

English Episcopal Acta, XLIII: *Coventry and Lichfield, 1215–1256*; XLIV: *Coventry and Lichfield, 1256–1295*. Edited by J. H. Denton and P. M. Hoskin. (Oxford: Oxford University Press (for the British Academy, 2014). Pp. cxv + 352 + 4 plates; pp. xxxiii + 542. £90 + £100.

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These very valuable volumes contain over six hundred *acta* of thirteenth-century bishops of Coventry and Lichfield. The documents cover a wide range of issues, but in particular show how important was business involving the control of parish churches, both grants of such churches and, for example, matters relating to vicarages and allocation of revenues. There are a significant number of documents concerning excommunication, especially significations of excommunication sent to the king, asking that the excommunicated person ‘be coerced by royal power according to the custom of your realm to make satisfaction to God and the Church’. There are also accounts of various disputes. Many are settled by mediation rather than formal court decision. However, some cases do illustrate more formal procedures, according to canonical procedures. Some of these appear amongst an extremely interesting group of documents issued not by bishops but by their officers. Both these and the episcopal documents include significant incidental information. For example, a grant of Bishop Roger to Darley Abbey (no. 325), made at London on 25 October 1268, refers to that monastery’s goods having been taken away ‘by the agents of Satan in the turmoil that recently occurred in the kingdom (“in turbatione nuper habita in regno per sathane satellites”)’. There are also interesting legal usages, for example arrangements concerning view of frankpledge (no. 211), employment of the phrase ‘in quasi possessione’ (xliv. 450), and a reference to holding ‘in chief’ from the bishop (no. 173). Given the scale of the undertaking, there are inevitably a few typographical errors (including on the contents page), but overall the volumes are a major editorial achievement. In addition, the English summaries of the documents are much more extensive than is normal in such editions, amounting indeed to full or almost full translations (see pp. cxiv–cxv). These again are pleasingly accurate (a rare slip is the insertion of the word ‘corporal’ into the translation of no. 67). The decision to include such translations is extremely welcome for those wishing to use the volumes for teaching undergraduates. Whereas many narrative sources are available in translation, very few *corpora* of documents are. These two volumes deserve to be the basis of many an undergraduate dissertation as well as for much further scholarly work.

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University education of the parochial clergy in medieval England. The Lincoln diocese, c.1300–c.1350. By Donald F. Logan. (Studies and Texts, 188.) Pp. xiv + 197. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2014. \$80. 9780 88844 188 1

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Standards of education among the diocesan clergy in medieval England have attracted comment from distinguished scholars in recent times. Sound historical judgement and canonical expertise converge in Donald Logan’s rich research

and perceptive analysis, drawing upon a sample from the diocese of Lincoln in the first half of the fourteenth century. A review of the canon law regarding ordination is provided in the opening chapter as well as a summary of practice in the diocese of Lincoln. There were two routes available to the beneficed clergy of that diocese seeking leave to study. First, Boniface VIII's constitution *Cum ex eo* in 1298 dispensed them to attend the universities for up to seven years, provided that they became subdeacons and priests within a year of completing their studies. Secondly, priests were given *licencie studiendi* to spend time at the universities. Dispensations according to the terms of *Cum ex eo* form the second chapter. The conditions of these dispensations were clearly specified and the bishops were accustomed to awarding them for differing periods. Clerics who had already graduated from the Faculty of Arts were among recipients. The third chapter explores the continuance of these dispensations under Bishop Henry Burghersh, a prelate who also issued licences for priests who were rectors to study for up to seven years. A good many priests availed themselves of the licences and their number eventually overtook the number dispensed according to *Cum ex eo*. Numerous licences were issued for study in England. Oxford was the preferred university for most clerics in the diocese of Lincoln, with a smaller number proceeding to Cambridge. There were also permissions to study abroad, such as at Paris. The cathedral schools are represented by Robert de Dunnesby who was authorised to study at Lincoln. The proliferation in the number of 'mixed permissions' under Bishop Burghersh is explained by the fact that some dispensations were followed by licences. This strategy was useful for dispensed clerics who were subsequently ordained to the priesthood and sought further leave for study. Many clerics were permitted to study in the Faculties of Arts and Canon and Civil Law. Masters of Arts were encouraged to study in the Faculty of Divinity. The policy of 'mixed permissions' was perpetuated by Bishops Bek and Gynwell. Logan concludes that the vast majority of priests in the survey subsequently returned to the pastoral ministry in the diocese of Lincoln at the expiry of their time in the schools. It was the Black Death, however, that brought high levels of priestly mortality to the diocese of Lincoln in the summer of 1349 and effectively sounded the death knell of the system of dispensations and licences. A lengthy index contains the names of the beneficed clergy of Lincoln who received dispensations and licences to study in the first half of the fourteenth century. Logan is to be warmly commended for his excellent contribution to the question of standards of clerical education in the diocese of Lincoln.

ST EDMUND'S COLLEGE,
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MICHAEL ROBSON

Contextualizing miracles in the Christian West, 1100–1500. New historical approaches.

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