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The Relations between the Religious Orders of the Diocese of Lincoln and Robert Grosseteste

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THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS OF THE DIOCESE OF LINCOLN AND ROBERT GROSSETESTE

BY

JOHN F. MITZEL, S.J.

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VITA AUCTORIS

John Francis Mitzel, S.J., was born in Akron, Ohio, March 26, 1922. His elementary schooling was begun at St. Paul's parish school, but after the mid-year of the first grade he transferred to St. Mary's Grade School. The first year of his high school studies were made at Campion in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin while the remaining three years were taken at St. Mary's High in Akron. Upon graduation, he entered Milford Novitiate of the Society of Jesus, at Milford, Ohio, in August, 1940. For the four years spent there, he was academically connected with Xavier University, Cincinnati. In August of 1944, he transferred to West Baden College of Loyola University, receiving the degree of Bachelor of Arts from that institution in February, 1946. He was enrolled in the Graduate School of Loyola University from September, 1945 to June, 1949.
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CHAPTER I

THE MONASTIC SITUATION IN THE FIRST HALF
OF THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

It is generally acknowledged that the church reached the apex of its power in the middle ages during the pontificate of Innocent III and that the very zenith of authority was attained in the Fourth Lateran Council which met in November, 1215. But by the time of Boniface VIII and the failure of his Unam Sanctam and Clericis Laicos, the church had lost its supremacy and was plunging toward the nadir of the Western Schism.

But in between the zenith of 1215 and the nadir fore­shadowed in the Anagni outrage of 1303, across the stage of English history moves the figure of Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln (1235-53). He was a man of wide intellectual attain­ments in letters, philosophy, and theology. His election in 1235 to the see of Lincoln put him in charge of the largest diocese of England. In a celebrated passage, Matthew Paris refers to him as the hammer of monks. Other contemporary writ­ers refer to the harshness of his monastic visitation. Our purpose will be to examine all the evidence in the case in or­der to determine just how much truth there is in this judgment of the famous chronicler of St. Albans.

The first task, however, is a description of the monastic situation in England during the first part of the
thirteenth century so that the relations of Lincolniensis with the monks may be grasped in their proper setting. Some of the pigments that will enter into this portrait are the opinions which people had about the monks, the general monastic situation around 1200, together with the material condition, the religious status and the intellectual attainments of the monks. The final lines of the picture will be a delineation of their relations with the king.

By the year 1200, there was in England a group definitely opposed to the monastic order, and in this opposition two parties were involved. The first was composed of various English prelates whose patriarch had been Roger of Bishop's Bridge, archbishop of York (d. 1181). These bishops were opposed to the black monks in particular because of the exemptions and privileges claimed by the various monastic houses.¹ Another member of the episcopal opposition was Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury (1184-9), a prelate who, late in life, had entered religion as a Cistercian. His talents and genius quickly raised him to prominence so that he was soon elected superior of Ford Abbey; in 1180, he was chosen to be bishop of Worcester and four years later, he was elected to the primatial see of England. Although he began his reign in harmony with the monks of his

cathedral chapter, the two parties were soon at loggerheads over a proposed collegiate church of the archbishop to be founded at Hachington near Canterbury which, the monks feared, would soon rival and supplant them. St. Hugh of Lincoln advised Baldwin against the project, but the archbishop failed to follow the saintly Carthusian's advice. Moreover, Baldwin secured the appointment of Hugh of Nonant to the see of Coventry where the new bishop immediately proceeded to oust his monastic chapter. Baldwin's most atrocious act, however, was the appointment of Roger Norreys to the priorship of Canterbury and later to the abbacy of Evesham, which "appointment must always remain a dark stain on the archbishop's reputation."  

In addition to the opposition of the bishops, another party "showed itself in the violent criticism of a group of literary men" against the monks; "the attack of these clerks was against the whole monastic order, black [Benedictine] and white [Cistercian]." The two outstanding representatives of this group are Walter Map and Girald Cambriensis. Girald had been friendly to the Cistercians, but when it seemed that they had wronged him, he became their most vitriolic critic. 

In the last decades of the century, when so many of the bishops were at odds with

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2 Ibid., 320  
3 Ibid., 332  
4 Ibid., 315  
5 Ibid., 316
the black monks, and when the clerks of the royal and other great households, such as Walter Map and Gerald of Wales, were bitter in their attacks upon the Cistercians, it was a commonplace to contrast the sobriety and regularity of the canons with the avarice and laxity of the monks.6

Although there was an organized opposition in 1200, which was lacking a century earlier, it would not be correct to conclude that this feeling was universal. The fact that the monastic organization was able to maintain itself, the fact that it was able to attract notable recruits and that the king continued to use the abbots and priors as his judges and even as sheriffs, goes far to indicate that a fair section of "public opinion" was not opposed to the monks.

According to the German scholar, Dr. Else Guetschan, whose opinion Dom David Knowles believes to be "only slightly over-emphatic", the general ecclesiastical situation in England during the pontificate of the great Innocent was chaotic in the extreme.

The church of the land is split by a series of bitter conflicts. Each man's hand is raised against his neighbor's. The archdioceses are separated by a century old jealousy. St. David puts forth a claim to be the third archbishopric. The suffragan bishops are loath to submit to their metropolitan's will. The archdeacons, on the other

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6 Ibid., 361
hand, complain to both king and pope about the high-handed tactics of their bishops. The relations of the cloister with the bishops are the worst of all. All discipline in the individual dioceses has disappeared."

In the midst of this general disruption, the monastic class in England presented another example of disunity. Since a constitutional bond was lacking, the outlook of the great monasteries was individual rather than corporate, so that the various houses were isolated units. No longer was there a Lanfranc; no longer did a house such as Evesham or "a monastic bishop such as Wulfstan of Worcester" exert a benevolent influence upon a whole circle of neighbors.

Not only were the monasteries so many independent units, not only were they striving to liberate themselves from episcopal regulation, but in the very monastery itself, centrifugal forces were separating the community from its superior. "... all the houses were wholly independent of each other and of any higher authority within the monastic body. Each, in all matters of discipline, observance and ritual, was a law unto itself...." This is true of the black monks rather than of the Cistercians and the new religious groups among whom a general chapter secured united action. But they too withdrew as much as possible from diocesan control.

7 Ibid., 371, n. 1. Translated by Francis J. Smith, S.J.
8 Ibid., 300
9 Ibid., 371
The three powers, who normally could have curbed the excesses of the individual monasteries, were the local bishop, the king and neighboring abbots; but by the beginning of the thirteenth century, they "had ceased to have their disposal, either by law, custom or public opinion, the powers essential to make their interference prompt and effective."¹⁰ Such a condition was not destined to endure, and it is due to the energy of Innocent III in summoning the Lateran Council and guiding its legislation that a new order of things blossomed forth. Dom David Knowles adds that another contributing factor was "the emergence of a number of eminent administrators among the diocesan bishops."¹¹

Although by the end of the twelfth century, the black monks "had all but ceased to increase the number of their foundations",¹² that is not an indication that they had no care for the material condition of the houses already established. Many bequests were now being directed to the canons regular, but the Benedictines continued to improve their buildings and also to put up new ones. In fact, the building activities of the monks absorbed much of their income. It was not always out of the abundance of their resources that the monks raised their abbey churches and shrines since we have records showing

¹⁰ Ibid., 344
¹¹ Ibid., 313
¹² Ibid., 359
that they would, by a self-denying resolution, forego their pittances in order to augment the credit side of the building-fund ledger.

Thus the tower at Evesham was built c. 1200 partly on the money that one of the monks acquired by practicing in medicine, partly by what the community could save by renunciation of various kinds, and at Bury in 1198 Abbot Samson gave his whole store of sixty marks towards reconstructing the shrine of St. Edmund and suggested that the monks should go without their pittances.13

At Peterborough, in the diocese of Lincoln, we also get the picture of how the monks cared for their property. They were unfortunate in 1200; for the archbishop of St. Andrews, while he was custodian of the abbey during an interregnum, carried off much of the monks' possessions;14 but three of the abbots of the first part of the thirteenth century were diligent in their activity. Pelarius (1200-1210) built several halls at the various manors while his sacrist, Robert de Lyndeseye glazed 30 windows in the monastic buildings. Upon becoming abbot, Robert (1214-1222) built a marble lavatory.15 Walter de St. Edmund (1233-1245) "busied himself much in the repairs and enlargement of the monastery and its revenues though he undertook no building of extraordinary magnitude.16

13 Ibid., 303-4
15 Ibid., 354
16 Ibid., 355
The community of Spalding after being victimized by the abbey of Angers which had the power of appointing the prior, finally made progress in developing its material condition after it had been freed from foreign control through the intervention of Hugh of Wells and Robert Grosseteste. Under John, the Almoner, the priory acquired many lands and was guided by John's economy and industry. It seems, too, that Ramsey during the administration of Ranulf, who became abbot in 1231, prospered, for "Matthew Paris ... speaks of his generosity with money and gifts both to the king and to St. Alban's abbey."18

But as was mentioned above, centrifugal forces were at work in the monastery. In order to facilitate the administration of the various parcels of property, they were assigned to the officials of the abbey who were supposed to supply certain needs of the community from the revenues thereof. This led to many duplications in administration and made it next to impossible to secure a unified financial policy.

When, under a weak or absentee abbot, the officials had carte blanche not only to spend, but to mortgage the resources and treasure of the house, a state of chaos was swiftly reached such as prevailed at Bury immediately before the election of Abbot Samson 1184 -- and Bury, be it remarked, was possessed

17 Ibid., III, 209
of potential resources amply sufficient for its needs and was far from being decadent in spirit.19

Another serious drain on monastic resources was the number of lawsuits in which these religious bodies participated. Private cases were serious enough, but they were of very little importance when compared to the causes célèbres. An incalculable wealth was expended by the monks in trying to stave off revocation of their privileges, or in the attempt to gain new exemptions from diocesan control.20 These lawsuits and monastic building projects, together with the uneconomical financial arrangements in most monasteries, so depleted many communities' resources that they found themselves in the clutches of the usurious Jewish money lenders. This was true of Bury, St. Albans and Evesham at one or other time during this period, and even the prosperous, wool-raising Cistercians were forced into the usurious embrace of these leading medieval money lenders.21

The effort to determine the spiritual status of the monasteries is a little more difficult since we can only deal with externals without really piercing to its very heart and core. The externals, however, will give us some indication of the interior fervor present; for from the internal convic-

19 Knowles, 304
20 Ibid., 302-3
21 Ibid., 304-5
tions of a person, flow his actions. It is much more difficult, however, to judge in how far Cistercian discipline and observance were effected by the disruptive forces at work in the Church. On this point, we will accept the opinion of Dom David Knowles:

... here it may be sufficient to remark that the summary judgments that have sometimes been made do not sufficiently distinguish between century and century, house and house, and that in general the life of the order would seem to have been still vigorous at the death of John.22

During the reign of John, the monasteries, as well as the other phases of church life, were thrown out of gear so that the lawlessness of the times with its concomitant insecurity would tend toward a weakening of religious discipline. Moreover, due to the differences of opinion that arose between abbots and convents, "the spiritual relationship of father and sons" would be adversely affected.

