

CHAPTER ONE. BATH ABBEY

Why has so little interest been taken in a once notable Benedictine house, the abbey or cathedral-priory of Bath? Perhaps it is that the church as it now stands does not offer much of real interest. Among the ancient minsters of England it does not hold a pre-eminent place; and the fact that it was not completed at the time of the reformation and was never consecrated makes us regard it with but scant attention. Yet there are in it some features worthy of note, and it is the only visible sign that tells of the monastic history of Bath, carrying thought and imagination back more than twelve hundred years.

It is to no purpose to write here of the ancient city of Bath under Roman dominion, of its greatness and splendour. But it may be a point of interest to realise somewhat in imagination what kind of spot it was in which the city's first monastic foundation was made.

The days of the Saxon invasion were days of horror. But little mercy did the pagan hordes show to their enemies, and they cared not at all for the civilisation they might have inherited. Their course was ever marked by fire and sword; and imagination gathers up the few records of their progress and intensifies the horrors by taking no note of the long years of time and the many miles of distance which made the background of the great tragedy. Yet we know that the struggle was of more than a hundred years duration. We do not commonly realise its character, simply because records are wanting; but the few indications which survive are enough to show that imagination itself can hardly exaggerate its savagery.

It was in the year 519 that Cerdic, the West Saxon was recognised as sovereign of a kingdom, having conquered and taken abiding possession of the region which formed the beginning of the kingdom of Wessex. Under his son, Cynric, in 552, the career of conquest was continued and afterwards by Cynric's son and successor, Ceawlin. In 577 a great battle was fought at Deorham¹ (Dyrham) in which three of the British princes were slain and a vast tract of territory came under the dominion of the Saxons. Gloucester, Cirencester and Bath were taken, and we cannot doubt that they were reduced to utter ruin. Bath, with which alone we are concerned, saw the end of its ancient glory. Its people were slain, its temples, its basilicas, its baths shattered and destroyed in the overwhelming confusion and conflagration. Such must have been its fate; and we may assume the probability of the scene from the following description which Gildas gives of an attack of the Saxons on the town.

All the columns were levelled with the ground by the frequent strokes of the battering ram, all the husbandmen routed, together with their bishops, priests and people, whilst the sword gleamed, and the flames crackled around them on every side. Lamentable to behold, in the midst of the streets lay the tops of lofty towers, tumbled to the ground, stones of high walls, holy altars, fragments of human bodies covered with livid clots of coagulated blood, looking as if they had been squeezed together in a press, and with no chance of being buried save in the ruins of the houses or in the ravening bellies of wild beasts and birds.²

In confirmation of this, there remains an early poem in the Anglo-Saxon tongue, commonly passing under the name of 'The Ruined Burg'³ which refers, in the judgment of competent critics to

¹ Deorham, now Dyrham, in the county of Gloucester. It is situated on the little river Boyd, and seven miles north of Bath. Near it is, or was, a place known as Barhill Camp, supposed to have been Saxon

² Gildas, *de excidio et conquestu Britannia*, 24, Dr Giles' translation

³ *Codex Exoniensis*, ed. Thorpe, f 476

the city of Bath. The poet, whoever he was, was moved by the vastness and weirdness of the ruin to record his impression in these graphic and forcible words:

Wondrous is its wall of stone, strange the ruin!
Broken are the burg-steads! Crumbled is the giants work.
Fallen are the roofbeams; tottering are the towers;
Unroofed the door pierced towers; mouldering the masonry!
Tempest-marred and sunken down are the sheltering battlements,
Undereaten of old age! Earth's grasp holdeth
These, the mighty workmen, worn away, lorn away
In the hard grip of the grave, while a hundred ages
Pass away of men. Long its wall
(Weed grown and lichen spotted), saw the rule that followed rule
Under storm skies sheltered! Steep the court that fell,
Still it falleth... (skilful ancient work it was)!
Strong in rede (the builder strengthened), strong of heart, in chains he
All the wall uprights with clamps, wondrous wrought together.
Bright were the burg-steads, the bathhouses many;
High towered the pinnacles, of the host a mickle sound,
Many were the mead-halls, full of mirth of men,
Till all was overturned by Fate the violent!
In a slaughter wide they fell, woeful days of bale came on;
Famine-death fortook fortitude from men;
All their battle-bulwarks bare foundations were!
Crumbled is the castle keep; there have cringed to earth
Pitifully the armies! So the halls are dreary,
And this courtyard's wide expanse! From the raftered woodwork
(See) the roof has shed its tiles! Ruin crushed the pavement,
Broken up in heaps; where erewhile many a baron,
Joyous and gold-bright, gloriously adorned,
Hot with wine and haughty, in war-harness shone;
Looked upon his silver, on set gems and treasure,
On his wealth, his stores, on his precious jewels,
On this brightsome burg of broad dominion!
There stood courts of stone; hotly surged the stream,
With a widening whirling (a wall enclosing all),
With its bosom bright. There the baths were set,
Hot within their heart; fit (for health) it was!⁴

Such is the vigorous language of the early poet, even in the obscurity of its meaning sufficiently applicable to the city of Bath; and doubtless all who are acquainted with Bath will be disposed to conclude with Professor Earle that the poem 'suits no other place that I can think of in the habitable world.'⁵

It was not the custom of the earlier Angles and Saxons to dwell in towns. This became their habit only by degrees, and may possibly account for the long desolation of Bath. But in the course of time the invaders had settled firmly in the land and had embraced Christianity, and their faith and

⁴ See Stopford Brooke, *Early English Literature*, vol. 1, p. 153; also Earle, *Anglo Saxon Literature*, p.140

⁵ Earle, *Anglo Saxon Literature*, p. 140

zeal surpassed those of the races they had conquered. In this spirit kings and princes vied with each other in founding houses where men and women might devote themselves particularly to the service of God, and where the donors might have the benefit of perpetual prayer and grateful remembrance. We find accordingly that a certain Osric, ruler of the Hwiccas⁶, by a charter dated November 6th AD 676, gave 'to the Abbess Bertana ... a hundred hides of land, adjacent to the city of Hat Bathu, for the establishment of a monastery of holy virgins;'⁷ and to this charter King Ethelred of Mercia (675-704), Osric's overlord, subscribed his name and consent. It is interesting to note that in the preamble of the charter Osric speaks of his first determination being to erect only a bishop's see, 'according to the synodal decrees.' This refers to the work of St Theodore, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in organising the Church in England, and notably in dividing the country into fixed dioceses, in accordance with ecclesiastical canons. This and other important enactments were decreed in the synod of Hertford in 673, only three years before the foundation of Bath.

Of the fortunes and fate of this monastery of nuns we have no details. We have a glimpse that in 781 a monastery – whether of monks or of nuns we are not told – was flourishing in Bath. The bishop of the Hwiccas, Heathored, is found to be having a dispute with King Offa of Mercia about the possession of certain lands. The king argues that the bishop held the property unjustly, and seems to imply that it had been wrongfully alienated. The bishop, unable to show any document in support of his claim, determines that such a difficulty shall not occur again; and accordingly he takes advantage of the synod of Brentford to come to a compromise in the presence of witnesses of repute. By a charter he makes over to the king 'that most celebrated monastery at Bath, to hold it absolutely, or to give it to whom he thinks well;'⁸ in return for which Offa confirms the bishop in all the other possessions of the see.

With this event the connection of Bath with the Hwiccas and their bishop ends, and we find the monastery, which was already 'most celebrated' brought in some way under royal control. We know not whether it prospered under this condition; history tells us little or nothing: but it seems most probable that the house eventually shared the decay of the monastic spirit brought about by unsettled times and consummated by the devastation of the Danes. The later assertions, that Offa founded the monastery of Bath, and that he placed secular canons there, rest upon no trustworthy evidence. It is clear however that, whatever were the fortunes of the monastery, those of the city advanced prosperously; for we find King Ecgfrith of Mercia in 796 issuing a charter from 'the celebrated town which is called in the Saxon tongue 'at the Baths' and another of the same date from 'the celebrated monastery' there.'⁹ Again, nearly seventy years later, in 864, King Burhred of Mercia appears there, writing his charter of donation 'in that famous city which is called 'ad calidum balneum' that is 'at the hot baths' (aet tham hatum bathum).'¹⁰ And when we find Bath lodging at the first date two kings, the archbishop and several bishops and thanes, and at the second date the king and queen, with bishops and nobles and the necessarily attendant court, we may safely conclude that it was no mean city.

The Danish depredations from the year 878, and the consequent disorganisation of society, must have obliterated much of the observance of monastic life; and when we are told that even the great abbey of Glastonbury had altogether forgotten monastic discipline we cannot wonder if Bath suffered from the same evil. To St Dunstan was due at Bath the revival of the right observance, such as he had already effected at Glastonbury; and though it is not clear that he re-peopled the monastery, it was much that he was instrumental in reinvigorating its spirit. For we have testimony that when he was bishop he used to go about visiting the monasteries, in order that by his authority

⁶ Ven. Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, iv, c. 23. The Hwiccas dealt chiefly in the district formed by the present counties of Worcester and Gloucester and their name is perpetuated in the Latin name of their city, Worcester (Wigornia).

⁷ Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus*, vol. ii, no. 12.

⁸ Kemble, *Codex Diplomaticus*, no. cxliii

⁹ *Codex Diplomaticus*, no. clxx., clxxi

¹⁰ *Id*, ccxc

he might confirm what was well carried on or correct what was amiss.¹¹ In this way he came to Bath, and there is a story told in connection with his visit which is worth giving here as it is handed down by an anonymous writer who had known and spoken with the saint.

