Chapter One

Introduction

When Matthew Paris reviewed the fifty years preceding his *Chronica Majora* in 1250 he noted that *jam fluxerunt de tempore Gratiae viginti quinque quinquagenae annorum, id est, mille ducenti et quinquaginta* (a thousand two hundred and fifty years had flowed from the time of grace, that is 1250).[1] Yet, later on in his fifty year retrospective he mentioned that many saints were canonized in England, and also elsewhere, in order to put England into a grander, European context of sanctity. He described this boom in English sanctity as follows: *videbatur igitur tempus innovari, de quo plenus spiritu sanctorum omnium factus* (it seemed therefore to be a time of renewal, in which everyone was made full of the spirit of all the saints).[2] But this was just the midpoint of a revival in popular devotion that had begun to occur in the last quarter of the twelfth century, and which continued until the Reformation of the English Church by Henry VIII in the 1530s. What Matthew Paris omits from his record is that this renewal of saintly religiosity was manifested almost wholly in the canonization of bishops: specifically bishops extolling the virtues of the martyrs of the early Church. In fact, the canonization of Thomas Becket, only three years after he was martyred in the cathedral church of Canterbury in 1170, is perhaps the moment at which this revival sparked to life.[3] After this, and up until the time that Matthew Paris was writing in 1250, a total of

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[1] *Mathaei Parisiensis, Monachi Sancti Albani, Chronica Majora: Vol. V. A.D. 1248 to A.D. 1259*, ed. H. R. Luard, Rolls Series (London: Longman & Co., 1888), p. 191. (My Translation).

[2] *Ibid*, p. 195. (My Translation).

[3] M. D. Knowles, *Thomas Becket* (London: Adam & Charles Black Ltd, 1970), p. 153.

nine candidates underwent an inquiry for canonization;[4] six of these postulant saints had been canonized in England and one in Ireland.[5] Out of the seven canonizations during the period being studied by Matthew Paris, six belonged to the station of bishop, with two more to be added to the ranks of the English bishop-saints by 1320. In full they were; Thomas Becket, canonized in 1173; Wulfstan of Worcester, in 1203; Hugh of Lincoln, in 1220; William of York, in 1226; Lawrence O'Toole of Dublin,[6] also in 1226; Edmund of Abingdon (or Canterbury), in 1247; Richard of Chichester, in 1262; and Thomas de Cantilupe (or Thomas of Hereford), in 1320.

Canonization was not an uncommon phenomenon during the Middle Ages, with many finding solace in the belief that the saints were active intermediaries between the living world and the heavenly, and that they could intercede on behalf of humankind. Over the centuries the process of canonization evolved in many ways. The first saints of the Christian Church were martyrs who had separated themselves from society and the established norms of the period and had thus been persecuted for their beliefs. They were venerated for upholding traditional Christian values and dying for what they believed in. At first canonization was a locally driven affair, with the clergy being a vital element in the growth of local cults and the *fama sanctitatis* of people who were considered *sancti* – holy or saintly. Often as part of the clergy-led attempt at canonization, sainthood would be indicated by the translation of relics as it 'was an

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[4] Other local cults had been campaigned for at different times; however, some, like the cult of Robert Grostesste never received a process. See also, A. Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, trans. J. Birrell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Table 9, pp. 72-3.

[5] The eighth candidate that underwent an inquiry by 1250 was Osmund of Salisbury. Though he had died in 1099 and the process of inquiry had started in 1228, he was not formally canonized until 1457, and as such is outside the period for this dissertation; the other candidate was the Welsh hermit Caradoc, see below p. 4 and n 14.

[6] Lawrence has been included in this list as he played a major part in the Irish Church Reform Movement and helped to mediate the peace after the English invasion, being requested as a mediator and diplomat for all sides.

ancient and traditional method of marking the sanctity of the individual concerned',[7] and the performance of miracles at the site, attracting pilgrims and offerings.

