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ARCHBISHOP JOHN STRATFORD

Political Revolutionary and
Champion of the Liberties of
the English Church
ca. 1275/80 - 1348

BY

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The Making of a Career

Stratford-on-Avon in the late-thirteenth century was a small compact town with a regular pattern of streets, approached from the southeast, the direction of Oxford and London, by a wooden bridge across the River Avon, towards the reconstruction of which the subject of this biography was to make a substantial contribution in his will. The town and surrounding area constituted a manor of the bishops of Worcester.¹ John de Stratford, the future archbishop of Canterbury and chancellor of England, was born there into a propertied burgher family. His father's name, like that of his younger brother, was Robert, his mother's Isabel; information which he himself provides in the regulations for his chantry, first drawn up in the autumn of 1331, by which time both parents had died.² Thus far we are on safe ground.

John's father is commonly assumed³ to have been that Robert de Stratford who, as a member of the fraternity of the Holy Cross, early in 1270⁴ secured Bishop Godfrey Giffard's confirmation of a plan to build a

¹ According to the author of *VCH Warwicks*. 3, p. 222, "The layout of the older part of the town has changed little since the 15th century. It consists of three streets running parallel and three at right angles to the river, and seems to be an example on a small scale of medieval town planning." For extents of "Old Stratford" manor (which lay to the southwest) dated 1252 and 1299 see *Red Book of Worcester*, pp. 243ff., 471ff.; also *Extenta Manerii de Veteri Stratford* (1252). The 1252 extent lists all the burgage tenements. The bridge is first mentioned in 1235 and was of timber until the building of Clopton Bridge in Henry VII's time. See *VCH Warwicks*. 3, p. 224.

² Worcester Reg. Montacute 1, fol. 56^vii (al. p. 124). Dated 8 October 1331, while Stratford was bishop of Winchester.

³ For instance, in the modern commemorative stained-glass window depicting John Stratford on the north side of the sanctuary of the Guild Chapel at Stratford (Robert de Stratford's foundation). The adjacent window depicts John's brother Robert.

⁴ The date is invariably given as 1269. In fact Giffard's confirmation is dated 10 January 1270. Worcester Reg. Polton, fol. 85^r (al. p. 173). The author of *VCH Warwicks*. 2, p. 113, writes of Robert de Stratford and "15 of the confraternity of the Holy Cross," giving his reference as "Reg. Polton, fol. 149 [sic]." I can only suppose that the "15"

hospital with an oratory or chapel, complete with bells.⁵ As in all such medieval foundations there was an element of chantry; divine service was to be celebrated on behalf of the forbears of the brethren and sisters of the fraternity. The immediate purpose, however, was the care of the poor, both members of the fraternity and others. Unusual was the additional provision for such needy priests as might be promoted with insufficient title by the Worcester bishops. This clearly reflects the interests of the local diocesan, Giffard, who is alleged to have been excessively liberal in the ordination of clerks; so much so that his successor, William Gainsburgh, was forced to seek Pope Clement v's dispensation from the canonical obligation to support them.⁶

But there are problems in identifying the cofounder and first master of the hospital with John Stratford's father. In the first place he is termed *Magister* Robert de Stratford, as though a graduate; secondly, the members of the new institution were bound to observe the Rule of St. Augustine, which would certainly have been inconsistent with marital union and the procreation of children.⁷ John's birth can be assigned to the later 1270s or at a stretch to the early 1280s, his life span being roughly congruent with that of Adam Murimuth, the chronicler, who was born

derives from Dugdale's use of the word "sistren," which from the printing of long "s" appears very much like "fifteen." There is no such number in the Reg. Polton entry. See Dugdale, *Warwickshire* 2, pp. 695-697.

⁵ The original document has been lost. We owe our text to Bishop Polton's confirmation (27 September 1430) following a dispute about parochial rights between the warden of Stratford collegiate church, Richard Praty, and the guild. See Worcester Reg. Polton, fols. 149^v, 85^r (al. pp. 302, 173) — the folios are bound incorrectly. The documents are translated in the preface to Harvey Bloom, *The Gild Register*. On 12 March 1270 Bishop Giffard licensed the fraternity of the Holy Cross to elect a collector and distributor of alms. Another mandate of the same date directed the Stratford bailiffs to aid and protect the new hospital. Regs. Giffard, fol. 26^r; Polton, fol. 85^r. The Polton entry of the former seemingly was not copied from Giffard's register.

⁶ *Worc. Admin.*, p. 168 n. 6. At the time of ordination clerks were often made to take an oath to the effect that they would not claim support from the bishop on the basis of *Cum secundum apostolum* (Extra 3, 5, 16), which obliged him to make provision for those whom he had ordained. There was a poor priests' hospital at Canterbury (part of the buildings can still be seen) and in some other places. See Clay, *Mediaeval Hospitals*, pp. 23-25.

⁷ Giffard appointed "Magister Robert de Stratford" as "dicti hospitalis magistrum ... et custodem." Had he been a graduate (the term *magister* is also used in other contexts) this would not have precluded him from fathering children, but John does not accord his parent any such title. Giffard decreed: "Conversantes in hospitali regulam teneant beati Augustini." Those admitted were to promise obedience to the master and to take a vow of chastity and poverty (continencie et proprietatis non habende). Worcester Reg. Polton, fol. 85^r. It is true that Giffard is not as explicit as one would wish and the master of a hospital could on occasion be a layman. See Clay, *Mediaeval Hospitals*, pp. 149, 174-175.

1274-1275 and who died in 1347.⁸ In other words John was born within a decade or so after Master Robert's assumption of the governance of the new hospital. Despite the survival of a sprinkling of late-thirteenth-century deeds and other documents concerned with the guild of the Holy Cross and the transfer of land and property in Stratford, there is no firm evidence connecting the two Roberts.⁹

The Rochester chronicler William Dene¹⁰ rightly considered John Stratford (hence also his brother Robert) to be uncle to the bishop of London, Ralph (de) Stratford, who bore the family name Hatton. The relationship is confirmed by Archbishop Stratford in his will and later, in 1354, by Robert, then bishop of Chichester, who in a document granting forty days' indulgence to those who prayed for his nephew's soul, describes him as "Ralph Hatton de Stratford."¹¹ There being no indication of a third brother, the suggestion has been made that a sister of John and Robert was Ralph Hatton's mother. John Stratford's will mentions a sister Alice, but whether she was married or not is left to our conjecture. She may not have been, for one of the complaints made (in 1342) against Abbot Hereward of Cirencester by the townsmen was that he had granted an annual pension of £40 to the archbishop's sister, presumably Alice. Of course, by that time she could have been a widow. Another possibility is that she was the Alice, wife of Philip de Barton, who during her lifetime was entitled to hold the manor of Caldecote, Cambridgeshire, which belonged to John Stratford and on his death was inherited by Robert, subject to Alice's interest.¹² Another "nephew" of the Stratford brothers

⁸ For Murimuth see Emden, *Biog. Oxon.*, s.v. It is difficult to be more precise about Stratford, but it looks as though Murimuth was a few years his senior – four or five at most.

⁹ The residual archives of the guild are housed with the Stratford borough records in Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust Records Department (BRT). See Wellstood, "Stratford: Calendar of Medieval Records" (typescript). Items were transcribed and/or translated by W. J. Hardy in a handwritten calendar ("Hardy's Calendar"). For later guild records see Harvey Bloom, *The Gild Records*. Fisher, *Antient Paintings*, has reproductions of many guild documents, notably the indulgences. The Gough edition (1838) has a descriptive letterpress.

