

Book Reviews

UNDERSTANDING THE MIDDLE AGES. Harald Kleinschmidt. 2000. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge. £45. ISBN 0-85115-770-X.

For authors and readers alike, the engagement with abstract ideas removed from the relative safety of the primary source material presents a serious challenge. It is all the more remarkable to find a book dedicated in its entirety to 'concepts . . . abstractions from the world of tangible realities'. It is change affecting ideas and concepts over a stretch of time that Kleinschmidt is interested in, challenging the views of those modern philosophers, anthropologists and other social scientists who regard concepts such as 'culture' and 'society' as essentially static across space and time. With regard to these two last factors, the author casts his net widely, using as his field of investigation a somewhat fuzzy concept of 'Europe' over a period of more than a thousand years from roughly the fifth to the sixteenth century.

The thirteen distinct ideas the author seeks to analyse are divided up under four headings: *Generalities* (encompassing such diverse themes as 'Time', 'Space', 'The Body — Modes of Behaviour', 'Groups', and gender), *Action* (covering 'Production and Distribution', war, and thinking), *Interaction* (here dominated by the concept of 'Communication', and dealing with 'Communication in a Given Present', historiography, and 'Movement of Persons and Groups', and finally, *Images of Order* (covering 'The Old and the Young', as well as 'Rule and Representation'). Kleinschmidt is well aware of the potential pitfalls in so broad a field, and is at pains to distance himself from any claim to comprehensive coverage of all possible aspects of his topic. His approach is essentially descriptive, and he is happy to admit to raising questions rather than providing answers.

For all its attempts at pan-european breadth, the volume is firmly rooted in the traditions of central European historiography. The author acknowledges his debt to Jacob Burckhardt, and — however unintentionally — the book is weighted towards the traditional fields of study of German historians in its definition of a Europe centred on the Carolingian empire, its use of source material drawing heavily on the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, with England contributing in the main Anglo-Saxon material, and — as a result — a

chronological focus in the earlier and high middle ages. Similarly, to any reader wishing to follow up the ample secondary leads given by the author, a thorough knowledge of the German language is an essential prerequisite. This is not to say that Kleinschmidt's use of both primary and secondary material is limited. Even the 'selective' bibliography provided by the author runs to no fewer than forty-three pages. Visual sources are also given their place, and the publishers must surely be commended for agreeing to fairly lavish illustrations, although one does occasionally regret that it was impossible to render at least some of them in colour.

In general terms, the volume is remarkably successful. Although at times clarity of expression is sacrificed to the need for abstraction, and the occasional point does get buried under a heap of technical jargon, the author usually manages to rescue his argument by skilful reference back to the original sources.

The student of later medieval England may find some points to quibble with. Even a cursory glance at Kleinschmidt's chronological table at the start of the book suggests that he is rather more at home in the earlier and high middle ages than in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and this impression is confirmed throughout the volume. There are some minor errors and omissions: the reign of Henry VI is dated to 1422-72, and Ricardians may not be the only ones surprised at the absence of any events between 1483 and 1487 warranting a mention in the author's chronology.

Other omissions are rather more serious. Does the evidence of late medieval women's correspondence and wills not illustrate a self-confidence which belies the awareness of 'suppression' the author detects in the writings of Christine de Pisan? Going beyond the ideas of the relationship between ruler and ruled expressed by England's rebelling peasants in 1381 and similar continental insurgents, would reference to the emergence of the idea of a 'community of the realm' and the development of Parliament not have been useful in the discussion of changing concepts of governance?

Some of these *lacunae* may arise either from an unfamiliarity with English sources, or perhaps more worryingly from the need to make statements applicable across a 'Europe', the majority of which is significantly less well endowed with surviving sources of this nature than England. The result can at times leave the reader wondering just how useful a concept of 'Europe' as a constant in this type of study really is, once crossing an arbitrary threshold somewhere in the mid-fourteenth century. There is a sense, although not one made explicit by Kleinschmidt, that having been at the heart of 'Europe' in the Anglo-Saxon period, by the later middle ages England had begun to drift away from the continent in at least some respects: an early sixteenth century allegorical map

depicts Europe as an empress, and whereas the island of Sicily serves as an orb, the British Isles drift away into the ocean, while the empress's face is turned the other way (p. 112).

