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978-1-107-45068-4 - Bartholomew of Exeter Bishop and Canonist:
A Study in the Twelfth Century
Dom Adrian Morey
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PART I
BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

THE exact date of the birth of Bartholomew of Exeter, like that of his famous contemporary John of Salisbury, is unknown. He died in 1184 at a considerable age and was therefore probably born a little earlier than John, whose birth is conjecturally assigned to the years between 1115 and 1117.¹ From an allusion in a letter of John of Salisbury addressed to Bartholomew it seems that the latter was a native of Brittany, and but for an entry in the Exeter Martyrology our knowledge of his origin would cease at this point. The Martyrology however records the anniversary of the death of his father, a certain Petrus de Melireries.² The latter place is a small Norman town, Millières, in the department of La Manche and the diocese of Coutances. This, added to another entry in the Martyrology relating to the bishop's nephew, Jordan,³ suggests that some of the members of his family may have migrated with him to Exeter, but there is no evidence that Bartholomew ever practised in later days a nepotism comparable to that of bishop William Warelwast, a previous holder of the see.

Of Bartholomew's early years little is known for certain. A letter from the Exeter clergy addressed to the prior and convent of Canterbury, after the archbishop's martyrdom, refers to the bishop of Exeter as an *alumnus Cantuariensis*, a fact which would explain a good many subsequent incidents in his life: his intimacy with archbishop Theobald and with prior Odo, and his choice by the monks as preacher when the cathedral was reconciled after the murder.⁴ The exact meaning of the term is obscure, but in all probability Bartholomew held a position of some kind in the household of archbishop Theobald, who gathered around him at Canterbury a group of brilliant young men which included among its members the future archbishops

1 See *John of Salisbury* by Clement Webb, p. 1. 2 vi Kal. Maii: Exeter Martyrology, Chapter MS. 3518, f. 15d. I owe this reference to the kindness of Mrs Rose-Troup. 3 iii id. Martii. 4 *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, ed. J. C. Robertson, I, 407: "pater noster Bartholomeus, Cantuariensis ecclesiae alumnus".

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of Canterbury and York, as well as John of Salisbury. Probably Bartholomew was one of them, but at what precise period is not known. The older bibliographers assert that he studied at the university of Paris,¹ and it would have been in some such centre of learning that he obtained his great skill as a canonist and the degree of *Magister* which he used later as archdeacon. But his position in the schools at Paris may have been more important than these bare facts would imply.

The first part of the twelfth century was primarily the epoch of the cathedral schools, but it saw also the gradual evolution of the universities, that of Paris being the first to secure an established position. In a poem entitled *Metamorphosis Goliae Episcopi* appears a list of the masters who were teaching in the Paris schools during a period between June 1140 and April 1142.² Thirteen names figure, all of them known and some of them famous in their day, men like Peter Lombard, the Englishman Robert Pullen, later cardinal, and Abélard. Among this distinguished group occurs a certain Bartholomew:

Hinc et Bartholomeus faciem acutus,
 retor, dialecticus, sermone astutus.

Most scholars are agreed in assigning these lines to the future bishop of Exeter and in default of more exact proof it can at least be said that they fit in with the circumstances of the bishop's life as we know them.³ At this period he would have been about thirty years of age, a not unusual time of life in those days for a distinguished teacher, and he would thus have been a member of that band of learned clerks at Paris to which Otto of Freising drew attention in his account of Abélard.⁴ The holding of such a position by Bartholomew would account not only for his wide circle of friends, for his acquaintance with such

1 E.g. Oudin, *Commentarius de Scriptoribus Ecclesiae Antiquis*, II, c. 1569 (Lipsiae 1722): "Non mediocriter eruditus in Gallicis scholis Parisiensibus".

2 Printed in *Latin Poems attributed to Walter Mapes*, ed. T. Wright, p. 29 (Camden Soc. 1841).

3 See *Mémoires de l'Institut National de France, Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, xxviii, ii, 1876: *Mémoires sur quelques Maîtres du XII^e siècle*, by M. Hauréau; "Some Masters at the Schools of Paris and Chartres", by R. L. Poole, *English Hist. Review*, xxxv, 321; *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century*, by C. H. Haskins, p. 379 (1927), who wrongly speaks of Bartholomew as an Englishman.

