

ART. XI.—*The Origins of the Cathedral of Carlisle.* By
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THE cathedral of Carlisle enjoyed the distinction of being the only medieval English cathedral to be served by regular canons of St. Augustine, all the others being served by either secular canons (like York and Lincoln) or by Benedictine monks (like Canterbury and Durham). Regular canons trace their origin to certain largely clerical communities in Central Italy, which, about the middle of eleventh century, adopted what we would now call the monastic life and had their ideal officially confirmed at the Lateran councils of 1059 and 1063. In the following decades they spread quickly especially in Italy, Southern France and in Lorraine. Here in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries they were instituted in a number of cathedrals—notably Fano, Florence, Pistoia, Avignon, Carcassonne, Narbonne and Nice. Carlisle however has little in common with these, which were mostly the centres of small antique dioceses, but has close affinities with a number of cathedrals which came into Augustinian hands in the early part of the twelfth century, were situated on the outskirts of the historic Roman world, and were in effect missionary dioceses. Such were the famous cathedrals established by Praemonstantensian canons in Eastern Germany as well as the Scottish sees of St. Andrews and Whithorn.*

Carlisle is thus by no means a unique example of an

* Early Augustinian cathedrals and history are considered more fully in an almost completed study of the origins of the regular canons by the present writer.

Augustinian cathedral, but it can vie with the others for the unfortunate distinction of being the one whose origins is the worst documented. Fires, the Scots and carelessness have reduced the medieval archives of the cathedral to little more than a few episcopal registers and it is this paucity which principally explains the doubt and confusion which has obscured the outlines of its early history. As is well known, a priory existed on the site of the cathedral some years before the latter was officially established and it will tend to clarify an obscure problem if the origins of these two institutions are considered separately.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE PRIORY.

The existence of a vigorous church life at Carlisle in the time of St. Cuthbert is beyond all doubt, but nothing is known of the history of the district in the two and half centuries which preceded Rufus' capture of the city in 1092. At this time the parish church of St. Mary was probably in existence on the site of the later cathedral but we have next to no evidence on the point. A note in the lost register of bishop Strickland (1400-19) claims that a church was begun at Carlisle in the time of Rufus by a certain chaplain called Walter who had come to England with Conqueror.* This tradition, reproduced by Leland and others is probably unreliable, as we shall see, and in any case, like the chronicles of the time, makes no mention of a monastery at Carlisle (see Prescott 478).

Local opinion fairly early assigned the establishment of the priory here to the first years of Henry I. The Lanercost Chronicle,† a list of religious foundations in the

* BM. Lansdowne MS. 721 ff. 54-55b. summarised in V.C.H. Cumb. ii, 7-8. For previous studies of the origins of the cathedral and priory of Carlisle see J. Wilson in V.C.H. Cumberland, ii, 7-14 and J. E. Prescott, Cartulary of Wetheral priory (Carlisle, 1897) pp. 478-503.

† The reference occurs in early unprinted annals but is quoted in H. Maxwell's translation (Glasgow, 1913), xiv-xv.

back of the Lanercost cartulary* and the Scottichronicon† ascribe the foundation to 1102, and in 1278-9 a Carlisle jury alleged that the house had been founded by Henry I about one hundred and eighty years before as they found by inspection of the king's charter.‡ But this evidence is none too trustworthy and is unlikely to be accurate. The Lanercost list is a mass of inaccuracies, the Chronicle in its present form far from contemporary and the entry in the Scottichronicon is the work not of Fordun but of his fifteenth century continuator abbot Bower.§ Henry I is most unlikely to have instituted regular canons at Carlisle at so early a date, for it is all but certain that his knowledge and esteem of the order followed the foundation of the priories of Dunmow (1106) and Aldgate (1107). If the foundation of a monastery was mooted about 1102 it is highly improbable that it was to be a house of regular canons and is more likely that the initiative came not from Henry I, as the jurors asserted, but from Walter the chaplain already mentioned. However this may be, there can be little doubt that, as Wilson rightly claims, little or nothing was done for another twenty years.||

The foundation of a house of regular canons at Carlisle almost certainly followed Henry I's visit to the city in the winter of 1122¶ and was probably a consequence of it, the king perhaps now reinforcing earlier attempts to found a monastery made by Walter the chaplain.