‘The venerable man,’ says the Saxon priest, ‘was ever inflamed with the love of God, and therefore used to go about to different monasteries, anxious to do what might be profitable to souls. It was in accordance with this admirable custom that he came to the place of baths, where a hot spring boils up from the depths of an abyss and gradually turns to vapour – a place that the inhabitants are wont to call in their native tongue Bath. He had stayed there some time, meeting with an affectionate reception from the brethren of that place; and it happened that (one day) after dinner he saw the soul of a certain young scholar of the monastery of Glastonbury carried up to heaven by angels of God amid hymns of praise, and surrounded on every side by a great train of heavenly citizens. On the next day, as if in confirmation of this wondrous vision, there came from the aforesaid monastery a certain prior named Ceolwy, with the object of obtaining advice on monastic matters, and also of dealing with the bishop as usual on the affairs of his brethren. After giving his blessing, the bishop anxiously questioned him who had just arrived from the monastery whether all things were going well with his brethren; and the prior replied, quite forgetful of the death of the boy, that everything was going quite well. But the bishop, more clearly enlightened by his own vision, gently said, ‘I hardly think that all things go well with everyone when men depart.’ ‘Yea’, replied the prior, ‘all things are well, except that yesterday about midday a young boy of our house died.’ ‘That is what I meant,’ said the holy bishop; ‘may his happy soul rest in peace, as our vision told us.’¹²

If we may reasonably argue from the above reception of St Dunstan that there was already regular observance at Bath, we may assign the coming of the great abbot, St Elphege, to an earlier date. This saint, who was afterwards bishop of Winchester and Archbishop of Canterbury, and finally met his death by martyrdom at the hands of the Danes in 1012, had first entered upon the monastic life at Deerhurst in Gloucestershire. After several years he sought a more perfect life, and came to Bath and there constructed himself a hermitage. The influence of his example soon drew to him a great number of monks, and we may suppose that those of the monastery accepted him as their abbot. He is styled in several early histories the abbot of Bath, and from that abbacy he was appointed, by the influence of St Dunstan, to succeed St Ethelwold in the see of Winchester, where he sat from 984 till 1006, the year of his translation to Canterbury.

The paucity of records makes it difficult to give any detailed account of the monastery of Bath in these times; but here and there fragments of information are at hand which guide us to a reasonably sound conclusion. That the abbey of Bath was a place of some repute is indicated by the generosity of several of the kings of Wessex and of England towards it; and the zeal of King Edgar in its behalf and its selection of its church for the scene of his coronation tell us that the reform of St Dunstan had there at least met with full success. King Athelstan, who reigned from 925 to 940, was set down in the obituary roll of Bath as a great benefactor, whose anniversary was to be solemnly celebrated in copes, on which day a hundred poor were to be fed every year ‘for the help of his soul.’ The several charters included in the Bath chartulary at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, some of which are accepted as genuine and others are doubtful in their authenticity, convey to us the record of the actual benefactors of the monastery; and even in cases where the charters bear on

¹¹ *Memorials of St Dunstan* (William of Malmesbury), Rolls Series, p. 305. *Life of St Dunstan*

¹² *Memorials of St Dunstan* (Vita S. Dunstani, auctore B), Rolls Series, p. 46. The designation given in Latin to the above named Ceolwy is ‘quidam praepositus.’ The praepositus in the strict meaning of St Benedict’s rule is the assistant to the abbot, and is known in late days as the prior, a title not employed by St Benedict in its present sense. It may be, however, that the author of the life of St Dunstan uses the term widely, applying it to a monk holding some position of authority over others, as did the monastic deans.

the face of them no evidence of the donations being made to Bath, and the evidence from other sources of the lands mentioned in those charters being undoubtedly Bath property, make the accumulated value of the charters remarkable. Thus King Athelstan gives to Bath lands at Priston, Cold Ashton, Olveston and Lyncombe.¹³ King Edmund is the donor of lands directly to Bath and also to certain seemingly private individuals, as 'adoptivo fideli meo ministro Ethelere,' 'fideli meo ministro Ethelonotho;' King Edwy gives land 'cuidam fideli feminae nomine Aelfswydae.' But these same lands we find in a very short time undoubtedly in the possession of Bath. King Edwy in 956 by his royal power restores the land at Olveston and Ashton 'lately taken away from it by violence or injustice, and which my uncle King Athelstan had given to the church of the blessed Peter, prince of the apostles, which is situated in the city of Bath;' and the Bath chartulary in the library of Lincoln's Inn records Kings Edwy and Edgar not only as having given lands, but as having restored 'affectuose' and 'devote' those which had been taken away.

It is about this time also that we learn the names of two of the abbots of Bath, Wulfgar 'qui praest supradicto monasterio' in 956, and Ascwi 'abbas' in 965 and 970. Probably it was in the time of the latter that St Elphege came to Bath, succeeding him in due course as abbot. In the days of Ascwig, in the year 973, the abbey church of St Peter at Bath was the scene of an event of great moment and unwonted splendour. Edgar 'the Pacific' nephew of the great Athelstan 'the Conqueror' had completed his traditional seven years of penance, and came to Bath for his solemn coronation. This was to be the outward sign of his supremacy over the whole land of England, not only of the Saxons but also of the Danes and the Welsh whom he had subdued. What was the size or grandeur of the church of Bath we do not know, but it is styled in a charter of Edwy (957) 'mira fabrica' and was probably one of the greatest churches of England, and Bath a famous city. On Whit Sunday, May 11th 973, the solemn rite was performed and we have from a contemporary historian of the life of St Oswald of York, a minute description of it.

'At that time,' he says, 'the solemn occasion was drawing near when, as usual, the archbishops and all the other illustrious clergy and distinguished abbots and abbesses, and all the earls, generals, and judges – indeed all whom a position of dignity in the vast kingdom gave a claim to be summoned – assembled together: from east and west, from north and south, the command of the king went forth that they should come together unto him. And the remarkable and glorious host of his nation did not come around him to drive him out, or to take counsel how they might put him to death or hang him upon a cross, as the wretched Jews one time treated the loving Jesus; but they came together from all parts with sound intent, and joyfully hastened to see the most revered bishops, bless, anoint and consecrate him by the favour of Christ, by whom and from whom proceeds the happy unction of supreme blessing and holy religion. Magnificent preparation was made for the great festival, and the solemn feast of the Holy Ghost dawned on which the great act was performed, when all gathered to the consecration of the king of renown, whose sceptred glory and golden diadem shone that day more resplendent than ever. With glory and honour the crowned and elected king was led to the church, where all his princes were gathered and all the people on the tip-toe of expectation; and with him went along the noblest men amongst his subjects and the worthiest abbots, vested in robes of white and purple. This illustrious body was followed by the most honourable matrons and the abbesses with their worthy daughters, and then came a multitude of priests, and lastly walked bands of clerics. Two bishops took the king by the hand and led him to the church, while all sang in loud harmony the antiphon. 'Let thy hand be strengthened and thy right hand exalted: justice and judgement are the preparation of thy throne; mercy and truth shall go before thy face,' and after the anthem was added 'glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.'

¹³ These places are all more or less in the neighbourhood of Bath. Priston, four miles SW of Bath; Cold Ashton, five miles N of Bath, in Gloucestershire; Olveston, in Gloucestershire, nine miles NE of Bristol; Lyncombe, close to Bath.

And when they had come into the church, and the king, first taking off his crown, prostrated before the altar, Dunstan, the chief of the bishops, intoned in a loud voice the hymn of praise. 'Te Deum laudamus, te Dominum confitemur.' And he could not keep from weeping for joy at seeing the humility of the king, for he recognised that this nation had not deserved to have so humble and so wise a sovereign. When the hymn was finished the bishops raised the king from the ground, and he promised that he would keep these three oaths, in reply to the archbishop's questions. 'First I promise that the Church of God and the whole Christian people shall ever enjoy true peace under our authority. Secondly, I promise that I will forbid to men of every degree all greed and injustice. I promise thirdly that in all judgements I will command justice and mercy, that the merciful and loving God may grant to me and to you His mercy.' When these promises had been made, the archbishop stood up and prayed for him with the prayers that are written in their books – the Pontifical: and after these, Oswald, the minister of Christ, with grace and dignity pronounced a second prayer, as the father, Dunstan, whose behests all were wont to obey, had arranged. The consecration being over, they anointed the king, whilst with one great voice was sung the antiphon. 'Sadoc the priest and Nathan the prophet anointed Solomon king over Sion' and coming before him they all said, 'May the King live for ever.' After the anointing, the archbishop gave him the ring, then girded him with the sword, and lastly set the crown upon his head and gave him the blessing, bestowing on him also the sceptre and rod. All this did Dunstan, and then he celebrated mass, and the day was kept by all with a magnificent feast.¹⁴

Perchance on the very spot where the present church stands the Saxon church of St Peter also stood; and as we place ourselves within the west door of the edifice of today, our imagination goes back more than nine hundred years and conjures up the vision of that glorious scene. It was a great day for the monastery, which brought to it the favour and aid of the religious king, for he enriched it after his fashion, 'because he loved it for its splendour, and because of his having been there crowned.'¹⁵ But the life of Edgar was too short for England and for religion. Only two years after his coronation he died, at the age of thirty two. His son and successor, Edward the Martyr, was cruelly murdered, after a brief reign of three years, and the curse of England, Ethelred the Unready, the son of Edgar by his second marriage, began his long reign of misfortune. Perhaps also it may be that misfortune fell upon Bath. Alfer, one of the Mercian thanes, did much to undo the religious work of King Edgar and of St Dunstan, expelling the monks from several of the monasteries. The lot of Bath is not known. From the time of Edgar's coronation to the Norman Conquest only a few isolated facts appear. A rich man named Wulfaru in the reign of King Ethelred leaves by will certain property 'to St Peter's minster at Bath' and 'to Aelfere the abbot.' In 1061 Edward the Confessor leaves 'to a certain abbot of mine, Wulfold,' a small property at Ashwick (Aeswica), 'for himself and with power to bequeath it for ever to whomsoever he pleases.'¹⁶ This abbot shortly after made over the property 'in-tosanctes Petres, mynstere in-to Bathan.'¹⁷

Between 1061 and 1065 appears the name of Aelfwig as abbot of Bath, making a covenant with Archbishop Stigand,¹⁸ while Wulfold was still abbot. It is also evident that at the time of the Confessor's death not only was Wulfold abbot, but he ruled with a coadjutor named Sewold. Whether the existence of co-abbots arose from Wulfold's continual absence on the king's business or from his age and infirmities, is not now apparent. On the death or transfer of Sewold, Aelfsig became co-abbot. His name appears in union with that of Wulfold in an agreement between the

¹⁴ *Historians of the Church of York* (vita S. Oswaldi, auctore anonymo), Rolls Series I, p. 436.

¹⁵ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum*, Rolls Series, p.194.

¹⁶ CCC. Cambridge MS cxi. Bath Chartulary, f. 90. *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, p.33. *Kemble Codex Diplomaticus*, dcccxi.

¹⁷ CCC. MS. Cxi, f.92. *Somerset Record Society*, p. 35; *Kemble, Codex Diplomaticus*, dcccxxi.