¹⁰ I have accepted the attribution to Dene, which appears to carry conviction, although the *Historia Roffensis* has yet to be analyzed with a critical eye on the question of authorship. See below, "Stratford and the Chroniclers."

¹¹ BL Cotton MS Faustina B.v, fol. 88^r (*Anglia Sacra* 1, p. 374); BRT 1/3/16; Fisher, *Antient Paintings*, pl. ix no. 7; and see below, "Beneficiaries of Stratford's Will."

¹² *Cirencester Cartulary* 1, p. 103 no. 124: "item le dite abbe ad graunte annuele pension de xl l. a la soere le erchevesque de Canterb' pour maintenir lui et les mauensis enprises qe il usent en countre reson et encontre le droiture de roi et de sa corone"; BL Harleian Ch. 43 H 1.

was Thomas Laurence de la More, an Oxfordshire knight, the son of John Laurence de la More and husband to a lady of the same name as Stratford's mother – Isabel.¹³

With the Hatton family we return to firmer ground; its members were remarkably influential in early-fourteenth-century Stratford. Between 1309 and 1318, apart from the two-year interval 1314-1316, Henry de Hatton occupied the office of bailiff or mayor of the borough.¹⁴ A contemporary but distinguishable man of the same name had been one of Bishop Giffard's clerks, who was rewarded for his services by a grant of land in nearby Shotton.¹⁵ Bailiff Hatton made a substantial transfer of property in Stratford to a William de Hatton, son of Thomas de Hatton,¹⁶ and in some of the deeds this William is designated "clerk."¹⁷ Seemingly he was only in minor orders, since he was married to yet another Isabel, who survived him. It was Ralph Hatton of Stratford, then bishop of London, who in 1345 was to secure a reversion of the lands which the widow Isabel held for life from John de Peyto, senior,¹⁸ an influential man in the neighbourhood who was evidently acting as trustee.¹⁹

¹³ *CPR 1327-1330*, p. 184; *ibid. 1330-1334*, pp. 88, 115; WinRS, fol. 183^v. Details of his life are collected below, "Stratford and the Chroniclers." It is possible, however, that *nefeu* in More's case was used in an imprecise sense. Sometimes it can refer to a great nephew or even a mere kinsman.

¹⁴ Wellstood, "Calendar," fols. 7ff.: list of bailiffs, and subbailiffs or catchpolls.

¹⁵ Worcester Reg. Giffard, fol. 443^r; *Red Book of Worcester*, p. 253. Cf. BRT 1/2/79.

¹⁶ BRT 1/2/119.

¹⁷ E.g. BRT 1/2/132.

¹⁸ For the Peyto family see Dugdale, *Warwickshire* 2, pp. 471-472ff. Because of his services to Bishop Bransford John de Peyto, junior, was rewarded with the farm of Stratford manor for £60 p.a. (*Worcester Reg. Bransford*, p. 16, no. 80). Though a lawyer, Peyto failed to secure royal confirmation and the unfortunate aftermath is related in *VCH Warwicks.* 3, pp. 258-259. In Worcester Reg. Maidstone, fol. 17^r, the bishop addresses Peyto (senior) as bailiff of Stratford (London, 27 November 1314).

¹⁹ BRT 1/3/167-168. The surviving deeds suggest that Henry de Hatton (fl. ca. 1295 × 1318) and Thomas de Hatton (fl. ca. 1294 × 1328) were contemporaries, possibly brothers. Thomas is recorded as having two sons, William (fl. 1310, ob. by 1344) and Ralph (mentioned 1315), who could be the future bishop. The "Thurstan message" in Old Stratford was granted to William by Bishop Maidstone and the grant confirmed by Bishop Cobham and the Worcester chapter in 1319. *Red Book of Worcester*, p. 252; Liber Albus, fols. 97^v-98^r; BRT 1/3/167. A John son of William de Hatton was granted letters dimissory to all minor and holy orders in January 1338 (Worcester Reg. Hemenhale, fol. 13^v). William de Hatton accompanied John Stratford on his journeys abroad in the 1320s and in 1342 acted as one of the archbishop's attorneys. *CPR 1324-1327*, pp. 50, 94, 129; *ibid.*, 1340-1343, p. 374. Probably the man, given the status "donzel," who was appointed constable of Farnham in 1328. WinRS, fol. 183^v (*bis*) and see below, "Stratford's *Familia* and Administration." In general, see Wellstood, "Calendar"; "Hardy's Calendar"; Dugdale Soc. 6 (Lay subsidy rolls), pp. 90-96, and cf. *ibid.*, pp. 5-6 (Rolls of a tenth and fifteenth, 1332).

Connected with the Hattons were the Prests or Priests. In 1311 Robert "called Prest" granted two parts of a messuage with reversion of a third to the William son of Thomas de Hatton who has just been mentioned, and it was to this William that in 1314 and 1319 Helen or Ellen Elysse, daughter and heiress of John Prest, quitclaimed property in the town of Stratford.²⁰ Here we encounter the same combination of names prevalent among the Stratfords. It may be added that although John occurs in the Hatton family, the combination of John and Robert seemingly does not.²¹

Another local family which could claim kinship with the Stratfords was the Gerauds. Henry "de Stratford," a chancery clerk who during the political crisis of 1341 is described as the archbishop's – that is John Stratford's – cousin, bore the name Geraud. Henry was kinsman, possibly brother, of the John Geraud who became "custos" of the Stratford chantry.²²

A bewildering number of John de Stratfords occurs in records of the time in question.²³ It is not always easy to distinguish them. For instance, a John de Stratford was ordained subdeacon in Worcester diocese at the Trinity ordination of 1284,²⁴ and he could have been the clerk who, at the petition of the then dean of St. Paul's, William de Montfort, was granted a bull of provision seven years later.²⁵ By the latter date he is entitled "magister" and the bull secured for him the rectory of Badminton, though not without opposition from a presentee of the regular patron.²⁶ On the strength of the title provided by his benefice Master John proceeded to the

²⁰ BRT 1/2/112, 132.

²¹ E.g. a John Hatton occurs in 1229, *Red Book of Worcester*, p. 248; others in the 1330s, 1340s and 1360s: Wellstood, "Calendar," fols. 223-224 (cf. Dugdale Soc. 6, pp. 94-96), 262, 351-352.

²² *French Chronicle*, pp. 84-85. For the Gerauds alias "de Stratfords" see below, "Stratford's *Familia* and Administration," and for chantry warden John Geraud, "The College of St. Thomas the Martyr, Stratford." For other Geroudes or Gerauds see Dugdale Soc. 6, pp. 94-95.

²³ Br. John de Stratford was a Worcester monk. See indexes s.v. to the Worcester *RSV* and *Liber Albus*. A secular clerk of this name was ordained subdeacon and deacon in May and June 1319. *Worcester Reg. Cobham*, fols. 47^r, 49^v; pp. 52, 62. A John Nore "alias dictus Johannes de Stratford," son of Adam of Shottery, occurs in a list of deacons in Worcester Reg. Hemenhale, fol. 23^r. He alienated property in Stratford to the warden of Stratford's chantry (*CPR 1348-1350*, p. 281). A M. John de Stratford was in 1340 sent by the king to Norwich Priory as a corrodian (*CCR 1339-1341*, p. 482), and another M. John "alias Keu," a king's yeoman, was granted a pension of ten marks from St. Augustine's, Canterbury (*CPR 1340-1343*, p. 520). A John de Keu went abroad with Stratford in 1325 (*ibid.* 1324-1327, p. 129). A John de Stratford was comptroller (controller) of the pipe in the early 1330s. PRO E.430/259, 267, 276.