According to the Sheriff's Inquest of 1212 Henry I "gave to Walter formerly his chaplain Linstoc and Karleton by rendering annually of cornage 37s. 4d. The aforesaid Walter by the desire and permission of the

* Carlisle Dean and Chapter MS.

† ed. Goodall, i, 289 (v. 39).

‡ Cumb. Assize Roll, 132 m. 32 quoted V.C.H. Cumb., ii, 9.

§ Prescott, op. cit. 478.

|| V.C.H. Cumb., ii, 131. It is within the bounds of possibility that some ineffective attempts to found a monastery were made about 1102, though there is no evidence as to their nature.

¶ Simeon of Durham Hist. Reg. ii, 267 (Rolls Series 75).

aforesaid king took the religious habit in the priory of St. Mary of Carlisle and by the desire and assent of the aforesaid king he gave all the aforesaid land to the aforesaid religious house."* The king was undoubtedly the legal founder but it is possible that, as at St. Frideswide's, Oxford and St. Bartholomew's, Smithfield, he reaped where others had sown. Unfortunately the inadequate charter evidence does not clear up the matter. The nucleus of the original endowment seems to have been the lands and churches given by Walter and confirmed by the king between 1126 and 1130.† But Walter perhaps died soon after the priory was begun, for Leland tells us that his design was unfinished at the time of his death and was completed by Athelwold prior of Nostell, who spent all the wealth left by Walter in finishing the structure and placed there regular canons.‡ Certainly the house's resources remained precarious for some time, and such early benefactions as there were seem to have come largely from the king.

By a writ of 1121-9 the king directed that the canons of Carlisle should have the bounds of the forest as the king gave them to them in alms and as he ordered them to be determined.§ By a charter perhaps drawn up at Rouen in 1123 Henry granted them the churches of Newcastle-on-Tyne and Newburn with the reversion of the churches of Warkworth, Corbridge, Whitingham and Rothbury in Northumberland.||

An insufficiently known letter of Henry III sent to the pope in 1219 incidentally notes that examination of charters has shown these churches *inter alia* were given by

* Book of Fees, i, 199; V.C.H. Cumb, i, 422.

† W. Farrer, Itinerary of Henry I, no 525; C.C.R., iii, 81.

‡ Collectanea, i, 120.

§ W. Farrer, Itin., No. 458.

|| Mon., vi, 144. It is tempting to surmise that "Walter the chaplain" whose name occurs next to that of Richard d'Orival (to whom the king had granted these churches early in his reign, Itin., No. 182), as witness to a royal grant of 1101 (*ibid.*, No. 28), is the Walter with whom we are concerned.

King Henry I "at the first foundation of the church of Carlisle,"* and alone seems sufficient evidence to dismiss the tale that the house began under Rufus.

The Pipe Roll of 31 Henry I records the payment of by royal writ of £10 to the canons of Carlisle "for the building of their church" and the remittance of 37s. 4d. of noutgeld.† The absence of any considerable temporalities in the royal gifts is noteworthy, and it was perhaps partly because of the anticipated difficulties in providing an adequate endowment that a monastic rather than a secular chapter was established here.

But there were other reasons for selecting regular canons. King Henry was by now a considerable benefactor to the order and may have already chosen as his confessor Athelwold the prior of Nostell, the Yorkshire house of regular canons which the king had recently helped to establish.‡ Thurstan archbishop of York was also a firm friend of the order aiding the foundation of at least four other houses of regular canons in northern England.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE SEE OF CARLISLE.

As is well-known the establishment of the see of Carlisle and the consecration of Athelwold the king's confessor as its first bishop are recorded under the year 1133 by most of the chief chroniclers of the time,§ but this must not be allowed to blind us to the fact that the see was certainly unfinished some years later and was probably envisaged some years before.

* Rot., Claus. ii., 405.

† V.C.H. Cumb., i, 338. The noutgeld payment appears regularly in later Pipe Rolls and evidently represents dues from the lands given to the priory by Walter as part of the original endowment. (Prescott, 485).

‡ On the foundation of Nostell see J. Wilson, *The Foundation of the priories of Nostell and Scone*, Scot. Hist. Rev., vii, 141-59, A. Hamilton Thompson Bolton priory (*Thoresby Soc.*, xxx, 1924), 24-7.

§ Listed by Prescott, *op. cit.*, 479-80.