Eventually, however, the declaration of people deemed appropriate to become one of the Church's saints moved from local and episcopal veneration to a papal right of creation. By 1200 the papacy had consolidated its power and held the exclusive authority to canonize saints,[8] guarding its hard earned privilege jealously. In a decretal of 1234 Pope Innocent III declared 'you may not revere anyone as a saint without the permission of the Roman Church',[9] and perhaps the earliest example of a papal canonization is that of Gilbert of Sempringham in 1202.[10] Over the following century the ritual was adapted and evolved until, by the middle of the thirteenth-century, a clear process had been defined. Canonization was run like a legal trial – as if sanctity could be tested and judged as a matter of fact, like guilt before the law.

The process of canonization by the later Middle Ages had three main steps.[11] Preliminary campaigning would begin with petitioners recruiting other bishops and members of the clergy, along with barons and nobles, to the cause of the putative saint, whilst also sending letters of postulation to Rome. Next, convinced by the *prima facie* case laid before him, the pope would choose judges-delegate to travel to the home of the

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[7] R. Bartlett, *The Hanged Man: A Story of Miracle, Memory and Colonialism in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 117.

[8] Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, pp. 22-85; E. W. Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1948); E. W. Kemp, 'Pope Alexander III and the Canonization of Saints', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 27 (1945), 13-28.

[9] Bartlett, *The Hanged Man*, p. 14.

[10] *The Book of St Gilbert*, ed. R. Foreville and G. Keir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[11] P. Daly, 'The Process of Canonization in the Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries', *St Thomas Cantilupe: Bishop of Hereford, Essays in his Honour*, ed. M. Jancey (Hereford: The Friends of Hereford Cathedral Publications, 1982), 125-135 (pp. 126-134).

putative saint to conduct a *processus informativus*,[12] a local inquiry, and interrogate witnesses about his life, morals, faith and death, and also gather evidence of any thaumaturgic wonders performed at the shrine or grave, focussing on four elements: the *vita* (life), *poena* (punishment or suffering), *causa* (fighting for the sake of the Church), and *signa* (signs and miracles) of the possible saint. All the evidence was then collated and brought to the papal curia for detailed assessment of the validity of the miracles and accounts. Finally, once all the evidence had been sifted, sorted and analysed, three cardinal-examiners would evaluate the rubrics and present the pope with the *relatio processus.* He would then decide whether or not the candidate was really a saint. If the pope was satisfied, there would soon follow a solemn service enlisting the candidate on the Church's Roll of Saints.

Sanctity had never been a wholly exclusive arrangement to one group of people; many different people from different stations in life, whether they were clergy, monks, friars, bishops or popes could become saints. Even lay people could be postulated for canonization, for example, in England Thomas of Lancaster was campaigned for between 1327 and 1331 and Edward II was postulated in 1386;[13] however, neither of these were successful in receiving a *processus informativus* for possible canonization. In fact, according to Vauchez, the only lay-person to be considered in England during this period and receive a *processus informativus* was the Welsh hermit, Caradoc, in 1200;[14] however, it should be noted that Edward the Confessor (d. 1066) also received a

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[12] *Ibid*, p. 129.

[13] Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, p. 265.

[14] However, he was never canonized officially, yet his cult was still recognized and he was considered a saint by the Church, see *Ibid*, pp. 264-5; Vauchez does include Queen Margaret of Scotland who died in 1044. She underwent a process of canonization between 1245 and 1249 and was finally canonized in 1250, see *Ibid*, pp. 265, n. 17.

processus informativus and was canonized in 1163 by Pope Alexander III.[15] By moving to a papal run process, however, the papacy could control when and where someone could become a saint, actively picking candidates that were thought to best suit a particular region or trend at a particular time, giving rise to different patterns and models taking precedence throughout the later Middle Ages. The papal canonization process still goes on today; Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) actually canonized more saints than any medieval pope.[16] As such, thanks to its enduring nature, canonization and the people being canonized have been the subject of broad scholarly works often focussing on all of the individual groups concerned;[17] however, one group cries out for more specific treatment; the *sanctus episcopus* – saintly bishops – especially in England during the period 1170 to 1320.