However, such concerns are essentially insular, and leaving them to one side, overall the book works well and provides some interesting and reasonably accessible insights, and more importantly contexts, which are likely to reach beyond many readers' immediate field of expertise. This volume is by no means an easy read, but it is worth the effort, less for the sake of the answers it provides than for its thought-provoking nature. For all that it is not an end, the book nevertheless provides a starting point for some stimulating intellectual acrobatics.

HANNES KLEINEKE

THE CULT OF ST KATHERINE OF ALEXANDRIA IN LATE MEDIEVAL ENGLAND. Katherine J. Lewis. 2000. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, Suffolk. £45.
ISBN 0-85115-773-4.

Richard III and Katherine Swynford both had a particular devotion to St Katherine of Alexandria. There was nothing special in this for they shared this preference with thousands of English men and women throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth century and well into the sixteenth. Even the Lollard knight Sir John Montague, when removing all the saints' images from his house in 1387, apparently allowed the image of St Katherine to stay, albeit in the bakehouse, 'because many people had an affection for it'.

This study surveys the cult of the saint in England and asks how people responded to the story of her life and refashioned it to fit their own interests, and why so many different people liked St Katherine. Though she never existed she became 'the most important saint in late medieval England'; though a virgin martyr she was not only worshipped by women; though a woman she became the patron saint of scholars. Was she merely an intercessor, of whose special powers one had justifiably high hopes, or was she also a role model, for the faithful to imitate?

Her life consisted of two parts: her *vita*, which tells us of her royal birth, early life, education and her resistance to all attempts to marry her, and her *passio*, which predates the *vita* and narrates her conversion of fifty philosophers, who were supposed to talk her out of her faith, but failed completely, and her actual martyrdom: tortured, threatened with death between two spiked wheels and finally beheaded. Most English versions of her story derive from

James de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*. Many lay men and women actually possessed such texts and those who could not read became acquainted with her life and acts from sermons, three dimensional images, stained glass and wall-paintings in their own parish church. Dr Lewis lists many places in England where such visual images can be found, such as the wall paintings in Sporle and Raunds (Norfolk), Croughton and Castor (Northants), Battle (Sussex) and Wotton Wawen (Warwickshire), and stained glass panels in St Peter Mancroft in Norwich, York Minster and Balliol College.

Evidence about the popularity of St Katherine can also be found in wills, with bequests for the upkeep of particular lights, altars or chapels, and the existence of many religious guilds dedicated to her. St Katherine was many things to many people, but one of her greatest 'assets' was her royal birth, which made her acceptable to royalty, the nobility and aspirants to a higher social status. According to the author it was one of the reasons — apart from her name — for Katherine Swynford to venerate St Katherine particularly: 'a means of justifying her newly achieved, yet somewhat equivocal membership of the royal family'. Dr Lewis spends much time on John of Gaunt's former mistress and claims that the coat of arms that she used (gules, three [Katherine's] wheels, or) was inspired by her special saint. As far as I know these were the canting arms (wheel = *roue*) of her father, Sir Payn (or Paon) de Roet, Guienne King of Arms. They are very much present, for example, in the church and almshouse of Ewelme, where they represent Thomas Chaucer, son of the poet and Philippa de Roet, Katherine's sister, and Thomas' daughter, Alice de La Pole, Duchess of Suffolk.

Her royal birth and, in later versions of her life, her mystical marriage to Christ, made St Katherine special among other virgin martyrs such as Agnes, Agatha and Margaret. In addition she was given an English connection by turning her father, Costus, into a half-brother of the Emperor Constantine, whose mother, St Helen, was, of course, British born. However popular St Katherine was, few churches are actually dedicated to her, because her cult only became widespread in England in the thirteenth century 'by which time most medieval churches had been built'.

