

## ON EPISCOPAL RINGS.

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THE ring is one of the most ancient of the episcopal insignia. The history of Episcopal Rings presents many interesting details. I propose to treat of the subject under the following heads :—

- I. The ancient use of the ring ;
- II. Its fashion ;
- III. The blessing of the ring ;
- IV. How the ring was conferred ;
- V. How it was worn ;
- VI. The mystical signification attached to it by various ecclesiastical writers.

I. The use of the ring for a bishop is of very ancient date. The Pope, when promoted to the see of St. Peter, being already invested with the episcopal insignia, does not receive a ring ; but if, as it sometimes happens, the Pope-elect is not a bishop, he is consecrated prior to his coronation as Supreme Pontiff, and receives the ring with the usual formula, except that the consecrating cardinal kisses his hand after investing him with the ring.

Aringhi states that the ring of St. Caius (283–296) was found in his tomb :—“*Intra sepulchrum tria Diocletiani Imperatoris numismata, sub quo coronatus fuerat, et Sanctissimi Pontificis annulus adinventatus est.*”<sup>1</sup>

In 511 the Council of Orleans makes mention of the rescript of Clodovicus, wherein he promises to leave certain captives at the disposition of the Gallican bishops, “*si vestras epistolas de anulo vestro signatas sic ad nos dirigatis.*”<sup>2</sup> The Sacramental of St. Gregory the Great, A.D. 590, prescribes for a bishop the use of the ring and pastoral staff.<sup>3</sup> The fourth Council of Toledo, held in 633,

<sup>1</sup> Roma Subterr. iv. c. 48, p. 426.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Conc. Aurel. ad. ann. 511.

<sup>3</sup> Sac. Greg.

appoints that a bishop condemned by one Council, and afterwards found innocent by another, shall be restored to his dignity by receiving back his ring.<sup>4</sup>

In the tomb of St. Birinus, Bishop of Dorchester, who died in 640, a gold ring was found.<sup>5</sup> A ring was also found in the coffin of St. John of Beverley, who died in 721, when his body was translated about 1037.

## II. The fashion of the episcopal ring.

Prior to the eleventh century very many if not all of the episcopal rings were signets; for, before that time, large official seals were not in general use. Each bishop seems to have chosen the subject to be engraved on his ring, at pleasure. St. Augustine, in one of his letters, mentions that he sealed it with his ring, “qui exprimit faciem hominis attendentis in latus;”<sup>6</sup> and the precept of Clodovicus to the bishops, to which I have referred, requires their replies to be sealed with their rings. One of those to whom this precept was addressed was Avitus, Archbishop of Vienne.<sup>7</sup> Writing to Apollinaris, Bishop of Valence, he begs him to send the seal or signet (*signatorium*) which he had promised, made in such a way, “ut anulo ferreo et admodum tenui, velut concurrentibus in se delphinulis concludendo, sigilli duplicis forma geminis cardinulis inseratur.”<sup>8</sup> And, referring to the subject which was to be engraved on the bezel, he adds:—“Si quæras quid insculpendum sigillo, signum monogrammaticis mei per gyrum scripti nominis legatur indicio.” These monograms were called *siglæ*, which Nicolai, in his treatise *de Siglis veterum*, defines as “compendia literarum, cum una vel duæ literæ pro integra voce pluribus literis constante ponerentur.”<sup>9</sup>

In the early days of Christianity, bishops sealed with their rings the profession of faith which the neophytes made in writing: they also sealed their pastoral letters.

Ebregislaus, Bishop of Meaux in 660, wore in his ring an intaglio representing St. Paul, the first hermit, on his knees before the crucifix, and above his head the crow by which he was miraculously fed.<sup>1</sup>

In conformity to a decree of St. Sergius I. (687–701)

<sup>4</sup> Syn. Tolet. iv. c. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Surius, in his Life.

<sup>6</sup> Ep. 217, n. 59, ad Victorinum.

<sup>7</sup> Mabillon de Re Diplom. 132.

<sup>8</sup> Ep. 78, quoted by Mabillon ut supra.

<sup>9</sup> Nicolai de Siglis, c. 1, p. 3.