²⁴ Worcester Reg. Giffard, fol. 210^v, p. 238.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, fols. 240^v-241^r, p. 395; bull of 1 March 1291, Orvieto.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, fols. 367^v, 372^r; pp. 427, 433.

diaconate,²⁷ an order to which yet another John de Stratford was promoted in 1295.²⁸ It must have been Master John, in company with a colleague, who informed the Worcester cathedral chapter of the death of the diocesan bishop, Godfrey Giffard, with the request that his body be received for burial.²⁹ He occurs also as the proctor of M. Thomas de Wilton for the latter's institution to Lapworth rectory in 1303.³⁰

Our John Stratford emerges from the obscurity of his early years at about the time we lose trace of his namesake.³¹ He must surely be the "J. de S.," professor of civil law, who bore testimony to the character of a secular clerk who was seeking to become a monk. The document was copied into the *Liber Albus* of Worcester Cathedral Priory, and as the entries are regularly in chronological order, it has been usual to ascribe this one to 1308.³² However, it so happens that a similar entry was made in another of the priors' letter-books, the *Liber Ecclesiae Wigorniensis*, now in the Public Record Office in London.³³ This time the entry is preceded by a letter addressed to Archbishop Reynolds, which points to a date at least five years after 1308. But as this volume is far from being in chronological order, the evidence is inconclusive.

Particulars of John Stratford's education are sparse. We know nothing of his schooling, though it is a reasonable guess that the schoolmaster thought to have been attached to the parish church of Holy Trinity in his home town instructed him in the rudiments of Latin grammar.³⁴ Subsequently he studied at Oxford.³⁵ In the seventeenth century Anthony

²⁷ Ibid., fol. 370^r, p. 431. Not entitled "magister" in this instance.

²⁸ Ibid., fol. 391^r, p. 459.

²⁹ *Liber Ecclesiae Wigorniensis*, p. 25 (PRO E.315/63/fol. 28^v).

³⁰ *Worcester Reg. Gainsburgh*, fol. 32^v, p. 122: 8 October 1303.

³¹ Possibly the last occasion on which he is mentioned is in 1310, when a royal writ was issued on the plaint of "John, parson of Great Badminton." *Worcester Reg. Reynolds*, fol. 105^r, p. 170.

³² *Liber Albus*, fol. 32^r, no. 422. It is in the form of a letter from the abbot of Winchcombe to Prior John de Wyke. The clerk concerned is a "Magister R. de D. clericus," who in view of the description cannot be equated with the monk of Worcester, Robert de Diclesdon, who is mentioned in 1317 (ibid., fol. 83^v). See next note.

³³ *Liber Ecclesiae Wigorniensis*, pp. 21-22 (PRO E.315/63/fol. 24^{r-v}). This time the editor incorrectly extends the "W" of the manuscript to "Westminster." The clerk is named as "Magister Ricardus de D. clericus."

³⁴ See Leach, *VCH Warwicks.* 2, p. 297, quoting *Worcester Reg. Giffard*, fol. 390^v. The Giffard entry is an ordination list of 28 May 1295 (eve of Trinity). Among the deacons appear M. William de Grenefeld, rector of Stratford, and much lower down "Ricardus rector scholarum de Stratford." The assumption that the latter functioned in connection with the parish church is however not unreasonable.

³⁵ *Biog. Oxon.* s.v. A letter from the Oxford chancellor to "John bishop of Winchester," mentioning suits in the Roman curia, is now considered to refer to John de

Wood, out of misguided loyalty to his own college, Merton, "tried to fit in a number of extra planets which had never been there."³⁶ One such luminary was John Stratford, whose name Wood claimed to have found in the bursarial accounts among those of the fellows.³⁷ Admittedly there are lacunas during the relevant years, but these seem to have been present already in Wood's time. A pointer in another direction is provided by Stratford's legacy of ten marks to Balliol Hall.³⁸ We do get an inkling of Stratford's Oxford reputation from a fellow lawyer. In his gloss on the phrase "quod habita possessione," which occurs in Cardinal Ottobon's regulation *Christianae religionis* about institution and the plurality of benefices, the noted canonist John de Athon (or Acton) quotes from Stratford's *repetitio* and dubs him "doctorem meum."³⁹ Athon though was of a later generation; the *repetitio* must have been delivered well before his student days. Indeed, it has been argued that the canonist's claim to pupillage may in fact mean only that Stratford, when bishop of Winchester, honoured Athon by presiding at his inception.⁴⁰ The *repetitio* itself survives in a somewhat ill-written copy on what had been one of the blank leaves prefacing a manuscript now in the British Library.⁴¹

Leaving aside the questionable instance in the *Liber Albus* at Worcester, it would seem that Stratford is first mentioned as a doctor of civil law in 1312.⁴² The context is provided by another episode in the perennial struggle between the mendicant friars and the secular masters of Oxford

Sandale and not Stratford. *Bl. Royal MS 11 D.vi, fol. 24^v; Oxford Formularies* 1, pp. 84-85.

³⁶ Highfield, *Early Rolls of Merton College*, intro. p. 77.

³⁷ Brodrick, *Memorials of Merton College*, pp. 183 n. 1, 197.

³⁸ The lacunas are between 1292/3 and 1296/7, first bursar's accounts; 1290/1 and 1295/6, second bursar's accounts; and 1290/1 and 1294/5, third bursar's accounts. See the table in Highfield, *Early Rolls of Merton College*, p. 198. For the will, see *CCL MS W.219* and below, "Beneficiaries of Stratford's Will."

³⁹ *Constitutiones Legatinae*, p. 129. "Solutio secundum venerabilem patrem dominum Johannem de Straford, doctorem meum, nuper Wintoniensem episcopum, jam vero Cantuariensem, in sua repet[it]ione dictae decretalis, *commissa* lib. 6." The question involved the interpretation of "possession" of a benefice, necessitating the surrender of all "prior benefices." Stratford's solution was: "Quoad commodum litis sufficit possessio quaecumque, licet non pacifica Sed quoad perpetuum praejudicium generandum, vel evitandum per possessionem, oportet, quod sit possessio, etiam pacifica." See Brownbill, "An Old English Canonist," pp. 164-167.

⁴⁰ *Biog. Oxon.*, s.v. Acton, John de. Athon was MA by 1327, DCnL by 1335. See also his "Prologus" to the *Constitutiones Legatinae*.

⁴¹ *Bl. Royal MS 11 D.vi*, the second leaf before the text. I owe this reference to *Biog. Oxon.*, s.v. Stratford, John de. The MS is a copy of the *Digestum Vetus*.

⁴² In his credentials as proctor for Oxford University (June 1312). See *Collectanea* 2, pp. 207, 229-230, 236-237.