St Katherine's learning, which the author no doubt correctly qualifies by saying that it was not so much the saint's own merit but came miraculously from God when she needed it, appealed to a different group of people and made a man like Pietro Carmeliano, the Italian humanist, write his clever verse life and dedicate it to Richard III and Chancellor Russell in the hope of reward. Dr Lewis also argues that the life of the saint may have been read as an authorisation of the education of women, and to support this she looks at all surviving manuscripts and copies of the English life that existed in medieval

households. She quotes Reginald Pecock, who wrote — no doubt with some rhetorical exaggeration — of ‘x. thousand . . . of the same Seintis lijf and pasioun’ in London, and she concludes that ‘these manuscripts seem to have been owned and read by wealthy people of middling status, who probably had an eye on improving that status’. Such people’s interest is reflected by the fact that the saint’s early life, mystical marriage and education became a standard part of her story, which originally had only been concerned with her martyrdom.

Dr Lewis’ study is the first major study of St Katherine’s cult in England and makes an interesting and worthwhile book, but I have a few reservations. As to content, I missed, for example, any discussion of St Katherine’s fascinating link with St Barbara as the twin patrons of the active and contemplative life. As to form, I feel that the author has a tendency at times to slip into unnecessary jargon which does not seem to come naturally to her; this phenomenon is accompanied by an equally unnecessary and unfortunate prolixity and repetitiveness. Though the book is endlessly subdivided and ‘subheaded’ it is still not particularly easy to find anything in it and I am not sure that I found its thematic division helpful or clarifying, partly because many statements are repeated in several of these sections. There is also a tendency to announce *ad nauseam* what is *going to be* discussed, something which should be clear enough to the reader from the many subheadings.

One also wonders why almost none of the Middle French, Latin and the more obscure parts of Middle English quotations have been translated (and when a French quotation is translated the result is incorrect). Such translations, together with a more accessible organisation of the text, possibly a guide or gazetteer to all the places where the interested reader may find traces of the cult of such an extraordinarily popular saint in this country, and finally and most of all a few more illustrations than the rather puny collection of drawings and one black and white photograph, would have made this a better book. Do we blame the author or the publisher?

LIVIA VISSER-FUCHS

MEDIEVAL WARFARE: A HISTORY edited by Maurice Keen, 1999.
Oxford University Press. £25.

ISBN 0-19-820639-9.

This is a compilation of periods and themes, divided into an Introduction and two Parts each of six chapters contributed by twelve leading scholars. Maurice Keen himself begins with the Preface and Introduction and concludes the book with ‘The Changing Scene: Guns, Gunpowder, and Permanent Armies’. It is a

reflection and in many ways a summary of some excellent work that has been done in recent years into the general subject, which is now something of an established discipline in its own right. It covers a considerable area, and consequently the specialist reader will likely find subjects that he knows and those that he does not. The earlier chapters of 'Part I — Phases of Medieval Warfare', will most likely be among the latter category for readers of *The Ricardian*. Timothy Reuter provides a study of 'Carolingian and Ottonian Warfare' and H.B. Clarke of 'The Vikings' — which, incidentally, is particularly of interest in showing that these legendary warriors appeared to lose more often than not!

In 'An Age of Expansion c.1020–1204', John Gillingham considers wars and warfare from across Europe, though especially Germany, Italy and Spain, to demonstrate important points. From this he observes that Norman and Crusader successes were due as much to their enemies' disunity as much to their own skill in arms. Next Gillingham reviews the long held cherished view that the Norman cavalry revolutionised warfare, sweeping all before it. Through his analysis of the battles of Civitate, Hastings, but most especially the Saxon-Frankish wars in Germany in 1073–1115, he argues that the efficacy of cavalry warfare was limited to dealing with a disorganised, retiring enemy and in providing a fast, mobile force to help maintain blockades and go on *chevauchée*. Such mounted raids were common, both in non-castellated lands and in more urbanised societies that were centred on fortifications, where raiding and plundering went hand in hand with the acquisition of strongpoints as a systematic process of conquest. Leading on from this, Gillingham touches briefly on the importance of castles, reminding us that where they existed, warfare generally focused upon them and action in the field was comparatively rare.