<sup>1</sup> Annales Benedict. tom. I., p. 456.

the bishops of France and Spain used to seal up the baptismal fonts with their rings, from the beginning of Lent to Holy Saturday.<sup>2</sup>

From ancient documents it would appear that sometimes bishops called their rings the "*annuli Ecclesiæ*." David, Bishop of Benevento in the time of Charlemagne, issued a mandate ending as follows:—"Annulo sanctæ nostræ Ecclesiæ firmavimus roborandum."<sup>3</sup> In 862, Rathbodus, Bishop of Treves, writes thus:—"Hanc epistolam Græcis litteris, hinc, inde, munire decrevimus, et annulo Ecclesiæ nostræ bullare censuimus."<sup>4</sup>

In 985, Pope John XVI. sealed with his ring the confirmation of the decree made by the Council of Mayence in favor of the monks of Corvey, in Saxony.<sup>5</sup>

These quotations are sufficient to prove that, until the eleventh century, the bishops used their rings as signets; but we must not infer that every episcopal ring was a signet. It is probable that each bishop had a large jeweled ring to use when pontificating. Only one Anglo-Saxon episcopal ring is believed to exist in England, and it presents quite a different type. This is the celebrated gold nielloed ring bearing the name of Alhstan, and supposed to have belonged to the prelate of that name, Bishop of Sherborne 824 to 867.

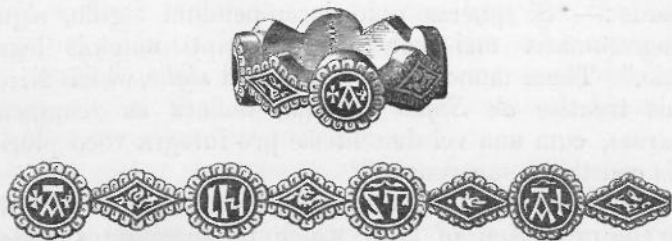


Fig. 1. Gold Ring, inscribed with the name ALHSTAN.  
In the Collection of Edmund Waterton, Esq., F.S.A.

It is now in my *dactyliotheca*, and it is here figured (see woodcut, fig. 1).

In the will of Riculphus, Bishop of Perpignan, 915, mention is made of a ring with precious stones.<sup>6</sup> In 1194 the

<sup>2</sup> Given in the xvii. Council of Toledo.  
Tit. de Reg. S. Fidei, c. ii.

<sup>3</sup> Ughellius, Ital. Sac. viii. col. 46;  
quoted by Mabillon, p. 134.

<sup>4</sup> Sirmund, Concil. Gall. iii. p. 858.

<sup>5</sup> Nouveau Traité de Diplomatie, iv.  
p. 312.

<sup>6</sup> Pugin, Glossary, p. 203.

fashion of the episcopal ring was definitively settled by Innocent III., who ordained that it should be of gold, solid, and set with a precious stone on which nothing was to be cut:—"Annulus ex auro puro solide conflatus palam habeat cum gemma in qua nihil sculpti esse debet."<sup>7</sup> In the thirteenth century many of the episcopal rings were of very rude fashion, frequently in almost literal conformity with the prescript of Innocent III., without regard to shape or elegance. The stone was set just as it was found, merely having the surface polished, and the shape of the bezel was adapted to the gem. Of a remarkable ring of this description, found in Winchester Cathedral, we are enabled, by the kindness of Mr. R. H. Smith, Curator of the Kensington Museum, to give the accompanying representation (woodcut, fig 2.) In my collection there are three good examples of the period. Sometimes the goldsmiths seem to have availed themselves of an antique gem, which may have been originally used either in a necklace or bracelet. There is a remarkable example in my series; it is a gold ring, with a pierced sapphire set *à griffes*. Robert, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, in the reign of Edward I., had a ring set with a pierced ruby, as we learn from the following entry in one of the Wardrobe Books of that monarch:—"Anulus auri cum rubetto perforato, qui fuit Roberti Coventrensis et Lichfeldensis Episcopi."<sup>8</sup>

There is also in my collection a curious episcopal ring of the latter part of the twelfth century, which is here figured (see woodcuts, fig. 3). It was found in 1856, about six miles from Oxford. In general design it resembles that above mentioned; it is, however, of purer gold, and the bezel set with a fine antique *plasma* bust of a female. We have proof that cameos were worn in episcopal rings. In the list of rings and precious stones collected by Henry III. for the shrine of St. Edward in Westminster Abbey, there is enumerated:—"j *chamah* in uno annulo pontificali."<sup>9</sup> I consider the gem in the ring found near Oxford to have been intended to represent either our Blessed Lady or some female saint. We know that during the middle ages the glyptic art had declined very much, and that from their fancied assimilation

<sup>7</sup> Merati, ed. Gavanti, p. 1341.

<sup>8</sup> Liber Garderobæ 28 Ed. I. fol. 278, p. 341. The name of this prelate, who

died in 1295, is usually given as Roger. Le Neve, ed. Hardy, vol. i. p. 549.

