their argument, see Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, 5–16.
- 30 'Veneranda dies', trans. in T. F. Coffey, L. K. Davidson and M. Dunn, eds, *The miracles of Saint James* (New York, 1996), 18–19, *Liber Sancti Jacobi: Codex Calixtinus*, ed. W. Muir Whitehill et al., 3 vols (Santiago, 1944). On the text, see the sceptical note by Christopher Hohler, 'A Note on the Jacobus', *Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 35 (1972), 31–80.
- 31 'The Miracles of Saint James', no. 18, in Coffey et al., *The Miracles of Saint James*, 89–90.
- 32 M. Bull, *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour: Analysis and Translation* (Woodbridge, 1999), I, 34, 122–23.
- 33 B. Abou-el Haj, 'The Audiences for the Medieval Cult of Saints', *Gesta* 30 (1991), 3–15; K. M. Ashley and P. Sheingorn, *Writing Faith: Text, Sign and History In the Miracles of Sainte Foy* (Chicago, 1999); Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, 177–89; H. Mayr-Harting, 'Functions of a Twelfth-century Shrine', in idem and R. I. Moore, eds, *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis* (London, 1985), 193–206; Lapidge, ed., *The Cult of St Swithun*.
- 34 *The Book of Sainte Foy*, trans. Sheingorn, 79.
- 35 Bull, *The Miracles of Our Lady of Rocamadour*, I.2, 101–02.
- 36 Cf. Colin Morris, 'Introduction', in Morris and Roberts, eds, *Pilgrimage*, 9.
- 37 Cited by Birch, *Pilgrimage*, 118–20.
- 38 T. Pestell, 'Using Material Culture to Define Holy Space: the Bromholm Project', in A. Spicer and S. Hamilton, eds, *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2005), 161–86.
- 39 Yarrow, *Saints and Their Communities*, 63–99.
- 40 In general on this movement and its importance, see T. Head and R. Landes, eds, *Peace of God: Social Violence and Religious Response in France around the Year 1000* (Ithaca, NY, 1992); on the number of councils held between 989 and 1038, see R. I. Moore, *The First European Revolution c.970–1215* (Oxford, 2000), 9. For those who think the level of popular participation in the councils has been exaggerated: D. Barthélemy, 'Le Mutation féodale, a-t-elle eu lieu?', *Annales* 47 (1992), 767–77, and his 'Le Paix de Dieu dans son contexte', *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 40 (1997), 3–35; Janet L. Nelson, review of T. Head and R. Landes, eds, *The Peace of God in Speculum* 69 (1994), 163–69.
- 41 Rodulfus Glaber, *Histories*, IV.14, 194–95.
- 42 *De diversis casibus cenobii Dervensis et miracula S. Bercharii*, c. 27, *Acta sanctorum ordinis sanctis Benedicti*, 9 vols, ed. L. D'Achéry and J. Mabillon (Paris, 1668–1701), II, 859, trans. in T. Head and R. Landes, 'Introduction', in Head and Landes, eds, *The Peace of God*, 5–6.

- 43 K. Cushing, *Reform and the Papacy in the Eleventh Century: Spirituality and Social Change* (Manchester, 2005), p. 51; Andrew of Fleury, *Miracula s. Benedicti*, trans. Head and Landes, *Peace of God*, 339–42.
- 44 J. A. Bowman, 'Councils, Memory and Mills: The Early Development of the Peace of God in Catalonia', *Early Medieval Europe* 8 (1999), 99–129; T. Head, 'The Development of the Peace of God in Aquitaine (970–1005)', *Speculum* 74 (1999), 656–86; T. Head, 'Peace and Power in France around the Year 1000', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 23 (2006), 1–17.
- 45 Adhemar of Chabannes cited by C. Taylor, *Heresy in Medieval France: Dualism in Aquitaine and the Agenais, 1000–1249* (Woodbridge, 2005), 29.
- 46 Taylor, *Heresy*, 30, citing D. F. Callahan, 'William the Great and the Monasteries of Aquitaine', *Studia Monastica* 19 (1977), 321–42.
