

TINTI, Francesca 2010. *Sustaining Belief: The Church of Worcester from c.870 to c.1100*. Farnham: Ashgate. pp. xviii + 358. ISBN: 978-0-7546-0902-5. £65.

THIS IS THE LATEST VOLUME IN THE SERIES *STUDIES IN EARLY Medieval Britain* and it certainly meets the standard set by its predecessors, which included some remarkable works in the field of Anglo-Saxon studies such as Joanna Story's *Carolingian Connections*, or the memorable collection of essays edited by Julia Barrow and Nicholas Brooks, *St Wulfstan and his World*. In line with the latter, Tinti's book brings the series back to Worcester, as N. Brooks (the series' general editor) reminds us, where 'attention is directed towards the work of both the bishops of Worcester and of the cathedral community from the age of king Alfred until the generation after the Norman Conquest' (p. vii).

Francesca Tinti is one of the latest additions to the ever-growing landscape of Anglo-Saxon Studies in Spain. For a number of years she has been producing and editing some increasingly interesting pieces centred upon the relevance and details of pastoral care in late Anglo-Saxon England (Tinti 2002, 2005 and 2009) which have found their culmination in this illuminating book. Here the author makes full use of the fertile archives of Worcester Cathedral Priory as a case study of landholding, property leasing and provision of pastoral care in the century leading to the Norman Conquest. *Sustaining Belief* presents a thorough examination of Worcester archives, with special reference to the three cartularies produced at the community during the eventful eleventh century. The aim of the author is to use the huge amount of data provided by those cartularies to 'offer a detailed, but integrated, picture of the main occupations and preoccupations of the church of Worcester in its relations with society at large: that is both with its own tenants and those of other lords, with the clergy throughout the diocese and with its supporters and indeed its opponents and its land disputes' (p. 7).

The book is divided into four main sections. Thus, after an introductory presentation (Chapter 1) of its methodology, organization and aims, the author discusses the bishops of Worcester (Chapter 2) from

Wærferth (869×872/73–907×915) to St Wulfstan (1062–95). The extent given to each individual is dependent on the extant references in legal (and hagiographical) texts. For example, whereas the likes of Wærferth, Cenwald, Oswald and Archbishop Wulfstan receive extensive and detailed analyses, some of their successors and predecessors are condemned to obscurity due to lack of documentary evidence (such is the case of Æthelhun and Wilfrith, who immediately followed Wærferth, or even Dunstan, who held the office for a year before becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 959). Chapter 2 also explores the roles of those individuals who were in charge of the clerical and (later) monastic community. This section explores the terminology found in contemporary documents regarding the different offices held by those members of the cathedral community and the significance that terms such as provost, dean and prior had particularly in reference to the development of the monastic community during the eleventh century.

Chapter 3 is probably the most crucial section within the entire book. Here Tinti approaches the preservation (and manipulation) of the past and its memory at Worcester through a detailed exploration of the three cartularies: the *Liber Wirgoninensis*, the Nero-Middleton Cartulary and Hemming's Cartulary. Although the documents they contain show a degree of uniformity (esp. among the first two), each of these volumes responded to different agendas and concerns. Thus, whereas the former is a catalogue of episcopal property, the extant leaves of the so-called Nero-Middleton cartulary, bound up with an antique bible, seem to reflect a distinct wish to give the documents therein a 'sacred' nature. Finally, Hemming's is a 'cartulary primarily concerned with the monastic lands', (p. 149) which should be considered in view of the imminent arrival of a Norman bishop to take over after St Wulfstan's passing. Tinti explores the design, production, development and use of the three cartularies made at Worcester by taking the reader through their organisational principles, contents and aims. She provides a comparative presentation which sheds new light on early medieval monastic record-keeping and the production of legal compilations. The author supports her description and discussion with tables and figures which allow the reader, even if non-academic, to obtain a full picture of the process behind the earliest surviving compilations of legal documents

from an English priory. Finally, the evolution of the relationship between the bishop and the monastic community is investigated with the development of the latter's own legal identity, particularly towards the end of the eleventh century.

Chapter 4 deals with the history of the manors belonging to the bishops of Worcester and their different portions. Tinti carefully describes the manors (most of which were based on ancient independent minsters lately acquired by the bishop) following the available documentary evidence (particularly Domesday Book and the aforementioned cartularies) before introducing the process of separation of the *mensa* whereby the property of the Church of Worcester was divided between the bishop and the monks, especially after the growth in numbers at the community during the eleventh century.

Finally, in chapter 5 the attention shifts from land ownership and estate administration to the pastoral duties of the priests (and ultimately of the bishop) towards the faithful in the diocese. A noticeable shift in vocabulary logically follows: from hides, manors and leases to baptism, preaching and confession. Although this section inevitably focuses on Worcester Cathedral and town due to lack of evidence from elsewhere in the diocese, a number of interesting considerations are pondered in relation to the way in which pastoral care was delivered. Thus, for example, Tinti tentatively suggests that the lack of written evidence for preaching materials outside the cathedral may be respond to the use of memory and oral transmission of homiletic texts.

The book's very short conclusion summarises the main contents and ideas discussed and judges that, contrary to the common assumption, 'St Wulfstan and his see should not be seen as the last stronghold of Englishness in a world that was rapidly moving to new sets of values. In reality under him and his successors the church of Worcester found very effective means to adapt to the new and insecure times by championing its own past and finding its own balance between change and continuity, between the concerns of the newcomers and English tradition'. (p. 318)

Overall the book exploits with great success the three cartularies and the details of the documents they contain. By doing so, Tinti takes the reader on a journey that reaches well beyond the field of legal and property matters and opens a window into the history of one of

the most important Anglo-Saxon cathedral communities. *Sustaining Belief* is a thorough and rewarding examination of the concerns of the bishops of Worcester from the times of King Alfred to the death of St Wulfstan in 1092, when the Norman Conquest had radically changed the relationship between the former see of the Hwicce and the lay aristocracy. The focus of the work lies with the eleventh century, when the three cartularies were produced as a result of different circumstances and in response to the needs of the two identities stemming from this eventful century at Worcester: the bishop and the monastic community. However, the information extracted from the astonishing number of documents explored sheds light on the whole history of the see from its very foundation, as well as on that of many ancient minsters which had originally been independent before having inevitably succumbed to the power of the bishop of Worcester.

Well presented and supported by a reasonable number of figures and manuscript images, this book would certainly make a welcome addition to the library of any reader (scholarly or otherwise) with an interest in Anglo-Saxon England and its ecclesiastical structure as long as its slightly prohibitive price can be met.

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