¹⁸ CCC. MS cxi, f. 75. *Somerset Record Society*, p. 19; *Birch, Cartularium Saxonum*, iii, 929.

convent of Bath and William Hoset of Charlecombe.¹⁹ This agreement cannot be dated later than 1084, for by that time Wulwold was dead, and Aelfsige (Elsi or Aelsius) ruled as sole abbot till his death in 1087. Of him there remains one interesting record, a bond of union of prayer between St Wulstan, bishop of Worcester, and different monasteries. The copy in the Bath Chartulary gives the names of several of the Bath monks, and it is the earliest list we have of that community. The bond is in the following terms:-

In the name of the Lord and Saviour Christ. This is to say that Wulstan, bishop, in the name of the Lord hath made an agreement with his beloved brethren that are true to him before God and before the world, - namely, first Aegelwig, abbot of Evesham; and Wulfwold, abbot of Chertsey; and Aelfsige, abbot of Bath, and the brethren; and Eadmund, abbot of Pershore; and Rawulf, abbot of Winchelcombe; and Saerle, abbot of Gloucester; Aelfstan, dean²⁰ of Worcester. And this it is: - we will earnestly be obedient to God, and to St Mary and to St Benedict, and govern ourselves as near as ever we can according to righteousness, and be as it is written 'as one heart and one soul.' Moreover we will be true before God and man to our temporal lord, King William, and to Matilda, his Queen. And we have agreed among ourselves, for the good of our souls and for all those brethren that are associated with us and are of the monastic state this; - that we purpose to be one body, as if all these seven minsters were one minster, and be as it is here before written, 'as one heart and one soul.' Therefore we shall sing every week in each minster severally two masses for all the brethren - on Monday and Friday; and this shall be the duty of the brother whose week it is for the Conventual mass. And these masses shall be for the benefit of those brethren that are living. And for each deceased brother we shall do each of these things as if these were all together in one minster. And now is the agreement of the abbots. They resolve to be faithful to God and to their bishop. To their common benefit, as follows:- on the death of one of them, each shall have said a hundred masses of his own procurement and wash a hundred poor men and feed them, and give shoes to all of them. And each shall himself sing seven masses and put for thirty nights meat before him and one penny upon the meat.²¹ God help us that we may so perform and may increase in some good. So be it.

These are the names of the brethren in Bath, namely:- first, Aelfsige the abbot, and Aelfric, Leoswig and Hiethewulf, Aelfwig and Aegelmaer, Eadwig and Godwine, Aegelwine and Oswald, Aelmaer Theodwold, Eadric, Aegelmaer, Saewulf, Thured, Aegelic and Haerlewine; and Godric, monk in Malmesbury, also one of us; and also Wulferd, brother of Pike of Taunton.²²

¹⁹ CCC. MS cxi. f. 95. *Somerset Record Society*, p.37; Madox, *Formulare*, cxxxv.

²⁰ This evidence of the title 'decanus' or 'dean', is worthy of note. The name is given in the Rule of St Benedict only to officials who were placed over sections of a large community, to assist the abbot in governing. But we sometimes find the title given to the prior himself, as is the case at the present day at Einsiedeln. Also we find a high official appointed by an abbot to look after the various churches subject to the monastery; such being the case at Evesham about the year 1035 where we read that the abbot Aelfward appointed Avitius the prior to be the dean of Christianity (*decanus Christianitatis*) for the whole vale of Evesham. (*Chronicon Abbatia de Evesham*, Rolls Series, p.83.) At Worcester there was no abbot; and if the deans mentioned in the bond of union were not priors they must at least have been officials in high authority.

²¹ Similar customs of commemorations of departed brethren exist in monastic communities to the present day. Among the English Benedictines, on the death of a monk the brethren of his monastery celebrate a solemn dirge and mass and a mass *de Requiem* is said or sung also on the third, seventh and thirtieth days from the death as well as on the first anniversary. Moreover, each priest says seven masses for the deceased, and each religious not a priest seven offices of the Dead. For thirty days a cross is put in the place occupied by the deceased in the refectory, and his portion of food is each of those days given to the poor, that they may pray for his soul.

²² CCC. Cambridge, MS, cxi. f. 55; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, p. 3; Thorpe, *Diplomatarium Aevi Saxonici*, p. 615

There are also several records of manumissions from serfdom, of which the following are interesting. They are to be found in a manuscript Anglo-Saxon book of the Gospels, in the library of Corpus Christ College, Cambridge.

- (a) Here in this book of Christ is witnessed that Edric of Ford has bought Saefgu his daughter from Aelfsige the Abbot and the Convent of Bath to perpetual liberty, as also her children.
- (b) In this book of Christ is shown that Aelfric Scot and Aegelric Scot have been given perpetual liberty in behalf of the soul of the Abbot Aelfsige. This was done in the presence of the whole convent. (Aelfsige died in 1087).
- (c) In this book of Christ is shown Aelfwig Scred has redeemed himself from the Abbot Aelfsige and the whole convent by the payment of one pound. All the Convent of Bath are witnesses of this. May Christ deprive him of sight who shall alter this writing.

This Aelfsige was the last of the abbots of Bath, and with his death began a new phase in the life of the monastery, even as the coming of the Norman opened a new page in the history of the land.

CHAPTER TWO. THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF BATH

It may be remembered that Heathored, bishop of the Hwiccas, made over the abbey of Bath to King Offa of Mercia. The succeeding kings, whether of Mercia or of Wessex, or of Anglo-Saxon England, deemed this sufficient reason for holding their patronal right; and therefore with or without advice they themselves appointed the abbots. It is not unlikely that this custom arose in many places from the abbey being of royal foundation, and the kings did not readily surrender a right once acquired.

We do not find on the death of the abbot Aelfsige anyone was appointed to succeed him, and it came about that the new bishop of Wells, John de Villula, finally stepped into his place. This prelate, who was a native of Tours, had been chaplain to the king, and succeeded Giso in the see of Wells in 1088. He was a skilled physician, and he seems to have been a man of some learning, of refinement and of social tastes. Therefore it is not unlikely that William of Malmesbury had some ground for saying that Bishop John 'thought it not at all honourable to live without fame in a mere village (Wells) and had it in his mind to transfer his throne to Bath.'²³ If such was his mind, it was only in agreement with the decision of the Council of London in 1075, which decreed the transfer of episcopal sees from villages or small towns to greater centres of population. Whatever therefore his personal motives, John de Villula was justified in seeking to transfer his see from Wells to Bath. He did not however obtain William the Conqueror's sanction, and was compelled to await the accession of William Rufus, who complied with his request in the year 1088. The king in that year granted to the bishop 'the abbey of St Peter, at Bath ... for the augmentation of the bishopric of Somerset, and for the special end that he may set up in that place his episcopal chair.'²⁴ Moreover, between the years 1094 and 1098 the king made over to the bishop the whole city of Bath with all rights and privileges appertaining thereto, and this to enable the bishop to maintain his pontifical throne there with due honour. Tradition says that the bishop 'greased the king's hands with some white ointment' in the shape of a gift of money, and that the city itself was bought with five hundred pounds of silver. This is asserted by William of Malmesbury, and also by writers of a later age. The tongues of gossips wagged even in those days, and the character of William Rufus lent colour to many strange stories; but the discontent of the monks of Bath and of the canons at Wells may have given rise to the story. Wells had lost its pre-eminence; the canonical establishment formed there by Bishop Giso in was broken up, the Conventual buildings and the common life of the canons being destroyed by Bishop John. The monastery of Bath lost its independence; and though it increased in

²³ *Gesta Pontificum*, Rolls Series, p.194.

²⁴ CCC. MS. cxi, f. 99; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, i. 37.

splendour from being the cathedral, with the community as the diocesan chapter, the abbacy was absorbed in the episcopacy, and the resident superior, now a cathedral prior, became in some things subject to the bishop as both diocesan and abbot. If we may trust William of Malmesbury, the early conduct of the bishop towards the monks was not calculated to conciliate them. 'He was rather hard upon them' says the chronicler, 'because they were stupid and in his opinion mere barbarians, and he took away all the lands upon which they depended for food, and doled out by his lay stewards a scanty allowance.'²⁵ But by the introduction of foreign monks and by the effect of training, we may suppose the community became more to his mind, for he showed himself a little more kindly; 'he granted the prior some portion of the lands, that he might be able to support himself and his guests somewhat.' This sounds but little. William of Malmesbury speaks, however, of many great works begun and finished by him, not merely in the material adornment of the house and furnishing it with books, but also in watching over the progress of the community; and he is able to say that the monks 'are praiseworthy both on account of their skill in letters and their assiduity in their religious duties.'²⁶ It is probable that the learned Athelheard of Bath was a monk of this house.

William of Malmesbury says that Bishop John built the church of St Peter from the foundations 'magno et elaborato parietum ambitu.' Living at a time when the great Norman churches being erected, and being a man of taste and of aspirations not likely to be satisfied with anything not befitting the dignity of his episcopal city, his ambition was to raise a cathedral that might hold its own with the other notable churches of his day. We have little to tell us of the style or size of the Norman church of Bath; the only visible traces are remains of groups of piers which may be seen at this day through gratings in the floor of the present church. The work was dear to the heart of the bishop, so much so indeed, that he put aside all issues and profits arising from the city of Bath 'to be laid out in perfecting the new work which I have begun.'²⁷ He perhaps did not live to finish it. The record of his benefactions says only that 'ecclesiam illam a fundamentis inceptit, et testitudines inferiores fecit.'²⁸

In the year 1106 John de Villula had so far become attached to his monastery as to make over to it again what he had taken away, and also to bestow on it many rich gifts. In a most formal grant, duly witnessed, after stating how he had laboured 'that the head and mother church of the bishopric of Somerset shall be in the city of Bath, in the church of St Peter,' he goes on to say 'to which holy Apostle and to the monks his servants I have restored their lands, which I formerly held unjustly in my possession, in as free and perfect a manner as Alsius the abbot held them before me; and whatever I have improved or acquired, or whatever profit has arisen from them, I have made over entirely to their hands.' He then makes over to the monks several properties of his own, and at the close he gives also all his pontificalia and treasures 'to St Peter and his monks for ever as their own, for the remission of my sins.'²⁹ In spite therefore of the assertion of William of Malmesbury that he could not be induced to restore fully to the monks their lauds even on his death bed, the bishop seems to have done his best to make full restitution, sixteen years before. He died at an advanced age on December 29th, 1122, after an illustrious pontificate of thirty four years, and was buried before the altar of the Blessed Virgin in his cathedral church. Centuries later, Leland the antiquary speaks of having seen his tomb:

'This John pullid down the old chirch of St Peter at Bath, and created a new much fairer and was buried in the middle of the Presbyterie thereof, whos image I saw lying ther a nine yers sins, at the whiche tyme al the chirch that he made lay to waste and was onroffed and weds grew about this John of Tours sepulchre.'³⁰

²⁵ *Gesta Pontificum*, p.195

²⁶ *Id.* p. 196

²⁷ *CCC. MS.* p.113; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, i. 53

²⁸ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p.314; *Somerset RS*, vol. 7, ii. 808

²⁹ *Somerset RS*, i. 53, above quoted.