Peter Edbury provides an analysis of 'Warfare in the Latin East' — the only chapter to concentrate on a single geographical area. The Levant was not the only area where war was almost endemic, and indeed 'crusading' went on elsewhere, but the warfare of this particular theatre has been a special favourite of historians since Smail's pioneering work. How refreshing it would be to have a similar study available in English on the Reconquista in Iberia or something to supplement Christiansen's excellent general study of the Northern Crusades! Of course another reason for interest in the Holy Land is the now dated view that crusading warfare led the way for the West, especially in castle architecture. This is now played down, and Edbury makes it clear that much indeed, was the same: pillaging and extracting tribute; a reluctance to commit to battle in all but the most favourable circumstances; the vital importance of first rate castles and the techniques used to assault them. On the importance of cavalry,

Edbury follows the established view that the Frankish charge was crucial, but that its timing had to be so perfect as to diminish greatly its value, and that it was in any case dependent on stolid infantry support.

In 'European Warfare, c. 1200–1320', Norman Housley too observes that cavalry and other arms had to work in conjunction to achieve success. Of Courtrai (1302) and other battles at the start of the fourteenth century that are supposed to mark the 'Infantry Revolution', Housley sees no real evidence that cavalry had become obsolete. What does change in this period is that armies become much larger and more organized, and this leads him to spend much of his chapter summarising how governments raised, paid and sustained their forces.

Unlike Housley, in 'The Age of the Hundred Years War', Clifford Rogers certainly subscribes to the view that Courtrai and other contemporary battles mark a transition from heavy cavalry to infantry as the main arm. Among these battles he includes Dupplin Moor and Halidon Hill in that the English did not depend on cavalry as at Bannockburn. But of course neither did the Scots — what those fights did show however is the efficiency of the English archers — which Rogers notes. Staying with Anglo-Scottish warfare, Rogers later returns to this theme of the new found value of infantry in that, he says, this enabled the Scots to stand up to the English. Clearly Dupplin Moor and Halidon don't suggest this, and, on the whole, neither does the Scots' battle record after Halidon. A better use of Anglo-Scottish warfare would have been as an example *par excellence* of the effectiveness of plundering and devastating. In the years after Bannockburn, Scottish *razzias* into the north of England demonstrated the inadequacy of the Edwardian regime more emphatically than that one spectacular defeat. However one can't reasonably expect everything to be included in a survey like this, and in fairness, Rogers does refer to this type of warring when he writes of Edward III's campaigns in France.

In 'Part II — The Arts of Warfare', Richard Jones provides a competent survey of 'Fortifications and Sieges in Western Europe, c. 800–1450'. He takes the sane view that although there were some advances in siege weaponry — primarily the counterweight trebuchet and later the cannon, in the main, siege techniques changed little in the period and defence retained the upper hand. This is refreshing especially with regard to the effect of gunpowder artillery which is all too frequently overplayed, and consequently diminishes somewhat Rogers' rather different views. As Jones points out, the lack of any fortification built primarily to resist cannon, helps suggest that this new device was slow to make a real difference. Admittedly all this was to change, as for example in the French recapture of Normandy, but this is technically after Jones' chosen period.