The decision to make Carlisle a cathedral town was an important move in the vigorous struggle between English and Scottish influences in Norman Lakeland. Rufus had made Carlisle the military centre of a region which had been for long before his time no part of the English kingdom, but he could not be said to have effectually welded the area into his realm. To do this was an obvious task for his successor. The establishment of English ecclesiastical officials and institutions in the turbulent north was recognised as an essential weapon whereby to counteract Scottish influences. (The very considerable weight which the crown attached to this was shown a few years later when Stephen refused to permit St. Waltheof to succeed Thurstan as archbishop of York. Stephen was well aware of the latter's sanctity and unimpeachable reputation and had considerable personal veneration for him, but opposed his election from fear that Waltheof's aristocratic northern connections would weigh in favour of the Scottish party. See Jocelyn of Furness *Vita sancti Walthevi in Acta Sanctorum Aug.* 1, 249-78).* Further it was obviously undesirable that English political soil should remain within a Scottish diocese. It is certain that both Henry I and archbishop Thurstan were convinced of the desirability of founding a new see in north-west England to consolidate their influence there.

An interesting annal in the *Scottichronicon* tells how the king (presumably during his visit to Carlisle in 1122) saw bishop John of Glasgow dedicating churches and carrying out other episcopal functions in Cumberland, though John owed paid no allegiance to the king or to his archbishop Thurstan, and goes on to relate that "at the instigation of archbishop Thurstan of York by force and violence he constituted Eadwald bishop in Cumberland,"†

* Cf. also the trouble when the canons of Carlisle sided with the Scots against King John (*Scot. Hist. Rev.*, xvii, 207).

† *Hic Henricus . . . videns Johannem Episcopum Glasguensem per Cumberlandiam ecclesias dedicare et cetera officia pontificalia secundum*

whereupon bishop John vented his mortification by retiring overseas to the monastery of Tiron.*

It is abundantly clear that long before 1133, the struggle between archbishop Thurstan and bishop John was at full blast and there is every reason to believe that the archbishop was, as *Scottichronicon* testifies, behind the establishment of an English See. For Bishop John was elected bishop of Glasgow in 1115 and consecrated by Pope Paschal before Jan., 1118. He early refused to recognise the contention of Archbishop Thurstan that the see of Glasgow was subordinate to that of York. Between 1118 and 1122 on several occasions he was ordered to submit by Popes Gelasius II and Calixtus II. Failing to win his case by a visit to Rome, John stayed for a time at Jerusalem but returned to Scotland and in 1125 a papal legate enquired into the dispute at Roxburgh and later in the year it was argued out at Rome. But John remained unsuccessful and obstinate, being ordered to obey Thurstan by Honorius II in 1126 and by Innocent II in 1131.†

Thus we see that from the middle years of Henry I's reign a serious ecclesiastical broil was in progress and that from an early stage archbishop Thurstan had convinced the pope of the rightness of his cause. It is unlikely on general grounds that the king should have sought no alteration until his reign was nearing its close, for his visit to Carlisle in 1122 must have shown him clearly the undesirability of an arrangement which left so important a part of his domain in the charge of a Scottish bishop. A valuable scrap of evidence powerfully reinforces the

morem juris antiqui perficere, cum nec sibi nec archiepiscope Eboracensi vellet inde ut domino et praelato obsecundare incitante Turstino Eboracensi Archiepiscope, constituit per vim et violentiam Eadwaldum Episcopum in Cumberlandiam . . . contra eum, quia non erat qui ei resistere audebat. Scottichronicon VIII 3.

* *Ibid.*

† On this dispute see Haddan and Stubbs, *Coun. and Eccles. Docs.*, ii, 16-26; A. C. Lawrie, *Early Scottish Charters* (Glasgow, 1905), 267-70.

view that the see of Carlisle was planned some years before 1133, with the aid of Pope Calixtus who is known to have so firmly supported archbishop Thurstan's claim against bishop John.

In his *Monasticon Eboracense* Burton quotes the interesting statement that Athelwold prior of Nostell founded at Carlisle a cathedral of canons of his order, which Calixtus II (1119-24) allowed him to hold along with his priorate of Nostell, the arrangement to last for his lifetime only.* This is corroborated by the vaguer but evidently independent testimony of the *Nostell Chronicle*.† That the establishment of a cathedral at Carlisle was decided upon in 1122-3 when the priory was founded is by no means unlikely. The unusual pluralism it involved might well be justified by local conditions and curiously enough can be closely paralleled elsewhere at this time. For in the equally turbulent region of Spain the Augustinian Saint Olegario had been permitted by Gelasius II (1118-9) to hold along with his see of Barcelona the archbishopric of Tarragona‡ whose endowment the Moors had reduced almost to nothing.