- 47 J. Marindale, 'Peace and War in the Early Eleventh-century Aquitaine', in C. Harper-Bill and R. Harvey, eds, *Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the Fifth Strawberry Hill Conference* (Woodbridge, 1992), 147–176.
- 48 Head, 'The Development of the Peace of God'; idem, 'Peace and Power'.
- 49 M. Bull, *Knightly Piety and the Lay Response to the First Crusade: The Limousin and Gascony, c. 970–c. 1130* (Oxford, 1993), 44–45.
- 50 R. Kaiser, 'Quêtes itinerantes avec des reliques pour financer la construction des églises (XIe–XIIe siècles)', *Le moyen âge* 101 (1995), 205–25; P.-A. Sigal, 'Les voyages des reliques aux onzième et douzième siècles', in M. A. Cuc, ed., *Voyage, quête, pèlerinage dans la littérature et la civilisation médiévale* (Aix-en-Provence, 1976).
- 51 'The Miracles of St Ursmer on His Journey through Flanders', trans. Koziol; G. Koziol, 'Monks, Feuds and the Making of Peace in Eleventh-century Flanders', in Head and Landes, eds, *The Peace of God*, 239–58.
- 52 *De miraculis beatae Mariane Laudunensis*, PL 156, 961–1018; Guibert of Nogent, *Monodine*, III, 12–13, PL 156, 937–42; trans. Archambault, *A Monk's Confession* 173–81. For modern accounts, see: J. S. P. Tatlock, 'The English Journey of the Laon Canons', *Speculum* 8 (1933), 454–65; B. Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000–1215* (Aldershot, 1982), 133–42; Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, 63–99.
- 53 Yarrow, *Saints*, 81–84.
- 54 Ibid., 89–92.
- 55 PL 156, 968D; Yarrow, *Saints*, 84.
- 56 Carl F. Barnes, Jr, 'Cult of the Carts', *Dictionary of Art*, ed. J. Turner (London, 1996), 8: 257–59.
- 57 A. Kingsley Porter, *Medieval Architecture: Its Origins and Development with Lists of Monuments and Bibliographies*, 2 vols (1909; repr. New York, 1969), II, 156–57.
- 58 Ibid., II, 154.
- 59 'Letter of Archbishop Hugh of Rouen to Bishop Theodorich of Amiens', c. 114, *ibid.*, II, 157.
- 60 Barnes, 'Cult of the Carts', 258.
- 61 Ward, *Miracles*, 153.
- 62 *Liellus alter de consecratione ecclesie sancti Dionysii*, in Abbot Suger, ed. and trans. Panofsky, 92–93.
- 63 II Samuel 6.3; I Chronicles 13.7–8.
- 64 Barnes, 'Cult of the Carts', 257.
- 65 *Chronica monasterii Casiensis*, trans. C. Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art 300–1150* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1971), 136; Abbot Suger, ed. and trans. Panofsky, 214.
- 66 Rodulf of Saint-Trond, *Gesta abbatum Trudonensium*, ed. D. R. Koepke, *MGH SS X* (Hannover, 1852), 234–35.
- 67 A. Luchaire, *Social France at the Time of Philip Augustus*, trans E. B. Krehbiel (London, 1912), 13–19. See also J. Perrel, 'Une révolution populaire au moyen âge: le mouvement des Capuchonnés du Puy, 1182–84', *Cahiers de la Haute-Loire* (1977), 61–79; G. Dickson, 'Religious Enthusiasm in the Medieval West and the Second Conversion of Europe', in his *Religious Enthusiasm in the Medieval West: Revivals, Crusades, Saints* (Aldershot, 2000), I, 14–15; J. H. Arnold, 'Religion and Popular Rebellion, from the Capuciani to Niklashausen', *Cultural and Social History* 6 (2009), 149–69.
- 68 Luchaire, *Social France*, 17; *Historia Episcoporum Autissiodorensium, Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de France*, ed. M. Bouquet et al., rev. L. Delisle (Paris, 1904), XVIII, 729–30.
- 69 Arnold, 'Religion and Popular Rebellion', 158–62.
- 70 J. M. H. Smith, 'Saints and Their Cults', in Noble and Smith, eds, *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Early Medieval Christianity c. 600–c. 1100*, 581–605 at 582.