University. The secular masters were attempting to insist on regency in Arts as a preliminary to a theological degree; a measure strongly resisted by the Dominicans who considered themselves capable of providing such instruction in their own houses. Riccardo Petroni, cardinal deacon of St. Eustachius, heard the case on 27 January 1313, Stratford appearing as proctor for the university. The cardinal's decision is not extant, but the case was shortly afterwards referred to judges delegate in England.⁴³

Legal expertise such as Stratford possessed was in considerable demand in the litigious world of the fourteenth century. What is more, there were local openings of which the young lawyer took full advantage. Some time before 1313 he became one of the legal advisers to the prior and chapter of Worcester. In September of that year his position was recognized by the grant of an annual pension of five marks (£3 6s 8d), with the right to claim hospitality at the convent's expense.⁴⁴ Stratford's enhanced status involved the taking of the customary oath of fidelity, with an acknowledgment of the obligation to give appropriate counsel and a promise not to reveal the chapter's affairs or to do anything to its detriment.⁴⁵ The roll of the cellarer and bursar from about this time shows Stratford heading the list of the priory's pensionary clerks, only one of whom, M. Andrew de Brugges, received a higher pension.⁴⁶ Among the *iuris periti* was M. John Bloyou, shortly to become Bishop Walter Maidstone's diocesan official at Worcester.⁴⁷ It was this bishop who in 1315 appointed Stratford one of his advocates in the Court of Canterbury. This responsible position also earned him a pension of five marks, payable for as long as he held office.

⁴³ See inter alia, *Collectanea* 2, pp. 206-251; *Oxford Formularies* 1, pp. 18 n. 1, 24-28; *Councils and Synods*, p. 1357 and n.; *CPL 1305-1342*, pp. 111-112; and the general account in Rashdall, *Universities* 3, pp. 70-75. Wright, *Church and Crown*, p. 323 no. 26 summarizes the whole case, concluded in 1321.

⁴⁴ *Liber Albus*, fol. 60^v, no. 599: vigil of St. Matthew, i.e. 20 (not 2nd) September 1313. Cf. Wilson, *Worcester Liber Albus*, p. 129.

⁴⁵ *Liber Albus*, fol. 60^v, no. 600: 21 September 1313. Wilson, *Worcester Liber Albus*, p. 130, takes the feast to be St. Matthias, hence 24 February 1313/1314. The form is the regular one. Compare, for instance, the declaration of M. William de Hyntes "of Ludlow" at fol. 63^v of the *Liber Albus*.

⁴⁶ *Early Compotus Rolls*, p. 36 (WoCL ms C.482). This has been dated ca. 1313/1314. M. Andrew received £5 p.a. He was very senior; he is named official of Winchester diocese in 1316 and had died by January 1325. See *Biog. Oxon.* 3, App. s.v. Briggs; Wright, *Church and Crown*, index s.v. Bruges.

⁴⁷ Appointed in 1318 to serve Bishop Cobham in the same capacity: *Worc. Admin.*, p. 324. He became official of the Court of Canterbury in 1328: *Cant. Admin.* 2, p. 237. Another of the group, M. Thomas Teffunte or Teffonte, became a clerk of Bishop Maidstone and of Archbishop Reynolds and also dean of the Arches. See *Biog. Oxon.*, s.v. Teffonte; *Worc. Admin.*, index s.v.; *Cant. Admin.* 2, p. 239; *Councils and Synods*, p. 1295.

Once again Stratford found himself in the company of talented legists, among them M. Adam Murimuth, the chronicler, likewise a doctor of civil law.⁴⁸

Thanks to the *Liber Albus* we are able to view some of Stratford's activities in the cathedral priory's service; activities which soon earned him promotion to a benefice in lieu of the pension he had so far enjoyed. Opportunity arose as a consequence of the vacancy of the Worcester see caused by Walter Reynolds' translation to Canterbury,⁴⁹ but the business was fraught with complications. Following the death of the rector of the episcopal church of Kempsey in Worcestershire, Bishop Reynolds granted the commend, or temporary enjoyment of the revenues, to Roger de Wingfield, but this was cancelled forthwith,⁵⁰ custody of the sequestration being granted instead.⁵¹ Both mandates were dated 7 October 1313 from London, but the following day Reynolds changed his mind again and sealed letters of collation in their place.⁵² What happened then is obscure. Already Reynolds' bulls of translation were on their way to England,⁵³ but it was not until some time after his successor had obtained possession of Worcester that Prior John de Wyke collated Kempsey to Stratford, claiming that the right to do so had devolved on him as a consequence of the recent vacancy.⁵⁴ Whether the new rector gained possession is doubtful. We do know that his position was contested and that an attack was made on his rectory. Following a petition to John de Sandale, the royal chancellor, a commission of oyer and terminer was set up to deal with the matter.⁵⁵ So far as Stratford is concerned the incident was closed by Bishop Maidstone's collation of Kempsey on 19 December 1316 to M. Richard of Chaddesley, who was already the incumbent of Chipping

⁴⁸ A future official of the Court of Canterbury. See *Cant. Admin.* 2, p. 238; Worcester Reg. Maidstone, fols. 29^r, 37^r; and, in general, *Biog. Oxon.*, s.v. Murimouth. Other advocates were Teffunte and John Oseworth. For the latter: *Worc. Admin.*, pp. 284, 324.

⁴⁹ Prior John de Wyke assumed the *sede vacante* jurisdiction about 26 November 1313, relinquishing it ca. 25 February 1314. *Worc. Admin.*, p. 292. During that period Gloucester abbey renewed its resistance to the prior's exercise of visitation as official *sede vacante*. Murimuth and Brugges were accepted as arbitrators (18 July 1314), with Stratford as a third in case the other two failed to agree. See *Liber Pensionum Prioratus Wigorn.*, pp. 28-29; Haines, "Sede vacante Administration," pp. 168-171.

⁵⁰ Worcester Reg. Reynolds, fol. 95^r.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 95^v, printed *Worc. Admin.*, p. 202 n. 4.

⁵² Worcester Reg. Reynolds, fol. 94^v.

⁵³ Dated 1 October 1313. *Worc. Admin.*, p. 281.

⁵⁴ *Liber Albus*, fols. 67^v, 68^r; nos. 661, 663. The form used was set down as a precedent.

⁵⁵ PRO S.C.1/37/109: London, 19 September 1316. Stratford was granted protection 24 September and the commission was issued 10 October. *CPR 1313-1317*, pp. 550, 593.

Norton church, which he expressed himself reluctant to surrender because of the possibility of litigation.⁵⁶

We can do no more than speculate about movements behind the scenes. It is conceivable that Bishop Maidstone sought to compensate Stratford for the loss of Kempsey by making him dean of the collegiate church of Westbury-on-Trym, just outside Bristol.⁵⁷ On the other hand, the brevity of his tenure of the deanery could indicate that this was merely a temporary expedient.⁵⁸ Whatever the reason, Stratford was without a benefice and thus deprived of the measure of financial security it would have afforded. But not for long. By February 1317 he had tapped another source of patronage; he was presented to a canonry of the king's free chapel within Hastings Castle. Furthermore, it was probably in early May during the renewed vacancy in the see of Worcester – this time occasioned by Maidstone's death – that Stratford secured Holy Trinity rectory in his native town. Doubtless this was due to the good offices of Prior John de Wyke; one of his last, for the prior died before the year was out. There is no record of Stratford's institution, but on 12 May he obtained letters dimissory for the subdiaconate, such ordination being by canon law incumbent on holders of benefices.⁵⁹ A few months later, 4 August 1317, he received letters dimissory to all holy orders from M. James de Cobham, the vicar general of the incoming bishop, the scholarly Thomas de Cobham.⁶⁰

It was common for highly qualified clerks to remain in minor orders until such time as they secured a benefice with cure of souls, but after ordination to the subdiaconate they could obtain licence to continue their

⁵⁶ Worcester Reg. Maidstone, fol. 49^v. "Et dictus magister Ricardus tunc publice protestabatur se nolle ipsam ecclesiam admittere ut litigiosam, nec propriam ecclesiam de Chepingnorton dimittere, antequam sciret se posse ecclesiam Chepingnorton pacifice retinere [sic]."