4 *Gesta Frid.* I, 49, ed. Holder-Egger, *M.G.H.* 8vo, pp. 68-74 (1892).

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scholars as Peter of Celle, but for the authority which his Penitential subsequently obtained both in England and on the Continent. It would account also for the sources on which he drew so largely, and especially for the emphasis laid on the teaching of Peter Lombard and Gratian.

It is unfortunate that we have no information as to the date of Bartholomew's first contact with the Exeter diocese, and the absence of precise details regarding his connection with Canterbury makes it impossible to conjecture the year in which the Norman scholar first came to England. A possibility as to the latter may however be suggested. The future bishop's birthplace was in the diocese of Coutances and in 1132 a new bishop, Algar, was consecrated to that see who has been traditionally reputed to have been an Englishman. In the following year Algar came to this country and visited Exeter, probably when the new cathedral was consecrated; at any rate he attested a manumission made by bishop William.¹ A canon named Bartholomew also witnessed this document but it is too early to believe that the future bishop was already a member of the Chapter; it is not however impossible that bishop Algar may have brought Bartholomew with him among the clerks of his retinue. In any case that must remain a conjecture.

If Bartholomew was teaching at Paris in the early forties of the century his connection with Canterbury is probably to be assigned to the following period. In 1154 Becket was appointed archdeacon of Canterbury and, in the following year, the name of Bartholomew first appears among the list of archdeacons of Exeter. Bishop Robert Chichester died on 28 March 1155 and in June Robert Warelwast returned from Salisbury and was consecrated bishop of his old diocese at Canterbury.² The archdeacon of Exeter, Walter de Piriton, seems to have resigned his office at about this time and Bartholomew was appointed to fill the vacancy.³

From the beginning he seems to have resided and performed in person the duties attached to the office, witnessing a series of charters during the next five years. Thus in 1155 he witnessed bishop Robert's confirmation of a grant made by his prede-

¹ See the *Consecration of the Norman Minster at Exeter*, by F. Rose-Troup, p. 8 (1933). ² *Registrum Sacrum*, Stubbs, ed. 2, p. 48. ³ See p. 117.

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cessor to his baker Godwin of land at Tawton, on the episcopal manor, and the grant of land which the Chapter made to Jordan, nephew of archdeacon Alured.¹ At some period during the next two years he was one of the two archdeacons present when Aldred de Douna gave his chapel of St Pancras to the monks of Montebourg in the presence of bishop Robert, the donor receiving in return a share of the good works and prayers of the monks and a promise that his two sons should be admitted to the monastery without charge whenever they should so wish.² Bartholomew also witnessed the bishop's confirmation of the grant. In 1157 he was present when Richard de Redvers confirmed the grants made to St James's Priory by his father earl Baldwin, in the presence of bishop Robert.³ Two years later he witnessed the composition which the earl made at Sufferton on the vigil of the feast of the Assumption with the monks of St James, by which the dispute concerning the church of Tiverton was settled, earl Richard granting his land at Cottlegh to the priory together with a forester named Robert.⁴ In addition to these dated charters the archdeacon's name also appears as witness to an interesting letter issued by bishop Robert authorising a grant of land by one of his canons, Walter de Augo, to a fellow canon, Baldwin of Winchester, during the years 1155-9.⁵

There seem to be only two instances of Bartholomew's activities outside the Exeter diocese. He was witness to an undated charter giving land at La Heghe and Holcumbe to the monks of Montacute living at the cell of Carswell in Devon, other witnesses being Stephen, prior of Taunton, and Aibrich, prior of Leigh.⁶ A later charter by the same donor, Simon FitzRogo, given in the county court at Exeter in 1206, mentions the previous grant as having been made "a long time since".⁷ The earliest other record of prior

1 Exeter Chapter MS. 1804; see Hist. MSS. Comm., *Various Collections*, iv, 47 (1907); Exeter Corporation Deed Nr. 592. 2 *Calendar of Documents preserved in France*, ed. Round, p. 319, no. 898 (1898). 3 King's College, Cambridge, Muniment Room, 2 W 6; Oliver, *Monasticon Dioecesis Exoniensis*, p. 194. 4 K.C.C. Mun. R. 2, W 7. 5 Ex. Ch. MS. 523; Hist. MSS. Comm. *op. cit.* p. 48. 6 *Montacute Priory Cartul.* no. 138, p. 170; Somerset Record Soc. VIII (1898). 7 *Montacute Priory Cartul.* no. 140, p. 171.