This picture of a breakdown in religious discipline is heightened by a picture of the situation which evolved during the first decade of this century at Evesham under the unworthy abbot, Robert Norreys. This man had been intruded on the community by Archbishop Baldwin. Norreys was a moral reprobate who thought nothing of indulging in adultery or over-

22 Ibid., 356
indulging himself at table and who had no sense of the proprieties of dress, even within the precincts of the religious house. "Under such a regime," remarks Knowles, "it was inevitable that regular life should collapse." The substance of the house was wasted and it is no wonder then that "hospitality and the relief of the poor were out of the question;" but even under such adverse conditions, Evesham could still attract a man of the character of Thomas Marleberge.

The situation at Battle during the rule of Odo (1175-1200) and at Bury St. Edmunds under Samson (1184-1210) gives us a picture more in keeping with normal religious life. In Odo, we see a man who set spiritual values incalculably higher than temporal ones. Consequently we learn that when he died "he left behind him a reputation for sanctity." Although we can characterize Samson of Bury as the great administrator, nevertheless his abbey had not lost sight of its spiritual ideal. But even here we must proceed with caution. According to Knowles:

To characterize Bury as an abode of mediocrity would therefore be unjust, if by mediocrity is understood all lack of enthusiasm or endeavour. Yet it would be true to say that, so far as can be seen, the purely spiritual ideal of the monastic life had been lost to view, and esprit de corps had come to occupy for many the

23 Ibid., 334
24 Ibid., 306
position of a leading interest in life
and guide of action.25

As in most cases, so with the monks, an infraction
of rule or a misdemeanor receives great publicity while years
and years of renunciation and great sanctity frequently pass
unnoticed. That many houses were not lax and were sincerely
trying to live their profession, we find implicitly in the
statutes of the first black monk general chapter held in 1218.

Therefore, dear brothers, we urge and
exhort you in the Lord humbly and de-
voutly to take upon yourselves, and
with affection and fidelity to fulfill,
what has been planned and ordained for
the salvation of souls, the reform of
the order and regular observance in the
Lord. Furthermore, when the visitors
come to your houses, backed by the au-
thority of the council, receive them
with graciousness striving, to use the
words of the council, that they may
find your affairs in such good order
that you may want not correction, but
commendation.26

The various decrees of this general chapter indicate that the
monks wished to uphold their religious spirit and to this end
they are incited to greater efforts in the more perfect observ-
ance of their vows and what these vows imply.27 It seems that
in spite of the troubles at Evesham that may be cited, in spite
of the dispoiling of Spalding by its foreign priors, in spite

25 Ibid., 308
27 Ibid, passim 3-9
of the rare cases of violations of chastity that may be unearthed in spite, too, of the fact that the fervor of English monasticism does not reach the white-hot intensity of St. Benedict's or St. Bernard's religious spirit, nevertheless these religious, for the most part, were sincerely striving to save their souls; they were exercising the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; and their prayers were directed to the glory of God and the begging of His grace for the salvation of their fellow men.

It can not be doubted that by the thirteenth century the monasteries had ceased to be the educational centers of Christendom. "The great educational revolution"²⁸ of the eleventh century, according to Rashdall, was the concomitant decline of monastic influence and the emergence of the secular clergy as the dominant factor in the schools. In England, from the latter half of the thirteenth century, the Benedictines and the other religious orders had scholars at Oxford and Cambridge. But the conclusion of the author of the celebrated work on medieval universities is that "these monastic colleges possess very little importance in the history either of learning or of education."²⁹ They are condemned for not advancing learning and are accused of sending men to the universities merely to avoid being called absolutely ignorant.

²⁹ Ibid., III, 190
To the monasteries belongs the credit of producing the great medieval historians. The Benedictine monks of this period were above all things men of the world: their point of honour was a devotion to the interests of the house; their intellectual interests lay in its history and tradition. As a body they had as little interest in the controversies of the age as they had in the practical work of the church.30

This statement contains much truth, but it is too harsh and too sweeping. In the few following pages, we will give a description of some of the intellectual endeavours of the monks. These statements will refer, for the most part, to the first half of the thirteenth century.

During the thirteenth century, the monastic scriptorium was in its full flowering and only by the end of this century was it to begin its decline.31 The books of the library were usually obtained by borrowing a book for copying from a neighboring monastery.32 This was only one of the four possible ways of securing copies of books. Because of the great value of a book, due to the great and strenuous labor expended in its production, many monastic institutions were wont to "put their volumes under anathema."33 This practice of threatening a person with excommunication for lending a book

30 Ibid., 190-1
32 Ibid., 627
33 Ibid.
was censured by the Council of Paris in 1212. Nor is it true that it was the common practice of religious houses to chain their books in this period. Thompson goes into this subject and his conclusion is that, with the exception of service-books, manuscripts were not chained. It was only later that this practice came into vogue. "My own opinion is that it [chaining books] was more common for the first printed books than in the case of manuscripts."34 The usual assumption is that books were chained to prevent their usage; such an opinion is quite erroneous. The purpose of the practice, when it existed, was to insure the wider usage of books, to prevent one person from appropriating a book for himself and thus deprive others of its use.

Although the monks did not produce new works or distinguish themselves as theologians and philosophers, nevertheless they did a great service by preserving many works for us. And this monastic employment was considered consonant with the Benedictine vocation.

So, too, the Statuta of the Benedictines in England in the 13th and 14th centuries make it clear that this the copying of manuscripts etc. was looked upon as no less a part of the English monastic work. . . . The direction of the Benedictine general Chapter of Canterbury in A.D. 1277 was that:-- "In place of manual labour the Abbots shall ap-

34 Ibid., 625
point other occupations for their claustral monks according to their capabilities (namely) study, writing, correcting, illuminating, and binding books."

The number of library catalogues shows that although there were not as many catalogues for the thirteenth century as for the twelfth, still the former century shows a considerable activity.

In the diocese of Lincoln, we can consider three of the more important houses, Peterborough, Ramsey and Leicester. Peterborough had the good fortune to obtain as abbot in 1177 Benedict, a monk of Christ Church. He was a great lover of books "and enriched the library of his house with some fifty-three volumes." During a convalescence, he wrote a good study of St. Thomas, the recently murdered archbishop of Canterbury. Walter de St. Edmund, whom we saw was assiduous in repairing the monastic buildings, had more books in his library than either his predecessor or successor in the abbatial office. The two catalogues we have of Peterborough books show the tremendous increase in titles from the twelfth to the fourteenth century; for the first list contains seventy titles while the second one enumerates 1,700 titles in 346 volumes.

Around the three-quarter mark of this century, Ramsey

35 Francis Aidan Gasquet, *The Old English Bible and Other Essays*, John C. Nimmo, London, 1897, 49
36 Thompson, 614
37 Gasquet, 37-8
38 Dugdale, I, 355
39 Thompson, 302
Abbey, the most important house in Hunts, was well-known for its Hebrew scholars. "Undoubtedly, Ramsey had the best collection of Hebrew books of any English monastery at the time...." Thompson also believes that this group derived its impetus from Robert Grosseteste. Even in the universities of this period, Rashdall finds scant evidence of the study of lingua hebraeica.

Leicester Abbey which, by the time of the suppression, was one of the larger houses has been neglected in the history of the monastic establishments of England. We do not know how its library was collected, but the catalogue of the 1490's indicates that the monastery possessed over a thousand volumes.

Excluding duplications, service-books, rent-rolls, and other miscellaneous documents; a total number of about 450 volumes remain—a most respectable collection. The library at Leicester Abbey was a large and varied one. Astronomical and medical science appear to be the chief profane interests, with the classical poets and history next.

St. Albans, which was just beyond the southeastern confines of Grosseteste's diocese, is best known in intellectual circles for the historians that it produced. Thompson, following the lead of Hardy, believes that the office of historiographer was begun by Abbot Simon (1167-1183). "But, more important than the simple copying of books, Abbot Simon maintained

40 Ibid., 303
41 Ibid., 309
continuously in his chamber two or three select scribes."

This abbot's successor had been educated at Paris and among his contributions to the library was the *Historica Scholastica*. This same manuscript at present, in addition to the *Historia*, contains Grosseteste's translation of the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Another abbot, Robert (1260–91) "added to the library several books on canon law, a volume containing Seneca, and some sermons of his own, in his own handwriting."

Of the writers of St. Albans, Matthew Paris is the most outstanding; and for many facts of this period, Matthew is our only source. But in using him, we must be careful since, according to Smith, he is sometimes unsatisfactory when we have other sources with which to check his statements.

And here it may be worth noting that St. Albans, then in the height of its greatest glory, with Matthew Paris working as our national archivist in its scriptorium and training others in historical methods, was apparently the focus from which Greek learning and a love of letters spread to other parts of England.

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42 Ibid., 284
44 Thompson, 284
46 Francis A. Idan Gasquet, *The Last Abbot of Glastonbury and Other Essays*, George Bell & Sons, London, 1908, 163
The library at St. Augustine in Canterbury was enlarged by the gifts of various abbots, priors and friends of the house. Thomas Findon, abbot from 1283-1309, gave over a hundred volumes and a John of London, about eighty. These latter are mostly scientific, a description which can be applied to many of the St. Augustine books. 47

From two catalogues of books made respectively in 1210 and 1247-8 at Glastonbury, we learn of a phenomenal increase in that monastic library. When we consider that every volume produced was made only by means of a tremendous outlay of labor, "only three fingers hold the pen, but the whole body toils", said a monastic scribe, it becomes clear what an increase of 325 volumes in a thirty-seven year period reveals that learning and books were not dispised, at least not in this monastery. 48

At Evesham, the scholar of this period was Thomas de Marleberge, prior for many years and finally abbot, who wrote a considerable portion of the chronicle of his house. His studies had been made at Paris, Rome and Bologna; and after lecturing at Oxford on both canon and civil law, he entered religion at Evesham, taking with him his large collection of books. In his time, the scriptorium was considered quite important if we may judge from the revenue which was assigned for its upkeep. 49

47 Thompson, 274-5
48 Ibid., 307
49 Ibid., 305
At Bury St. Edmunds, the store of abbey books was increased through the special interests of the various monks: some increasing the number of volumes on medicine, others procuring books for refectory reading and so forth. And the great Abbot Samson founded a school for grammar-boys during his administration. It may be noted that no one could teach within the "liberty" of St. Edmunds unless his teaching was sanctioned by the abbot and his magister scholarum.

From the Customary of Westminster, we learn that, as in most place, the three men in charge of books were the precentor, succentor and sacrist. There were "almeries of waincott" in the north cloister for keeping books and opposite the bookscases were carrells "which at sometime were at least partially glazed. The Customary of Abbot Ware shows that the carrells were in use during the second half of the thirteenth century at least."

A few more collections may be mentioned. Whitby had seventy-four volumes in 1180 "among which, besides theology, were fifteen volumes of classical and other early authors. . . ." The Cistercian house at Meaux which had been founded in the middle of the twelfth century had 350 volumes by the end of

50 Gasquet, Old Eng. Bible, 38-9
51 Rashdall, III, 288, n.
52 Thompson, 300-1
53 Ibid., 298
the fourteenth while Rievaulx, also Cistercian and founded a few years before Meaux, had "a rather large library"54 in the fourteenth century.

Although we find little evidence of the positive advancement of learning either in theology, philosophy or the science, nevertheless the foregoing pages would seem to indicate the rashness of accusing the monks of ignorance. There will not be found in any of the houses what might be termed "an intellectual coterie" nor will every member of a convent be interested in learning. It seems, however, that the evidence of interest in classical authors and in theology, as manifested by the monastic libraries and the monks' many bibles, together with their efforts to chronicle the events of their time, are proof enough that they were educated men.