⁵⁷ Ibid.: 14 December 1316. At fol. 48^r there is an earlier institution of Stratford to the deanery (11 November 1316, Alvechurch). For a list of the deans of Westbury at this time see *Worc. Admin.*, pp. 28-29 n. 7.

⁵⁸ Nicholas de Gore became dean 31 January 1317. The deanery was then said to be vacant by the resignation of Gilbert de Kirkeby. It is worth noting that Chaddesley, the new rector of Kempsey, was Gore's proctor. Worcester Reg. Maidstone, fol. 50^r.

⁵⁹ Stratford was presented to the Hastings canonry 19 February. The mandate to install, following admission by John Langton, bishop of Chichester, is dated 22 May. *CPR 1313-1317*, pp. 619, 654. Emden, *Biog. Oxon.*, s.v. Stratford, John de, thought he became rector of North Piddle, but this arose from a misunderstanding of *RSV*, fol. 103^r (p. 188), which runs: "Memorandum quod iiii Idus [12th] Maii anno supradicto magister Johannes de Stratforde rector ecclesie eiusdem [i.e. Stratford, not the North Piddle of the previous entry] obtinuit litteras dimissorias de ordine subdiaconatus."

⁶⁰ Worcester Reg. Maidstone, fol. 52^r.

studies, thus shelving the necessity of advancing to the priesthood. As we have seen, by 1317 Stratford had committed himself fully to an ecclesiastical career, but bearing in mind his qualifications one is inclined to suggest that he had been somewhat slow in acquiring a benefice.

With the death of Stratford's patron, John de Wyke, the process of electing a successor as prior of Worcester began. This followed the lines of the composition drawn up in 1224 between bishop and chapter, and the complexity of the legal procedures required that they be thoroughly understood and meticulously followed.⁶¹ Stratford was available to make sure that this was the case. As proctor of the subprior and convent he gave preliminary warning that all those who were disqualified from voting should take no part in the election. The *acta* or formal notarial exemplification of the process bore his name as one of the witnesses.⁶² The electors' task was to nominate seven of their confrères, from whom the bishop was to select the new prior. In Cobham's absence his vicar general, James de Cobham, chose Wolstan de Bransford, who was installed in the cathedral choir on 30 November 1317, the feast of St. Andrew. Stratford's position was unaffected by this change of command. He must have known Wolstan long before the election and the new prior, himself a competent administrator, had every confidence in the abilities of the chapter's established legal adviser.⁶³

Shortly afterwards the *Liber Albus* records a lengthy but enigmatic letter from Prior Wolstan to Stratford, whom he addresses as his "special friend."⁶⁴ First of all the writer hints at matters touching Stratford's own position, about which he intends to speak at their next meeting.⁶⁵ The letter continues with the claim that the diocesan official, M. John Bloyou, was angry with the prior and had it in mind to damage his interests and those of his church.⁶⁶ Stratford is asked to come to his aid by erecting a defensive wall for the house of the Lord – an expression not uncommon

⁶¹ For the process see *Worc. Admin.*, pp. 220-221ff. It was usual to have at least one qualified secular clerk on hand to ensure adherence to canonical procedure.

⁶² *Liber Albus*, fols. 83^v, 84^r. The election document is summarized (with some inaccuracies) by Wilson, *Worcester Liber Albus*, pp. 162-166, no. 750.

⁶³ Haines, "Wolstan de Bransford," p. 98; *Worcester Reg. Bransford*, pp. vi-vii.

⁶⁴ *Liber Albus*, fol. 92^r. "Eximie discrecionis viro et amico si placeat speciali magistro J[ohanni] de S[tratford] W[olstanus] prior...."

⁶⁵ "Propter aliqua personam vestram tangencia de quibus vos plenius informabimus in futurum."

⁶⁶ "Nosque ac ecclesiam nostram intendit gravare, et modis quibus poterit molestare prout publice comminatur." The language is somewhat immoderate. It is likely that this refers to the officials' claim to procuration during sessions of the consistory court. See *Worc. Admin.*, p. 108.

at this time.⁶⁷ The prior then goes on to say that he has learned of the intention to remove the official of the Worcester archdeacon.⁶⁸ He urges Stratford to secure an appointee favourably disposed towards him, or better still, one of the priory's own clerks.⁶⁹ The writer concludes with a request that Stratford use his influence to secure for the prior the farm of the archdeaconry, which would be advantageous to the church of Worcester. Although undated, the letter can probably be assigned to the year 1318.⁷⁰ At that time the Worcester archdeaconry was occupied by the eminent nobleman Henry de la Tour, uncle of the Dauphin Guigue VIII, who became bishop of Metz the following year.⁷¹ Normally the official of the archdeacon would have been deputed by his principal. Of course, the bishop could have stepped in because of default and assigned someone – Stratford for example – to deal with the matter. In this instance, however, the prior's statements would bear the interpretation that Stratford was acting as proctor of the absentee archdeacon and thus able both to appoint the official and to arrange for the farm of the archdeaconry.⁷²

Other letters followed, which illustrate the close liaison between Stratford and Prior Wolstan. Meetings of the kind referred to in such correspondence help to explain why the letters themselves are less explicit than one would wish. Already the more sensitive aspects of particular negotiations had been examined, and decisions taken, in private. For example, this was so in the case of a certain "Dominus N.," to whom at the prior's request Stratford had given advice at Grimley⁷³ and elsewhere. This man had allegedly suffered at the hands of Bishop Orleton, the

⁶⁷ "Vobis ... specialiter supplicamus quatinus per vos murum pro domo domini in hiis que poteritis velitis opponere, loco et tempore oportunis, quo minus minas adversantium timeamus." Cf. Ezek. 13.5.

⁶⁸ For these officers see *Worc. Admin.*, pp. 39-43. Stratford is said to have appointed the official himself (officialis domini .. archidiaconi Wygorn. eidem officio per vos hactenus deputatus).

⁶⁹ "Rogamus quatinus talem eidem in eodem officio subrogare velitis qui statum nostrum et ecclesie nostre predicte in suis negociis favorabiliter et benigne velit et valeat promovere. Sane dilectum clericum nostrum speramus, si vobis placuerit, dictum officium occupare...."

⁷⁰ In a further letter (Liber Albus, fol. 92^r) Prior Wolstan asks for the farm of the archdeaconry to be given "Magistro W. de B.," should he be removed from his office (of official of the archdeacon?). Mention in the earlier letter of John de Bloyou argues a date subsequent to his appointment as diocesan official, i.e. *post* 31 January 1318. See *Worc. Admin.*, p. 324.

⁷¹ *Worc. Admin.*, p. 33 n. 7.

⁷² See above, nn. 68-69. For some temporary arrangements: *Worc. Admin.*, p. 40.