In later chapters, Andrew Ayton provides an excellent survey of 'Arms,

Armour, and Horses'; Michael Mallett considers 'Mercenaries', concentrating on the *condottieri*, while Felipe Fernandez-Armesto on 'Naval Warfare after the Viking Age, c. 1100–1500', is particularly absorbing, partly because of his especial grasp of this neglected subject from a Mediterranean perspective, and partly owing to his singular style of prose — which requires extra concentration! Due consideration is given, not just to vessels and their crews and equipment, but also to the forces of nature which, we are told, provided an advantage to certain states, England being a prime example. He spends much of his chapter convincing us successfully of the great importance of sea warfare, only to say rather surprisingly at the end that it remained of secondary importance to war on land.

Finally, Christopher Allmand discusses 'War and the Non-Combatant in the Middle Ages', and Maurice Keen himself concludes as mentioned above. Keen's summary is excellent. He covers the development of artillery, tracing its effect on field actions and fortifications (showing, incidentally, that its presence was not inevitably decisive) and its integration into the armies of 1450–1525. Those armies were bigger and more organized than before, but perhaps the single most interesting point is that the elite troops remained the heavy cavalry. In this one respect at least, the book closes on the same note as that on which it opened.

JAMES PETRE

CONCEPTS AND PATTERNS OF SERVICE IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES. Edited by Anne Curry and Elizabeth Matthew. 2000. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge. £45. ISBN 0-85115-814-5.

Ever since the Bristol conference of 1978, publication of the proceedings of the regular series of fifteenth-century conferences has been in the hands of Alan Sutton, later Sutton Publishing. They have now pulled out, and this volume is the first to appear under the aegis of the Boydell Press. As a product of the 'senior' conference, with papers delivered by established scholars, it has a theme — service in all its manifestations — and the volume is far more satisfying than the less coherent collections produced by the 'junior' conferences, where the wide range of topics had to be subsumed in the generalities of the trademark tripartite titles like *Estrangement, Enterprise and Education*. The diverse contents of such volumes usually included goodies, but they were books to borrow for the sake of one or two papers. This is one to buy.

Its range, though, is far from narrow. Service took many forms and this

samples most of them. Papers by Jeremy Goldberg and Chris Given-Wilson look at what we, with our narrower definition of service, would think of instead as employment. In posing the question, 'What was a servant?' Goldberg is mainly concerned with the domestic or agricultural work force. Given-Wilson surveys the development of labour legislation and sees this as evidence of growing acquiescence in state intervention. Clerical service — in both senses — is the subject of Virginia Davies' paper on how people got ahead in the medieval church and Jeremy Catto's look at graduate employment. Both point up the importance of having a patron, and Davies convincingly demonstrates that success in securing a benefice, and hence a place on the ladder, generally came early or not at all. 'Political' service is the subject of papers by David Morgan and Ralph Griffiths. The former takes as his starting point the household of Henry V (an inexplicable omission from the masterly survey of Henry and his reign edited by Gerald Harriss as *Henry V: the practice of kingship*). But this is not a prosopographical survey of household men but a sensitive exploration of a political culture. Griffiths revisits the role of the king's servants at a local level, measuring the realities against Sir John Fortescue's advice on the subject.

The last three papers look beyond England. Kathleen Daly explores what would later be called the civil service in France and its critics. Michael Jones looks at the material rewards of service through an examination of the residences of the servants of the dukes of Brittany — an illustrated paper which left participants at the conference jealously wondering why their research projects did not allow them summers in Brittany. Finally Alexander Grant discusses a political society which is arguably less familiar to an English audience than that of France: the 'lords and lairds' of late-medieval Scotland. That anticipated unfamiliarity means that the early part of the paper is dominated by the need to explain the Scottish legal system, but that is the necessary prelude to discussion of whether tenurial links have any place in service relationships. The answer turns out to be 'yes, but only when they are newly created', which is not so very different from the English situation after all.

