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Dom David Knowles

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The Religious Orders in England

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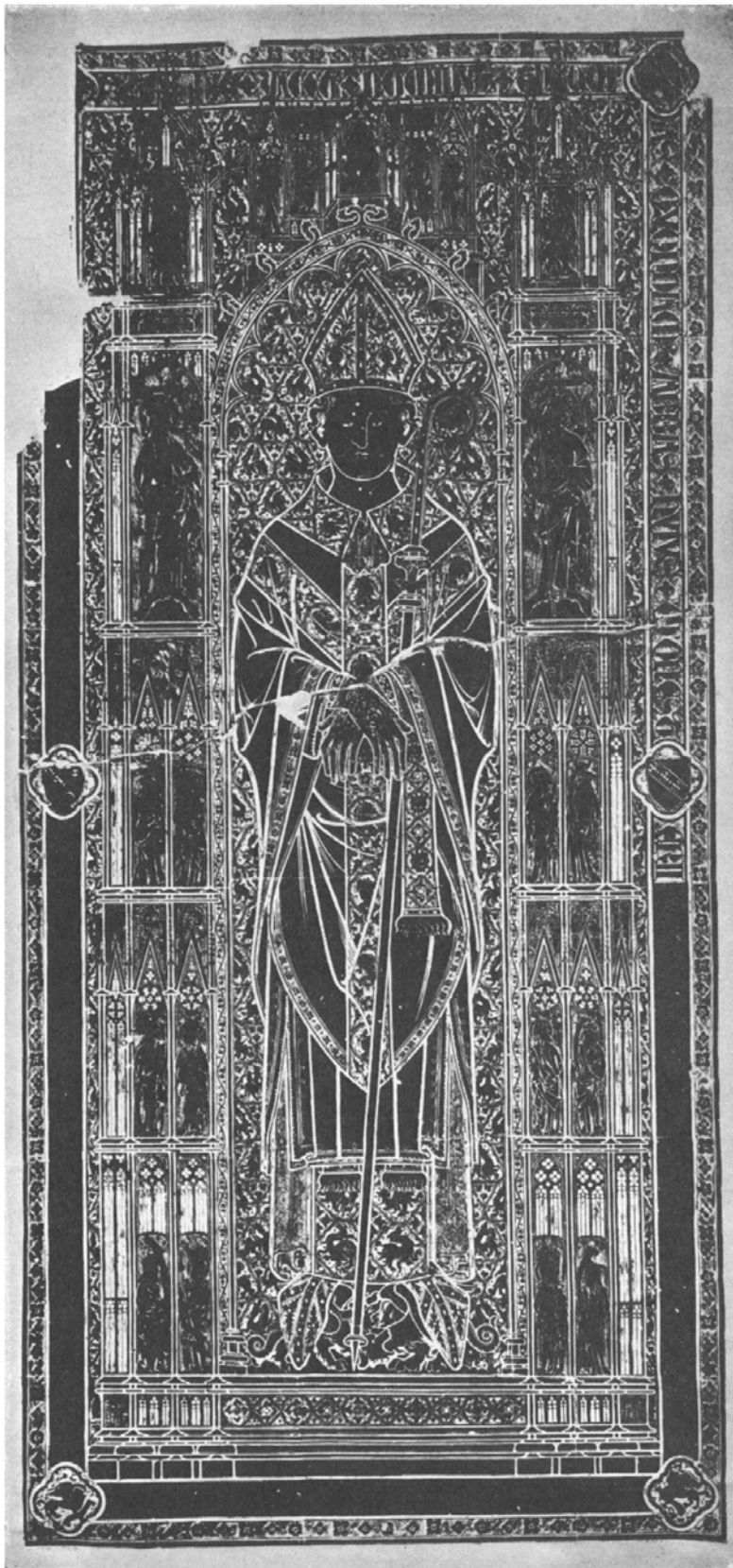
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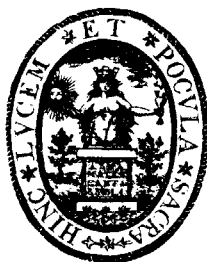
VOLUME II

The End of the Middle Ages

BY

DOM DAVID KNOWLES

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University of Cambridge*



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

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LONDON · NEW YORK · MELBOURNE

Cambridge University Press
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PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

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First published 1955
Reprinted 1957, 1961
First paperback edition 1979

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 0 521 05481 8 hardback
ISBN 0 521 29567 X paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2004

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<p>This brass formerly covered the tomb of Abbot Thomas de la Mare in the presbytery of St Albans Abbey. It was executed to the abbot's orders <i>circa</i> 1360, more than thirty years before his death (1396). He is shown in full Mass vestments and <i>pontificalia</i>. Flanking his shoulders are King Offa and St Alban. The brass is considered to be of Teutonic workmanship.</p>	
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PREFACE