<sup>9</sup> Rot. Pat. 51 Hen. III. m. 20 d.

lation antique gems were occasionally used for devout subjects.<sup>1</sup> Thus the monks of Durham converted an antique intaglio of Jupiter Tonans into the "Caput Sancti Oswaldi."<sup>2</sup>

The Wardrobe Book of 28th Edward I. contains several entries relating to episcopal rings, which will be found appended to this memoir. St. Dunstan, who was celebrated as a worker in metals, seems to have made rings; possibly the following entry in the *Liber Garderobæ* may refer to that which had been worn by himself:—"Unus annulus auri cum saphiro, qui fuit de fabricâ Sancti Dunstani, ut credebatur."<sup>3</sup>

During the latter part of the thirteenth century the large episcopal rings were enriched by the addition of precious stones which were set around the principal one. Thus, in the Wardrobe Book there is the following entry:—"Anulus auri cum quatuor rubettis magnis qui fuit Fratris J. de Peccham nuper Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi."<sup>4</sup> He died in 1292.

Dart, in his *History of Canterbury*, gives an Inventory of the *Ornamenta Ecclesiastica*, taken in 1315.<sup>5</sup> One of the *annuli pontificales* was of elaborate character, and is thus described:—"Annulus quadratus magnus cum smaragdine oblongo, et quatuor pramis, et quatuor garnettis." The others had sapphires surrounded by smaller gems. One of these rings was set—"cum saphiro nigro in quatuor cramponibus ex omni parte discoperto."

The precious stones preferred for episcopal rings appear to have been the sapphire and the ruby. Mention occurs also of the balass-ruby, the emerald, the topaz, the turquoise, the chalcedony, and, as accessories, pearls and garnets. Sometimes these gems were of great value. John Stephen Durantus observes that a bishop's ring should be made of pure gold, solid, set with a very valuable stone,—*cum gemmâ pretiosiori*.<sup>6</sup> Another ring in my series is an exceedingly beautiful specimen of an "annulus pontificalis magnus," it is one of the finest mediæval rings known to me. (See

<sup>1</sup> See Bury Wills, p. 266, note.

<sup>2</sup> Dugdale's *Mon. Angl.* edit. Caley, vol. i. See pl. 2, of seals of Benedictine monasteries.

<sup>3</sup> *Lib. Gard.* p. 348, fol. 280.

<sup>4</sup> Dart, *Hist. of Cant. Cathedral*, App. p. xiii.

<sup>5</sup> P. 346, fol. 279.

<sup>6</sup> *De Ritibus*, ii. c. ix. sec. 37, p. 289.

EXAMPLES OF EPISCOPAL RINGS.

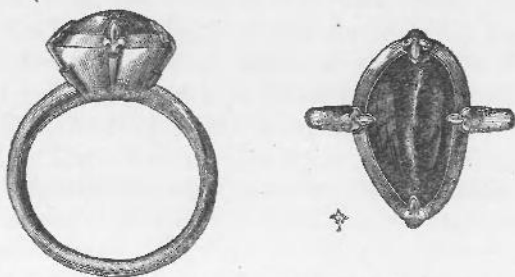


Fig. 2. Gold Ring, set with a sapphire. Winchester Cathedral, XIII. century.



Fig. 3. Gold Ring, set with an antique plasma. Found near Oxford. Waterton Coll.



Fig. 4. Gold Ring, obtained at Milan. Waterton Collection.

woodcuts, fig. 4.) Unfortunately the original stone has been removed, but I have had it re-set with an amethyst.<sup>7</sup> A remarkable ring, set with a fine opal, was preserved at Mayence Cathedral, where it was found, with an enameled crosier, in the tomb, as supposed, of the Archbishop Sigfroi III., 1249. It has been figured by Hefner, Trachten, pl. 9.

III. Before the ring is conferred upon the bishop-elect, it is blessed. The old *Ordo Romanus* gives the following formula :—"Creator humani generis, Dator gratiæ spiritualis, Largitor æternæ salutis, Tu, Domine, emitte tuam benedictionem super hunc annulum, ut quicumque hoc sacrosancto fidei signo insignitus incedat, in virtute cœlestis defensionis ad æternam vitam sibi proficiat."

IV. I proceed to the ceremonial used in conferring the ring.

Before receiving the pastoral staff and the mitre, the bishop-elect is invested by the consecrating bishop with the pontifical ring. The formulæ seem to have varied at different times. The most ancient one, contained in the *Sacramental* of St. Gregory, 590, is this :—"Accipe annulum discretionis et honoris, fidei signum, ut quæ signanda sunt signes et quæ aperienda sunt prodas, quæ liganda sunt liges, quæ solvenda sunt solvas, atque credentibus per fidem baptismatis, lapsis autem sed pœnitentibus per mysterium reconciliationis januas regni cœlestis aperias; cunctis vero de thesauro dominico ad æternam salutem hominibus, consolatus gratiâ Domini nostri Jesu Christi."