³⁰ Leland, *Itinerary*.

But the story of the decay of the church is to be told later.

The munificence of the bishop aroused the generosity of a few great persons in the county of Somerset, and among the most illustrious were William de Mohun and Walter de Douai. The former was Lord of Dunster and the latter of Castle Cary, and both had been distinguished followers of the Conqueror, and were great landowners in Somerset in 1086. William de Mohun, with the consent of his wife Adeliza, gave to the church of St Peter of Bath the church of St George at Dunster and much valuable property there, 'that the bishop and monks of Bath may build and raise the church of St George.' He also gave them 'himself' a donation literally carried out when he was borne to his tomb in the cathedral church of Bath. Walter de Douai and his family gave the church of Bampton, in Devon, the churches of Bridgwater and Cary in Somerset, and much land also. So by degrees the property and the advowsons in the hands of the cathedral church and the monks of Bath became of considerable extent and value.

It was a common custom to obtain from successive authorities confirmations of rights and privileges once granted, for in those days the impression prevailed that the grants of one donor could not be safely held to bind his successor; indeed, with the uncertain tenure of power which sometimes existed, it was held by a point of wisdom to make assurance doubly sure by securing confirmatory grants from those who might be prospective heirs. So we find in the charters of the various Saxon kings to Bath; so we find in the confirmation of the grant of William Rufus to Bath by Henry I, Robert Duke of Normandy, Stephen and Henry II. The archbishops of Canterbury also, St Anselm and Theobald,³¹ gave charters of confirmation as an earnest of the rights of the church of Bath and of their protection. But there exists in the Bath Chartulary of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, a charter of higher authority still, which is especially interesting as setting forth the possessions of the church of Bath, at a date when matters had become settled.

Robert of Lewes, the third bishop of Bath (1136-1166) had thought it well to apply to the Holy See for confirmation and protection of all the possessions and rights of his church. The Pope was the Englishman, Adrian IV; and he, in a charter of January 21st 1155-6, declares that 'We take the church of the monastery of St Peter at Bath under the protection of the blessed Peter and ourselves,' and he goes on to express in detail what possessions and rights belonged to Bath; Lyncombe, South Stoke, Priston, Evesty, Welmendon, Stanton, Corston, Ashwick, Cameley, Olveston, Ashton, five hides in Weston, North Stoke, Charlecombe, a hide and a half in Easton, Ford, Hampton, Woodwick, the church of Bampton, the church of Dunster, the church of Bridgwater and all its appurtenances ... the city of Bath and all its appurtenances, etc. ... also Claverton, four hides in Easton, Dogmersfield, the salt springs in the New Forest called Arnwood and five hides in Weston.' And he points out 'these donations, and also the transfer of the episcopal see, we confirm to thee, and through thee to thy church, by our apostolical authority, and decree that they remain so for ever.' And there follows soon after the usual saving clause, 'salva in omnibus apostolicae sedis auctoritae.'³² The bulk of these possessions, with some few others which were obtained later on, remained with the priory of Bath until the dissolution of the monasteries.

The first prior of whom we have notice was John, whose name occurs in the affairs of the monastery in 1121 and the following year. How long he ruled and when he died, there is no direct evidence to show. He was appointed to his office by Bishop John de Villula, and all his successors were appointed by the bishops of Bath until the year 1261, when a free capitular election of their prior was granted to the monks.

The bishop who succeeded John de Villula was Godfrey. He seems to have been a Fleming by birth, and had been chaplain to Adeliza the queen of Henry I. He was canonically elected by the monks of Bath, as he himself testifies, and was consecrated on August 26th 1123. A pious and kindly man, he was a good friend to the monks. He recovered for the see the manor of Dogmersfield,

³¹ It is noticeable that Archbishop Theobald styles the church of Bath 'of the apostles Peter and Paul.' This is the earliest appearance of the double title.

³² CCC. MS. cxi, p. 130; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, i. 74

restored to the monks the villa of Combe, and enriched their library with many books. He died on August 16th 1135, and was buried on the north side of the high altar of his cathedral church of Bath.

In the Easter of 1136, in a general assembly at Westminster, King Stephen bestowed the temporalities of the see of Bath upon the new bishop, Robert de Maud, after his due canonical election. This Robert was a monk of Lewes. In the first year of his episcopate he made a donation to the prior and brethren of Bath confirming to them the restoration of the five hides in Weston and the villa of Combe, and granting them the full tithe of Barton and of Lyncombe, and 'the tithe of my vineyards at Lyncombe and Beckenofna (possibly Beacon Hill). Of the quality of the produce of these vineyards we can but imagine: certainly in those early days native grapes were not uncommon. He also granted their chapels of Bath and elsewhere to be so subject to the free jurisdiction of the prior that he might canonically appoint and remove the incumbents. The manor of South Stoke for their maintenance and clothing, and leave to construct a mill near his *vividarium* as also twenty measures of salt, he gave them absolutely for the soul and memory of his predecessor bishop John. All these donations he made to them on a solemn occasion when he dedicated an altar to the Holy Trinity.³³

Not long after this, on July 29th 1137, a great fire took place at Bath, by which the greater part of the city was destroyed, the cathedral church much damaged and the Conventual buildings seemingly totally ruined. Bishop Robert is said³⁴ to have spent much money in repairing and completing the church of Bishop John de Villula, and also in raising new Conventual buildings – chapter house and cloister, dormitory, refectory and infirmary. No doubt the civil war in Stephen's reign must have hindered the progress of the work, but all seems at length to have been completed.

The second prior whose name occurs is Benedict. He it was who acted as Bishop Robert's agent at Rome in 1155 to seek confirmation from Pope Adrian IV of the possessions and privileges of the episcopal church of Bath, as has been already detailed. About the same date as the bishop dedicated in his church a cross, which was intended to be an object of special veneration; and indulgences were granted to all who should visit the church of Bath on the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.³⁵ Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury, granted twenty days indulgence and participation in the prayers and good works (*beneficia*) of the church of Canterbury; Mark, bishop of Cloyne, granted twenty days indulgence; Nicholas, Bishop of Llandaff, granted an indulgence of twenty days and a participation in the good works (*beneficia*) of the church of Llandaff. The grant of Bishop Robert himself is interesting, as showing the origin and reason of the devotion and the indulgence.

It was probably at the same time that Nicholas, Bishop of Llandaff, dedicated an oratory in the suburb of the city of Bath in honour of St Werburge, virgin, and St John, the evangelist and St Catherine, virgin and martyr, at the petition of the prior, Peter, and the whole community of Bath and others. Granting also on the solemnities of the above saints twenty days indulgence to those who had 'confessed' – 'ut devotio fidelium ibi augeatur et deus noster ab omnibus et per omnia benedicatur.'³⁶

Prior Benedict seems to have died before his return from Rome, and his successor Peter comes before us only in 1157 and 1159, except for the undated mention of his name in the above grant of the bishop of Llandaff. Between that time and the notice of the next prior, Hugh, Bishop Robert died on August 31st, 1166 and was buried before the steps of the high altar of his church of Bath.

Then commenced a long vacancy of nearly eight years in the see. Henry II was engaged in his quarrel with St Thomas Becket, and he did not show himself disposed to do justice to the Church; but at length, in 1174, Reginald Fitz Jocelin de Bohun was duly elected Bishop of Bath, and was consecrated on June 23rd of that year. There is no record available of the name of the prior of Bath at that time, or of the condition of the church and community. One fact about the election of Bishop

³³ CCC. MS. cxi. p. 119; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, i. 61

³⁴ *Historiola*, p. 24

³⁵ CCC. MS. cxi. p. 54; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, i. 2

³⁶ CCC. MS. cxi. p. 54; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, i. 3

Reginald foreshadows the long contention which afterwards took place between the monks of Bath and the canons of Wells. The latter bore it hard that they should have been displaced from their pre-eminence and that the episcopal see should have been removed from among them. Accordingly they themselves also elected Reginald as Bishop, and sent to Pope Alexander III for the ratification of their election, proclaiming their ancient rights. The Pope confirmed their election, and declared that the chapter of Wells was not to lose its right, recommending however a joint election by both chapters. This perhaps did not altogether please either the monks or the canons, but it became in due time the law.

At the commencement of Bishop Reginald's rule, if not earlier, a certain Hugh was prior of Bath, for his name occurs as assenting with Richard of Spraxton, dean of Wells, who died in 1180, to a grant made by the Bishop to one Richard de Ford.³⁷ Hugh was probably succeeded in or before 1180 by one Walter, who had before been sub prior of the monastery of Hyde.³⁸ He was a man of high ideals and spiritual life, and we can well believe that he raised his community to a good monastic standard. The annals of Winton relate³⁹ that he was a man 'multae scientiae et religionis,' that he was chosen prior of Bath on account of the good report of his holiness, and that he moulded the community 'monastico ordine ad unguem.' His good work did not, however, satisfy him; he was much taken with the fervour of the Carthusian monks, who had lately been introduced into England and, accordingly he left Bath and retired to Witham to a life of seclusion. What became of Bath in his absence we know not, but his absence was not for a long while. A monk of Hyde, an old friend of his, went to visit him at Witham. 'Seeing him very busy with his pot herbs and vegetables,' say the Annals of Winton, 'who had so short awhile before been intent upon the saving of souls, he said to him laughingly, *Domine Pater, quod facis est kire, quod tractas kirewiwere.*' These mysterious words, whatever they may mean, produced their effect, for Walter 'returning to himself a few days after, and understanding by the petition and precept of the great, that it was a holier thing to save many souls rather than one, returned to his priory and there persevered manfully till his death.'