The various monastic houses, besides their spiritual relation to the bishop, or directly to the pope in the case of the exempt houses, also had a relationship to the king since "the lands of the abbeys were held in feudal tenure, and the relation of the abbots who held in chief, or who held of mesne lords, to their over-lords was feudal."55 Twenty-four abbots held their lands by military service two of these, Peterborough and Ramsey, were in the Lincoln diocese. The former owed the

54 Ibid., 298
55 Sister Aloyse Marie Reich, S.N.D., The Parliamentary Abbots to 1470, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1941, 293
king sixty knights, the greatest number owed by any abbey; and the latter, four. 56

Upon the death of an abbot, the lands which were the abbot's reverted to the king; and it was to save the revenue of the house during such vacancies that the lands and revenues had been divided between abbot and convent. Besides collecting the abbot's share of the revenue, the king would demand a fine for the grant of the conge d'elire, the permission for the convent to proceed to the election of a new abbot. 57

In theory, at least, the monasteries always possessed freedom in electing their superiors, though frequently there was something wanting in the actual practice, especially during John's reign. The right was settled "by decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council", "and the first article of Magna Carta confirmed the right of free election to the church of England. 58 This did not mean, however, that the conge d'elire did not have to be obtained. In 1219, Honorius III ordered Pandulph, the legate, "to warn and compel prelates and chapters of churches in England to desist from proceeding to the election of Pastors without the royal licence, contrary to right and custom." 59

56 Ibid., 293-4
57 Ibid., 320
58 Ibid.
The abbeys were not infrequently called upon for a subsidy for the king. Although they frequently protested, in the end they would usually acquiesce. The exceptions to this rule were the Cistercians and the Premonstratensians who might give a courtsey to the king, but never a subsidy. "They were not averse to discomfort and sacrifice, they were willing to help the needy and the general good, but principle was paramount and their privilege meant more to them than money."60

Into this monastic framework with its religious, intellectual and material aspects, must we fit the visitorial activities of Robert Grosseteste in his capacity as bishop of Lincoln. This study has been an attempt to sketch the monastery during the age of Grosseteste. Unfortunately, however, we have been granted but an occasional glimpse here and there. As we proceed in our project, it will be necessary to consider church legislation regarding visitations, as well as Grosseteste's idea of the religious life and his own religious convictions. We shall, then, be prepared to discuss his relations with the monks and shall be better able to evaluate that relationship.

60 Reich, 315
CHAPTER II

GROSSETESTE AND THE MONASTIC IDEAL

In order to understand the relations between Robert Grosseteste and the monks, it is absolutely necessary to determine just what kind of religious this bishop of Lincoln expected the monk to be. Grosseteste had very definite ideas about the monastic life and he demanded that the monk should aim at great perfection. The ideal of the religious life which Bishop Grosseteste entertained was not the mere figment of his imagination but was based upon objective knowledge. Robert possessed an intimate knowledge of holy scripture as his letters eloquently testify; and in addition, his familiarity with the rules of both St. Benedict and St. Basil, and the fact of his translating a short Greek account of monastic life indicate that he had a firm grasp on the religious ideal.

First of all, the monk is to be a man of prayer. In fact the very name, monk, means a man who prays in solitude according to an etymology contained in the little treatise he sent to Peterborough. The monk prays to God without ceasing so that in all things he is offering to God a continuous prayer.

1 H. Luard (ed), Epistolae Roberti Grosseteste (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1861, # 53 & 57
2 Ibid., # 57
3 Ibid. "Et secundum derivationem et compositionem Graeci sermonis monachus dicitur a quod est solus, et quod est oratio sive votum, quasi moneuchus; eo quod ad monachum pertinent ut solus oret."
of praise. By eliminating distractions and inordinate effects, the monk will draw closer to God so that "ad solum Deum dirigens orationem, ad solum Deum summe expetunt, sed ad alia per ipsum obtinenda tendunt." 

The second etymology ties in with this idea when it describes the monk as "solus habens solum". Solus is the monk; and solum, God. The monk’s whole raison d’etre is his continual effort to possess "per superfervidam caritatem" God who alone truly is. And in his solitude, the monk will be sad because God is offended and consequently he will grieve continually for his sins and those of others.

The very fact that monks are men of prayer whose whole life is directed Godwards implies that they have given up the things of this world. The monk has nothing that he may call his own; "but he considers the laws, the sermons, and the commands of the prophets and hymns and other exercises by which learning and holiness are increased and perfected as his proper riches." Besides the spirit of poverty, the monk should practice abnegation and mortification. Both in the among of sleep and of nourishment, the monk should observe great moderation. This reveals the spirit of the little trea-

4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., "...a propinquis et possessionibus recedunt."
7 Ibid.
tise that Grosseteste translated for the monks of Peterborough, and his recommendation of it to their study indicates that he made its principles his own.

From a letter of the bishop to the abbey of Fleury about the cell at Minting, we learn that he placed the giving of good example as one of the primary considerations in the life of a monk. He warns them against a possible misinterpretation of the text, "bona sua faciant in abscondito, et Pater caelestis, qui videt in abscondito, reddat eis."

Their good works are to be hidden from the glitter of human praise so that they may not be blighted; they should be manifested so that by their light, others may be shown the way to truth and may take up the good work.

The monk must guard against an evil life because of the scandal that he will cause in the laity. It is not only that he will be leading a life unworthy of his calling, but also that other, following his example, will lose sight of the true goal of this mortal life.

The monastery is to be a family in which the abbot is the father. "St. Benedict makes the abbot the pivot on which the life of the monastery turns." Since the abbot is the most important monk in the monastery, it will be wise

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8 Ibid., # 53
9 Ibid.
10 Edward Cuthbert Butler, Benedictine Monasticism, Studies in Benedictine Life and Rule, London, 1924, 184
to consider how Grosseteste's idea of the abbot compares with the norms that St. Benedict set down in his rule. In describing the abbot according to the mind of St. Benedict, Abbot Butler notes these six aspects of the abbatial office. In the first place, "the abbot is Christ's vicegerent in the monastery." Consequently, we see whence comes the high motive for obedience on the part of the monks. Also as the abbot is the father of the monastery and the spiritual father of all its monks, he has to be solicitous for the salvation of their souls. Another function of the abbatial office is indicated by St. Benedict when he calls the abbot the shepherd of God's flock. The story of the Good Shepherd is used to illustrate this point. Besides being the Shepherd,

... the abbot must be the wise physician who when any of his monks is laboring under some spiritual disease must do his utmost to apply the remedy suitable to the case: correction, exhortation, chastisement, teaching of Scripture, public prayer; and if all these remedies fail, then, in the last resort, the 'amputating knife', 'lest one diseased sheep should infect the whole flock.'

Next the abbot is considered as the master. This may be applied in both of its senses, namely: that he is in charge of everything and that his will is to be followed, and also in the

11 Ibid., 185
12 Ibid., 186, 190-1
13 Ibid., 185
sense that he is the teacher of his monks by deed as well as by word. 15 "Finally the abbot is to be the 'Dispenser' or steward of the house of God (ch. LXIV), the administrator who must dispose of all things prudently and justly. (ch. III)" 16

St. Benedict must certainly have had these qualities and duties of the abbatial office in mind when, in the sixty-fourth chapter of the rule, he wrote:

In the appointment of an abbot let this principle be observed, that he be made Abbot whom the entire community shall choose unanimously in the fear of God, or whom a minority, however small, shall choose because of the merit of his life and because of his learning, even though in the community he may be the lowest in rank. 17 (italics added)

St. Benedict again stresses the same ideas when, in discussing the kind of men who are to assist the abbot in the discipline of the monastery, he says: "Let there be chosen brethern of good repute and holy life." And later, "let them not be chosen according to rank, but according to the merit of their lives and their learning and wisdom." 18

Robert Grosseteste shows himself gravely concerned that the abbots who are elected to office in his diocese be men who are well fitted for the charge which they undertake.

15 Butler, 186
16 Ibid. Chapters in quotation refer to The Holy Rule.
17 The Holy Rule, ch. lxiv
18 Ibid., ch. xxi
His mind on the subject is unveiled to us in a letter19 which he wrote to the abbey of Missendem just before the monks were to elect a new superior. The theme of the entire letter is the need there is for the monks to make a prudent and diligent investigation before they choose an abbot. Since the abbatial office is a pastoral care and the abbot must look after the spiritual welfare of his subjects, it would be folly to choose a person who was not fitted for such great responsibility. There is a double danger because both the electors and the elected would suffer from an ill-advised selection. Grosseteste’s interest and reiterated desire that the monks choose wisely is apparent when he writes: "Paterno affectu vos regamus, monemus, exhortemus, ac quantum possumus, injungimus ut ad pastorem idoneam vobis eligendum pro viribus vestris omnem apponatis curam et diligentiam...."

By means of a homely example he insists on the importance of scrutinizing the character of the man into whose hands they are going to place themselves. He says that when they want to hire a swineherd they inquire quite diligently into the ability of the person to whom they will commit this office. Does he know when and where to pasture his animals? Will he keep them safe during the day and return them to their pens in good condition in the evening? Will he take care to

19 Epistolae, # 85
keep them safe during the night? Robert sums up by saying: "If you don't employ a like care (diligence) in providing a suitable pastor for your souls, aren't you placing a greater value on your swine then on your own souls?"

The good bishop, however, immediately adds that he is sure that they are going to make a wise choice "as befits religious." They will omit nothing which would make for a good election since "they are aflame with zeal for God and their own salvation."

According to the doctrine of the Apostle, they will do everything necessary to choose ... a pastor who is blameless, without crime, not proud, not subject to anger, not quarrelsome, not given to wine, not a striker, given to hospitality, gentle, modest, just, holy, continent, learned as a steward of God, embracing that faithful word which is according to doctrine, so that he may be able to exhort in sound doctrine and to convince the gainsayers; one who rules his own house well.

This enumeration of characteristics which Bishop Grosseteste takes from St. Paul, together with his insistence on choosing the abbot only after mature consideration of the man and his qualifications for the office, indicate that he took to heart the words of St. Benedict that the abbot should be chosen "in the fear of God ... with wiser counsel ... because of the merit of his life and because of his learning."

The abbot of Leiscester in a letter to the bishop had complained that his lordship was hard of heart. In reply-
ing to the abbot, Grosseteste made it clear that it was not his intention by any manner or means to be severe just for the sake of being severe. In explaining his position, the bishop goes back to a quotation from Ezechiel. God told the prophet that the house of Israel was hard of heart and thus would not listen to him.

Behold I have made thy face stronger than their faces, and thy forehead harder than their foreheads. I have made thy face like an adamant and like flint; fear them not, neither be thou dismayed at their presence; for they are a provoking house.

The abbot then is asked to pray that the "bishop's hardness of heart" may be like that of the prophet and not a turning away from the truth of God as that of the Israelites. This same idea is stressed in another letter to the Abbot of Fleury about the cell at Minting.

... for you most certainly know that, with the help of the Lord, we will not permit--as far as it is in our power--any monk to live in our diocese unless he acts respectably and lives consistently according to the rule of the Blessed Benedict; but we will endeavor as far as by the help of the Lord we can, according to the teaching of the Apostle "to put away the evil one from our midst, lest a little leaven corrupt the whole mass and this contagious itch creep over a widening area."

