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052154808X - The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 940-1216, Second Edition - Dom David Knowles

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GLASTONBURY FROM THE AIR

Dunstanus Glastoniae abbatiam composuit qualis nusquam in Anglia sit fueritve

WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY *de Gestis Pontificum*

The view shows the precinct from the south-west, with the ruined Lady Chapel half hidden by foliage. The Saxon Church, completed by Dunstan, lay a little to the east of this, and his monastery was presumably adjacent to the south. The remains of the later medieval refectory can be seen immediately above the lantern of the abbot's kitchen; the cloisters lay between it and the church. Since this photograph was taken c. 1935 considerable clearances and excavations have taken place, and the outlines of the pre-Norman cloister have been traced immediately to the south of the Lady Chapel. The plan revealed is that of an unexpectedly large monastery.

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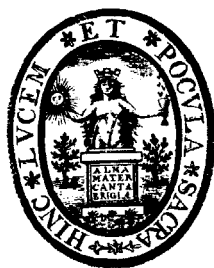
A HISTORY OF ITS DEVELOPMENT
FROM THE TIMES OF ST DUNSTAN TO THE
FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL

940-1216

BY

DOM DAVID KNOWLES

SECOND EDITION



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PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

The typescript of *The Monastic Order* passed from the hands of its author to the Secretary of the University Press in October 1937. In the twenty-five years that have passed since that date monastic and other historians have been extremely active, but no opportunity has been given me of making more than a very few alterations, mostly literal, to the book. Now, for a photo-offset reprint, the occasion has been taken of effecting a more extensive review, but in order to preserve the existing pagination and layout all alterations have been confined to exact replacements and the filling-up of blank spaces. Anyone who has been through an exercise of this kind will probably agree that, while it consumes an inordinate amount of time, it can nevertheless produce fairly satisfactory results, and corrections and additions have been made in some 150 places in the light of criticisms received and further research. If even this seems little when such a large book is in question, it may be said that in fact major revisions in English monastic history have been few; the most notable additions to knowledge have been in the fields of early and continental monasticism. Consequently, the text of this book remains virtually unchanged. Were it to be written again *ab ovo* it would doubtless differ much in emphasis and treatment, but it would then become another book, and I have been content to eliminate or to change only those statements and passages which seemed to me to be either erroneous or outdated by subsequent research.

Nevertheless, there appeared to be a handful of topics, important in themselves though for the most part marginal to the main theme of the book, where a silent correction or a short footnote would be wholly inadequate, and in a series of Additional Notes I have endeavoured to summarize a number of living issues, and to indicate the decisive literature on each. I have also added a list of books which, almost without exception, have appeared since 1937 and which bear directly on the history of English monasticism, whether or not they have been cited in the footnotes of this revised edition of *The Monastic Order*. One of the most striking and welcome developments in medieval studies abroad since the War has been the emergence of active schools of critical history among the Benedictines at Sant' Anselmo, Rome, and elsewhere, and among the Cistercians of France, Belgium and Holland.

This preface provides an opportunity of thanking the numerous reviewers and readers who have suggested corrections or improvements. I owe a particular debt to Mrs Helen Clover, Dr C. R. Dodwell and Dom Thomas Symons, who answered a direct appeal for help by making a careful examination of the passages in the book that fell within their especial competence.

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In conclusion, a preface is perhaps the proper place in which to explain a change, small in itself but inevitably attracting notice. The limiting dates of this study are now given on the title-page as 940–1216 instead of 943–1216. The earlier date, that of the entry of Dunstan into his abbacy at Glastonbury, which Armitage Robinson and others placed *c.* 943, can now be given greater precision from a charter issued by King Edmund to ‘my faithful abbot Dunstan’ in 940. The charter (Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 752; *The Great Chartulary of Glastonbury*, ed. A. Watkin, III, no. 1229, p. 666), though preserved only in a late manuscript, is accepted by F. M. Stenton (*Anglo-Saxon England*, 440 and *n*) and by Dom Symons (*Regularis Concordia*, introd. xiv and *n*) and others. Thus, by a coincidence unperceived at the time, the original edition of this book appeared within a few weeks or months of the millennial anniversary (in 1940) of the effective birth of the monastic life of medieval England.