We find him, in accordance with the grant of Bishop Robert, conferring different livings in Bath and the neighbourhood upon various clerks, as the chapels of St James and All Saints 'de la Biri,' the Church of St Michael in Bath, the churches of North Stoke, of Carhampton, which was a part of the Dunster property, and of Corston. His wise and energetic administration was aided by the goodwill of Bishop Reginald. The Bishop had founded a hospital for the use of the poor who resorted to the Bath waters, and had dedicated it to St John the Baptist. The monks gladly seconded him and endowed it, and the bishop, thinking it would be best looked after under monastic supervision, placed it in 1180 under the care of Prior Walter and his successors. The priors of Bath accordingly henceforth appointed the Masters of the Hospital. Richard of Devizes speaks of the mutual affection existing between the Bishop and the monks, and the memorial of his list of benefactions to them is preserved. The monks commemorated him as having either granted or confirmed 'affectuosius' for their own use various properties which had been burdened with liabilities; as having confirmed to their church 'as the mother church of Somerset' the yearly Whitsun offering. He gave them the body of St Euphemia, virgin and martyr, and many relics of saints, and also the rich alb, amice and mitre of St Peter, the Archbishop of Tarentaise, who had assisted at his consecration.⁴⁰

³⁷ *Bath Register, Lincoln's Inn MS*, p 14; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii. 42

³⁸ Although a Prior Gilbert is spoken of, it seems to be an error copied from writer to writer. The initial G of the old records probably stands for Gualterus.

³⁹ *Rolls Series*, p. 68

⁴⁰ Reginald had been to Rome in company with Richard, archbishop-elect of Canterbury, on the question of an appeal by young Henry, son of Henry II, against bishops being nominated without his consent. Their effort to secure the Pope's confirmation succeeded and Alexander III consecrated the Archbishop at Anagni, on April 7th, 1174. On the return journey, Richard consecrated Reginald at St Jean de Maurienne, in Savoy, on June 23rd of the same year. Peter, the Archbishop of Tarentaise, assisted. The last named died in 1174, and was canonised by Pope Celestine III in 1191.

He assigned forty shillings yearly from the church at Banwell to supply and maintain for ever a light 'ante corpus dominicum et sanctorum reliquias.' He enriched their library and the treasury of their sacristy, and – not least – he obtained for them or made over to them royal charters of liberties and papal grants of privileges. In November 1191, he was elected to the see of Canterbury, but he was never to occupy it. On his way from Bath he was taken ill at Dogmersfield, and he knew that his end had come. Prior Walter attended him in his last hours and gave him the Benedictine habit. 'It was not the will of God,' said the Bishop, 'that I should be an Archbishop, and it is not my will. It was the will of God that I should be a monk, and it is my will.' He died on December 26th, and three days after – on the feast of the newly canonised Saint Thomas Becket – he was buried before the high altar of the Church of Bath.

Bishop Reginald had secured the promise of the Bath convent to elect as his successor his cousin Savaric, who was at that time Archdeacon of Northampton. No notice was taken of the rights of the Church of Wells. The canons thereof protested, but in vain; and the king's justiciary put the bishop-elect in possession of the temporalities. Savaric was ordained priest on September 19th 1192 and consecrated probably on the following day. During his episcopate occurred the annexation of the abbey of Glastonbury to the see of Bath. The history of the famous struggle resulting from this does not however concern the story of the Benedictines in Bath. The action of their Bishop could not but be disapproved by them, who felt with their brethren of the ancient abbey. In some way, too, the exchange which Savaric made with the king, of the city of Bath for the abbey of Glastonbury doubtless affected them. The city was alienated to the king and the king's officials were likely to come at times into collision with the privileges and customs which the monks possessed in the city. Savaric personally, however, acted fairly towards his church of Bath: he confirmed the possessions of the monks and even added to them, and fortified them by papal confirmation. Moreover, when the treasures of churches were seized to pay Richard Coeur-de-Lion's ransom from captivity, the bishop at his own expense redeemed the Bath treasures from being melted down.⁴¹

Savaric died at 'Senes la Vieille' (which is said to be Siena or else Civita Vecchia), on August 8th, 1205 and was buried at Bath. So the restless Bishop, who from his struggle with Glastonbury had gained the title of 'malleus monachorum,' was at last at rest. Perhaps the monastic scribe who awarded him the above unenviable epithet was the author of the epigram which Godwin, in his book *de praesulibus Angliae* has handed down to us:-

'Hospes erat mundo per mundum sepmer eundo,
Sic suprema dies fit sibi prima quies.'

During the pontificate of Savaric the worthy prior Walter died at Wherwell, and was buried at Bath on May 31st 1198. He was succeeded by one Robert, who proved himself worthy to follow him. The first event of his time that was of consequence to the monastery was the acquisition in 1204, from King John, of the Barton Farm, an estate lying north west of the old city walls and forming part of the outer district known as the *hundredum forinsecum*.⁴² This was given over to the monks, with rights of jurisdiction, at a rent of £20, and by this possession the influence of the monks was much increased. The same king also, three years afterwards, conferred upon the Bath convent many privileges and exemptions. Perhaps he had good cause to do so, for he had put the convent to some expense by his visits and by his application for loans. The king, we find, was anxious to obtain a release from his debts to Bath, and the monks found it impossible to refuse the quittance. So the

⁴¹ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 314 seqq; *Somerset Record Society*, vol 7, ii. 808

⁴² The ancient city of Bath formed a small area consisting chiefly of the precincts of the old Roman baths, in the midst of which the monastery was founded. This was the 'city' given to the bishop and the monks by the king. But the outer district was larger, and had special rights of jurisdiction and greater freedom of taxation than the city enjoyed. Whatever changed took place therefore in the lordship of the city did not affect the influence and rights of the monks of the *forum extrinsecum*.

prior Robert and his convent, in 1212, granted to the king all the money owed. There certainly seems to be no point left open for the insertion of a future claim.

In the year 1204 new possessions and responsibilities came to the Bath monks. King John, when Earl of Morton, had founded in 1185 at Waterford in Ireland, a Hospital dedicated to St John, putting it in charge of a Master and brethren. But before very long the brethren, under their master Peter, agreed with prior Robert and the convent of Bath to surrender their house to the convent, so that it became a cell of Bath, and was governed by a prior appointed from there. Other houses were added at Cork and Youghal, with some dependent churches, but all were subject to the prior of St John's at Waterford, as warden of the Irish estates. The difficulties of dealing with these then distant possessions will appear later.

The election of a new Bishop to succeed Savaric gave the first opportunity to the two chapters of Bath and Wells of exercising the method of joint election recommended in 1174 by Pope Alexander III. They had made a formal agreement sometime after 1180, the prior and convent of Bath and Dean Alexander and the chapter of Wells ratifying it under their respective seals. They were to meet in a suitable place and treat together of the election, and when they had elected it was to be the place of the prior of Bath to announce the election and to ask for confirmation. If either chapter elected contrary to this form the election was to be null and void. The new Bishop was to be first of all enthroned in the church of Bath.

According to this agreement Jocelin Troteman, a native of Wells, was elected Bishop on February 3rd 1206. He had been a cleric of Bath, having received an annuity of one hundred shillings, and afterwards the living of Dogmersfield in place thereof, from Prior Robert. He was also one of the judges in the King's court and a canon of Wells, in which chapter his brother Hugh was archdeacon (1204-1210) and thence promoted to the see of Lincoln (1210-1234). That he was a good and capable man was summed up in the instrument of his election in which he is styled 'virum industrium et literatum et honestum.' But his election is of particular interest in the history of the convent of Bath because, first of all, the letter petitioning for his confirmation gives us the earliest known list of the monks of Bath that we possess. We find them to be forty one in number:⁴³

Robertus, <i>prior</i>	Anselmus, <i>succentor</i>	Willelmus, <i>sacrista</i>
Aluredus	Walterus	Walterus, <i>rectfatorius</i> (sic)
Vincentius	Serlo, <i>subcellerarius</i>	Johannes, <i>custos operum</i>
Hamo	Robertus, <i>granatarius</i>	Johannes, <i>elemosinarius</i>
Hugo	Walterus	Robertus
Johannes, <i>supprior</i>	Walterus	Symon, <i>precentor</i>
Aurelianus	Willelmus	Johannes, <i>tercius prior</i>
Martinus, <i>camerarius</i>	Nicholaus	Fulco
Adam	Arnaldus	Willelmus
Reginaldus	Urbanus, <i>cellerarius</i>	Hugo
Ricardus	Radulfus, <i>infirmaries</i>	Johannes
Willelmas, <i>thesaurarius</i>	Robertus	Walterus
Ricardus, <i>subsacrista</i>	Marchus	Robertus
Willelmus		Johannes

Jocelin was consecrated on Trinity Sunday 28th May 1206, in the church of the abbey of St Mary at Reading, the see of Canterbury being at that time vacant. With his labours for the welfare of Wells and the completion of its cathedral we need not be concerned. It does not appear that he did very much for Bath; though he is remembered in the Bath register as a benefactor. For a time he used the style of 'Bishop of Bath and Glastonbury'; but the monks of that place ceased not to agitate

⁴³ The original is among the manuscripts of Wells Cathedral, as also is the document of agreement as to election. Both are printed in the appendix to Canon Church's *Chapters in the Early History of the Church of Wells*.

for the recovery of their lost position, and the dispute was ended in the early part of 1219 by the following decision of Pope Honorius III, - that the union of the see of Bath to the abbey of Glastonbury was to be dissolved, that the convent was to elect their own abbot, that the Bishop was to retain the right of *patronatus*⁴⁴ which had been granted by King John in 1215, and that with the exception of four manors all the properties assigned to the Bishop in 1202 were to revert to the abbey, the advowsons remaining in the hands of the Bishop. Permission was also granted to Jocelin to use the title of 'Bath and Wells' instead of 'Bath and Glastonbury,' if precedent could be found for the former. There is no evidence that he ever exercised this privilege, for he was henceforth styled 'Bishop of Bath.' In accordance with the recent decision, Bishop Jocelin, as patron, admitted William, the abbot elect of Glastonbury, and solemnly blessed him on the feast of the Translation of St Benedict in 1219.