From these sentiments of the bishop of Lincoln, we

20 Ibid., # 55
21 Ezechiel III, 8-9
22 Epistolae, # 53.
can draw two conclusions. First that he is determined to see religious life lived according to the rule of St. Benedict, and also that should the implementing of this determination require severity, he is ready to be "hard", but that he would rather proceed in a more pacific manner.

In seeking for an explanation of why his visitations were considered severe by his contemporaries—whether they were or not—we may find the reason in the fact that episcopal visitation in general was not as regular up to and including Grosseteste's time as it should have been. And it was due in no small measure to Robert Grosseteste's untiring zeal that bishops began to take more seriously their episcopal duty of visitation. In describing his visitations the bishop remarked on one occasion:

... on that and the following day, I and my clerks gave our attention to inquiries, corrections and reformations, such as belong to the office of inquiry. In my first circuit of this sort, some came to me to find fault with these proceedings, saying "My Lord, you are doing a new and unaccustomed thing." to whom I answered, "Every new thing which instructs and advances a man is a blessed new thing."23

The visitorial activities of Robert Grosseteste, though perhaps not too popular with the monks, were definitely according to the mind of the church. From Luchaire, we learn

that Innocent III from the very beginning of his reign encouraged bishops to investigate the state of the monasteries in their dioceses.

L'ardeur reformatrice de pape se manifeste par les nombreuses lettres qu'il adresse aux évêques pour les pousser à exciter une surveillance plus active sur les moines et à user contre eux de leur pouvoir de correction. Il ne laisse échapper aucune occasion de leur rappeler qu'ils doivent visiter les monastères, y faire les réformes indispensables, déposer et remplacer les abbés qui se conduisent mal. Si leur autorité propre ne suffit pas à cette tâche, il leur confère les pouvoirs extraordinaires attachés au titre de leurs de Saint-Siege. Et quand ils ont imposé à un monastère le règlement destiné à le sauver de la ruine ou de la déchéance complète, il s'empresse d'appouvoir leurs actes, et par une confirmation solennelle, de donner force de ici à la réforme. 24

But with Innocent the whole affair was one of mutual interplay. He would infuse new life into the monastic order by stimulating episcopal visitation and he would keep the bishops on their toes by keeping the monasteries in a flourishing state. "Pendant tout son règne, il a été le protecteur, le bienfaiteur, mais aussi le réformateur des établissements monastiques." 25

While Dr. Cheney points out that, even though his

25 Ibid., 157-8. As this study proceeds, it is hoped that it will become clear that Bishop Grosseteste, though a reformer of monastic establishments, was nonetheless the benefactor and protector of the monks.
contemporaries made Grosseteste the person of prime importance in inducing his brother bishops to visit their bishoprics, the facts indicate that there were a number of other contributing factors.

In the first place, there were some episcopal visitations before Grosseteste's time. Secondly, whatever the imponderable influence of the friars after their arrival in England in the third decade of the century, Pope Gregory IX had given a definite order in 1232, and that order was responded to. Thirdly, this was followed up in 1237 by the Council of London, which had a new code of Benedictine rules to enforce. Finally, we should remember that not only the friars were setting an example to the secular prelates of their day in the work of visitation; the Cistercian and Premonstratensian Orders had long maintained their systems, and since the Fourth Lateran Council the unreformed Benedictines and the Augustinian canons had been supposed to hold chapter and visitations triennially.26

Besides indicating that other forces were at work urging visitation, these precedents show that the bishop of Lincoln was only doing his duty in visiting the monasteries of his diocese. But it should be remarked that it frequently requires not a little courage to do even one's duty if tradition has allowed that duty to fall into desuetude.

In attempting to examine the mind of Robert Grossete-

26 C. R. Cheney, Episcopal Visitation of Monasteries in the Thirteenth Century, Manchester University Press, 1931, 35. The order of Gregory IX referred to is a letter that he wrote to the archbishop and suffragans of Canterbury commanding them to visit the religious houses in their dioceses and promising to back up their work with his authority.
Grosseteste on the monastic ideal and what he thought the monk should be, we have another important source of information. This document is the "Articles of inquiry in religious houses" which we find in the Burton Annals. It does not seem possible to prove with certitude that these are the actual questions asked by Bishop Grosseteste in his visitations, but the evidence indicates with a high degree of probability that, if they are not verbatim his, at least they do reflect his mind on the matter.

The bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, who had been dean of Lincoln, made a visitation of his diocese in 1253. According to the Burton annalist, the bishop was led to make this visitation by the example of Robert Grosseteste. Since these articles were most likely used by the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, he probably got them from Bishop Robert.

There seems no certain proof that they are episcopal articles. Other visitors might inquire on all the same subjects. Nevertheless, the question "An fecerint conspirationem contra adventum episcopi" suggests that a bishop framed the articles. Moreover, they occur in a chronicle which contains a set of bishop's articles for inquiry in parishes; if the latter are to be ascribed to Grosseteste, the articles for monasteries may have been his also. Since these articles are so comprehensive, since such compre-

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27 H. R. Luard, Annales Monastici (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1864, i, 484-6
28 Cheney, 72, n.3
Hensiveness may be one of the reasons for calling a visitation strict, and since Grosseteste's are about the only episcopal visitations we hear of from 1235-1250, it seems most probable that these questions represent his views on the subject.

Assuming them that these articles represent the line of questioning which Bishop Grosseteste would undertake when visiting a monastery, it will be instructive to compare these questions with the Rule of St. Benedict, which we remember the bishop insisted that the monks observe strictly, with the articles in Matthew Paris which the abbots of England agreed on London under the presidency of Cardinal Otho in 1237, and also with the points that the General chapters of 1219 and 1249 instructed the order visitors to inquire about.

The fifty-seven numbers in the bishop's scheme of inquiry cover rather thoroughly the points which would determine the fever or laxity of a community. Sixty-one percent of the questions touch directly on the religious life of a convent while 22.8% treat of the good management of the monastery and its possessions and seven percent treat of hospit-

29 H. R. Luard (ed), Chronica Majora (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1872-83, VIII, 499-503
31 Ibid., 39-44
Considering some of the big divisions into which the inquiries fall we may note that 24% of the questions deal with poverty, 15.8% with obedience and 10.6% with meals while only 3.5% inquire about the observance of silence as well as chastity. From the ratio of points which deal with the good management of monastic possessions and with the subject of poverty, it is clear that the monasteries had numerous possessions but that nevertheless a serious effort was being made to keep the individual monks true to their religious calling in the observance of the evangelical counsel of personal poverty. The fact that according to one division nearly 40% of the questions pertain to poverty and obedience and according to another 61% are directly concerned with the religious life as against 24% for the good management of temporal affairs indicates that the emphasis was still on the religious life.

With the more important emphases of the inquiry determined, it is possible to proceed to an evaluation of these questions in terms of the rule of St. Benedict and the various statuta that the Benedictines enacted for the guidance of their own visitors. In comparing these Benedictine documents with the Grosseteste questions, it is found that 77% of the questions have a factual basis in either the rules or the statuta of the General Chapters. This means that only thirteen questions out...
of fifty-seven can not be found explicitly mentioned in the Benedictine documents. Six of these questions come under the heading of good management while of the remaining questions, two have to do with common life in the cloister, two warn against private conversations with women, and one asks about their attitude towards women.

There is almost a strange symmetry in the equal ratios of verifications of the articles found in the Rule of St. Benedict and the statuta of the General Chapters. In each case, eleven articles or 19.3% are corroborated by the rules only and another eleven by the statuta alone. The rules substantiate thirty-three articles (58%) all together, as do the statuta and of these thirty-three verifications by each set of documents twenty-two (38.6%) are in common.

The first conclusion that we can draw from the fact that these articles can be substantiated in so many details by Benedictine documents is that Robert Grosseteste was familiar with the Benedictine ideal and that he wanted the monks in his diocese to attain it. In addition, it can be said that, at least in the matter asked in the visitation, the bishop was not overly severe. We may consider the Bishop's questions severe only on condition that we are prepared to call St. Benedict and the statuta of the General Chapters severe.
CHAPTER III

GROSSETESTE'S CONTACTS WITH THE MONASTERIES

In February, 1235, Hugh of Wells, bishop of Lincoln since the time of King John, died. The election of a successor proved to be a difficult task because of the factions in the chapter. But the canons finally agreed to the election of Robert Grosseteste. The chronicler of St. Albans, in his mention of Robert as bishop of Lincoln, remarks that the consensus of opinion was that the new bishop was under the domination of the Franciscans, that, though of lowly origin he was well educated, had a mind and will of his own, and trusted his own prudence.\(^1\) In this introduction to Robert Grosseteste, Matthew Paris tries to set down the bishop as rather headstrong.

The consecration of the new bishop of Lincoln took place at Reading on the insistence of Bl. Edmund who was the recently installed archbishop of Canterbury. The usual place of consecration for the suffragans of England's primatial see was in the capitular convent church in Canterbury according to a privilege granted the monastic chapter by St. Thomas. Later in the year, the monks obtained an indulg to the effect "that their right to have all bishops of the province consecrated in their church shall not be prejudiced by their having per-

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\(^1\) H. R. Luard (ed), *Historia Anglorum* (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1866-69, II, 376
mitted Archbishop E. to consecrate the bishop of Lincoln at Reading."² It seems that Edmund was bent on nullifying this monastic privilege although Grosseteste affirms, and this after a conference with the chapter itself, that he had no objection to being consecrated at Christ Church.³

Reading, in Berkshire, which Edmund chose, had already had dealings with Grosseteste. In 1231, as rector of St. Margaret's which was under the patronage of this monastery, Robert had disagreed with Adam of Laterbury about some of the revenues claimed by the abbot and convent. Robert wrote to the monastery and suggested that they have their representatives meet to settle the case as amicably as possible.⁴

1239 is the fateful year in which the bishop and chapter of Lincoln began their dispute over the bishop's right to visit the chapter. The details of their conflict are beyond the scope of our study, but a glance at some of its developments will help to clarify the relations of Robert and the religious of the Lincoln diocese. Matthew Paris is of the opinion that the importance of the dispute was exaggerated.

³ Abbot (F. A.) Gasquet, Henry the Third and the Church, G. Bell and sons, Ltd., London, 1910, 145-6
⁴ H. Luard (ed), Epistolae Roberti Grosseteste (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1861, # 4
by both contestants. In his introductory remarks about this case, he says: "Lincolnensis quoque episcopus religiosorum sua diocese factus est malleus et immanis persecutor." In order to have made his conclusion more certain, this pioneer historian should have strengthened his generalization by the citation of individual cases. The dispute started about the beginning of 1239 for we find the following statement in Bliss dated January 23. "Licence to the same Bp. of Lincoln to exercise his office in regard to the visitation of the chapter of Lincoln, which has hitherto not been visited by himself or any other, without paying attention vexatious appeals." However, these "vexatious appeals" did manage to ward off the bishop's visitation for six years.

Under the year, 1241, Matthew again alludes to the conflict between the bishop and his chapter. "The bishop ... set afoot against these canons the important question of the visitation and the reproving and correcting of their excesses." By the fall of 1244, the difficulties between Grosseteste and his cathedral chapter had become so great that he decided to consult the Holy Father himself. Paris informs us of the bishop's departure, adding that soon after-

6 H. R. Luard (ed), Chronica Majora (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1872-83, III, 528
7 Bliss, I, 179
8 Hist. Angl., II, 419
9 Ibid., 495; Chron. Maj., IV, 390-1
wards the dean, Roger de Wesemham, also went to Lyons to defend the action of the canons.