⁷³ Liber Albus, fol. 92^r. Grimley was one of the priory's manors.

Hereford diocesan; an incident which cannot be traced at present. There is no need to give the statement a sinister interpretation, despite Orleton's (largely undeserved) notoriety. Very probably it concerned some beneficial irregularity; Orleton had a reputation for rigorous implementation of canon law.⁷⁴ In the same letter the prior reiterated his request for the farm of the Worcester archdeaconry and concluded with profuse apologies for failing to accede to Stratford's petition on behalf of one of his kinsmen.⁷⁵ The eventual outcome of these various negotiations does not transpire.

Stratford was next involved in a particularly intricate negotiation, arising from the prospective visitation of the monastic houses of Evesham, Worcester and Gloucester by visitors deputed by the presidents of the provincial chapter of the Black or Benedictine monks. Prior Wolstan and his fellow prelates were reluctant to endure the inconvenience and expense of a visitation, so Stratford was asked for his opinion. He argued that there were adequate legal grounds for an appeal in that the presidents had determined on visitation without consulting the general chapter. On the other hand, he said, processes of that kind could well give rise to "popular tumult" and eventually they might be faced with much sterner visitors. It would be wiser to seek a temporary postponement on the basis that the notice of visitation had been too brief. This irenic counsel was adopted by the three religious houses and postponement was conceded; an outcome which speaks well for the common sense of all concerned.⁷⁶

When Prior Wolstan was summoned to appear in person before Archbishop Reynolds to account for payment of the current tenth, he preferred – as was usual with him – to remain at home, pointing out that very little money had still to be collected. It was to Stratford that he entrusted the compilation of letters dealing with the affair.⁷⁷ The essentially practical and seemingly disinterested nature of Stratford's advice emerges from another delicate matter; delicate because it involved

⁷⁴ Notably with respect to plurality regulations. See Haines, *Church and Politics*, p. 47. The allegation runs: "Quod dominus .. Hereford. iuxta opinionem wlgii et clamorem populi dominum N. infestat minus racionabiliter et iniuste" (*Liber Albus*, fol. 92^v). Nicholas de Aka (later one of Stratford's clerks) was deprived of his benefice about this time. The case went to the Court of Canterbury.

⁷⁵ This person is described as "A." Could he have been Alexander de Stratford? See *Lit. Cant.* 2, p. 217, and below, "Stratford's *Familia* and Administration."

⁷⁶ *Liber Albus*, fol. 92^v, no. 850. The whole of this correspondence is printed in Pantin, *Documents* 1, pp. 186-192.

⁷⁷ *Liber Albus*, fol. 94^r, no. 863: "Nos domi valeamus manere," and "Mittimus ... litteras ... dilecti magistri Johannis de Stratford eidem patri directas ob illud."

Archbishop Reynolds' kinsman and protégé, Ralph of Windsor. Thanks to his sponsor Ralph had secured the episcopal benefice of Tredington, but subsequently complained to the same quarter that the prior's officers were abstracting a portion of the tithes. These in fact came from the priory's demesne lands in nearby Shipston, within Tredington parish, and had for long been paid to the sacrist, though not without contention. Prior Wolstan attempted to mollify the archbishop, but made the point that as long ago as the time of Bishop Mauger (1200-1212) judges delegate of Pope Innocent III had secured an agreement apportioning tithes between rector and sacrist. It was easier, he concluded, to explain by word of mouth than by letter, so he was sending the details to Stratford so that he could contact the archbishop. Wolstan then wrote to Stratford, enclosing copies of the relevant documents and of his own letter to Reynolds, with the request that he examine the situation. There was no question, wrote the prior, of claiming anything to which his house was not entitled. From the priory's point of view the initial response was disappointing. Stratford gave his opinion that as the result of a new constitution a privilege of the kind claimed did not extend to those lands which had been handed over to others for cultivation. His advice was that the rector should be permitted to enjoy the tithes without hindrance, but if the affair went otherwise the prior should write to him so that it could be settled without altercation. He promised to find some satisfactory way out of the difficulty.⁷⁸ The legal adviser proved over-sanguine; as late as 1363 the dispute was to be an element in the composition between the then rector and the cathedral chapter.⁷⁹

The practice of exchanging benefices was common among career clerks of the day. The real reasons for specific exchanges are often hidden from us, the series engineered by the Stratford family in the autumn and winter of 1319 being no exception. We can surmise, however, that John Stratford, whose centre of gravity had by that time moved from Worcester diocese, found the prospect of Lincoln archdeaconry attractive. It offered income without the onerous conditions of residence which were being enforced by more rigorous bishops in the case of parish churches. It was regular practice for archdeacons to rely on deputies, called officials, to carry out the everyday duties of their office. It must also have been by design that the family retained the incumbency of Holy Trinity in Stratford, for which later an ambitious plan was to be conceived. It was

⁷⁸ Ibid., fol. 99^{r-v}, nos. 893-894. The new constitution referred to was incorporated in Clement. 3, 8, 1 *Religiosi quicumque*.

⁷⁹ Printed Nash, *Worcs.* 2, pp. 434-436, from the *Liber Albus*.

on 30 May 1319 that Bishop Cobham of Worcester set the process in motion, at the request of the parties concerned, by authorizing the Lincoln diocesan, John Dalderby, to bring about the exchange of the archdeaconry held by the persistently non-resident William de Estaviaco [Estavayer], for John Stratford's rectory of Holy Trinity.⁸⁰ The proper procedure was well established; enquiry had to be made (in theory at any rate) and the respective patrons induced to give what amounted to a nominal assent. The date of Stratford's assumption of the archdeaconry has been taken to be 30 May,⁸¹ but it is not until 13 September that Bishop Dalderby concluded the formalities by issuing his certificate, which recited the action taken by virtue of Cobham's mandate.⁸² The order for Estaviaco's induction to Stratford was issued four days later.⁸³ The next exchange must already have been under way for it was effected by 27 October, when Estaviaco gave up Holy Trinity for the benefice of Overbury, which had been in Robert Stratford's possession for just under two years.⁸⁴ Three days afterwards John Stratford was among those present in the prior's chamber at Worcester for Estaviaco's resignation of Overbury.⁸⁵ The final stage was reached when M. John Geraud, himself as we have seen a Stratford man, exchanged Nettleham rectory in Lincoln diocese for Overbury, to which he had been presented by a cooperative Worcester chapter. This time it was Bishop Cobham who was authorized by his colleague to carry out the exchange. He did so on 31 December 1319.⁸⁶ As the benefices in this concatenation of exchanges were of disparate value, we are left to imagine the means by which financial equivalence was achieved.

⁸⁰ *Worcester Reg. Cobham*, fol. 40^r, pp. 40-41; *Lincoln Reg. Dalderby 2* (Reg. 3), fol. 417^v, where Estaviaco is said to have been non-resident for more than twenty years. Archdeacon Stratford himself, though with a house in Minster Yard, was also to be a non-resident. See the lists in Edwards, *Secular Cathedrals*, App. 1, from LAO Bj/2/4-10.

⁸¹ *Worcester Reg. Cobham*, fol. 40^r, pp. 40-41; Dalderby's certification of Cobham's mandate (Alvechurch, 30 May 1319). Much later, 29 February 1320, the king presented Stratford by reason of the vacancy following Dalderby's death (12 January). See *Le Neve* 1, p. 6.