All the papers have interesting things to say about their particular concerns. But what makes the book so worthwhile is the resonances between them. Sometimes this, too, is a matter of detail. Sir John Fortescue's belief that the loyalties of royal officers should *only* be to the crown is central to Ralph Griffiths' paper. Kathleen Daly, in the following paper, does not mention Fortescue by name, but she shows that precisely this idea was current in France in the middle of the century. More striking is the detail that in 1484 the Third Estate at Tours recommended that royal officials should only hold a single office — another plank of Fortescue's argument. Is the implication here that

we need to locate Fortescue within a 'civil service' culture, as Anthony Gross implies in his *Dissolution of the Lancastrian Kingship*? Certainly the English equivalents of Daly's 'civil servants' badly need work done on them. The editors' belief, expressed in the introduction, that Daly's paper draws attention to 'some fundamental differences' between England and France claims too much. The 'differences' are surely due in part, if not wholly, to the fact that the political service culture of medieval England has hitherto been studied primarily through the experience of the county gentry rather than the career administrator.

As this implies, a major concern of the book as a whole is the interface of public and private. Daly and Morgan are concerned with this explicitly. Daly's title, indeed, is 'Private vice, public service?' The question mark is important. Historians writing in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries took it as axiomatic that the goal of political development should be an 'independent' civil service whose loyalty was to the public good rather than to any individual ruler. Powerful value judgements about the unacceptability of personal motivation are at work here, and indeed the fifteenth century had its own rhetoric which set public weal against private profit. But this was also a society which believed that 'obedience done for love is more steadfast than that which is done for lordship or for dread' (one of the *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers* printed by Caxton). The fact that service was a personal relationship was seen as a strength, and historians who see it as inherently disreputable are in danger of misreading the culture of the late middle ages very badly. The reason why the interface of public and private is so fascinating, and so important, is precisely because the personal and the private on the one hand, and the general and the public on the other, are *not* synonyms for vice and virtue respectively.

It is true that over time the concept of service to an abstract entity, whether this is 'the state' or 'the public' becomes more visible and presumably, although the two are not always the same thing, more potent. It is an important development and one with profound implications for how political society likes to think of itself. But in practical terms the polarisation, and hence the shift from one to the other, is never complete: the two always co-exist. Indeed, even co-existence might be too tame a way of putting it. As the doctrine of the king's two bodies, or the current media privileging of personality over policies, reminds us, rulers have always been both public and private. And so have their servants. Virginia Davies addresses the same point from another angle when she ends her survey of clerical promotion with a gentle reminder that clerical vocation is important too. Her mild dig at the current fashionable emphasis that 'lay people are devout, clergy are cynical careerists' is typical of the book's willingness to engage with the complexities of late-medieval attitudes. This is

the best book in the series for several years, and someone at Sutton Publishing should be kicking themselves for letting it go elsewhere.

ROSEMARY HORROX

A BROTHERHOOD OF CANONS SERVING GOD. ENGLISH SECULAR CATHEDRALS IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES. David Lepine. 1995. *Studies in the History of Medieval Religion*, 8. The Boydell Press, Woodbridge. £35. ISBN 085115-620-7.

David Lepine's doctoral thesis, completed in 1989, was a study of the canons of the comparatively small and poor cathedral of Exeter for the period from 1300 to 1455. This book extends his original study to encompass the period from 1300 to 1540 and canons of all nine of England's secular cathedrals: Chichester, Exeter, Hereford, Lichfield, Lincoln, London St Paul's, Salisbury, Wells and York.

Building on the pioneering work of A. Hamilton Thompson (*The Cathedral Churches of England*, 1925 and *The English Clergy and Their Organisation in the Later Middle Ages*, 1947) and, more especially, of Kathleen Edwards (*The English Secular Cathedrals in the Middle Ages*, 1967), Lepine sets the scene by describing the secular cathedrals and their functions. The cathedrals' constitutions were well established by 1300. Their canons ranged in number from twenty-four at Exeter to fifty-eight at Lincoln, only a small proportion of whom were normally resident in the cathedral close. At the head of these residentiaries were the dignitaries, the dean, precentor, chancellor and treasurer. Vastly outnumbering the canons were the minor clergy over whom they presided: the vicars choral, cantarists, secondaries and choristers. The principal function of the cathedrals and the men serving them was the performance of the liturgy, especially the mass. As setters of liturgical standards, centres for pilgrimage and diocesan life, and sites for ecclesiastical and secular courts and meetings, their influence was wide. 'Cathedrals performed functions that medieval society valued and retained the support of the community which helped them survive the upheaval of the Reformation' (p. 17).