It was probable that lack of adequate endowment delayed the foundation of the see till 1133 and which also explains why even later Innocent II found it necessary to write to Stephen (probably in 1136) urging him to complete the arrangements for the foundation of the see which his predecessor had greatly desired but left uncompleted.§

In the same year (1136) the Carlisle district was ceded to the king of Scotland, a circumstance which is unlikely to have assisted the consolidation of the cathedral. Not

* p. 310 quoting J. Bronolt script. 257.

† Athelwoldus fundator ecclesie cathedralis canonicorum ordinis nostri in dicta civitate privilegiatus fuit a curia Romana ut occuparet pro vita sua prioratum sancti Oswaldi, non obstante quod episcopus esset. *Scot. Hist. Rev.*, vii, 159.

‡ *Espana Sagrada* xxv App. xv (1118): *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada Europeo-Americana* xxxix, 995.

§ J. Raine, *Priory of Hexham*, i, App. VIII.

long after the canons made some attempt to join the order of Arrouaise, a strict Congregation of regular canons. The deed by which Athelwold gave his consent to this has survived in a transcript in abbot Gautier's cartulary of Arrouaise now in the Bibliothèque municipale of Amiens,* and belongs to about 1140. It is very tempting to regard this association with Arrouaise as due to St. Malachy of Armagh who, as the cartulary tells us, visited Arrouaise and did much to propagate the order in Ireland† and is known to have been in Northern England twice in 1140 and once in 1148.‡ No other trace of any connection between Carlisle and Arrouaise has survived and if the canons intention to join the order was ever put into practice it was certainly short-lived.

After the death of Athelwold in 1156 a series of mischances prevented a successor being appointed for almost half a century. The poverty of the see and the turbulence of its neighbourhood were notorious and when, in 1204, the canons elected Bernard the vagrant archbishop of Ragusa he delayed some time before accepting the office.§

Of the history of the priory in the first century of its existence only the scantiest evidences remain. Unwisely deserting the topographical fields in which he excelled, Wilson has argued that adequate organisation of the priory was long delayed.|| But this contention is principally based on a misinterpretation of the word *canonicatus*. This word has not the vague connotation he suggests, but is the usual word employed on the

* MS. 1077, f. 47v. This was printed by Gosse *Histoire de l'abbaye d'Arrouaise* (Lille, 1786), p. 419 and from Gosse by H. E. Salter *Chapters of the Augustinian Canons* p. xlv. I am indebted to the librarian of the Bibliothèque municipale, M. Pierre Dubois for facilitating my access to this MS.

† f. 5v.

‡ J. Wilson, *St. Malachy in Scotland*, *Scot. Hist. Rev.*, xviii, 69-82, cf. *ASS* Aug. I, 256B.

§ V.C.H. Cumb., ii, 21-3.

|| J. Wilson, *The early constitution of Carlisle Cathedral*, in *Scot. Hist. Rev.*, xvii (1920), 199-218. The unsoundness of the article on this point must not be allowed to obscure the value of the rest.

continent in the eleventh century to denote a house of canons whether regular or secular. Its use in twelfth century England is rare being largely confined to a few royal charters to houses of regular canons.* One of this is granted to Aldgate and the evidence of the *Historia Fundationis* of this house adequately shows that the priory here was in every way a normal monastic community from its inception, and that therefore no special conclusions can be drawn as to the special nature of a house of regular canons referred to as *canonicatus*. It is not clear whether Athelwold was the first prior of Carlisle as well as the first bishop. In view of his commitments with Nostell this seems unlikely, and absence of early evidence of a separate prior is not surprising in view of the singularly defective documentation of the early years of this interesting house.† It is however certain that no division of endowments between bishop and chapter was made until the thirteenth century was well advanced and tempers on both sides somewhat frayed.‡

* E.g. Cal. Chart. Rolls, v, 34, 35, 265, 268. It is hoped to develop this point elsewhere.

† A prior is provided for in Athelwold's deed regarding Arrouaise. A 14th century document from Conishead priory (given in Prescott, 417-8), claims Athelwold was prior of Carlisle at the time of his election to the episcopate.

‡ V.C.H. Cumb., ii, 14-23.