Finally on August 25, 1245 in Lyons, the official notification was issued of Grosseteste's victory over his chapter. Bliss summarizes it as follows:

Notification to the bishop of Lincoln of the definitive sentence that the pope had pronounced that he is to be admitted to visit the dean and chapter, canons, clerks choral, and ministers, the vicars of the churches of the chaplain, and their parishioners; and to correct abuses. The canons, however, are not bound to take an oath of obedience.10

This outcome, felicitous for Robert, although it does not directly concern the religious of his diocese, nevertheless does strengthen his position when he is dealing with them, for the chapter had claimed exemption from episcopal visitation, which the religious did not, and it had been made to submit. Obviously, the monks, canons and nuns would be cautious in resisting the victorious bishop.

After the fight between Grosseteste and his chapter was settled, Roger, the dean at Lincoln, was made bishop of Coventry and Lichfield where he stepped into a strange situation. As two factions, the canons of Lichfield, and the monks of Coventry, had each elected a bishop, the pope wrote to the

10 Bliss, I, 219
prior and convent of Coventry saying, "that as the first died and the second resigned, and the pope has promoted R. Dean of Lincoln to the said see, they are to admit and pay obedience to the said bishop."11

In an evaluation of the relations of Robert Grosseteste and the monks, especially in regard to the bishop's visitatorial activities, it must be remembered that Gregory IX had ordered the English bishops in 1232 "to visit, correct and reform the clergy, regular and secular, in their dioceses."12 A year or so later, however, the monks of Coventry would not admit their bishop and even urged several judicial suits against him in order to avoid the visitation. The case went against the monks, and on January 8, 1236, the pope ordered "the bishop, the treasurer, and chancellor of Lincoln" to see that the monks allowed "the bishop with religious persons to visit them."13

It would seem that this order had an immediate effect upon the monastic policy of Grosseteste, for evidence points to the fact that it was just about this time that he undertook the vigorous visitation which aroused so much hostility. The action of Gregory in supporting the bishop of Coventry inspired Grosseteste with confidence; he felt, no doubt, that

11 Ibid., 218
12 Chron. Maj., III, 234
13 Bliss, I, 150
his regulations also, if questioned, would be backed by papal power. 14

In considering the bishop's contacts with the religious in his diocese, we will follow a topical, rather than a chronological, scheme. During his visitations, Robert Grosseteste removed, forced a number of superiors to resign while others voluntarily laid down the duties of office. After a house had lost its superior either by resignation or death, it was necessary to obtain the bishop's approval of an official-elect before he could take office. Although Robert approved the great majority of those presented to him, there were some whom he rejected outright, while in other cases, it was necessary to regularize a canonical defect in the election proceedings.

The first evidence of the completeness of the bishop's visitation comes from the Dunstable Chronicle which informs us that Robert of Lincoln made an episcopal visitation in 1236. 15 At each of the monasteries, if the bishop followed the same pattern he did two years later, he convoked a general chapter, preached a sermon, and at his departure promulgated regulations for the better discipline of the house. 16

14 Ibid., 152
15 H. R. Luard, Annales Monastici (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1864, III, 143-4
16 Ibid., 147
elderly Prior Richard who wrote the chronicle at Dunstable states that the bishop removed seven abbots and four priors. This series of visitations most likely began in January, 1236 since Richard attributes the removal of the abbots and priors to that year, and since in four of these cases the bishop's register states that the new superiors were chosen in the first year of Grosseteste's episcopate, which came to a close in February of that year.

Strange as it may seem, when we consider all that Matthew Paris says against Grosseteste, Robert had more contacts with the Austin Canons than with the Benedictines. And all but one of the eleven Austin superiors removed from office during Robert's administration, were removed in 1236.

In the case of St. Frideswide, there is the statement of the bishop's register that the prior, E., a Scot, was removed by episcopal order. E., however, was not a man to take his deposition without a fight, for we find that on June 22, 1237 the legate Otho was ordered by the pope to annul the sentence given by the prior of Bolton and his fellow judges against the bishop of Lincoln, who had removed the prior of St. Frideswide's, accused of incontinence, the bishop being condemned in costs of 140 marks...18

17 Davis, F. N. (ed), Rotuli Roberti Lincolniensis, Lincoln Record Soc. XI, 1914, 446
18 Bliss, I, 163
At the other Austin houses, much less is known about the reasons for deposing the superiors. Richard of Dunstable says that the abbots of Leicester, Owston, Thorton, Notley, Bourne, Dorchester and Missenden, as well as the priors of Cold Norton, Bradwell and Launde, were removed from office. Bradwell, however, was a Benedictine establishment. At Leicester and Owston, we find a formula that will reappear many times in the bishop's register, "vancantis per resignationem." Abbot Martin of Missenden was induced to resign; "whether for mal-administration or for more serious faults does not appear, but indeed the house seems from the first to last to have been singularly unfortunate in its abbots." Around the beginning of August, 1249, Robert made a visitation at Caldwell where Prior Eudo was "accused of many things by his brethren and others." Eudo, however, did not wish to face the bishop's wrath; so taking the advice of some visiting priors, he resigned, and a few days later joined the Cistercians who were exempt from episcopal control.

There are two other cases of the flight of religious because they feared the bishop, and both canons lived at Dunstable before their flights. In 1240, Walter de Gledalle fled

19 Annales Monastici, III, 143-4
20 Davis, 385; 388
22 Annales Monastici, III, 179
to the Cistercian community at Woburn "because the bishop of Lincoln, visiting us, wrested from each an oath." When the bishop made his visitation of Dunstable on the feast of St. James the Apostle, July 25, 1249, Henry of Bilenda was denounced to him. Poor Henry could find no one to swear to his innocence. Afraid therefore of what the bishop might do to him, he fled Dunstable on the following Saturday at dawn, and on the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin joined the Cistercians.

Bishop Grosseteste was instrumental in removing two Benedictine abbots from office. The first was the abbot of Bardney. The Bardney cause célèbre began in 1243 during the bishop's ninth year. Since Stevenson, as well as Creighton, has treated this affair quite thoroughly, it will be sufficient here merely to indicate the various phases of this struggle between Robert Grosseteste and Walter de Beningworth. When the abbot refused to settle a debt he owed a cleric of the Lincoln diocese, he was cited before the archdeacon, but failed to appear. Finally, the bishop entered the case and when the abbot would not heed the commands of his ordinary, the bishop excommunicated him and deposed him from his office. The Can-

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23 Ibid., 152
24 Ibid., 178
26 Mandell Creighton, Historical Lectures and Addresses, Longmans, Green, & Co., London, 1904, 133-35
terbury monks who claimed archiepiscopal authority *sedexecante* answered Walter's appeal by excommunicating the bishop of Lincoln. The dispute had reached such proportions by this time that it required the intervention of the newly elected Innocent IV to restore some semblance of order. But neither side was happy about this decision: Grosseteste, because the pope, in lifting the ban of excommunication against him, had failed to decide whether or not the monks of Christchurch possessed archiepiscopal powers *sedexecante*; the monks, because Walter's suspension from office remained in force. One outcome of this dispute was an "Indult to the bishop of Lincoln that no one shall issue against him sentence of suspension or *excommunication*, or against his chapel sentence of interdict, without special licence from the pope." 27

In 1249, Robert Grosseteste extended his visitatorial activities to Peterborough where there was trouble between the abbot and convent. 28 The monks were hostile to the abbot William de Hotot, because he was not giving the proper care to the monastery, in addition to depleting its revenues by enriching his relatives. The monks had brought the case to the notice of Bishop Grosseteste. As the charges against the abbot could be substantiated, William took the wise course of

27 Bliss, I, 209
resigning before the bishop took the canonical steps toward removing him from office.

The actions of Abbess Flandrina of Godstow invited inquiry in 1247. After an investigation by two officials appointed by Robert Grosseteste, this abbess of Godstow was formally deposed because of her "cupable activities." Since Ralph de Paceio, prior of Hinkley, a cell of the Benedictine monastery of Lyra in Normandy, handed in his resignation to the archbishop of York, it is quite probable that for some reason or other he did not want to face Grosseteste. Consequently, we may attribute Ralph's resignation to Robert's influence.

Our survey shows that Grosseteste was responsible for the removal or resignation of sixteen superiors during the eighteen and a half years that he was bishop of Lincoln. Eleven of these superiors were removed in 1256. In the case of the prior of St. Frideswide, we know that the cause of his deposition was incontinence, while Grosseteste said that the prior of Kyme was removed because he was unsatisfactory. In each case, it was to the advantage of the religious to have unfit men removed from office. And at Bardney, we can hardly blame Robert for removing Beningworth because of insubordin-
tion. The narrative for 1249 shows that Grosseteste caused the resignation of the abbot of Peterborough and the prior of Caldwell, but in considering these two situation, it is of importance to note that in both cases, it was not Bishop Robert who initiated the proceedings; in each instance, he was assisting the members of the community against a person in whom they no longer had confidence because of that superior's questionable activities. Consequently, rather than characterize the bishop's action as over severe, it would be closer to the truth to say that he maintained a careful vigilance in the true interests of the religious of his diocese.

During Bishop Grosseteste's administration, there were seventeen resignations in addition to the ones that have already been mentioned. There can be no doubt that four of these were voluntary: the abbot of Eynsham, and the priors of Covenham, Weedon Pickney and St. Andrew, Northampton, who resigned to become prior of Longus Pons. For the Benedictine prior of St. Leonard, Stamford, for the Austin abbots of Missenden, St. James, Northampton, and Osney, and the priors of Torksey, Breedon, and Kyme, for the priors of the alien houses of Hinkley, Wilsford, St.

32 Cart. of Eynsham, xx1 39 Ibid., 496
33 Davis, 16 40 Ibid., 138
34 Ibid.; 175-6 41 Ibid.; 424-5
35 Ibid.; 223 42 Ibid.; 119
36 Ibid.; 66 43 Ibid.; 423
37 Ibid.; 355 44 Ibid., 96
38 Ibid.; 202
Neot and Wilsford a second time, for the abbess of Elstow and the priores of Markyate, the bishop's register simply states that they resigned; nor is there any other evidence to indicate that the resignations were not voluntary.

Having considered removal from office and resignations, let us turn our attention to the candidates for office presented to the bishop of Lincoln. The first group to be considered will be those whom the bishop refused to admit to office, only nine in the eighteen years of his administration.

It is most likely that, while Grosseteste was on the continent in 1243, the unbelievable episode of the Caldwell Priory election took place, so that the approval or rejection of those presented for ecclesiastical office during this time was left in the hand of Robert Marsh who was of one mind with the bishop in demanding that candidates be competent to fulfill the duties attached to the offices to which they were elected. During the Fourth Lateran Council this canon had been enacted:

There is nothing about which the church is more concerned than that unworthy prelates should have the care of souls. Wishing, therefore, to apply a necessary remedy to this disease, we sanction

45 Ibid., 295
46 Ibid., 118-9
47 Ibid., 336
48 Ibid., 512
by an unalterable constitution that, whenever someone is selected for the care of souls, he to whom the confirmation pertains should carefully examine both the election and the elected so that, when everything has been duly accomplished, he may take upon himself the task of confirmation, because, if it has in any way been unwisely consummated, not only will the unworthy recipient be removed from office, but the unworthy sanctioner will also be punished.