PETERHOUSE

31 May 1962

DAVID KNOWLES

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The monastic antiquities of medieval England have, since the days of Camden, if not since those of Leland, received an attention from scholars and antiquaries such as has been given to few other branches of national history. From the end of the reign of Elizabeth, and throughout the century which has with some justice been called “the greatest age of English medieval scholarship”,¹ a succession of men of eminent talents and unwearied industry collected, transcribed and edited all that they could find of the wealth of monastic records that had been in part destroyed and in part scattered at the Dissolution. Sir Thomas Bodley, Sir Robert Cotton, Camden himself, Augustine Baker, Clement Reyner, Sir Roger Twysden, Roger Dodsworth and (most illustrious of all) Sir William Dugdale—these are only a few from among the names that become familiar to every student of monastic history. They were followed by others scarcely less notable—by Tanner, by Gale, by Hearne, by Wanley and by Sparke—and these, in their turn, after an interval, by the historians and antiquarians who, in the first half of the nineteenth century, embarked on the task of publishing the whole corpus of medieval literature and records in the great collections of the Camden, Surtees and other national and regional learned societies, many of which continue, after a century of life, to put out each year new additions to their familiar series. When, half way through the century, private initiative was supplemented by the magnificent and comprehensive enterprise undertaken by the Master of the Rolls, monastic annals, chronicles and registers formed a large part of the matter selected for publication at the hands of the leading medievalists of the day; to Stubbs, above all others, is due the gratitude of those who use the sound texts which he established and the introductory matter which has lost little of its value since it first appeared. Finally, within the last fifty years monastic literature has been published or discussed by almost every medievalist of note, and has formed the chief interest of a number of scholars, among whom the names of Professor A. Hamilton Thompson and of Dr Rose Graham take a leading place.

Yet although so much learning and industry has been spent upon publishing and commenting upon the memorials of monasticism, and upon discussing in learned studies and monographs particular points of its history, no modern work is available for the general reader which may give him in adequate detail an account of the various phases of monastic life in England, together with a view of the activities of the monks within the cloister and in their manifold relations with the society of their times.

¹ Prof. David Douglas in *History*, xx (December 1935), 193.

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Individual religious families and isolated periods have indeed received treatment in articles and biographies, and there are in existence not a few excellent outlines of English monastic history, but between the outline and the monograph the gap has remained unfilled, and while constitutional, economic, military and ecclesiastical histories of England exist in abundance, great and small, nothing that can truly be called a history of English monasticism has appeared since Fosbroke's *British Monachism* passed through a number of editions in the early decades of the last century. As one whose knowledge of the subject is unrivalled had recently occasion to write: "no attempt has yet been made to supply from original sources any synthetic account of English monastic life during the five crucial centuries preceding the Reformation."¹

It is the aim of the present work to supply this want for the first half of the period, almost exactly six centuries in length, during which the regular life was lived without interruption in the monasteries of England, and to give an account, historical rather than antiquarian in character, and based entirely on contemporary sources, of the development of the monastic order in this country between the years 943 and 1216.

These limiting dates, chosen originally, perhaps, without full realization of their significance in order to put some bounds to the work of research, seem to the present writer after several years of deepening knowledge to mark moments of real division in English religious history. As the evidence on a later page will show, regular life was, and had for many decades already been, extinct in England before the revival under Dunstan in 943, and that revival, when it came, though peculiarly national in character, did not repose directly upon anything inherited from the monastic past in this country. No such absolute significance attaches to the other date, that of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which so nearly coincided with the deaths of Innocent III and King John, but certainly no other year between the Norman Conquest and the reign of Henry VIII so clearly marks a division in the history of the Church in England. Here, more perhaps than in other lands of western Europe, the monastic and general legislation of the Council, the new spheres of activity claimed by the papacy, the coming of the friars, the growth of the universities, and the emergence of a new type of diocesan bishop in the long reign of the new king—all these factors gave to the monastic order in the thirteenth century a position and a character very different from those which had distinguished the body in 1100, in 1150 and even at the time of the Interdict under John.

To this period, subsequent to the Council, and to the centuries which followed till the Dissolution, it may be possible to pass in another volume at some future time. The close of the Middle Ages, no less than the epoch covered by these chapters, stands in need of full and clear examination. With the age before the times of Dunstan the case is somewhat different.

¹ Dr G. G. Coulton in *Five Centuries of Religion*, 1, 441.