England and Ireland were especially prolific in this type of canonization, accounting for more than sixty percent of the bishop-saints that were canonized in all of Christendom during this period.[18] This in itself calls for consideration. This surge in holy bishops attaining canonization was also reflected in the number of postulant bishops who never received a process of canonization: Stephen Langton; Roger Niger; Walter de Cantilupe; William Bytton; Robert Grosseteste; and Robert Winchelsey, to name but a few.[19] Admittedly 'there is a certain similarity among saints, for all are

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[15] F. Barlow, *Edward [St Edward; known as Edward the Confessor] (1003x5-1066)*, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography [Online].   Available at: http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8516 (Accessed: 12/3/2014).

[16] Between 993 and 1558 103 saints were canonized by the medieval popes. John Paul II canonized a total of 482 saints; see, M. J. Walsh, 'Pope John Paul II and his Canonizations', in *Saints and Sanctity*, ed. P. Clarke and T. Claydon, *Studies in Church History*, 47 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 415-437 (tables 1 and 2, pp. 420-423).

[17] Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages.*

[18] *Ibid*, p. 259, Table 14; see Chapter Two this work, p. 13, Table 3.

[19] M. Gibbs, J. Lang, *Bishops and Reform: 1215-1272* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 44-48.

expected to resemble Christ and to exhibit his virtues',[20] but what set these bishops apart from the other postulants of the period and made them so holy? Why, after Becket, was there a 'time of renewal, in which everyone was made full of the spirit of all the saints'?[21] What caused this revival of holy bishops in England specifically, whilst canonization of this category declined on the continent? This dissertation uses the primary source materials available to examine some of the bishops mentioned, and to understand whether or not they followed a cohesive 'model' of sanctity. It asks why so many of these men attained holiness in England.

The following chapters explore the medieval idea of the 'perfect' bishop, and the different models they were expected to exhibit. They also examine briefly the historiography surrounding the veneration of bishops and saints. The model of sanctity exhibited by Thomas Becket is analysed in order to explain the start of this preponderance of episcopal sanctity in England and how, at first, the principle of royal resistance was a key attribute for postulation and canonization during this period. A case study of Thomas de Cantilupe will show how the model of spiritual perfection for holy-bishops in England evolved towards an ideal of the bishop as a minister to his diocese and preacher of the Bible, addressing the concerns of the papacy from the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Having examined two bishops from the start and the end of the period in question, a brief examination of the case of Stephen Langton, one of the postulant bishops of the period, will chart the decline of royal resistance as a prerogative essential for episcopal sanctity and show how Langton managed to develop the cult and model of Thomas Becket during the thirteenth century. Finally, a case

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[20] J. R. Bray, *Concepts of Sainthood in Fourteenth-Century Europe* [online], p. 1. Available at: https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/api/datastream?publicationPid=uk-ac-man-scw:1m1671&datastreamId=POST-PEER-REVIEW-PUBLISHERS-DOCUMENT.PDF (Accessed: 27/2/2013).

[21] Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora V*, 191.

study of Wulfstan of Worcester shows how Becket's miraculous cult revived some postulant cases, and argues that the new model of holiness that could be applied allowed for sainthood to be achieved. Each of these chapters will use the surviving contemporary accounts and records wherever possible, supplemented as necessary by relevant secondary sources.