The present volume treats of the history of the religious orders in England from the pontificate of Benedict XII (1334–42) to the end of the period of strife between the houses of York and Lancaster, though no attempt has been made to keep rigidly within either of these limits. This epoch has been neglected by monastic historians in general, or dismissed in a few words, and the present writer had every expectation that a single volume would suffice to carry the story from the Benedictine Constitutions to the Dissolution. When, however, the sources were regarded more closely, they revealed a number of important developments and activities which hitherto had been either ignored or treated in isolation; the diffusion of Ockhamism in the English universities, the various controversies between the monks and the friars, and the literary work and controversial interests of the university monks, have never been considered in detail with all their mutual relationships. Similarly, no historian has taken account of the varied activities of the most notable group of monks to appear since the twelfth century, men so diverse in gifts and achievements as Alan of Walsingham, Thomas de la Mare, Simon Langham, Uthred of Boldon, Adam Easton and Thomas Brunton. A little later, at the end of the century and during the reigns of Henry IV and his son, the crisis of an attack launched upon the religious from several angles was followed by a conservative reaction which was in fact something of a spiritual revival, not only by reason of the new contemplative foundations of the Carthusians and Bridgettines, but also owing to the energy of the friars, and in particular of the Carmelites, who by their theological writings, their preaching and their spiritual direction gave distinction to the religious life of the towns. These and other topics of the same kind seemed to deserve, if not to demand, a fuller treatment than they had received in the past.

Already in the preceding volume it was found hardly possible to weave the external history of the monks and friars into a continuous narrative such as had served for the earlier years of the monastic order. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the impossibility was found to be absolute, not only through a dearth of narrative and biographical sources, but also from the very nature of the growth of great institutions. It is with religious orders as it is with medieval universities or with modern public schools. The beginnings, when the shape of the organism is moulded by distinguished pioneers and through acute controversies, and when numbers are small and diversities great, can readily be treated as parts of a connected story, in which individuals play their part in perfecting the type. But when the members of the class have become numerous, and interaction between them frequent, and an age of maturity and stability has developed in which no individual, however eminent, can change the character of the

institution, the historian has no longer a thread or pattern that he may take as his guide. He must abandon the hope of presenting an ordered or chronological account of the events and changes of the period, and be content to consider particular topics or take cross-sections and soundings.

The plan has therefore been adopted of treating chapter by chapter a series of varied aspects or activities of the religious, thus building up, stroke by stroke, a picture of the life of the period. *Quidquid agunt monachi*. . . . In so doing, an endeavour has been made to make each section self-contained, and, as in previous volumes, some repetition of detail has been retained of set purpose. A book of this kind may well be treated by some as a work of reference, and the reader who consults it for a single broad topic may find it convenient to meet with all the relevant facts, even if a few of them have been noted in another connexion elsewhere.

A reviewer of the preceding volume regretted the absence of a detailed treatment of the nuns: I fear he will still be able to charge me with neglect. In truth, intimate or detailed records of the nunneries are almost entirely wanting over the whole period between c. 1200 and the Dissolution. Doubtless it would be possible, after a long course of research, to describe the social and economic relationships of the nunneries in some detail, but the absence of information on the spiritual life of the nuns is all but complete. The religious historian of medieval England cannot help remarking, in every century after the eleventh, upon the absence from the scene of any saintly or commanding figure of a woman. While all the other regions of Europe, not excluding Scandinavia, witnessed the appearance of women saints of great distinction and individuality, whose lives and writings gave lustre to their age, it is not too much to say that the only two names known even to the specialist in England between St Margaret in the eleventh and Mary Ward in the seventeenth century are those of Dame Juliana and Margery Kempe, neither of them either a leader by nature or indeed, technically speaking, a 'religious' at all. Of the nunneries of England the only one of which we can have something like a clear picture is Syon, and even there it is the formal details of the life, and the composition of the library, not the acts and thoughts of the inmates, that we know.

As might be expected from what has been said above, the monastic historian of the later Middle Ages cannot expect to enter in upon a harvest which others have prepared. There is no Wilmart, no Stenton of the fifteenth century. The one indispensable work, without which the history of the black monks would have been far more difficult to elucidate, is the collection of official documents published by Mr W. A. Pantin, and the same writer, in a series of carefully documented studies, has made it possible to gain a general view of the literary activities of the monks. On particular aspects Miss R. Graham, by a series of papers on the Cluniac houses and on the Great Schism, and the late A. H. Thompson, by his publication of visitation records, have laid all subsequent writers in debt, while Mr H. M. Colvin and Miss E. M. Thompson have firmly based the

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story of the Premonstratensians and the Carthusians. The works of these scholars are well known to all medievalists, but in this volume I am particularly indebted to a number of less familiar works, the dissertations of research students in various universities during the past thirty years. One of the problems yet to be solved by those concerned is how to avoid the waste of so much meritorious investigation, which is at present buried in theses that have never been printed or otherwise made public by their authors, and whose very existence can so easily be forgotten. I have tried to acknowledge my debts in this respect both in the footnotes and by giving a separate list of such theses in the bibliography, but I should wish to record a particular obligation to Miss E. M. Halcrow who, besides lending me her thesis, allowed me to read and make use of many additional papers and transcripts.