Canonries in these cathedrals were highly sought after, not only because of the status and wealth (from the prebends attached to them) they conferred, but also because, being for the most part sinecures, they could be held in plurality. Appointment to a canonry came in several ways: collation by a bishop, royal grant, papal provision and exchange. In theory, the bishops had the right to appoint all canons, including all dignitaries, apart from the dean who was

elected by the chapter. In the fourteenth century, however, they found themselves considerably restricted by papal provisions. Similarly, exchanges increased rapidly in the fourteenth century, limiting episcopal collations and causing Archbishop Courtenay to express concern in the 1390s about the 'chopchurch' brokers who seem to have arranged them. Both papal provisions and exchanges declined in the fifteenth century, allowing bishops to regain control over collations. In fact, although the king only officially had the right to present to canonries during an episcopal vacancy, bishops, who almost invariably owed their promotion to royal patronage, probably felt most compromised by pressure to appoint royal protégés.

Lepine next discusses the origins of the men who thus achieved the thirty-seven archdeaconries, forty-two dignities and 350 canonries of the nine secular cathedrals. Geographically, the canons were a highly mobile group, many of whom had left their home diocese years before obtaining a canonry. Nevertheless, a sizeable minority managed to acquire a canonry in their local cathedral. In discussing social origins, Lepine is hampered by a lack of evidence, but suggests that most were relatively well born, claiming that obscurity of origins should not be taken as an indication of humble status. One is tempted to take issue with him here, but the educational achievements necessary before promotion to a canonry probably precluded all but the most exceptional candidates from humble backgrounds from aiming so high. The vast majority of canons were graduates. They also, unlike the mass of English clergy, obtained their first benefices early in their careers. This, together with their later progression to a cathedral canonry, was usually owed to service to either the crown or ecclesiastical administration, often both.

Such service, which usually continued after promotion, meant that the vast majority of canons did not reside in their cathedral closes. Lepine, however, concentrates more than half of his study on the minority of resident canons. He examines the cathedrals' varied regulations for residence, the payments distributed to the residentiaries from their common funds and the factors determining residence. In a detailed discussion of all the cathedrals, he reveals that residence levels were relatively high at Exeter and Wells, moderate at Hereford, Lincoln, Lichfield and Salisbury and low in London and York. It seems surprising that St Paul's had the lowest residence levels. One might expect those who had acquired their canonries through royal service to be able to continue that service while in residence at the cathedral. That they could not reveals just how demanding both royal service and canonical residence actually were. However, one or two exceptional canons (for example, Thomas Ward at Lincoln and St Paul's, 1442-4) managed residence in more than one cathedral at a time!

Canons' lives are perhaps most vividly brought to life in Lepine's chapter on their houses, households and hospitality, where he makes good use of recent work on the houses of the Lincoln cathedral close. Canons lived like the local gentry families from which most of them originated, although surrounded by fewer women. Lepine makes much of the canon's obligation to provide hospitality. However, as one who has waded through pages of complaints from the Lincoln clergy about Precentor Robert Burton's failure to provide such hospitality (1427-45), I would have welcomed more detail on what form this hospitality was actually expected to take.