Many different types of document have been consulted for this dissertation, and a great number of useful sources survive in transcribed and edited volumes. Emphasis will be placed on primary sources related to the bishops being studied in detail: for example, the model of sanctity embodied by Thomas Becket will primarily be studied from *The Lives of Thomas Becket*,[22] and the seven volume Rolls Series *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*.[23] Many of the bishops mentioned in this dissertation have *Vitae*, but special care must always be taken when analysing these sources as many are hagiographical in content; this means that the bishop is often portrayed in a way which exhibits his holiness and sainthood immediately. Even so, it will still be possible to find evidence of the ideas associated with episcopal sanctity amongst these records. An understanding of the medieval idea of the 'perfect' saintly bishop demands close attention to the Bible, and works of canon law such as the Decretals of Gregory the Great and the *Decretum* by Gratian are also studied. A few of the letters from Bernard of Clairvaux to various European bishops are also included to show what was required

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[22] *The Lives of Thomas Becket*, trans. M. Staunton, Manchester Medieval Sources (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001).

[23] *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Vol. I-VII*, ed. J. C. Robertson and J. B. Sheppard, Rolls Series (London: Longman & Co., 1875-1885).

of saintly bishops during this period of intense religious zeal,[24] and how those qualities had increased in importance since the emergence of Christianity.

The contemporary records used here have all the challenges that one would expect from primary sources of the medieval period, and because this study uses such a range of primary materials from the twelfth to the early fourteenth centuries, special care has been taken. The documents are often dominated by the opinions, influences, and beliefs of their authors, and are often moulded to a preconceived outcome. This is especially true in the case of the *vitae*. These often express the personal opinions of their sometimes openly partisan author, within a context intended to present the bishop in a transparently saintly light. The documents regarding canonizations also have a prejudiced agenda, and have been moulded to demonstrate the sanctity of the person in question. Moreover, some of the printed primary sources themselves can pose difficulties. Whilst most have been translated from the original Latin into accessible printed editions, some have not. For example, many of the primary sources relating to the *vita* of Thomas Becket and Wulfstan of Worcester have not been fully translated and care has been taken in translating to try and render the meaning as closely as possible to the original.[25]

The largest and most comprehensive secondary source of this subject is André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Middle Ages*,[26] which is widely regarded as the most authoritative study of canonization and the saints of the Middle Ages. Also, Ronald

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[24] Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. B. S. James (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1953).

[25] *M.H.T.B. I-VII*; William of Malmesbury, *Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract*, trans. and ed. M. Winterbottom and R. Thomson, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), p. 53.

[26] Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*.

Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims*,[27] is invaluable for its examination of the relationship between saints and the wider populace. Modern scholarship consulted in the cases of individual bishops includes Frank Barlow and David Knowles' books on Thomas Becket,[28] for Stephen Langton, Frederick Maurice Powicke's biography offers the only form of a *vita* as any contemporary accounts written of him have not survived,[29] and the collaborative group of essays on Thomas de Cantilupe has been invaluable.[30]

In fact, a great many secondary sources examine various aspects of saintliness, but this niche model of sanctity, specifically focussed on bishops, has never been studied in depth. Many historians have commented on the unusual cluster of English bishop-saints canonized between 1170 and 1320, but none have sought to explain it fully. Therefore, this study addresses a gap in the modern examination of saints and saintliness by accounting for this extraordinary era. It scrutinises in detail three of the eight bishop-saints who were canonized between 1170 and 1320 and one postulant bishop who never received a process in order to explain why England enjoyed such a unique revival, and so examines the medieval ideals of the perfect bishop. These case studies show how the pre-reformation model of sanctity evolved, and why other bishops, such as Stephen Langton, were postulated but never canonized.

Ultimately, as with any work on the saints of medieval England, this study shows how the borders between the living and dead in the Middle Ages were always blurred, and how the ordinary people of the time sought solace in the cult of the saints.

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[27] R. C. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1997).

[28] F. Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Phoenix Press Paperback, 2000); Knowles, *Thomas Becket*.

[29] F. M. Powicke, *Stephen Langton* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928).

[30] *St Thomas Cantilupe: Bishop of Hereford, Essays in his Honour*, ed. M. Jancey (Hereford: The Friends of Hereford Cathedral Publications, 1982).