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Stephen is in 1159. Lastly we find archdeacon Bartholomew associated with archbishop Theobald when he issued his charter to the monks of St Martin's, Dover.¹ In this charter the Exeter archdeacon takes precedence of all the other witnesses, including the archdeacon Philip of Norwich and Master John of Salisbury; evidently he was regarded as a person of some consequence. In his own diocese the archdeacon of Exeter was senior to the others, and, as there was no such office as dean of the Chapter, he probably exercised the functions of a dean.

In 1159 the long life of archbishop Theobald was at length drawing to its end. In his old age the great archbishop was a sick and disappointed man, out of favour with the king who neglected him, and already apprehensive of the latter's plans to attack the liberties of the Church. In this year came news of the death of the English Pope, Adrian IV, and of the simultaneous election on 7 September of the canonist Roland as Pope Alexander III and of an anti-Pope in the person of Cardinal Octavian, who styled himself Victor IV. Theobald's suspicion that king Henry would now attempt to make capital out of the schism in order to use it for the furtherance of his own schemes was not unjustified. On 23 October in this year the emperor Frederick wrote to the English king inviting him to send some of his clergy to assist at a council to be held at Pavia on 13 January 1160.² Early in the winter Theobald had gone to Canterbury where he fell into his last sickness, and the news of the schism was brought to him early in September.³ At the king's command, as we learn from a letter written for him by John of Salisbury, he convened a synod to meet at London in order to decide which of the rival candidates should be recognised in England. If we accept the reckoning of Lane Poole this meeting must have taken place in November 1159. In a letter written by John of Salisbury in the following March to Ralph of Sarr he gives an account of the meeting, of how Theobald was carried in his litter from Canterbury to the London synod where the two powerful bishops of Winchester

¹ *Gervase of Cant.*, *Gesta Regum*, R.S. II, 289. ² "Early Correspondence of John of Salisbury", by R. L. Poole, p. 21, *Proceedings of British Academy*, XI (1924). ³ Poole, *op. cit.* p. 20.

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and Durham were believed to favour the anti-Pope, although they dared not openly admit this, whereas the archbishop of York and the Treasurer, Richard FitzNeal, strongly supported Alexander III.¹

Throughout the meetings of the London synod the archdeacon of Exeter was a constant attendant. Possibly he had gone to it as the representative of bishop Robert, who may at this time have succumbed to his last illness, but in any case Bartholomew's reputation as a canonist would have given him importance in a gathering assembled to discuss what was essentially a question of canon law. Archbishop Theobald sent a report on the proceedings to the king which seems to have been entrusted to Bartholomew, and in view of the subsequent quarrel between Church and State it is interesting to note the limitations which Theobald attaches to the powers of the gathering: the proceedings were regulated by the rules of canon law, but evidently the assembly had no power to make decrees, the final decision in the matter must issue from the king himself.² Theobald commended the bearers of his letter, archdeacon Bartholomew and his chaplain William de Vere. The archdeacon had been present, he wrote, at all the meetings and had, together with himself, explored the opinions of each and all, so that the king can listen to him as though to Theobald himself.

The letter must have been written early in December and the messengers were obliged to set off with it to Normandy, where the king and queen were on their way to keep Christmas at Falaise.³ Bartholomew would have been back in England early in 1160 and bishop Robert died at Exeter on 22 March.⁴ Theobald did not die until 4 April in the following year and a series of letters which passed between him and the king during this interval makes it possible to reconstruct the negotiations which preceded the appointment to the vacant see of Exeter. The archbishop was still extremely anxious about the royal policy in ecclesiastical matters, and was worried by the advice which he asserted the king was receiving to increase his power by encroaching on the authority of the Church, and by the

1 John of Salisbury, Ep. 59, *P.L.* 199, c. 43.

2 John of Salisbury,

Ep. 64 (1), *P.L.* 199, c. 47.