In examining the pastoral interests and activities of the canons, Lepine finds that, although few of them were directly concerned with parish administration, they were in touch with diocesan life through visitation and the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts. Perhaps their greatest pastoral influence lay in what the laity saw and heard in the cathedrals: the beauty of holiness in their decoration and liturgy, and the devotion to the saints whose relics lay in the shrines they contained. The laity could learn indirectly from the imagery that surrounded them in the cathedrals and directly from the sermons that were arranged and frequently preached by the canons themselves. The canons' personal devotions are revealed largely through an examination of their wills and funerary monuments. Not surprisingly, for men at the top of the ecclesiastical tree, they are revealed as 'highly orthodox and conventionally pious' (p. 140). This does not mean that their piety was not genuine. Indeed, so great was the devotion of a few that they gave up their comfortable secular life to join the more austere religious orders.

While few of these men were among the leading scholars of their day, they were for the most part highly educated and intelligent. Lepine considers their intellectual and cultural interests and achievements by examining book ownership and authorship, and educational and artistic patronage. It is pleasing to learn that Chancellor Peter Partrich of Lincoln (1412-51), hitherto best known for being attacked in the cathedral choir by a gang of Dean John Macworth's henchmen (1435), found consolation in studying and annotating his substantial theological collection. Not many canons were noted authors in their own right. Nevertheless, the breadth of their interests is indicated by Dean Robert Fleming of Lincoln (1452-83), who was a noted humanist scholar and wrote Latin poetry, and Canon William Nassington of Exeter (d. 1359), whose religious poems in the vernacular were a popular element of the growing didactic literature of the period.

The book concludes with an examination of capitular life, emphasising how chapters had grown into strong and largely independent corporations from their origins in episcopal households. These generalities are illuminated by an exami-

nation of the cathedral chapters of Salisbury between 1398 and 1458 and Lichfield between 1481 and 1540. Such examples go some way towards compensating for the slight sacrifice of vividness of detail, which has been necessitated by the widening of this study from Exeter to all the secular cathedrals. The prosopographical study of the men who became canons in the English secular cathedrals of the later middle ages does not perhaps say much that is new to those of us already familiar with the work of Richard Davies, Joel Rosenthal and others on the bishops of this period. As Lepine himself says, the canons were already an elite group of which the bishops represented only the even more elite pinnacle. However, it does broaden and add detail to what is already known about the higher clergy of late medieval England. This information also ties in nicely with what is known of the constitutional history of the cathedrals, thus building on and expanding the pioneering work of previous scholars. Perhaps it should also encourage others to embark on the kind of detailed examination of institutions that Lepine himself has already undertaken at Exeter.

Finally, I must apologise to the author, the editor and the readers of *The Ricardian* for the long-delayed appearance of this review. Happily Dr Lepine's subject and achievement are such that his book will not quickly date. It will be illuminating and useful to those interested in the ecclesiastical and social history of England for a very long time to come.

ROSEMARY C.E. HAYES

Notes on Contributors

Joseph A. Gribbin has recently written *The Premonstratensian Order in Late Medieval England* and currently works at the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, University of York.

Rosemary Hayes is currently working on a pamphlet for Lincoln Cathedral Library on the fifteenth-century disputes between dean and chapter.

Rosemary Horrox. Fellow of Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. Author of *Richard III: A Study of Service*, Cambridge 1989.

Hannes Kleineke. Research Fellow in the 1422–1504 section of the History of Parliament. Currently preparing an edition of the Household Accounts of William Worsley, Dean of St Paul's, 1479–97 (with Mrs Stephanie Hovland).

James Petre worked for the Ministry of Defence, and studied Medieval Warfare with R. Allen Brown and John Gillingham, at King's College, and the LSE, University of London. Currently Head of Operations for a professional legal body.

Raymond Skinner is retired and writes on West Country history. Recent published works appear in the *Mariners' Mirror* May 2001, *London Magazine* August/September 2000 and *Wilts Arch. & Nat. Hist. Soc. Journal* 91 (1998).

Livia Visser-Fuchs is finishing a thesis on Jean de Wavrin's historical work and the reputation of Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, in the Low Countries.

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Daniel Williams, 'The hastily drawn up will of William Catesby Esquire, 25 August 1485', *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Transactions*, vol. 51 (1975–6), p. 48.

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