Another form of a later date has the above, with the following addition :—"Memor sponsionis et desponsationis Ecclesiasticæ et dilectionis Domini Dei tui, in die quâ assumptus es hunc honorem, cave ne obliviscaris illius."<sup>8</sup>

The formula contained in the *Pontifical* of Ecgberht, Archbishop of York, is as follows :—"Accipe annulum pontificalis honoris ut sis fidei integritate munitus."<sup>9</sup> The Anglo-Saxon *Pontifical* at Rouen and that of St. Dunstan at Paris both give the following :—"Accipe ergo annulum discretionis et honoris, fidei signum, ut quæ signanda sunt signes, es quæ aperienda sunt prodas."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I obtained this ring from Mr. Josephs, of New Bond-street, who told me that he had purchased it in Milan in December, 1858, and that it had been set with a valuable sapphire.

<sup>8</sup> *Vet. Ord. Rom.*

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by Dr. Rock, *Church of Our Fathers*, vol. ii. p. 173.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*



The ancient Ordo Romanus contains a formula couched in more elegant words :—" Accipe annulum pontificalis honoris, ut sis fidei integritate ante omnia munitus, misericordiæ operibus insistens, infirmis compatiens, benevolentibus congaudens, aliena damna propria deputans, de alienis gaudiis tanquam de propriis exultans." <sup>2</sup> The form, however, now prescribed is somewhat brief :—" Accipe annulum fidei scilicet signaculum, quatenus Sponsam Dei, Sanctam videlicet Ecclesiam, intemeratâ fide illibate custodias." <sup>3</sup>

It will be observed that, in the formula prescribed by St. Gregory and in the one contained in the two Anglo-Saxon Pontificalia, mention is made of the ring in terms which would imply that it was a signet. Certain it is that in the ancient Pontifical of Narbonne, in the ceremonial for the consecration of an altar, the rubric prescribes that the bishop shall take some "*bitumen*" and melt it over the place wherein the sacred relics are deposited, and imprint thereon seven times the seal of his ring (*proprii annuli*).<sup>4</sup>

v. I will now notice how the episcopal ring was worn.

It appears that bishops formerly wore their rings on the index of their right hand, being the middle one of the three fingers which they extend when giving their blessing ; but when celebrating mass they passed the ring on to the annular. They wore it on the index, as the forefinger was indicative of silence, and consequently of the *τὸ secretum*, since as wise and prudent men they ought to communicate the divine mysteries only to the worthy. Canonists interpret it, that, by means of the holy doctrine, the bishop ought to point out to his flock the way of salvation.

Gavanti says :—" In missâ pontificali fertur annulus in digito dexteræ manus, non autem sinistræ, quod sponsæ proprium est, et item in digito annulari, qui remotior est ab indice, ne indice quasi coronato ab annulo, Episcopus uti videatur ad consecrationem corporis Christi, si quod sentio dicere liceat, nam annulus corona manuum dicitur a sapientioribus, et coram Christo coronam deponere conventi, seu remotiori saltem gestare."<sup>5</sup>

Gregory IV., in 827, ordered that the episcopal ring should not be worn on the left, but on the right hand, as it

<sup>2</sup> Vet. Ord. Rom.

<sup>3</sup> Pontif. Rom. in Cons. Episcopi.

<sup>4</sup> Martene, t. ii. p. 368, who observes

of this Pontifical, that it was " ante 700 annos scriptum."

<sup>5</sup> Gavanti, ed. Merati, p. 1737.



was more distinguished (*nobile*), and was the hand with which the blessing was imparted. He says :—"Consultissimum visum est, ut Pontifices aureo gemmatoque annulo, nequaquam in sinistra, sed signantes in dextera, uterentur ;"<sup>6</sup> and, after prescribing that bishops were to wear their rings whilst celebrating mass, he adds,—“Annulos ipsos non in sinistra poni oportere, nullius venæ cordialis habitâ ratione, quæ gentilitatem sapere videretur, sed omnino in dextera, tanquam digniore, quâ sacræ benedictiones impenduntur ; maxime quia ipsi Pontifices dum sacrificant non nimium exercitas manus habent ; et sic ipsorum, tam summorum, quam cæterorum Pontificum consecrationibus dextera signanter Annulus imponitur.”