3 Eyton, *Itinerary of Henry II*, p. 49.

4 Stubbs, *Reg. Sacrum*, p. 48.

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rumour which he had heard that the emperor had sent his chancellor, the archbishop of Cologne, to win Henry over to the cause of the anti-Pope. Theobald first wrote to the king expressing his desire to see him once again before he died, for Henry had been absent from England since August 1158 and the archbishop evidently believed that a final interview might clear away the threatened difficulties in church matters and avert the storm which seemed about to break. Towards the end of this letter the archbishop referred to the vacancy at Exeter: he begged the king to provide a shepherd for the church of Exeter which, he stated, with some freedom of metaphor, was in danger of shipwreck. Referring doubtless to the dedication of Exeter cathedral to St Peter, Theobald termed himself the *sponsor Petri*, and begged the king not to permit a simonist to obtain the see.¹

When referring to simony the archbishop doubtless had in mind rumours which had reached him of certain candidates for the vacancy, or he may have feared from experience that Henry's choice of a candidate might be influenced by unworthy motives. More information transpires from a letter of John of Salisbury addressed to the chancellor, Becket.² In this he reports that at the archbishop's command he had prepared letters to Becket and the king urging the former to return to his duties at Canterbury, under pain of excommunication and loss of the emoluments he held in that diocese. He writes now to explain the circumstances and urges the archbishop's request more gently. Never does he remember that the archbishop has asked for anything so urgently as he does for the appointment to the Exeter bishopric of archdeacon Bartholomew—*vir honestus et litteratus, et pro quo fide jubere audet*. Theobald has often remarked to his intimates that to suffer a rebuff over such an excellent candidate would be a sign of scant favour with the king. Apparently Robert FitzHarding, the chief representative of the powerful Harding family of Berkeley, had some time previously requested the king's favour on behalf of an illiterate and useless candidate, whose suit had also been urged to the archbishop. The king was practically pre-

¹ John of Salisbury, Ep. 64 (2), *P.L.* 199, c. 50.

² John of Salisbury, Ep. 64 (2).

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pared to agree to the appointment had not the canons of Exeter and other god-fearing men taken steps to prevent it. Becket is begged to use his well-known influence with the king so that Theobald's petition on behalf of Bartholomew, the last that he will ever ask, may be granted. Should the decision be put off until the king's return to England the archbishop will believe that they are merely awaiting his death in order to act against his wishes.¹

Meanwhile Bartholomew must have returned to Exeter on the death of its bishop in order to undertake the additional administrative duties which a vacancy of the see would impose on the archdeacon of the city.² Shortly after the death of bishop Robert the archbishop sent an official letter to the Chapter urging them to unity, and directing them to send a mission to the king in order to ask for liberty to carry out the canonical election.³ Another glimpse of the diocese during the vacancy is given in a letter issued to a religious house ordering its members to obey a certain Richard for the time being as their superior, until a bishop had been appointed to the see of Exeter, by whose authority a new election might take place.⁴ The last prior, when dying, had suggested Richard as his successor, but the archbishop had been informed by Richard de Redvers, earl of Devon, and Alan de Furnell, that dissensions had broken out in the community through the existence of an opposition party headed by a certain Peter of Taunton and his brother

1 John of Salisbury, Ep. 78, *P.L.* 199, c. 64; dated by Poole, *op. cit.*, p. 22, May 1160. The letter referred to by John of Salisbury may have been Ep. 71, in which the archbishop again mentions the Exeter vacancy with some urgency, asking Becket to obtain his request from the king so that he may have some consolation for the latter's continued absence from him: "In eo autem sumus articulo, ut consilium nostrum suspectum esse non debeat, et quo non auderemus, praesertim in ecclesiasticis, aliquid postulare, quod non credamus Domino placitum et ecclesiae et regno conducere."

2 In the twelfth century the Chapter became the guardian of the spiritualities during the vacancy of a see and in the absence of a dean the senior archdeacon probably held a position similar to that of a modern vicar capitular. Makower, *Constitutional History of the Church of England*, p. 316. This would surely have been the tradition at Exeter since the Rule of Chrodegang orders the archdeacon to take the bishop's place.

3 John of Salisbury, Ep. 52, *P.L.* 199, c. 32.

4 John of Salisbury, Ep. 79, *P.L.* 199, c. 65.