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Certain moments, such as those of the flowering of Northumbrian monasticism, at first under Aidan and Cuthbert, and later under Wilfrid, Benet Biscop and Bede, and of the maturity of another type in the south in the days of Boniface and Aldhelm, are so familiar from the pictures given in a few wholly reliable documents that their oft-repeated story hardly needs retelling. On the other hand, the records of the times and places of which the Venerable Bede does not treat are in general so imperfect and of such questionable authenticity that an intensive critical and diplomatic investigation by specialists must precede any fresh attempt to understand the conditions under which the monks lived.

As for the period covered by this volume, no one with any knowledge of the religious history of England can be unaware of its importance and interest. It includes the times of Dunstan and Ethelwold, of Wulfstan and Lanfranc and Anselm, of Ailred of Rievaulx, Samson of Bury and Hugh of Lincoln; within its limits the Norman monasticism rose through all the stages of its growth, and the Cistercians swept over Europe like a flood; before it ended all save a dozen of the monastic houses of medieval England had been founded; in it arose the masterpieces of Romanesque architecture and of the new style of the white monks, so beautiful in itself and so important in the history of the art; in it, perhaps more than at any other time in English history, the monastic life met and satisfied the deepest spiritual needs of the age, and discharged a function most essential to the higher life of society and to the well-being and development of the nation.

This book, as will be seen, is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the historical development of the monastic body, and with the outstanding personalities among the monks, and the second describing the internal economy and external activities of the monasteries. Such a division formed no part of the original scheme; it was, however, soon found to be unavoidable; in default of some such arrangement, it would have been necessary to pause again and again in the narrative in order to note the small characteristics and changes of the various institutions in every generation, thus depriving of all unity a subject already sufficiently formless and cutting the only recognizable thread of continuity and progress. Moreover, the very real but gradual developments on every point of observance and in every sphere of activity can only be properly grasped when each department is isolated and passed in review. It is precisely because so many writers have failed to distinguish between century and century and between order and order that almost all the general descriptions of medieval monastic life lack definition, and often also historical accuracy and perspective. This division has inevitably resulted in a certain amount of repetition; some of the general conclusions arrived at in the second part have been anticipated in the earlier narrative, while it has been occasionally necessary to recapitulate a series of historical

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events when discussing points of institutional development. Such repetitions have been avoided wherever possible, but as it is hoped that the later chapters may be consulted by those who wish for information on individual points without reading or re-reading the whole, the sections of the second part have been made as self-contained as possible.

For somewhat similar reasons, quotations from the sources have been made as full as space allowed. All students of history are well aware that bare page references, especially when scattered over a wide range of learned literature, are of little or no direct assistance to the reader. Few will find themselves in a library where there is immediate access to all the volumes concerned; the footnotes, in consequence, can do no more than serve as a distant and sometimes very dubious guarantee of accuracy. In the following pages, therefore, relevant passages from the sources are cited wherever possible not only that the reader may have a means of checking, and even of taking exception to, statements and judgments in the text, but also that those who are primarily interested in other branches of history, but who wish for information on some aspects of monasticism, may gain some idea of the principal authorities that lie behind the chapters in question.

A single glance at the footnotes, or at the list of books to which references are given—a list which is far from being a bibliography of English monasticism—will be sufficient to show how much these pages owe to the work of others. In no department of English history, perhaps, do students owe so much, not only to the celebrated scholars of the remote and recent past, but also to that multitude of laborious workers, whether antiquarians or local historians, who have transcribed and annotated the voluminous records of the medieval world. From among all these it will not, I hope, seem invidious to name four scholars of yesterday and to-day whose work has given a wholly new precision to our knowledge of certain chapters of English monastic history: the late Dr Armitage Robinson, Dean in turn of Westminster and Wells, who studied to such good effect the early history of those churches and in particular threw such a flood of light upon the dark places of the tenth century; Professor F. M. Powicke, who has made Ailred of Rievaulx and his contemporaries live and move again before our eyes; Dr R. R. Darlington, who has reconstructed so fully the background of the lives of Wulfstan of Worcester and Aethelwig of Evesham; and Dom André Wilmart, *ce Mauriste de nos jours*, whose vast erudition, borne so lightly and displayed so gracefully, alternately stimulates and shames those who profit by its achievements.