The episcopal ring is now always worn on the annular finger of the right hand, and bishops never wear more than one. In the pictures of the early Italian masters, however, and on sepulchral effigies, bishops are represented with many rings, some of which are not unfrequently on the second joints of the fingers. A thumb-ring is often seen. In Raffaele's portrait of Julius II., the Pope is represented as wearing six rings. Certain it is that as late as the year 1516 the popes occasionally wore two or more rings. The *Cæremoniale S. Romanæ Ecclesiæ*, the first edition of which was printed in that year, contains the following directions at the robing of the Holy Father :—"Accedit primus Diaconum Cardinalium assistens, et imponit Papæ, jam mitram tenenti, annulum pontificalem et *alios quos voluerit*."

As the large pontifical ring was of size sufficient to enable the bishop to pass it over the silk glove which he wears when pontificating, a smaller, or guard-ring, was used to keep it on the finger. This is proved from the following passage in the *Sarum Pontifical*, at the vesting of the bishop :—"Tunc sedendo (episcopo) chirothecas manibus imponat, et annulum pontificalem magnum, una cum uno parvo strictiori annulo ad tenendum fortius super imponat."<sup>7</sup> There is a specimen in my *dactyliotheca* which I consider to have been probably a guard-ring.

VI. The mystical signification attached to the episcopal ring has been set forth by various ecclesiastical writers :—"Datur et annulus episcopo," observes St. Isidore of Seville,

<sup>6</sup> De Cultu Pont. quoted by Cancellieri, p. 21.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Rock, *Church of Our Fathers*, vol. i. p. 172.

in the sixth century, "propter signum pontificalis honoris, vel signaculum secretorum."<sup>8</sup> In the *Acta Conciliorum* we read as follows:—"Annulus datur episcopo, qui et aureus est et benedictus, daturque ad honorem et significationem quod ecclesiæ suæ sponsus est, et quod velut annulo signatorio non omnibus omnia mysteria revelare debet, et regulariter quidem."

In 1191, Innocent III. wrote that—"Annulus episcopi perfectionem donorum Spiritus Sancti in Christo significat."<sup>9</sup> Durandus, who lived in the thirteenth century, enlarges upon the subject in his *Rationale*. The ring, he says, is the badge of fidelity with which Christ betrothed the Church, his holy Bride, so that she can say, "My Lord betrothed me with his ring." Her guardians are the bishops, who wear the ring for a mark and as a testimony of it; of whom the Bride speaks in the Canticles, "The watchmen who kept the city found me." The father gave a ring to the prodigal son, according to the text, "Put a ring on his finger." A bishop's ring, therefore, signifies *integritatem fidei*, that is to say, that he should love as himself the Church of God committed to him as his bride, and that he should keep it sober and chaste for the heavenly bridegroom, according to the words, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste Virgin to Christ," and that he should remember he is not the lord, but the shepherd.

Moreover, observes Durandus, the ancients sealed their letters with a ring. Hence a bishop wears a ring because it is his place to seal the mysteries of the Scriptures and the sacraments of the Church to the "*perfidēs*," and to reveal them to the lowly.

Again, a finger-ring given to the Head, *i.e.*, Christ, signifies the gifts of the Holy Spirit. For the finger "*articularis* atque *distinctus*" represents the Holy Ghost, according to that verse—"This is the finger of God," "If I by the finger of God cast out devils," &c.

A bishop, when he puts on his ring at vesting, says—"Cordis et corporis mei, Domine, digitos virtute decora et septiformis Spiritus sanctificatione circumda."

A ring of gold and round signifies the perfection of his gifts which Christ received without measure. And he has

<sup>8</sup> De Ecclesiæ Offic. t. ii. c. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Lib. i. Myst. Missæ, c. 46.

distributed his plenitude to different nations, giving, according to the Apostle, to one the word of wisdom ; to another the grace of healing ; to another the working of miracles, which the visible bishop imitates in the church, making some priests, others deacons, and others subdeacons. Therefore a jeweled ring shines on the bishop's finger, as through his ministry are conferred the "*fulgida charismata gratiarum.*"

From this explanation of Durandus, it would seem that the episcopal ring was regarded as symbolical, first—of perfect fidelity ; of the duty of sealing and of revealing ; and lastly, of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

A curious question with reference to the English bishops now comes under our consideration. According to a document preserved in one of the registers of Christ Church, Canterbury, and published by Mr. Albert Way in the *Archæological Journal*, on the death of every archbishop or bishop, the king was entitled to his best horse and palfrey, with saddle and bridle ; a cloak with a hood ; a cup with the ewer ; a gold ring ; and the *meuta* or kennel of the hounds of the deceased. How these rights originated it may now be impracticable to ascertain. They existed in the reign of Edward I. and probably earlier. It is supposed that the seals of the deceased bishops were delivered up to their metropolitan, to prevent their falling into the hands of those who might make an improper use of them. In the province of Canterbury the second-best ring of the bishop accompanied his seals, his best was delivered up to the king. The rights of Canterbury with respect to the rings of the bishops are entered in one of the registers of Christ Church, in a hand, as Mr. Way states, apparently of the fourteenth century. These *Jura* are given at length in the *Journal of the Archæological Institute*.<sup>1</sup> They may be briefly summed up as follows :—