⁸² *Worcester Reg. Cobham*, fol. 40^r, pp. 40-41; Stow Park.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, fols. 16^v, 40^r; Bredon, 17 September 1319.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, fols. 17^r, 40^r-41^r. Robert Stratford was instituted to Overbury 4 October 1317 (*Worcester Reg. Maidstone*, fol. 53^r) and in April 1318 Bishop Dalderby licensed the bishop of Llandaff to ordain him to the subdiaconate and any lesser orders within Lincoln diocese (*Reg. Dalderby 2* [Reg. 3], fol. 348^v).

⁸⁵ *Liber Albus*, fol. 96^v, no. 877: 30 October 1319.

⁸⁶ *Worcester Reg. Cobham*, fol. 18^r, pp. 22, 233; *Lincoln Reg. Dalderby 2* (Reg. 3), fol. 430^r. Cf. *Liber Albus*, fol. 94^v, no. 869; *RSV*, fol. 124^r, p. 226.

By the early 1320s Stratford's portfolio of benefices, with its aggregation of canonries held in plurality by papal dispensation, had come to resemble that of the typical up-and-coming clerk with his way to make in a competitive world. The initial prebend of Stone in the chapel of Hastings Castle had soon to be relinquished for that of Wartling,⁸⁷ which in turn was exchanged for Tachbrook prebend in Lichfield Cathedral.⁸⁸ As canon of Lichfield Stratford, together with a fellow canon and two monks from Coventry Cathedral Priory, brought news of the death of Bishop Walter Langton (9 November 1321) to the king's officers at Ongar in Essex, where royal licence was issued for the election of a successor.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, at the end of 1317, Stratford had become a canon of Lincoln and prebendary of Caistor there.⁹⁰ To this canonry and the archdeaconry of Lincoln was added a canonry of York by virtue of papal provision.⁹¹ Finally in June 1322, thanks to the king's presentation, came the prospect of a canonry of Salisbury with the attendant prebend of Charminster and Bere. This time Stratford's luck was out. The royal letters were countermanded and Bishop Martival was prohibited from doing anything about the canonry until the right of advowson, disputed between bishop and king, should be determined in the royal court. Once the king had made good his claim, Martival was instructed to admit Stratford. Three

⁸⁷ *CPR 1313-1317*, pp. 619, 654; *ibid.*, 1317-1321, pp. 133, 150. Stratford was presented to Wartling, Walter de Harpham to Stone, 15 April 1318. Mandate for their induction is dated 22 May 1318.

⁸⁸ Coventry and Lichfield Reg. Langton (B/A/1/1), fol. 79^r: 4 June [1320]; *CPR 1317-1321*, p. 451.

⁸⁹ *CPR 1317-1321*, p. 33. The complexity of the delegation arose from the fact that the diocese had both a monastic and a secular cathedral.

⁹⁰ Lincoln Reg. Dalderby 1 (Reg. 2), fol. 299^v; *Le Neve* 1, p. 48, where Stratford is wrongly styled "D.Cn. & C.L.": see correction *ibid.* 12, pp. 14, 22. The fact that Stratford presented Gilbert de Normanby to Caistor vicarage 4 February 1324 suggests that he was slow to relinquish the prebend (PRO S.C.1/38/204). At Lincoln the fruits of the vacancy were claimed by the dean and chapter as soon as they heard of Stratford's consecration, i.e. on 26 July 1323, until 1 July 1324, when he received the Winchester temporalities. LAO Bj/2/5, fol. 61^v. There was much delay in admitting M. Eduardo Sapiti to succeed Stratford in the Tachbrook prebend at Lichfield. Coventry and Lichfield Reg. Northburgh (B/A/1/2), fol. 21^v: mandate of 5 May 1328.

⁹¹ *CPL 1305-1342*, p. 220: 27 April 1322; York Reg. Melton, fol. 78^v (cited Emden, *Biog. Oxon.*). Stratford does not figure in *Le Neve* as holder of a York prebend. This provision was made *motu proprio* [for which see Boyle, *Survey Vatican Archives*, p. 151], "non ad tuam vel alterius pro te nobis oblate petitionis instantiam sed de mera nostra liberalitate." Stratford is here (as elsewhere in the Vatican Registers) called "Johannes de Sterford"; execution was entrusted to the abbot of Evesham, the prior of Worcester and the archdeacon of Winchester. As executor of a bull for Benedict de Paston Stratford is styled "canon of York." Vatican Archives, RA 16, fol. 329^{r-v}; 17, fol. 107^r; RV 73, fols. 239^r, 366^v.

months later the presentation was revoked on the grounds that the canonry was not vacant but held by M. Giorgio dei Saluzzi, the king's kinsman, who was still alive and well!⁹²

The improvement in Stratford's beneficial, hence his financial position, was symptomatic of a widening of horizons. He had first come to the notice of the central government in 1317, when he was summoned to attend royal councils at Clarendon, Westminster and Nottingham.⁹³ To these we shall have to return.⁹⁴ For the moment suffice it to say that nothing is known of Stratford's contribution to the councils' proceedings, but they marked his political baptism of fire. The year 1317 was also marked by the controversial advancement of a fellow lawyer, Adam Orleton, to the see of Hereford, and it is in this connection that Stratford is first styled "king's clerk."⁹⁵

We have seen that royal service soon brought tangible rewards, but other avenues of employment remained open. By late 1317 Stratford was diocesan official at Lincoln in the service of Bishop Dalderby (1300-1320), for whom he was to perform the office of executor, and whose canonization he was to advocate.⁹⁶ Lincoln diocese, being second in size to that of York, the most extensive of English dioceses, must have provided an arduous challenge to any official. No court records have survived, but there is much information about the more general aspect of Stratford's work in the diocese. He was one of those delegated in 1318 to visit the dean and chapter and city of Lincoln – its religious houses, clergy and people. In addition he was appointed a penitentiary with power to absolve in serious cases reserved for the bishop's attention, and to impose suspension and excommunication where appropriate.⁹⁷ When in the

⁹² *Salisbury Reg. Martival* 1, pp. 261-264; 3, pp. 96, 192; *Le Neve* 3, p. 41. For Saluzzi see Wright, *Church and Crown*, pp. 324-325, nos. 29, 36.

⁹³ *CCR 1313-1318*, p. 455; *Parl. Writs* 2, ii, pp. 170-171, nos. 9, 10, and 1; *RDP* (App.) 3, pp. 263, 266-267.

⁹⁴ See below, "Councillor and Diplomatic Envoy."

⁹⁵ *CChW*, p. 468 (pro C.81/99/4194); *Foedera* 2, i, p. 129.

⁹⁶ Stratford's commission is dated 9 December 1317. Two days later he was empowered to proceed *ex officio* against the bishop's secular subjects with authority to correct, punish and reform. *Lincoln Reg. Dalderby* 2 (Reg. 3), fol. 376^r. For the canonical necessity to specify such powers see *Worc. Admin.*, pp. 110-111 ff. For notices of Stratford as executor see *CPR 1321-1324*, p. 41; *Lincoln Reg. Burghersh* 3 (Reg. 5B), fols. 4^r-5^r, 9^r, 69^v. Stratford's part in the Dalderby canonization process when bishop of Winchester (he sent four letters to three cardinals and M. Andrea Sapiti respectively) is recorded in *LAO* Dj/20/2/B3 (which includes two letters of thanks sent to Stratford by the chapter at mm. 14^{r-v} and 15^v). Cf. Dj/20/2/B1-2.