Jocelin, a native of Wells, a secular canon of that cathedral church, resided almost entirely there during his pontificate, save in the earlier years when he was in exile from the wrath of King John. It would seem, then, that the pre-eminence of Bath as the *sedes praesulea* was slipping away, though in nominal dignity it held the first place. In the diocesan synod of 1220, which was held at Bath, some variance arose on the question of precedence; and the prior of Bath was adjudged the seat at the right hand of the Bishop, and not the Dean of Wells. So Prior Robert maintained for himself and his successors his primacy of dignity after the Bishop. And what was he doing at Bath during the years of his government? The record of the inner life of the monastery is seldom set down unless it is notable for disorder, or on the other hand for extraordinary perfection; but the fact that the prior was a man held in such esteem as to be elected Abbot of Glastonbury in 1223 affords strong presumption that his community flourished in monastic discipline and in temporal prosperity. In the records of his administration are handed down several memoranda of the bestowal of 'corrodies.'

A corrody (*corredium*) was a 'signum honorarium' a grant of food, or food and clothing, or one or both accompanied by certain privileges, made to certain persons by way of charity, or of gratitude, or sometimes by way of 'quid pro quo' for property left to the monastery. Thus Isabella, the wife of a certain William the goldsmith, was granted 'the corrody of a monk for her life' and she was even taken 'into their society.' Is not this, perhaps an early example of a lay person being granted a 'letter of confraternity,' by which that person shared all the spiritual benefits of the community? Prior Robert also granted to Wimark 'mother of the venerable Hugh, Prior of Bath, of a full corrody of a nun for her life.' From the presumed date of the grant - 1210 - Wimark must have been a very old lady, and the appellation of 'Venerable' applied to Prior Hugh, who died before 1180, makes us gladly accept it as a sign of his claims to the special regard of the Bath monks rather than as an empty compliment.

That there was some kind of monastic school at Bath seems to be certain, for about the year 1205, Prior Robert appointed one Robert de Vallibus to be vicar of Dunster, and to help him to live more comfortably he granted him 'the corrody of a monk at the table of the monks' and moreover 'a corrody for a boy as one of the boys of the monastery of Bath.' In that youthful company the prior also placed 'William, son of Lucy' for he had taken charge of him 'so that when he comes to mature age he shall be made a monk.' Neither William nor his mother is further known to history, but we may trust that when the boy came of mature age he was enabled to choose for himself.

In only one case is the convent mentioned as joining in a grant, and that is of an annuity to one John de Berdestapel, who happened to be a nephew of Prior Robert. Perhaps this precaution was to do away with all suspicion of nepotism. His days at Glastonbury were not as peaceful as those at Bath, but into his troubles it is not necessary for us to enter. He was glad to resign his abbacy at Glastonbury in 1235, and then he retired to his old monastery to die in peace.

⁴⁴ The grant of *patronatus* states the rights belonging to it. The abbot elect was to receive the temporalities from the hand of the bishop, and to do feudal homage and service to him; and the bishop in the vacancy of the abbey was to have the custody and ordination of the abbey and grant permission to elect. Adam de Domesday, pp. 240-242

Upon Prior Robert's transfer to Glastonbury, Thomas, the first of the name, came into his place at Bath. Of his administration we know little or nothing till the year 1240 when we find him accepting the commands of Cardinal Otho, 'Cardinal Deacon of St Nicholas in carcere Tulliano,' and writing to Pope Gregory IX on Ash Wednesday that their clerk, Gilbert Cumin, was appointed as 'a fit messenger to the Pope.' This was to carry out the Papal commands to the convent to appoint a representative at the proposed General Council. Gilbert Cumin perhaps shared, however, the fate of many other clergy who were taken prisoners by the Pisan and Sicilian fleet in a battle against the Genoese on 3rd May 1240, fought by the former on behalf of the Emperor Frederick II. A difficulty nearer home was, however, about to exercise all the energies of the Bath community. Bishop Jocelin died at Wells on 19th November 1242, and whatever affection he had for Bath he loved Wells more, and left directions that at Wells he should be buried. This was contrary to law and precedent, the predecessors of Jocelin having been buried at Bath from the time of Giso, and it being the prerogative of the cathedral church to be the burial place of its bishops. This act of Jocelin opened the floodgates of discord.

The canons of Wells, perhaps thinking to bring about the pre-eminence of their church, determined to secure the burial of Bishop Jocelin at Wells as quickly as might be, and they did not send formal notice to Bath till three days after the Bishop's death that the convent should join them in taking steps towards a new election. But the monks were beforehand with them, and were already pushing for an election independently of the Wells chapter, being determined to make an effort to recover their position. The Prior and convent sent as their proctors two of their number, Richard de Kanyng and Gilbert de Dunster, to King Henry III at Bordeaux, asking for licence to elect. The Wells chapter, finding out this, protested and threatened to appeal to Rome. They had been rebuffed by the convent of Bath on 22nd November, and they made their formal protest on the Feast of St Lucy, 13th December 1242. Again, on 19th December, they sent a deputation to Bath to remonstrate; but finding their efforts ineffectual they appointed their dean, John Saracenus, and canon Robert de Marisco as their proctors to petition the King and carry their appeal to Rome. Perhaps the monks were disposed not to push matters too far; for on the Feast of St Thomas the martyr (29th December) they sent notice to the canons that they had appointed their fellow monks, Thomas de Cardiff and Thomas de Tewkesbury, as their procurators to treat on the business of the election with the dean and canons of Wells, or their proctors, at Farrington, and to decide the business, 'if it please our lord and patron, Henry, King of England.'⁴⁵

Nothing came of this, however, and the monk's hands being strengthened by the king's *conge d'elire*⁴⁶ on 6th January 1243, which reached Bath before the end of the month, they assumed a bolder attitude. They said that they were about to discuss and then proceed to the election of the Bishop on the Friday after the Purification of our Lady; 'and although neither by right nor custom is this election recognised as belonging to you in common with us, we nevertheless summon you of our goodwill, and for the sake of communicating our design, to our church of Bath...We protest however that by this summons we do not intend to derogate at all from our right or to attribute by the same any right to you.'⁴⁷ This must have alarmed the canons; but they proceeded at once to renew their protests and to assert their equality of rights, and with a view to peace they again sent their proctors and the three archdeacons, of Bath, Wells and Taunton, to arrange some common action. Prior Thomas refused to see them, and the canons were left protesting, even in the church, before the entrance to the choir. The next day, 6th February, the date fixed by the above summons of the Bath convent, the monks invited the canons to join in the election, an invitation which they indignantly refused. The monks therefore proceeded to the election without them, and nominated Roger, the precentor of Sarum, to the vacant see. Straightaway they sent to ask his consent, and the

⁴⁵ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 51; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii, 184

⁴⁶ *Conge d'elire* is a license from the Crown in England issued under the great seal to the dean and chapter of the cathedral church of a diocese, authorizing them to elect a bishop or archbishop, as the case may be, upon the vacancy of any episcopal or arch-episcopal see in England.

⁴⁷ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 51; *Somerset Record Society*, vol.7, ii, 185

deputies of the Wells chapter also sent to implore him not to accept the illegal invitation. By what arguments Roger made up his mind, we know not, but after consultation with some of his fellow canons he signified his assent.

The next step was to obtain the king's confirmation. No difficulty was expected, and therefore it was a severe blow to the monks to find that the royal mind had changed, and to receive a letter from both the king and queen at Bordeaux commanding the election of the royal treasurer, Peter Chaceporc. This did not suit the monks at all, and they faithfully adhered to their election, replying to the king and queen that they had chosen Roger, 'a person they firmly believed to be acceptable to God, fit for the position and burden of a bishopric, faithful to you, and serviceable to the kingdom,' that they could not change their minds, and begged to be excused, for they desired to obey the royal commands whenever possible. And later on they wrote to the king and queen again, as also to Walter, Archbishop of York, then justiciary and regent in England, in the same sense, and insisted that the contract of spiritual marriage between the elect and his church could not be dissolved. Perchance this reply of the Bath monks made the king give a willing ear to the protests and appeals of the Wells canons; he certainly gave them, on 12th March, the *conge d'elire* – now reserving the rights of the church of Bath, as in his previous *conge* he had 'saved the rights' of the church of Wells. The canons made a great show of this permission, and they summoned the monks to Wells for Trinity Monday, 8th June, but that if the time and place were not convenient they should meet them at Farrington Gurney on 30th April, and arrange. On the last named day a grand company of Wells dignitaries and their followers rode to Farrington, but no monk appeared. The journey was a bootless one, and when the chapter did meet in Wells on 8th June, the sum of the business was to decline to act on the king's licence because the appeals at Rome were pending.

It was useless in truth to fight the battle anywhere else. The Holy See had been vacant at the opening of the dispute; but on 24th June 1243, Cardinal Sinibaldi was elected Pope and crowned on 29th June, under the title of Innocent IV. Both canons and monks now pressed their appeals by words and by money. Dean John Saracenus and Canon John de Offington represented the canons; Thomas de Tewkesbury, the precentor, and Gilbert de Dunster were the proctors for the monks, and to these last a clerk named Nicholas was afterwards added. From the Wells registers it seems that 2600 marks in all were expended by the Wells chapter from first to last. What the monks spent does not appear; the few items set down are but fragments of the great debt which much strained the resources of their convent.

After long delays the Pope gave his first judgement on 3rd February 1244, confirming the election of Roger. On 23rd March he directed a letter from the Lateran to the prior and convent of Bath informing them of the confirmation; decreeing that in all future elections both chapters were to be equal and have an equal voice, and that any contravening of this condition would render an election *ipso facto* null and void; and reserving his decision on four controverted points. The king gave the temporalities to the bishop-elect and it was arranged by the Convent of Christ Church, Canterbury – the metropolitan see being vacant – that the consecration of Roger of Sarum should take place at Reading. Accordingly the Prior, Thomas, and the convent of Bath gave their assurance on the day after St Bartholomew's feast 1244, that this should not prejudice the rights of the Church of Canterbury; and Roger was consecrated Bishop of Bath by William de Ralegh, Bishop of Norwich, in the abbey church of Reading, on Sunday after the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin. He was afterwards duly installed at Bath, the canons of Wells protesting against the installation there instead of at Wells, and appealing for the Pope's decision on the four articles yet undecided.