The archbishop, or, *sede vacante*, the prior, was entitled to all the seals and the second-best ring (*annulum secundo-meliorem*) of each of the bishops of the province of Canterbury ; also to those of bishops of Bangor and St. Asaph. In the case of the bishop of Rochester, the archbishop claimed the *meuta* of hounds, palfrey, &c., the best ring

<sup>1</sup> *Archæol. Journ.* vol. xi. p. 274. This statement of the *Jura* due on the decease of the suffragans of Christ Church,

Canterbury, has also been preserved in Cott. MS., Vitell. E. 17, and is printed in the *Anglia Sacra*, vol. i. p. 88.

(annulum meliorem), and the administration of the temporalities of the bishopric. If the see of Canterbury were vacant, the king, *ratione episcopatus custodiâ sua existentis*, had all the perquisites and the best ring, but the prior received the second-best ring and the seals. And when the archbishop of Canterbury died, the king received the best palfrey, the best ring, the *meuta* of running dogs or hounds, and the cup of the deceased ; but the prior received all the seals and one second-best ring.

In 1310, on the death of Robert Orford, Bishop of Ely, his pontifical ring not having been delivered up in due time, a mandate was issued by Archbishop Winchelsey directed to Richard de Oteringham, then administering the temporalities of the vacant see, to obtain possession of the ring, which appears to have been kept back by two of the monks of Ely. The mandate recites the circumstances which had occurred, and describes the ring as "*annulum qui pontificalis vulgariter appellatur, qui de jure et consuetudine nostræ ecclesiæ Cantuariensis ad nos dignoscitur pertinere.*" It was alleged by the monks that the deceased bishop had made a gift of this ring in his lifetime to the prior and convent, but that, having no other pontifical ring, he had retained it for his own use until his death. The prior and convent then had possession of the ring, which they caused to be affixed to the shrine of St. Ealburga. The two monks were excommunicated, and the archbishop forthwith cited the prior and convent to appear before him.<sup>2</sup>

On the death of Anian, Bishop of Bangor, in 1327, the metropolitan see being at that time vacant, the prior of Christ Church claimed the ring, seals, and other effects which had not been rendered up to him in due course. The claims of the Crown were rigorously enforced, as the entries in the Wardrobe Book of Edward I., before cited, fully prove.

In conclusion I may remark that Mr. King, in his erudite work on antique gems, offers some observations on episcopal rings and the stones set in them ; he "thinks it probable that, when such mediæval rings occur set with a ruby, instead of a sapphire, they have belonged to bishops who were at the same time cardinals."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> These curious details appear in Archbishop Winchelsey's Register, and may be seen in Wilkins' *Concilia*, ii. 403.

<sup>3</sup> *Antique Gems*, by the Rev. C. W. King, p. 297.

EPISCOPAL RINGS FOUND IN CHICHESTER CATHEDRAL.



Fig. 6. Gold Ring, set with a gnostic gem, an intaglio on jasper. Found in the tomb of Seffrid, Bishop of Chichester, 1135-1151.

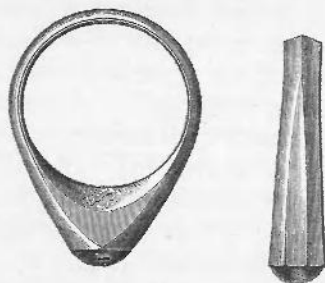


Fig. 7. Gold Ring, set with a sapphire. Found in the tomb of Hilary, Bishop of Chichester, 1146-1169.

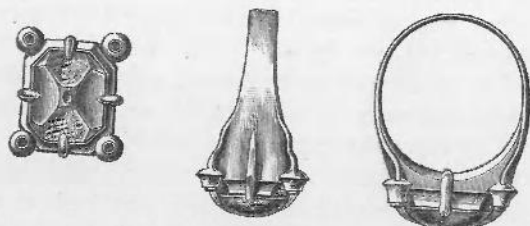


Fig. 8. Gold Ring, set with a sapphire and four emeralds. Found in the tomb of a bishop unknown.

I have already shown, however, that cardinals' rings were always set with a sapphire:<sup>4</sup> they may have worn additional rings set with various stones, but the cardinal's ring was and still customarily is, set with a sapphire. And in the old inventories, episcopal rings are enumerated as being set with various gems, such as rubies, sapphires, pearls, and garnets. Hence I do not think that Mr. King's observations can be regarded as correct.