With this ecumenical pronouncement in mind, let us consider the canons' choice at Caldwell. When Robert Marsh examined the election and the elected, he records that because of personal defects in Brother Thomas de Kerdinton, such as poor vision, a paralitic sickness, old age and lack of learning, he quashed the election. The canons of Caldwell showed very poor judgment in choosing a man so obviously unfitted for the office of prior. It might even be inferred that, by selecting such an incapable official, they hoped to be under a regime which would enable them to disregard their religious obligations. They were following the line of least resistance which shows how imperative it was for Bishop Grosseteste and his officials to be vigilant at all times in the interest of the church as well as the true interest of the religious themselves.

Two other Austin houses, besides Caldwell, were

49 John D. Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum Nova et Amplissima Collectio, H. Welter, Paris & Leipzig, 1903, XXII, 1014
50 Davis, 325
denied the men they chose as superiors. At Cold Norton, the bishop would not accept the canons’ selection of William de Berton in 1236 because the election was defective, and he appointed Walter de Wilton who was the assistant cellarer at Dunstable.51 He was the second religious from Dunstable to be selected for office in another house within a few weeks, for Grosseteste had confirmed as prior of St. Frideswide, William of Gloucester, recently the cellarer of Dunstable.52 Not only did Notley’s Abbot John resign at the bishop’s wish, but Walter de Augens, the canons’ choice for the vacant office was rejected, and Henry de Sancta Fide, the prior, was named abbot by the bishop.53 The Benedictine monastery of Croyland received Richard, the cellarer of Bardney, in 1236 after the bishop rejected their choice, Walter of Weston.54 And a few years later, the bishop quashed the election which had been held at the hospital of Brackley.55

Among the nuns, Bishop Grosseteste rejected four of the sisters presented to him. At Heynings in 1236, it was necessary for the bishop to designate one of the two candidates which the community had chosen.56 There must have been several

51 Ibid., 447
52 Ibid., 446
53 Ibid., 343
54 Ibid., 11
55 Ibid., 173-180
56 Ibid., 137
factions in this house because, a few later in 1240, Robert quashed the election, and after consulting "prudent men," he appointed Alice de Balivo of Lincoln, one of the nuns of the community on May 25 at Stowe Park. There is a double entry in Grosseteste's register for the institution of Celestria, prioress of Ankerwyke. It seems more probable that she became prioress in 1237 rather than a year later, for it is easier to repeat an entry than to anticipate one by a year. Upon the death of Celestria's predecessor, the bishop did not approve the nuns' selection of Christine of London, and since he had other reasons besides its violation of the Lateran norms for quashing the election, he gave the nuns Celestria. In 1247, the bishop appointed the sub-prioress Sibyl, prioress of St. Michael, Stamford, after rejecting Auricia, the sister chosen by the convent.

In each of the nine cases just cited, the bishop rejected the nominee presented to him because the religious had violated the canons of the Lateran council. At Caldwell, the canons' choice was manifestly unfit and at Brackley Hospital also the person chosen was not fit for the office. With these facts in mind, it is difficult to see that the bishop was severe towards the religious of his diocese by rejecting such

57 Ibid., 144-5
58 Ibid., 345; 346
59 Ibid., 104
presentees.

In other cases, although the bishop quashed the election, he would appoint the person whom the religious wanted. Frequently the register states that, because an election was defective, the appointment of a superior devolved on the bishop according to the norms of the Lateran council.

In Oxfordshire, Gilbert de Gloucester, the cellarer, succeeded John de Dovor as abbot of Eynsham. John "was abbot on March 13, 1241, but six weeks later his successor was in office; whether he had resigned or died, we do not know." 60 At any rate, the monks asked Grosseteste as patron for permission to elect a new abbot and Robert granted the request. An examination of the election, however, showed that "the sacred canons had been violated." Although the bishop thereupon quashed the election, on the advice of those who were skilled in the law, he appointed Gilbert by his episcopal authority and gave the new abbot his benediction. 61 At another Benedictine house, Bradwell Priory, the bishop had to declare an election void, but appointed the man whom the monks had chosen. 62

In five Austin houses, Owston, 63 Kyme, 64 St. James,

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60 Cart. of Eynsham, xxi
61 Davis, 468-9.
62 Ibid., 344
63 Ibid., 388
64 Ibid., 11
Northampton, Newstead, and Wymondley Grosseteste quashed the elections because the canons had violated the norms established by the Fourth Lateran Council. But because they had committed a technical blunder only, Robert designated the men they had chosen superiors. In the case of Wymondley, Martin, the canons’ choice, had to be legitimatized before he could become prior.

Among the nuns, the number of these defective elections was high. The reason for this most likely is their little acquaintance with canon law so that ignorance, rather than malice, accounts for their constant violation of the election norms. At Elstow, the register states that the election was quashed because it was defective and not because Albreda lacked the qualifications necessary for office. Besides Godstow, seven other nunneries violated the sacred canons in the process of electing superioresses. In each case, Grosseteste appointed the nun chosen.

These sixteen cases show that Robert of Lincoln was not a man to observe only the letter of the law; he knew its spirit also. Hence in all these instances, we find him giving

65 Ibid., 205
66 Ibid., 88
67 Ibid., 261
68 Ibid., 336
69 Ibid., 471 for Godstow; 32-33 for St. Michael’s, Stamford; 72 for Stainfield; 74 for Stixwould; 222 for Catesby; 88 for Legbourne; 234 for Sweardsley; 111 for Stixwould.
the religious the person whom they wanted when that person is fit but barred from office by a technicality alone. In view of such wisdom, it would hardly be correct to characterize such a man as over strict and stern.

Of the hundred superiors who took office during Grosseteste's administration, seventy-five were approved upon their presentation to the bishop. Of the twenty-five elections which the bishop quashed, we have already noted that, in the end, he appointed sixteen of the superiors presented to him.

The details of the appointment of the Cluniac monk, Arnulf, as prior of St. Andrew's, Northampton on October 7, 1240, are the fullest that we find in Grosseteste's register. While the bishop was in the tentario at the church Kenten at the third hour (tertia hora), Arnulf presented him with the letter from William, prior de Caritate, appointing him to the vacant priorship at St. Andrew's. Grosseteste immediately checked back in the register of Hugh II for the appointment of Thomas de Longervill who had just died and whom Arnulf was to succeed. All the principals in the two cases differ. The former prior de Caritate was S.; Hugh of Wells, the bishop of Lincoln, has been dead for six years; and Thomas is just recently deceased. At first glance, the two documents entered

70 Ibid., 200-201
in Robert's register seem to be very much alike. But the phrase, "Formaque literarum presentationis ipsius Thome cum litteris predicti fratris Arnulf ut videbatur non convenien-te...", which follows the second letter invites a more detailed study of these two letters. The point of greatest divergence appears to be in these parallel passages:

Thomam ... Radulpho ... 
Arnulfum ... eidem 
in priorem providimus 
perfecimus in 
substituendum....

In the first case, S., prior de Caritate, seems only to be suggesting to the bishop that Thomas be substituted for Ralph, while in the second case William says, "...we place Arnulf as prior in charge of this priory...." Such is the "forma ...
non conveniente...." That this is the point in question we learn from the words of Arnulf himself who seems to think that William has overstepped his power and so he tells the bishop what he believes to be the extent of this letter.

Frater Arnulf solemnly avered that by the authority of these letters sent by Frater William, prior de Caritate, to the lord bishop on his behalf that he was by no means ipso facto the prior, but he believed that through these letters he was only presented to the bishop whose favor he immediately sought; finally the lord bishop with this protestation admitted Arnulf to the said priorate and canonically made him prior there by the Book by entrusting to him the care of things spiritual and temporal and of things interior as well as exterior.... But this same Arnulf, here and now, touching the holy books, swore canonical obedience to the said bishop, his successors and officials.
It seems that Grosseteste was intent on maintaining the rights of his episcopal office. In "the greatest of centuries," custom counted for much, so that when Robert read in Hugh's register that the last time a prior de Caritate had presented a prior for St. Andrew's, he had left the bishop completely free in the matter, while in the present case, although William acknowledged the bishop's authority, the "prefecimus in priorem" declared that Arnulf was already the prior and that the bishop's consent had to follow, he deemed it necessary to keep the records straight by having Arnulf declare that his appointment depended on the bishop's approval.

King Henry III was not happy about the action of the Peterborough monks in forcing the resignation of William de Hotot in 1249 with Robert Grosseteste's help. So willy, nilly, in order to escape his wrath, they consented to elect John de Cauz, the king's candidate, who at the time of his approval by Grosseteste was prior of St. Swithun, Winchester. 71 Robert also approved Benedictine elections at Peterborough, Croyland and elsewhere. 72

In addition to the nominees of Bourne, Torksey and

71 Ibid., 244; Hist. Angl., III, 311; Chron. Maj., V, 84-85
72 Davis, 225 for Peterborough; 105 for Croyland; 225 for Hartford; 309 for Beaulieu; 459 for Eynsham; 65 for Bardney; 66 for St. Leonard's, Stamford; and 381 for Snelshall.
Wymondley whom the bishop absolved from obedience to other houses, he approved twenty-three other Austin superiors.\(^73\) During his administration, Robert approved the presentations of sixteen abbesses and prioresses,\(^74\) as well as sixteen superiors for the alien priories,\(^75\) most of which were Benedictine establishments. Two masters were approved for hospitals,\(^76\) a prior for Castle Hymal,\(^77\) and a prior for St. Andrew's when Arnulf resigned to become superior of Longus Pons.\(^78\)

At Bittlesden Abbey, a Cistercian foundation, Henry Mallore was elected abbot on Palm Sunday, 1241, and received his benediction as abbot from the hands of Bishop

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\(^{73}\) Ibid., 101 for Bourne; 153 for Torksey; 232 for Wymondley; 446 for St. Fridewide's; 447 for Osney; 385 for Leicester; 11 for Bourne; 138 for Missenden; 343 for Torksey; 171 for St. James; 256 for Huntingdon; 355 for Missenden; 462 for Bicester; 53 for Nocton; 319 for Dunstable; 415 for Owston; 424 for Breedon; 363 for Chetwood; 429 for Leicester; 494 for St. Fridewide's; 496 for Osney; 336 for Caldwell; 113 for Kyme; 246 for Brooke; 381 for Notley; 214 for Brooke; 477 for Wroxton.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 393 for Longley; 11 for Stainfield; 11 for Stixwould; 137 for Posse; 344 for Marlow; 372 for Markyate; 318 for Elstow; 369 for Ankerwyke; 221 for Worthorp; 289 for Hinchingbrooke; 325 for Harrold; 491 for Godstow; 122 for Greenfield; 361 for Ankerwyke; 420 for Gracedieu; 499 for Studley.

\(^{75}\) Ibid., 392 for Hinkley; 16 for Covenham; 454 for Coggs; 175 for Weedon Pinckney; 46 for Wilsford; 66 for Weedon Pinckney; 62 for Wenghate; 423 for Hinkley; 489 for Minister Lovell; 96 for Wilsford; 111 for Minting; 295 for St. Neot; 494 for Coggs; 113 for Wilsford; and 501 for Coggs.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 176 for St. John's; 336 for Hochlliff.

\(^{77}\) Ibid.; 246

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 223
Grosseteste. This is the only instance in the register of the bishop's having had anything to do with the appointment and blessing of a Cistercian. 79

At the Premonstratensian house of Croxton in Leicestershire, Brother Geoffrey, a member of the community, was elected abbot and received his blessing from Grosseteste. But the register gives the impression that the bishop had nothing to say about the approval or rejection of the canons' choice. 80

Since Robert Grosseteste put into office ninety-one percent of the religious presented to him for superiorships, and since the nine percent he rejected were rejected because they were unfit for office or their elections were uncanonical, it is hard to find in Grosseteste's handling of the appointment of superiors cause to call him too stern and strict.