To these scholars of the past and present all who work upon medieval history are indebted. I have beyond this the pleasant duty of acknowledging a personal debt to those who have given me direct assistance: to my friend Mr W. A. Pantin, of Oriel College, Oxford, who has been good enough to read through this volume in proof and to help me with numerous

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suggestions and corrections; to Professor Powicke, who kindly read the chapters on the Cistercians of the north; to Dr Rose Graham, who read the pages on the Cluniacs; to Dr Friedrich Saxl, of the Warburg Institute, and Mr Francis Wormald, of the British Museum, who gave me their expert advice on the subject of manuscript illumination; to Dom Gregory Murray, O.S.B., who read the sections on the Chant, and to Mr J. C. Dickinson, of Leeds University, who read those on the Augustinian canons: to all these I am indebted for valuable information, as also to Professor A. Hamilton Thompson, Dom Justin McCann, O.S.B., and Mr R. A. B. Mynors for help on various points, and to Dr Z. N. Brooke for his early and constant interest in this book.

For most generous help of another kind in the expenses incidental to the preparation of these pages I am indebted to my father, H. H. Knowles, to the Rev. Mother Prioress and Community of St Augustine's Priory, Ealing, and to my friend, Mr Austin Coghlan. Finally, I may be permitted to express my abiding sense of gratitude to those who built up two great collections of books: to Dom Raymund Webster, O.S.B., whose discerning foresight was largely responsible for assembling the library in which this work was begun, and to Sir Charles Hagberg Wright, LL.D., who, in the many years in which he has presided over the London Library, has done so much to anticipate all the requirements of students and connoisseurs in every branch of learning and of art. Rarely indeed does even a specialist seek in vain in that magnificent collection for the book or article that he needs; never does he fail to meet with an assistance in his search that is as courteous as it is untiring.

DAVID KNOWLES

25 March 1939

The photographic reprinting of this book has given an opportunity of correcting a number of small errors and misprints pointed out by readers and reviewers, but it has not been possible to take account in the text and footnotes of all the relevant literature that has appeared during the past ten years.

DAVID KNOWLES

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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout:

- Acta SS* *Acta Sanctorum*, ed. Bollandiana
Acta SS. OSB *Acta Sanctorum Ordinis S. Benedicti*, ed. Mabillon
 CS Camden Society
Chronicle The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, as in *Two Saxon Chronicles*, ed. Earle and Plummer
DAC *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, ed. Cabrol
DDC *Dictionnaire de Droit Canonique*, ed. Naz
DHG *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie ecclésiastiques*, ed. Baudrillart
DNB *Dictionary of National Biography*
DR *Downside Review*
DS *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, ed. Viller
DTC *Dictionnaire de Théologie catholique*, ed. Vacant and others
 EETS Early English Text Society
EHR *English Historical Review*
Epp. Cant. *Epistolae Cantuarienses*, ed. W. Stubbs (RS 38, vol. 11)
Flor. Wig. Florence of Worcester, ed. B. Thorpe (Eng. Hist. Soc.)
GASA *Gesta Abbatum Sancti Albani*, ed. Riley (RS 28, vol. v)
 HBS Henry Bradshaw Society
 JE } *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, {ed. Jaffé-Ewald }
 JL } {ed. Jaffé-Loewenfeld }, 1885-8
JTS *Journal of Theological Studies*
Mem. Fount. Memorials of the Abbey of...Fountains, ed. Walbran (SS xxxviii, vol. 1)
MGH SS, LL and Epp. *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores, Leges and Epistolae*
N.C. Walter Map, *de Nugis Curialium*, ed. Camden Society (1850)
 OV Ordericus Vitalis, quoted by volume and page of the edition of the Société de l'Histoire de France
PL Migne, *Patrologiae series Latina*, quoted by volume and column
RB *Revue Bénédictine*
 RS Rolls Series
s.a. *sub anno* or *annis*, used when quoting annals by the year's entry
 SS Surtees Society
 Symeon *Symeonis Dunelmensis Opera*, ed. T. Arnold (RS 75)
Ungedruckte Quellen *Ungedruckte anglo-normannische Geschichtsquellen*, ed. F. Liebermann, 1879
VCH *Victoria County History*
 Will. Malmesb., *GP* William of Malmesbury, *de Gestis Pontificum* (RS 52)
 Will. Malmesb., *GR* William of Malmesbury, *de Gestis Regum* (RS 90, vol. 11)
 Will. Malmesb., *Hist. Nov.* William of Malmesbury, *Historiae Novellae* (RS 50, vol. 11)
 Will. Malmesb., *de ant. Glast.* William of Malmesbury, *de antiquitate ecclesiae Glastoniensis* (ed. Gale, *Scriptores XV*)