It may be useful for the purpose of reference to give a list of a few of the authentic episcopal rings now in existence in England.

1. Seffrid, Bishop of Chichester, who died in 1151. This is a most curious ring, for it is set with a gnostic gem, representing the figure with the head of a cock. It is a strange subject for the ring of a bishop; but still it does not prove that Seffrid was a believer in gnosticism, as is stated in the *Archæologia*. This ring is given in the accompanying illustrations, from drawings by the skilful pencil of Mr. Henry Shaw, F.S.A. (See fig. 6.)

2. Massive gold ring, set with a sapphire. This was found in a tomb on the thumb of the skeleton of a bishop, supposed to be Hilary, who died in 1169, together with a silver chalice and paten, and a pastoral staff. (See woodcuts, fig. 7.)

3. Gold ring, with an octagonal sapphire, set *à griffes*, and with four small emeralds in the corners. This was found in a stone coffin on which was inscribed *EPISCOPUS*, and which also contained some remains of vestments and a pastoral staff. (See woodcuts, fig. 8.)

These three rings belong to the Dean and Chapter of Chichester.

4. Gold ring, set with a ruby, and found in York Minster, in the tomb of Archbishop Sewell, who died 1258.

5. Gold ring, also set with a ruby, found in the tomb of Archbishop Greenfield, who died 1315.

6. Gold ring, the stone of which has fallen out, and which bears on the inside the *chançon* × *bonnør* × *et* × *joye*. ×. It was found in the tomb of Archbishop Bowet, who died in 1423.

These three rings are preserved in York Minster, and are figured in the Historical Guide to that Cathedral by the Rev. G. A. Poole and Mr. Hugall, pl. xxiv. p. 196.

<sup>4</sup> *Archæol. Journ.* vol. xvi. p. 280.

7. Large gold ring, before noticed, set with an irregular oval sapphire, secured by four grips in the form of fleurs-de-lys. The stone is pierced longitudinally. This was found in Winchester Cathedral, and may be assigned to the thirteenth century. (See woodcuts, fig. 2).

8. The ring of William of Wickham, Bishop of Winchester; he<sup>5</sup> succeeded 1366—7, and died in 1404. A massive plain gold ring, set with a sapphire.

By his will he bequeathed to his successor in the Bishopric of Winchester his best book, *De Officio Pontificali*, his best missal, and his larger gold pontifical ring, set with a sapphire, and surrounded with four balass rubies.<sup>6</sup>

9. Gold ring, set with an oval *plasma* intaglio of the head of Minerva; on the shoulders of the hoop are two square-facettèd ornaments, each set with five small rubies, *en cabochon*. Found in the tomb of Bishop Gardiner, in Winchester Cathedral. He succeeded 1531—1555.

These rings belong to the Dean and Chapter of Winchester.

10. Massive gold ring, set with a sapphire. The shoulders are ornamented with flowers, and inside is the *chançon en bon an*. Found in the tomb of John Stanbery, Bishop of Hereford, 1452. He died in 1474.

11. Gold ring, set with an uncut ruby, and which has on either shoulder a Tau cross, filled in with green enamel, and a bell appended. Within is the inscription, enameled, *abe maria*. Found in the tomb of Richard Mayew, or Mayo, Bishop of Hereford, 1504. He died 18 April, 1516.

These rings were found in Hereford Cathedral. They are figured in the *Archæologia*, vol. xxxi., p. 249.

12. Massive gold ring, set with a sapphire, *en cabochon*. This was found on one of the fingers of St. Cuthbert, when his coffin was opened by the visitors in 1537. It came into the possession of Thomas Watson, the Catholic dean, appointed on the dismissal of Robert Horne, the Protestant dean, in 1553. Dean Watson gave the ring to Sir Robert Hare, who gave it to Antony Brown, created Viscount Montague by Queen Mary in 1554. He gave it to Dr. Richard Smith, Bishop

<sup>5</sup> This and the following rings from Winchester, were exhibited in the Loan Collection at Kensington, June 1862, and are described in the Catalogue by Mr. R.

H. Smith, to whose kindness we are indebted for the wood-cut accompanying this memoir.

<sup>6</sup> Test. Vetust. p. 767.



of Calcedon, *in partibus*, and Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District, whom he had for a long time sheltered from the persecution. Bishop Smith gave the ring to the monastery of the English Canonesses of St. Augustine at Paris; and it is now preserved at St. Cuthbert's College, Ushaw, near Durham. The ring is evidently not one worn by the sainted bishop during his lifetime. It does not appear to be of an earlier date than the fourteenth century; and a gold ring, set with a sapphire, and almost its counterpart, which was found at Flodden, is now in the British Museum. Probably the ring had belonged to one of the Bishops of Durham, and had been offered to the shrine of St. Cuthbert, and placed on the finger of his corpse on some occasion when the shrine was opened. The authentication of the ring simply states the fact that it was found on the hand of St. Cuthbert in 1537. It has been figured in the *Archæologia Æliana*, vol. ii., N.S., p. 66.