The alien priories were a source of trouble in English ecclesiastical and political history because their motherhouses were on the continent. The case of Minting, one of these alien priories, figures prominently in Bishop Grosseteste's relations with the religious of his diocese. In 1238,

79 Ibid.: 205
80 Ibid.: 416
he wrote two letters about the cell to the mother abbey, St. Benedict's at Fleury. 81 In this community, we find the second of the two references to immorality in religious houses in Grosseteste's see. In the spring of 1238, Robert sent back to Fleury two monks who had been living at Minting which was about ten miles from Lincoln. One of the monks, Philip, confessed to adultery, while the other, Thomas, was accused of fornication, and the brethren of their priory would not swear to the innocence of either. Both this letter, and a shorter one written about the same time, are very courteous and mild. The bishop has his duty to his office and tries to discharge it as civilly as possible. There is a third letter, 82 however, by Grosseteste to Abbot John of Fleury about Minting; and, as Thomson remarks, 83 this letter is anything but mild. Robert is very outspoken when he tells the abbot that the monks should not only know but that they should live their rule. This is the severest letter we have of Grosseteste to a religious house; but under the circumstances, it is perfectly justified. The bishop had previously written to Fleury about the situation at Minting, and from the two other letters that we possess, we can see that the bishop was quite gentlemanly in his pleading that the abbot enforce the rule at Mint-

81 Epistolae, ## 53 and 54
82 Ibid., # 108
ting. But now four monks of Minting, Philip, Theobald, Walrand and Girad, were very lax in their observance of the rule, and were immoral besides. The bishop had tried persuasion; now he used more forceful means. To interpret this letter as evidence of an anti-monastic attitude would be to misunderstand Robert Grosseteste, for this letter is rather evidence that he was a true friend of monasticism. He knew what the rule of St. Benedict expected of a monk and realized that men who publicly flaunted its principles and precepts were the really anti-monastic, though in name they were monks.

The priory of Spalding was a cell of St. Nicholas, Angers, but with the help of Hugh of Wells, it had been emancipated to some extent from the control of the mother house, when it was agreed that the priors should no longer be dative datus ab abbate de Angiers but perpetual; that they should be elected by the convent of Spalding.... In matters relating to the rule of the order the priory to be still subject to the abbey of Angiers....

The abbot of Angers, however, becoming dissatisfied with this agreement, obtained a letter of papal intervention a few weeks before Grosseteste became bishop of Lincoln, because, as he said, "the bishop made an ordinance limiting his rights over Spalding." After much litigation, a second agreement was reached on January 2, 1242, which was confirmed by Innocent IV

84 Dugdale, III, 207-208
85 Bliss, I, 143
on April 4, 1245. 86

In this deed, the chief points of agreement named in the former composition were recognized and more fully explained; and partly in consequence of expenses incurred in the suit, and partly to relieve the charge of the abbot in coming over to his visitation, it was determined that an annual pension of sixty marks, or forty pounds, should be paid him by the prior and convent. 87

The bishop also won a case against the French abbey of Marmoutier-lez-Tours which was hostile to him because he had excommunicated some monks at their cell of Newport Pagnel, and because he wished to keep the prior under his control. The sentence was given by Cardinal William on June 2, 1249 (sic) and confirmation of this sentence was forwarded from Lyons on June 22, 1248. 88

The first papal letter concerning the relations between Robert of Lincoln and the brethren of Sempringham is dated May 9, 1240. It orders the Gilbertines to "pay due obedience to the bishop of Lincoln, their diocesan." 89 But as the years passed, the master and brethren of this congregation seemed to have come under a delusion of oppression for they secured papal letter after papal letter forbidding anyone to encroach on their privileges. The onslaught of papal indults

86 Ibid., 215
87 Dugdale, III, 208
88 Bliss, I, 257
89 Ibid., 190
begins in 1245. There are three entries for January and
February of that year. There are two grants of protection:
one of these confirms their exemptions "from tithes, aids, and
unusual exactions...." In the third, "the privilege granted
by Pope Clement" is confirmed, and they are exempted "from the
exactions called 'Sancte Johannecorin,' in the diocese of York,
and Mariecorin,' in the diocese of Lincoln. In February of
the next year, another indulg was granted "to the master and
brethren of S empringham that they may charitably receive
bishops or prelates without prejudice to them or their order.
...." On February 9, 1249, the Gilbertines obtained a papal
grant to hold "to their own uses" the church of Wallcot which
was valued at ten marks, just as in the preceeding year
they got permission to take over the church of Prestwald.
From Perugia on March 7, 1253, another grant of protection
was issued to the brethren and sisters of Sempringham which
enumerated all their churches and possessions. And a year
later in July, 1254, the following papal letter was issued
at Anagni.

Indult to the master, priors, and con-
vents of the order of S empringham, that
they shall not be bound to receive any
archdeacon who comes on his visitation

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90 Ibid., 213
91 Ibid., 230
92 Ibid., 259
93 Ibid., 258-259
94 Ibid., 284
to these churches with an immoderate number of persons beyond that fixed by the Lateran council._rs

Whether these confirmations and privileges were sought in fear of Robert Grosseteste is not certain. What is certain, however, is that the bishop had to procure a papal letter ordering them "to pay him due obedience."

The date of the foundation of the new house of Augustinians at Chetwood is elusive. The edition of the bishop's register tells us that the entry appears on the dorse of the roll for the tenth year of Grosseteste's rule, but the entry itself says: "Given at Strode outside Roff on November 15 in the ninth year of our pontificate."_sr And there is a transcript of this with the records of the eleventh year. The desire to promote religion and the service of God urged the bishop to grant permission for this new house. The canons, however, must swear canonical obedience to the bishop and his successors. They must also make a reasonable agreement with the parish church in the vicinity lest it suffer because of this foundation. They are granted the privilege of having any bishop they please bless their building. This document is hardly that of a man who is excessively hard on the religious of his diocese.

Luard assigns 1244 as the probable date of Grosse-

95 Ibid., 301
96 Dabis, 371
67
teste's letter to the Cistercians at Scarborough about a Franciscan house that was to be established there. The white monks had obtained papal letters on whose authority Grosseteste ordered the Minorites to quit their house at Scarborough. After several days of litigation before the bishop, the poor men of St. Francis, although they claimed a special dispensation from the Apostolic See, agreed to withdraw. When these facts had been cited, the bishop went on to say that, although

they were prepared to withdraw with all humility...it would not redound to the honor of your order, but rather it would greatly tarnish the lustre of your fame and it would place an ugly stain on that glory as your good judgment without any hinting on my part clearly can ponder well....

Robert goes on to remark that he has told the Franciscans to stay until the convent will reconsider and inform him of its final decision.

At Leicester, Roger Blund, a canon of Lincoln, set up a chapel for himself and for other infirm clerics, with a Gregory de Milwere as warden of the chapel. In order to start this foundation, it was necessary to obtain the consnet of the canons of Leicester since the new foundation was to next door to their church of the Holy Trinity. In the bishop's register, the appointment of Gregory occurs first; then follows the deed in which the rights of the Austin canons are

97 Epistolae, # 109
safeguarded. Only those living at the chapel or those working there are permitted to receive the sacraments in that place; nor can marriages be celebrated at the chapel. Finally there is the consent of the abbey of St. Mary de le Pre of Leicester which repeats parts of the deed and then refers the reader to the deed for the guarantees of its privileges. From these documents in the register, it may be inferred that Grosseteste co-operated with the religious in safeguarding their rights.

When Robert was in Bannerbiry in 1238, he confirmed the appropriation of the church of Fulwell to Oseney Abbey, acting with the advice and consent of the dean and chapter of Lincoln. One of the stipulations was that, on the feast of St. Nicholas each year, the monastery give two marks to the diocesan official in charge of the Oxford schools to be distributed to poor scholars.

In 1242, the eighth year of Robert Grosseteste's administration of the Lincoln diocese, the canons of Dunstable recovered their church of Hecham from those of Ashby in Northamptonshire. The canons of Ashby were loath to return the church, but Dunstable effected the recovery through Grosseteste's intervention in their behalf.

98 Davis, 435-437
99 Ibid., 461-462
100 Annales Monastici, III, 160
During 1237, the bishop had some trouble with Walter of St. Edmund, the Benedictine abbot of Peterborough, over the provision of various clerics. The difficulty arose out of papal letters. One letter ordered them to give the church of Cestre to Master Robert de Sumercot, papal subdeacon, "and they are also compelled by the bishop of Lincoln to make provision to H., clerk, by reason of other letters addressed to him."\(^{101}\) When the convent had recourse to Rome, it was told not to be disturbed by those other letters. Grosseteste, to whom on January 26, 1239, a papal letter was sent, also took steps to relieve the situation. "Licence to the bishop of Lincoln that he shall not be bound by papal letters to make provision to anyone unless special mention is made of this licence."\(^{102}\)

About this time, the bishop instituted the convent of Abingdon, across the river from Oxford, as the rector of Cuddesdon in Oxfordshire. Though they were to have the rights of rectors, Robert stated very clearly in his grant what part of the parish revenues would go to the support of the vicar.\(^ {103}\)

The whole tone of the document is one of fairness both to the religious and to the man who will have the care of souls.

In August or September, 1240, the bishop was at

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\(^{101}\) Bliss, I, 168-169
\(^{102}\) Ibid., 178
\(^{103}\) Davis, 454-455
Bannebiry in Oxfordshire where he established a vicarage for the church of Wytefeld of which Eynsham abbey was patron. Since the rectors of this church found it very difficult to pay the convent the sum which custom prescribed, Grosseteste, with the consent of Eynsham, set up a permanent vicarage with a stipulated sum for the rector, and gave the rest to the religious of Eynsham. Robert undertook this business because according to him:

It belongs to the pastoral office to look out for the poor so that they receive their due with security and without undertaking lawsuits, from whom what is due them is frequently taken away and a solution of the case is arrived at only through contention and anxiety. 104

An order from Rome dated July 14 about a dispute the bishop had with the Augustinian nuns of Halliwell in the London diocese probably reached England about this time. This convent had an annual pension of five marks from the church of Wellewes granted them by St. Hugh, the late bishop of Lincoln. Gregory IX, some years before, with the concurrence of the chapter at Lincoln, had approved this pension. Meanwhile Grosseteste "has since ordered the said pension to be withdrawn and the priors refuse to proceed against him because they are his clerks. If he will not yield, they must proceed according

104 Cart. of Eynsham, 176
to the first mandate."

Toward the end of 1241, according to Matthew Paris, there was a serious misunderstanding between Bishop Robert of Lincoln and Abbot Richard of Westminster, in which both parties clashed most acrimoniously. The bishop was determined to check the growing privileges of Westminster by refusing to allow the monastery to take possession of the church of Ashwell in Hertfordshire. And "on a poor excuse", he tried to deprive the monks of Ashwell by conferring it on a certain Nicholas "whom this same bishop quite unjustly had deprived of his benefices. But the abbot, supported by right as well as privilege, opposed him openly with manly courage."  