The answer of Pope Innocent IV came from Lyons in January 1245, and the following decision was given:- That the throne of the Bishop should be in each of the churches of Bath and Wells; that the election should take place in each church in turns, first in Bath, the next time in Wells; that the installation should take place in the same church in which the election had been held; that the style of the Bishop in charter and on seal should be henceforward 'Bishop and Bath and Wells.' The Bishop, perhaps not liking to offend the Bath monks, did not immediately obey on this last point, and upon a complaint of the Wells chapter, Pope Innocent wrote a peremptory letter on 14th May

ordering him to obey the mandate. The Bishop could not but obey, and the title 'Bath and Wells' was adopted and has remained to this day. In the following year, Bishop Roger drew up a memorial of pacification in the spirit of the papal decree, and to this both the convent of Bath and the chapter of Wells agreed and affixed their seals. The Bishop dated his pacification at Stowey, in the parish of Chew, on 13th August 1246. Thus ended the long struggle, and the terms of the agreement remained in force till the dissolution of the Bath monastery in the days of Henry VIII. The controversy had cost the rival chapters much money, and must have caused much bitterness of feeling. The monks gained the consecration of their own candidate to the bishopric, but the canons acquired the right they strove for, and certainly the fruits of victory were with them. Bishop Roger, around whom raged so fierce a controversy, was an excellent Bishop, worthy of acceptance by both. He did not long survive the close of the disputes, for he died on the last day of the year 1247, and was buried in his cathedral of Bath, amid the monks who had chosen him and struggled for him. Henceforth Wells was to become the centre of the diocese and the burial place of its Bishops; while Bath, if it lost somewhat its pre-eminence and power as a cathedral chapter, was to gain greater freedom as a monastic community.⁴⁸

While contending for what he considered the rights of his church, Prior Thomas showed himself kind and considerate to those about him. The distress of the abbot and convent of Muchelney for want of water met with the sympathy of the monks of Bath. Through their prior, Thomas, they offered a share in the seven masses said daily in their church for benefactors, alive and dead, and in other prayers and good works, to all who should take spring water to Muchelney. They were mindful also of the kindness they received from others. The family of de Alneto, or de Anno, had always been closely connected with the priory of Bath, so it is not surprising that we read of 'the kindness received from Sir Alexander de Alneto' which Prior Thomas made some effort to requite by the grant of half a mark of silver to Alexander's son John till he should receive a benefice 'to his liking,' and in case he should die or 'choose another mode of life' by entering the monastic state, that his brother Jordan should have the half mark. At the same time the prior and convent made over a piece of ground in their garden, near his court house at Long Ashton, to him and his heirs forever – doubtless an accommodation. Indeed, Prior Thomas seems to have been very liberal with grants and corrodies. It was not for nothing that John Cohcer, citizen of Bath, and his wife Sibilla, received each day 'an allowanced loaf of bread, and a pot of convent ale, and three days a week a dish of meat, except in Lent etc, when a dish such as a monk has in the refectory. Also two relishes (*pulmenta*) a day.' Moreover the survivor of them was to have 'the full allowance.' Yet more liberally treated was Roger, 'rector of the church of St Michael without the North-gate, Bath;' and John Marshal, the 'faithful and domestic servant' of the convent, was settled in like manner 'for life.'

These are specimens of many, and yet the convent must have been somewhat in an embarrassed condition on account of the expenses of their suit with regard to the episcopal elections. For when Bishop William Button levied a subsidy on all the clergy for his journey to the Pope, Prior Thomas sent a letter in 1250 to the Bishop to say that 'their omission to contribute was not from disobedience, but from inability,' and 'they had sent Brother Gilbert, that by his words the Bishop might commiserate them.' There is evidence that money had had to be borrowed during the continuance of the suit, and perhaps the most illustrious creditor was the Lady Matilda de Champfleur, daughter and heiress of Sir William de Champfleur, of Batheaston. 'For the health of her soul,' she remitted a debt of fifty marks owing to her by the prior and convent. Furthermore, 'for the good of her own soul and the souls of her parents' she became a great benefactor, giving to Prior Thomas and the monks of Bath the church of Batheaston in free alms. In gratitude for all she had done, a formal record was made of obligations entered into by this prior and his monks for her soul;

⁴⁸ This famous dispute is described at some length by the Rev. W. Hunt in the introduction to Volume 7 of the Somerset Record Society; while Canon Church's *Chapters on the Early History of the Church at Wells* gives a more detailed account, and prints several of the documents in full.

‘that on account of her devotion to their house a perpetual mass should be celebrated for her, either by a monk or a chaplain, at the newly erected altar in their church, near the altar of the Holy Cross, on the North side, in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Catherine; that in her lifetime the mass should be in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Catherine, and for all the faithful departed, and after her death for the souls of her, her parents, friends etc. with Dirige and Placebo; that on the day of her death the convent bell should be tolled, and that its anniversary should be kept forever by feeding one hundred poor, each with bread, relish, and a dish of food, as on the anniversaries of kings and pontiffs; that each monk in priest’s orders should sing five masses for her, and those of a lower order sing three psalms, and that her name should be written in their martyrology. Moreover, that an arch should be made for her tomb near the new altar, so that all might see it from within and without (the choir), and be reminded to pray for her; that the anniversary of her father should be kept on the day of SS Simon and Jude, and of her mother on that of the Conversion of St Paul, each by feeding one hundred poor as above. They submitted themselves to the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Bath and Wells and to his censure if they failed in the above, and renounced all other means of escaping their obligation.’⁴⁹

Such is a graphic and minute account of a formal undertaking by the monks in gratitude for kindness received. That they were also not unmindful of their attached servants, or villeins, is shown by one interesting detail in which Thomas, Prior, and the convent of Bath testify that ‘we have quitclaimed John of Priston, our villein, from servitude, and grant him freedom, with his children, and chattels, and that he may have free ingress and egress, and remain on our land as a free man, or go elsewhere to better himself.’⁵⁰

The pacification made between the chapter of Bath and that of Wells was soon to be tested. Bishop Roger having died on 21st December 1247, the new election was carried out with all the required formalities. William Button, or de Bitton, archdeacon of Wells, was the elect, and was consecrated at Rome on 14th June 1248. Though he had been the opponent of the monks before, he was as Bishop a good friend to them. He was enabled in 1257 to welcome the completion of the Lady Chapel at Bath, granting an indulgence of thirty days to all who should visit the chapel and contribute of their goods to its adornment, and confirming and approving the indulgences present and future of the Archbishops and his fellow Bishops.

In 1261 Prior Thomas fell sick, and as now the Bishops were no longer resident at Bath there seemed not the same reason why they should retain in their own hands the appointment of the cathedral-prior of that church. Probably therefore the monks petitioned the Bishop William de Bitton for the right of free elections; he granted it to them in a formal charter dated from his manor of Dogmersfield, 19th May 1261. This grant was confirmed at the request of the monks, by the dean and chapter of Wells, on 5th June of the same year. It was not long before the occasion arose for the convent to use its newly acquired privilege. Prior Thomas died on 23rd June, ‘the eve of St John the Baptist, in the third hour of the day,’ and licence was sought and granted to proceed to an election. The monks decided to elect *per modum compromissi*, and Richard, the sub prior, issued a declaration that the convent would accept as Prior the person selected by their brethren, Elias de Kaynesham, Robert de Bocland, Thomas Normannus, John de Wynthon, John de Westbury, Reginald de Stanford, and Thomas de Anno. These seven electors met together, and after diligent discussion their choice fell upon the cellarer of the convent, Walter de Anno, and the election was confirmed by the Bishop. He was a member of a family long connected with the Priory of Bath, and he himself no unworthy to rule. The decree of his election styled him ‘virum providum et discretum,’ endowed with two

⁴⁹ *Lincoln’s Inn MS*, p. 32; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii. 124

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* p. 45; ii. 167

qualities most essential to a superior, and particularly to one situated as he was. No man could be found more fit to inaugurate the new period, when the Bath monks were to live under priors whom they would elect by their own free choice.

CHAPTER THREE. THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF BATH PART TWO

It was in the forty fifth year of the reign of King Henry III, Boniface being Archbishop of Canterbury and William Bytton I the Bishop of Bath and Wells, that Walter de Anno began his priorship of the convent of Bath. The times were troublous, for the long period of misrule that characterised much of the reign had led to the armed resistance of the 'popular' party among the barons, which culminated in the death of Simon de Montfort on the field of Evesham in 1265. We do not know what part, if any, the monks of Bath had in abetting or conniving in rebellion; they appear, however, to have incurred some of the penalties. Cardinal Ottobini was sent into England as legate from Pope Clement IV, and wholesale retribution fell on supporters of the rebel party; the Earl of Leicester, although dead, was excommunicated together with all his adherents, five of the Bishops were suspended, and twenty seven towns were laid under interdict. We learn that Prior Walter did not escape, for he was obliged to send a proctor for himself and his community to the legate, 'to humbly ask for the benefit of absolution in their behalf.'⁵¹

Not long after his accession the prior was called upon to take part in the election of a new Bishop. William Bytton I was buried, as we learn from the memorandum, on 8th April 1264; 'when there came to Bath, Master Adam de Glaston, vicar of Wells, bringing letters to the prior of Bath from Edward de la Knolle, the dean, and the chapter of Wells, requesting him to send his proctors to Fernthorn (Farrington Gurney) for obtaining licence to elect a Bishop.' Accordingly the prior and his convent sent a procuratorial letter 'to the dean and chapter of Wells, appointing Richard le Norreys the cellarer and Nicholas the precentor (both monks of Bath) their proctors.' The Wells chapter sent in their turn similar letters to the Bath chapter, 'appointing Nicholas de Sancto Quintino, Sir Gilbert Sar and Master Godfrey Giffard their proctors.' These proctors having been agreed among themselves, the prior and convent of Bath and the dean and chapter of Wells both sent to King Henry III for permission to elect; whereupon the king dated his royal licence on 16th April from Nottingham, where he was engaged in his campaign against the revolted Earl of Leicester. Without loss of time the convent of Bath wrote to the chapter of Wells to name proctors for the appointment of the day of the election; at the same time they themselves named 'Gilbert, sub prior and Nicholas, precentor, their proctors.' In reply to this the chapter of Wells appointed 'Master Roger de Sapwyk and Sir Gilbert Sar their proctors.'

These combined proctors appointed 'Thursday next after the feast of St Dunstan, at Wells, for the election. Thereupon, 'Edward the dean and the chapter of Wells, and Walter the prior and the convent of Bath' made a declaration 'that there had been selected the said Edward, William the archdeacon, John the sub dean, and Richard the succentor, canons of Wells, and Gilbert de Dunster, sub prior, Martin de Anno, John de Rading, and Thomas de Anno, monks of Bath, to elect a Bishop from among themselves or from the colleges of our said churches. The election to take place in the chapter house at Wells, on the Thursday next after the Feast of St Dunstan' (22nd May 1264). The election took place as determined and resulted in the choice of Walter Giffard, 'sub dean, papal chaplain, and canon of Wells,' as the new Bishop. The announcement and challenge of the election were made by the dean of Wells, in which place the election had been held; and to close the complicated procedure, on 23rd May the prior sent letters to the king and the Pope announcing the

⁵¹ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 80; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii, 266

election and begging from the latter his confirmation.⁵² Bishop Walter Giffard was not consecrated till 4th January 1265, and in the city of Paris.