The ring of Arnulphus, consecrated Bishop of Metz in 614, is stated to be preserved in the treasury of the cathedral at that city. It is believed to be of an earlier date than the fourth century, and it is set with an opaque milk-white cornelian, engraved with the sacred symbol of the fish.

In addition to these examples, I may adduce two other French episcopal rings. One is that of Gerard, Bishop of Limoges, who died in 1022. Didron thus describes it. "*Cet anneau est en or massif; il pese 14 gram. 193 m.; aucune pierrerie ne le decore. La tête de l'anneau, ou chaton, est formée de quatre fleurs trilobées opposées par la base sur lesquelles courent de légers filets d'email bleu.*"<sup>7</sup>

The second is a gold ring, with an irregular oval sapphire set *à griffes*. The shank is formed of two winged dragons. It is stated to have been found in 1829, in the tomb of Thierry, Bishop of Verdun, 1165, and is now in the Londesborough collection. See the Londesborough Catalogue, No. 45, where it is engraved.

The following extracts from the Wardrobe Book of 28th Edward I. (A.D. 1299—1360), relating to episcopal rings, are of interest.

*Jocalia remanencia in fine anni 27.*<sup>8</sup>

*Annulus auri cum sapphiro qui fuit fratris Willelmi quondam Dublin' archiepiscopi defuncti.*

<sup>7</sup> Ann. Arch. x. 178.

<sup>8</sup> Lib. Gard. p. 343.

Jocalia remanencia in fine anni 27 de jocalibus Regi datis, et post decessum prælatorum Regis restitutis anno 25.<sup>9</sup>

Annulus auri cum sapphiro crescenti qui fuit N. quondam Sarum episcopi defuncti.

Annulus auri cum rubetto perforato qui fuit Roberti Coventr' et Lichfield' episcopi defuncti.

Jocalia remanencia in fine anni 27 de jocalibus Regi datis et post decessum prælatorum Regis restitutis.

Annulus auri cum sapphiro qui fuit I. Ebor' Archiepiscopi defuncti, anno 24.

Jocalia remanencia in fine anni 27 de jocalibus receptis de venerabili Patre Will' Bathon' et Wellen' episcopo.

Tres annuli auri cum rubettis.

Unus annulus auri cum ameraudâ.

Unus annulus auri cum topacio.

Unus annulus auri cum pereditis.

The *Jocalia Sancti Thomæ*, which are given by Dart,<sup>1</sup> and which have been referred to in this memoir, are as follows—

Annulus pontificalis magnus cum rubino rotundo in medio.

Item. Annulus magnus cum sapphiro nigro qui vocatur lup.<sup>2</sup>

Item. Annulus cum parvo sapphiro nigro qui vocatur lup.

Item. Annulus cum sapphiro quadrato aquoso.

Item. Annulus cum lapide oblongo qui vocatur turkoyse.

Item. Annulus unus cum viridi cornelino sculpto rotundo.

Item. Annulus parvus cum smaragdine triangulato.

Item. Annulus unus cum chalcedonio oblongo.

#### ADDITION TO THE MEMOIR ON NIELLO.

(Archæol. Journ. vol. xix., p. 327.)

In the Essay on Niello which I had the honour to read last year at our Special Exhibition of examples of the arts of Enamel and Niello, I mentioned the nielloed shrine at Hildesheim, in Hanover, which is said to contain the head of St. Oswald, and I then stated that it could not be the head of the sainted Saxon king of that name, since that relic is buried with the body of St. Cuthbert, which still lies hidden and undisturbed at Durham. During a recent excursion on the continent I have ascertained the actual facts. The shrine contains a silver head, in the top of which a small fragment of the skull of St. Oswald is let in, and covered by a piece of glass. This fragment was sent to Hildesheim from Durham many years ago.

<sup>9</sup> Lib. Gard. p. 344.

<sup>1</sup> Hist. of Cant. Cath. App. p. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> This may signify *en cabochon*, uncut. Roquefort gives "*Loupe*, nœud, bosse, pierre precieuse brute." See Ducange,

v. "*Loppa, Loupa*, gemma imperfecta.—*Loppa* saphirorum, Inv. MS., 1363; *loupe* saphiræ, in al. 1376." Hence, in modern French, *loupe*, a convex lens or magnifying glass.