⁹⁷ *Lincoln Reg. Dalderby* 2 (Reg. 3), fols. 384^r (4 April 1318), 391^r (24 June 1318). The latter commission refers specifically to the visitation process. See below, Appendix 1.

summer of 1318 Bishop Dalderby's blindness and advancing senility prevented the proper performance of his duties, it was Stratford and his fellow canon, M. Thomas de Langtoft, who were commissioned to negotiate with the chapter for the provision of a coadjutor.⁹⁸ Stratford was a witness to the customary oath of canonical obedience taken by the archdeacon of Lincoln's official at the time of his appointment⁹⁹ and as diocesan official was empowered (with the coadjutor's assent) to hear the case of M. John de Spanby, who was claiming the rectory of South Hykeham despite an irregularity in his birth for which he had not received dispensation.¹⁰⁰ He was likewise commissioned to hear the suit against the Hospitallers, who were alleged to have erected a chapel at Shabbington and to have celebrated there without authority.¹⁰¹ A task which regularly engaged the official's attention was that of holding enquiry into the presentation of clerks to benefices.¹⁰² On another occasion he was deputed to examine the rector of Fingest for his failure to proceed to the priesthood as required by canon law.¹⁰³ Stratford also represented the bishop at the level of provincial and parliamentary assembly; he was proctor for the convocations of February 1318 and of April in the following year,¹⁰⁴ as well as for the York parliament of May 1319.¹⁰⁵ Dalderby's death in January 1320 meant the end of Stratford's period of office at Lincoln, but he was shortly to be found in Archbishop Reynolds' service, more particularly as dean of the Court of Arches, a forum in which he had previously exercised his talents as advocate.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁸ Ibid., fol. 393^r (27 July 1318). On 30 July Bishop Dalderby received a letter from the dean and chapter nominating M. Jocelyn de Kirmington. But in January 1319, at the appointment of an *yconomus* or temporary custodian of Creslow church, M. Thomas de Bray is named coadjutor and precedes Stratford in the list of witnesses. Ibid., fol. 407^v.

⁹⁹ Ibid., fol. 411^r: Buckden, 28 February 1319 (also M. William de Stanbridge's oath on 4 March, likewise witnessed by Stratford).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.: 3 March 1319.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.: 1 March 1319.

¹⁰² E.g. *ibid.*, fols. 417^v-418^r (Dillington, Weston); 422^v (Peakirk).

¹⁰³ Ibid., fol. 426^v.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., fols. 381^r, 415^r. Both were summoned to St. Paul's.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., fol. 416^v. Appointed 28 April together with Simon de Chaumberleyn, knight, and M. Thomas de Langtoft, canon of Lincoln. See below, "Councillor and Diplomatic Envoy."

¹⁰⁶ In Churchill's list (*Cant. Admin.* 2, p. 239) Stratford follows M. R[ichard] de Stanou (1315-1317), whose death on 11 October 1318 is recorded by *Annales Paulini* (p. 284), and he is said to have resigned about April 1323. Archbishop Reynolds appointed a commissary to act in the deanery of Arches in view of Stratford's absence in the Roman curia in that year. Canterbury Reg. Reynolds, fol. 130^r: Mortlake, 11 April 1323. Stratford is mentioned as dean in *CPR 1317-1321*, p. 577: 14 April 1321.

The chance survival of some isolated documents permits us to glimpse Stratford as defender of the rights of his archdeaconry. In October 1319 Archbishop Reynolds, fortified by a special privilege from the apostolic see, had determined to visit Lincoln diocese. In company with M. Gilbert de Middleton, the archbishop's official,¹⁰⁷ Stratford was deputed to examine the title of the dean and chapter to their appropriated churches, a regular feature of visitations but one which could give rise to conflict.¹⁰⁸ It must have been in the course of these or similar investigations that Stratford discovered various religious houses and colleges, on the pretext of appropriation, to have exercised jurisdiction during vacancies which by long-established custom belonged to the archdeacon. At Stratford's promotion the encroachment was brought to the archbishop's notice.¹⁰⁹ The overall outcome is unknown, although we do have Stratford's ratification (dated 21 July 1321) of the appropriation to Spalding Priory of the church of Spalding itself, as well as of the rectories of nearby Pinchbeck, Moulton and Weston.¹¹⁰

In the secular sphere Stratford was able to exert influence at a high level. He secured pardon for Walter de Paxford of Birmingham, who had been sentenced to abjure the realm on account of the death of his wife.¹¹¹ It was at his instance that M. Richard Bachiler from Warwickshire was pardoned for not appearing before the king on a charge of rape and breach of the peace. The accusation, made by Joan daughter of Robert de Eston, is possibly misleading.¹¹² At Stratford's intervention too, Sir John de Bishopton on payment of a fine of forty pounds was pardoned for his

¹⁰⁷ He was archdeacon of Northampton in Lincoln diocese.

¹⁰⁸ *Cant. Admin.* 1, pp. 311-314. See also LAO Dij/62/(i), nos. 12 and 13 (draft): *inspeximus* by the archbishop (6 January 1320) of Stratford's proceedings in the recent visitation; Lincoln Reg. Dalderby 2 (Reg. 3), fol. 423^{r-v} (papal privilege); Wright, *Church and Crown*, p. 73.

¹⁰⁹ PRO S.C.1/55/56: 16 December 1321. Much of this document (a mandate of Archbishop Reynolds for M. John de Harrington and M. Thomas de Langtoft to proceed against those having appropriated churches) is indecipherable. The final part runs: "... in usus proprios habentes ipsasque ecclesias et beneficia tacite iure archidiaconali quod ad archidiaconum loci eiusdem ratione vacationum ecclesiarum et beneficiorum huiusmodi in eodem archidiaconatu vacancium de consuetudine in dicto archidiaconatu optenta et antiquitus approbata spectare dinoscitur optinuissse appropriata, dictosque religiosos et collegia predicta ad promocionem magistri Johannis de Stratford nunc archidiaconi Lincoln. occasione premissa f... ad iudicium evocari [?] ad nonnullos actus iudiciales in hac parte procedendo."

¹¹⁰ BL Add. ms 5844, p. 329, citing "a most noble register of the abbey of Spalding," fol. 286^r (now Add. ms 35296). There is quite a lot about this Benedictine house in Owen, *Church and Society*.

¹¹¹ CPR 1317-1321, p. 497: 9 August 1320.

¹¹² Ibid., 1321-1324, p. 139: 26 June 1322.

adherence to the contrariant lords during the uprising of 1321-1322.¹¹³ It will be observed that all these were from Stratford's point of view "local men."

Many clerks of ability comparable to or even exceeding Stratford's might at this point have reached their pinnacle of achievement, with the prospect of continued employment in royal service, the ecclesiastical courts, or diocesan and provincial administration, as opportunity offered. Stratford's expectations were to be radically transformed by his unexpected elevation to the great bishopric of Winchester. It is to his activities as diocesan bishop therefore that we must next turn our attention.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 181: 20 July 1322. This was certainly a considerable fine. Many of the fines recorded in PRO Just. 1/1388 are quite small. Sir John was witness to one of Bishop Orleton's grants for the benefit of Stratford's chantry. *CPR 1330-1334*, p. 213.