This interpretation by the famed historiographer of St. Albans seems to judge the bishop a little more harshly than the documents which have been preserved in the register would seem to warrant. The church of Ashwell had been promised to Westminster since May 31, 1225 by a letter of Pope Honorius III which is preserved in the episcopal registers. The residual revenue of the church after a suitable living (unde honeste vivat) had been established for a vicar, was to go to the monastery "for the support of the brethren, the guests and the poor."  

There were difficulties before the two

105 Bliss, I, 191  
106 Chron. Maj., IV, 151  
107 Davis, 278
parties could agree on what would constitute a suitable living for the vicar, but Grosseteste did not question the right of the abbot and convent to be the rectors nor did he try to take Ashwell away from them. The chronicler from Hertfordshire indicates that Grosseteste tried to confer Ashwell on Nicholas to the exclusion of the monks. The documents, however, tell a different story. The right of nominating a vicar was given to the abbot and convent by the bishop.\textsuperscript{108} The register states "Nicholao de Catteworth ad ipsam vicariam presentato\textsuperscript{109} which seems to indicate that Nicholas is the choice of the monks and was not being forced on them by the bishop.

Should one seek a reason that would give the bishop cause for coolness toward the monks, it would be found in this case. The bishop had appointed a commission to look into the situation and set aside a fixed sum for the vicar. It was finally decided by the bishop's clerics that forty-five marks were hardly enough while the monks protested that it was too much. But Matthew Paris himself give the coup de grace to the monks' case when he says:

And in this transaction, the church of Westminster received a great increase of wealth and honor. By his labor, this Abbot Richard with this not least

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid. "Ad quam vicariam quotiens vacaverit dicti Abbas et conventus qui pro tempore fuerint virum idoneum loci diocesano presentabunt instituendum in eadem...."

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 281
commodious outcome increased the revenue of his abbey 300 marks annually by the returns acquired in perpetuity.\textsuperscript{110}

And yet the monks were so reluctant to grant their vicar at Ashwell "a living wage."

At the beginning of 1250, the bishop began to take action against those religious houses which held benefices or ecclesiastical revenues without sufficient legal evidence to support their claim. Working on the authority of the letter which Innocent IV had written on May 17 of the preceding year in which the pope had granted Lincolnensis the power of imposing ecclesiastical censures on those who should resist his authorization,\textsuperscript{111} he called together all the religious of his diocese and ordered them to bring copies of the chapters of their founders and of papal privileges. For, unless they could prove their titles valid, such titles would be revoked.\textsuperscript{112} The religious contested this action and six weeks later Grosseteste set out for the papal court at Lyons. In this city by the Rhone, Robert Grosseteste failed to attain his objective of forcing the religious of his diocese to give up their benefices and privileges which they held on scant evidence. On September 25, however, he did obtain authority to fix a sufficient portion for the support of the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{110} Chron. Maj., IV, 154
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., VI, 152
\textsuperscript{112} Hist. Angl., III, 68-69
\end{flushleft}
vicars in the various churches. The historian of Lincolnshire comments that concessions "failed to win back his allegiance." It might be more correct to say that his confidence in Innocent was not restored when the Holy Father failed to support him when he merely attempted to act on the powers granted him by Innocent on May 17, 1249.

In Robert Grosseteste's various contacts with the religious of his diocese, we have seen that a spirit of fairness to all characterized his actions. When he forced certain superiors to resign, it was because these superiors failed to fulfill faithfully and fairly the duties of their office; when Robert rejected a nominee to a superiorship, it was because the person presented was not fit to carry out the duties incumbent on a religious superior; when Grosseteste quashed an election, but then appointed the person by virtue of his episcopal authority, it was because the religious was competent, but barred from office by a technicality only. When we realize that Robert confirmed in office ninety-one percent of the candidates presented to him, when we consider his anxiety that the monks of Minting be true to their vocations, when we are aware of his care that older religious houses do not suffer when a new foundation is being made,

113 Chron. Maj., V, 300
114 The Vic. Hist. of the Co. of Lincoln, I, 29
when we see his equanimity in the face of the Westminster community's avarice, it becomes impossible to agree with the critics of the bishop who affirmed that he was too strict.
CHAPTER IV

AN EVALUATION OF MATTHEW PARIS' CRITICISM
OF ROBERT GROSSETESTE

In this study of the religious orders and Robert Grosseteste, bishop of Lincoln during what has been called the golden age of English monasticism, it has been noted that the monks were men of intellectual attainments who, while they had not lost sight of their religious ideal, were desirous of maintaining their properties and position. Grosseteste's knowledge of the monastic ideal also has been discussed while the preceding chapter investigated his various contacts with the religious houses of his diocese.

Although Grosseteste was desirous of promoting religious life and its interests, the monks and canons do not seem to have appreciated his zeal if we are to believe the words of Matthew Paris. Indeed, Paris whom historians in the past often followed too closely mentions Robert frequently and usually manages to give the impression that this bishop of Lincoln was no friend of the monks. But what does not being a friend of the monks imply? Perhaps it means the bishop was not a friend because he visited the monasteries in order to see that the monks lived the life they had vowed; or again he may have wished to strip them of their possessions and revenues. Did the bishop fail in friendliness be-
cause he removed religious superiors from office and refused to admit others? Consequently it will be instructive to consider Matthew's remarks and evaluate them in the light of what we have learned about Robert Grosseteste.

Our study of Robert's policy in removing superiors and rejecting some of the candidates presented to him has shown that his action was motivated by the desire of insuring to the monks, canons, and nuns competent administrators. Consequently such action may not be called unfriendly.

At the time of Grosseteste's election, Matthew remarked that the new bishop was too wedded to his own judgment. The chronicler promises that these traits will become obvious when more is related about Grosseteste. Does the historian of St. Albans mean that Robert of Lincoln was hostile to the monks or does he merely mean that the bishop would not permit the monks to do whatever they pleased? Robert would have been a poor bishop if he had not had a will of his own and had not trusted his own judgment. But even here, Matthew's statement is not entirely true, for occasionally the documents tell us that he acts with the advice and consent of the cathedral chapter, or that he appointed a religious superior after consulting prudent men.

1 H. R. Luard (ed), Historia Anglorum (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1866-69, II, 376
Matthew was especially bitter with Grosseteste when he attempted to strip the religious of the benefices and pensions which they held illegally. He called Robert "the indefatigable harasser of the religious" who made a liberal use of funds to persuade the pope to support him against the monks. The pope, however, did not support Robert directly. It seems to me that in granting to the bishop the power to fix portions for the vicars, Innocent IV granted Grosseteste the substance of his request. In attempting to limit the possessions of the religious, the bishop of Lincoln wished to make available to the clerics who aid the parish work a revenue sufficient for their needs. Consequently, although the religious retained possession of their benefices, Robert was enable by Innocent's letter of September 25, 1250 to set aside a suitable revenue for the vicars. Here again Paris accuses Grosseteste of injustice under the guise of justice. Matthew says that the bishop wished to "decimate the revenues of the religious and increase the portions of the vicars." We may dismiss this accusation after referring to the Westminster case. In neither case was Robert Grosseteste seeking his own aggrandisement; he was

2 H. R. Luard (ed), Chronica Majora (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1872-83, VI, 152
3 Ibid., V, 96
4 Ibid., 300
5 Ibid.
6 Supra, 71-74
merely attempting to give the vicars a modest living. Such action can not be interpreted as a sign of his being unfriendly to the monks.

Richard of Dunstable records that Robert made a general visitation of his diocese in 1238 after which it was difficult to get the bishop's consent for some churches which Dunstable had accepted. The remarks of the St. Alban's chronicler about Robert's visitations, however, are much more acrimonious than those of the canon from Dunstable. Thus Matthew in 1239: "The bishop of Lincoln has also become the hammer and untiring persecutor of the religious in his diocese." In 1251, "Robert, the bishop of Lincoln made a visitation of the religious houses in his diocese which was too strict and severe." Not only is the visitation with its "tyrannies" severe, rather it is "austere and inhuman." The bishop is castigated for taking too many seculars to Ramsey, for personally examining the monks' sleeping quarters. Matthew, reporting that the bishop went all over the house "as a housebreaker" destroying cupboards and over fancy mugs, sermonized that the bishop should have acted more circumspectly and given the whole to the poor. Stevenson remarks

7 H. R. Luard, Annales Monastici (Rolls Series), Longmans & Green, London, 1864, III, 143-144
8 Chron. Maj., III, 528
9 Hist. Angl., III, 108
10 Chron. Maj., V, 225
on this incident:

It is necessary to make allowance for the bias and the exaggerations of Matthew Paris's informants; and, having regard to the abuses existing in the monasteries in respect of private property, as set forth, for example, by Jocelyn of Brakelond at the close of the twelfth century, it cannot be denied that Grosseteste had good grounds for insisting that the monks should adhere to the vows which they had taken of their own free will, and with full knowledge of what they signified.\(^{11}\)

A more serious charge is leveled against Grosseteste when Paris affirms that the bishop made a limited physical examination\(^{12}\) of the nuns in order to determine whether any of them had been unfaithful to the vow of chastity. Since the *Chronica Majora* is the only original source to accuse the bishop in this manner, and since the chronicler's attitude toward Robert Grosseteste is so well known, it is quite possible that Matthew's animosity toward Robert overpowered his veracity. It may well be that the bishop went so far as to demand that the nuns be examined physically, but it is most probable that he would confide this examination to competent matrons as is sometimes done, and did

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\(^{11}\) F. S. Stevenson, *Robert Grosseteste*, Macm 1lan, London, 1899, 162

\(^{12}\) *Chron.* Maj., V, 226. "Et quod indignum scribi, ad domos religiosarum veniens, fecit exprimi mamillas earundem, ut sic physice si esset inter eas corruptela experiretur."
not personally direct it.

In commenting on Robert’s death, Paris writes:

The holy bishop of Lincoln, Robert II, then indeed left the exile of this world which he never loved at his manor of Bugedon on the eve of St. Denis. He was the palpable refutor of the Lord Pope and the king, the reprover of prelates, the corrector of monks, the director of priests, the instructor of the incontinent, the careful investigator of the scriptures, the hammer and contemner of Romans; his table for the needs of the body was sumptuous, abundant and urbane, happy and affable, while at the spiritual table, he was devout, tearful and contrite, and in his pontifical office, careful, worthy of respect and untiring.13

These words of Matthew Paris picture Robert Grosseteste as a bishop who took the duties of his office conscientiously. Such a man, even though he proformed only the duties of his office, will not be looked upon with unqualified sympathy by those whom he corrected. Consequently the monks in general, and Matthew in particular, as is quite evident, resented his activities. It is necessary, therefore, to take the fulminations of the chronicler of St. Albans with the proverbial grain of salt.

In conclusion, we may say that Robert’s knowledge

13 Chron. Maj., V, 406
of the ideal of religious life from the Scriptures, the writings of St. Benedict, and the Benedictine statuta of the first part of the thirteenth century, and his justice in appointing and removing superiors, coupled with his fairness in dealing with Minting, Bardney, Westminster and other houses, makes impossible an acceptance of Matthew Paris' verdict on his hostility to the religious in his diocese. Not only the personality seen in Robert's letters, but also Matthew's final description of the famed bishop of Lincoln, makes us realize that Robert Grosseteste was not a mean or petty man who would indulge in the impetuosities sometimes attributed to him. Robert Grosseteste was the friend of monks, canons, and nuns of his diocese, a bishop who had their true interests at heart and who kept his religious true to their ideal when at times they may have wished, inadvertently indeed, to stray from it.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by John F. Mitzel, S.J. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

August 3, 1949
Date

Signature of Adviser

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