Finally, I must thank those friends who have read and criticized the parts of this book in which they had particular competence: Dr H. M. Chew, Fr. Daniel Callus, O.P., Mr W. A. Pantin, Professor M. M. Postan, and Professor R. A. B. Mynors. I have also to thank the Dean of St Albans (the Very Rev. C. C. Thicknesse) for permission to illustrate the brass of Abbot de la Mare, and Dr G. H. S. Bushnell, for providing the rubbing from which the photograph was taken.

DAVID KNOWLES

PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE

8 December 1954

A second printing has made it possible to make a number of small corrections and a few additions suggested by readers and reviewers. These appear in their relevant places throughout the book. In addition, the following more important notes are added here. I owe them to the kindness of Professor V. H. Galbraith.

Henry Knighton. It has hitherto been generally assumed that Knighton died in 1366 and that the rest of his chronicle was the work of a continuator (*v. infra*, 185–6, 263). Professor Galbraith, in an article not yet (June, 1956) published, has shown that Knighton in fact lived till the very last years of the century, and that the whole chronicle is therefore his work.

Thomas Netter. Netter has usually been credited with the compilation of *Fasciculi Zizaniorum* (*v. infra*, 147) owing to the assumption of his editor, W. W. Shirley, that the last document in the collection dated from 1428, two years before Netter's death. It has now been shown that the manuscript was not written before 1436–9; this leaves the identity of the author or editor uncertain for the present.

DAVID KNOWLES

PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE

15 June 1956

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AC</i>	H. E. Salter, <i>Chapters of the Augustinian Canons</i>
<i>ACant.</i>	<i>Archaeologia Cantiana</i>
<i>AJ</i>	<i>Antiquaries Journal</i>
<i>ALKG</i>	<i>Archiv für Litteratur- und Kirchengeschichte</i>
<i>Amundesham</i>	<i>Annales Joannis de Amundesham</i>
[T]BGAS	[Transactions of the] <i>Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>CBEL</i>	<i>Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature</i>
<i>CCIR</i>	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
<i>CEH</i>	<i>Cambridge Economic History</i>
<i>CHEL</i>	<i>Cambridge History of English Literature</i>
<i>Chron. Mels.</i>	<i>Chronicon monasterii de Melsa</i> (Meaux)
<i>CMH</i>	<i>Cambridge Medieval History</i>
<i>CPL</i>	<i>Calendar of Papal Letters</i>
<i>CPR</i>	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
<i>CS</i>	Camden Series
<i>C & YS</i>	Canterbury and York Society
<i>DAR</i>	J. T. Fowler, <i>Extracts from the Account Rolls of the Abbey of Durham</i>
<i>DHG</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie ecclésiastiques</i>
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
<i>DR</i>	<i>Downside Review</i>
<i>DV</i>	A. H. Thompson, <i>Visitations of the diocese of Lincoln</i>
<i>DTC</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique</i>
<i>EcHR</i>	<i>Economic History Review</i>
<i>EETS</i>	Early English Text Society
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>GASA</i>	<i>Gesta Abbatum Sancti Albani</i>
<i>HBS</i>	Henry Bradshaw Society
<i>Henry IV</i>	J. H. Wylie, <i>History of England under Henry IV</i>
<i>Henry V</i>	J. H. Wylie, <i>The Reign of Henry the Fifth</i>
<i>HMC</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission
<i>JBAA</i>	<i>Journal of the British Archaeological Association</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>L & P</i>	J. Brewer, J. Gairdner and others, <i>Letters and Papers of the reign of Henry VIII</i>
<i>Lit. Cant.</i>	J. B. Sheppard, <i>Literae Cantuarienses</i>
<i>LV</i>	A. H. Thompson, <i>Visitations of religious houses of the diocese of Lincoln</i>
<i>MC</i>	W. A. Pantin, <i>Chapters of the Black Monks</i>

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>MO</i>	D. Knowles, <i>The Monastic Order in England</i>
<i>Monasticon</i>	<i>Monasticon Anglicanum</i> (Dugdale)
<i>MSAC</i>	<i>Monasterii S. Albani Chronica</i> (Rolls Series 28)
n.s.	new series
OHS	Oxford Historical Society
o.s.	original series (EETS); old series (CS)
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i> , ed. J. P. Migne
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Languages Association</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Bénédictine</i>
<i>RO</i>	D. Knowles, <i>The Religious Orders in England</i> , vol. 1
<i>Rot. Parl.</i>	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum</i>
RP	Record Publication
RS	Rolls Series
<i>RU</i>	H. Rashdall, <i>Medieval Universities</i> (ed. Powicke and Emden)
<i>Scriptores tres</i>	<i>Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres</i>
SRS	Somerset Record Society
SS	Surtees Society
<i>TRHS</i>	<i>Transactions of the Royal Historical Society</i>
<i>VCH</i>	<i>Victoria County History</i>
WHS	Worcestershire Historical Society
WS	Wyclif Society
<i>YAJ</i>	<i>Yorkshire Archaeological Journal</i>

NOTE

For all details of date, place of publication, and (in the case of articles and papers) title of periodical or series, etc., the reader is referred to the full Bibliography at the end of the volume. The works cited in the footnotes to the text are there listed under the author's name or (where only the title is given in the notes) under the title of the work.