The above process was repeated with each succeeding Bishop, the chapters of Bath and Wells acting throughout according to the rules laid down by Pope Innocent IV. The reign of Bishop Giffard did not long endure. He became Chancellor of the kingdom seven months after his consecration, and on 15th October 1266 was translated by Papal Bull to the Archbishopric of York. He had therefore neither time nor opportunity to do much for his diocese, and he made room for another Bishop, William Bytton, a nephew of his first namesake, and at the date of his election, 'in the church of Bath, the feast of St Scholastica (10th February 1267),' archdeacon of Wells. Yet a third time did Prior Walter have to do with an election, for Bishop William Bytton II died on 4th December 1274, and Robert Burnell, a canon of Wells, was elected in the chapter house of Wells on 23rd January 1275.

The two Byttons were benefactors to the church of Bath, in the Bath 'Liber Benefactorum' and Bishop Burnell was particularly worthy of mention. Bishop Bytton I granted the monks the right of free election of their prior, and he confirmed to them the impropriation of the church of Batheaston, of the church of St Mary de Stalls in Bath and of the chapel at Widcombe. He also gave them five dorsals; 'and at the end of his life he left to our church two vestments with stoles and maniples, and two chasubles – one black, and one red on one side and black on the other; and two pairs of tunics and dalmatics, of black colour and striped across; also a pastoral staff, with a mitre and case, and a pontifical covered with red leather; also a cross of crystal, a foot long, to carry in processions; and another cross, of silver, with relics of the cross and others; also a vessel of crystal with many relics. And he left by will to our church one hundred marks.'⁵³

The second Bishop Bytton left the prior and convent twenty marks, and remitted a debt of thirty marks due for the purchase of corn at Pucklechurch. He also established a fund of forty six marks for his anniversary, which sum of money was to yield a yearly income of twenty shillings for the pitancer of the convent and twenty shillings for the poor on the anniversary of his death. Moreover he added to the resources of the convent sacristy by giving a set of black vestments 'becomingly adorned with gold orphreys.'

Bishop Robert Burnell was a man of great family and of high position in the state. He was chancellor of the kingdom (1274-1292) under Edward I and in 1278 he was even proposed by the monks of Canterbury to be the Archbishop. He was therefore able to do much for the monks of Bath, and his good will was on a par with his power. By his influence he was able to save to the convent the right of patronage of the churches of Uffculm and Bampton in Devon, which had been disputed, and he recovered for the monks the possession of their house at Waterford and other Irish property, of which they had been deprived 'per malevolos.' At another time he upheld 'viriliter' in person, before the king at Caernarvon, the rights of Bath against a fresh attack on the Irish possessions. He also made to the brethren many grants of patronage and of property and money as well as gifts for church use: thus we read of a frontal 'with the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary embroidered thereon;' ten pieces of silk, 'more than enough to make five choir copes and a tunic and dalmatic;' a fine cope, 'embroidered in gold, with the history of Jesse, worth forty marks; and a fair silver vat for holy water, with a silver sprinkler.' From the queen's chapel he begged for them a chasuble 'decenter ornatam,' and a vestment having the coats of arms of the English and Spanish kings. 'He gave them also a piece of gold cloth, - perhaps a banner – having images of friars minor thereon; and two gold-striped cloths for the high altar; and two curtains of Eastern manufacture, one of silk and

⁵² *Lincoln's Inn MS*, pp. 91-95; *Somerset Record Society*, ii. 294-308

⁵³ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 314; *Somerset Record Society*, ii. 808

another woollen.' He seems, lastly, to have bequeathed them his heart, with an urn 'worth ten pounds' in which to place it.⁵⁴ It is no wonder that his anniversary was celebrated *in albis*.

Bishop Burnell was also to accomplish what must have been of great advantage to the convent, by securing the possession of the city of Bath. It had been made over to the king by Bishop Savaric in exchange for the patronage of the abbey of Glastonbury; but now, soon after his election, Bishop Burnell, 'elect' of Bath and Wells, made over the patronage of the abbey to King Edward I, 'in exchange for the city of Bath, together with the houses and the meadow of the said city towards the east between the haven and the city, with the advowsons of the churches, if any, in the said city and suburbs pertaining to the king, with all other appurtenances except the Barton of Bath, which the Prior and convent of Bath hold in fee-farm.'⁵⁵ The king granted this, and at the same time confirmed to the monks the Barton. The result of this was to increase the influence of the monks in the city and in many ways to bring money to the monastery from the convent rights of jurisdiction.

It may be supposed that the prior had other work to do besides electing Bishops. In 1277 he was summoned to the chapter of the Benedictine Order held at Reading on 15th September, together with the all the abbots and priors of the dioceses of Salisbury, Bath and Wells and Exeter.⁵⁶ There are also many evidences of his dealings with the property of his monastery in Bath and elsewhere, which we hope were for the best in smoothing the financial difficulties of the house. At any rate the prescribed remedy among religious bodies was near at hand, for we read that on 26th February 1277, came the archdeacon of Bath, Master Ralph de Wychem, to the cathedral, proposing to visit the priory as commissary of the Bishop. The commission was read, and 'Richard de Kaning and Gilbert Herbert, and all other monks of Bath' were cited 'to answer in the said monastery according to the Benedictine Rule.' The prior set forth certain objections to the terms of the commission, but there is no evidence to show whether the visitation took place, or if it did, with what result. The prior continued working in the quiet routine of his duty until his death in January 1290.

The sub prior and convent at once sent off two of the community, Richard of Chernbury and Philip of Bath, to London, to seek Bishop Robert Burnell's licence to proceed to an election. The election resulted in the choice of Thomas de Wynton to fill the vacant prior ship. He had been one of the electors of Bishop Burnell in 1274 and had been for some time sacristan of Bath. At the date of his election he must have been an elderly man, for after holding the prior ship eleven years he resigned, 'by reason of age and sickness.' His tenure was a busy one. That he had many debts to pay off is clear from repeated notices of his entering into bonds with several persons, but we have no means of showing whether the debts were his own or were inherited from his predecessors. The houses of Waterford and Cork were also feeling the pinch of poverty; so much so, that in the year 1298 Prior Thomas called attention to the fact that Brother John de Wells had been deputed and commanded, on account of the debts of those houses, not to receive any brothers, sisters or scholars who would be chargeable to the said houses, and that he now commanded Brother John de Cumpston, to whom had been committed the keeping of those houses, to remove all the brothers, sisters and scholars contrary to this order.

An additional item of expenditure at home was the continual subsidy that had to be paid to the king. The taxation of the clergy for royal or papal subsidies had been made according to a

⁵⁴ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 314; *Somerset Record Society*, ii. 808

⁵⁵ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 224; *Somerset Record Society*, ii. 609

⁵⁶ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 131; *Somerset Record Society*, ii. 371. In this Chapter it was ordained that the Athanasian creed should henceforth only be said on Sundays, that Vespers and Lauds should be omitted; and many other things were taken away or abbreviated in the divine office. Thomas Walsingham, in his *Gesta Abbatum Monasterii S Albani*, points out that in the next parliament, as if in punishment of such sloth or ingratitude, the king issued the statute of mortmain. (*Rolls Series*, i, 464)

valuation of ecclesiastical property drawn up under the supervision of Walter Suffield, Bishop of Norwich (1244-1266), by command of Pope Innocent IV, and known as the taxation of Norwich. In the year 1291, King Edward I, under a plea of crusade, obtained from Pope Nicholas IV a tithe of all ecclesiastical benefices for the six ensuing years, and the assessments were made according to the new valuation, which was taken upon oath.⁵⁷ The various churches and manors belonging to the priory of Bath, as well as those set apart for the prior himself and the different obedientiaries⁵⁸ of the monastery, were all assessed for the purpose, and the amounts payable are handed down to us. The king however was not content, but tried by unconstitutional means to increase the subsidies. He kept up the appearance of law by summoning the clergy to Parliament to give their consent, and he relied upon the original grant from the Pope; but so great and continued were his demands that the clergy in their turn were driven to invoke papal assistance against exactions. Boniface VIII accordingly published a bull – the famous '*Clericis laicos*' – forbidding the clergy to grant to laymen the revenues of their benefices without the permission of the Holy See, and excommunicating and otherwise censuring those who did so.

The struggle against the royal demands was not confined to the clergy; the laity were also stricken, and the names of Bohun, Earl of Hereford, and Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, are united in history with that of Robert Winchelsea, Archbishop of Canterbury, in winning for the parliament of England the right to grant or to withhold subsidies. Traces of this struggle are evident in the records of the convent of Bath. In 1295 Prior Thomas with the Bishop and the dean and chapter, gave an acknowledgment of receipt from the collectors, the Bishops of Winchester and Lincoln, of one thousand pounds of the tenth granted to King Edward 'in subsidium terrae sanctae' and also of £350 from the abbot and convent of Reading, collected in the archdeaconry of Berks and Wilts.⁵⁹ In the same year he and the convent received the king's summons to send their proctor to the parliament for 13th November, postponed afterwards to 27th November. In reply, Brother William de Hampton was named proctor, to answer for them at what they deliberately called – being determined to observe constitutional usage – 'General Convocation.' In 1297, as the king took the required subsidies by seizing the church property, and even placed the clergy out of the pale of his protection, the Archbishop summoned them to convocation, and Brother William de Hampteshyr was sent to London as proctor, as also two years later we find Brother Robert de Clopcote and Hugh Godmer sent in a similar capacity. But in spite of the *Clericis laicos* many of the clergy paid the subsidies, for the king's hand was heavy and they were as between the upper and lower millstone; among others the Bath monks must have succumbed to some extent, for in 1300 they had to apply to the Archbishop for absolution from the papal censures, Hugh Godmer, the precentor, being the proctor sent on this errand. The reply of the Archbishop, Robert Winchelsea, is recorded to the effect that he had received the letters of the penitentiary of the Pope – doubtless conveying facilities for absolution – so we may assume that the monks were speedily freed from censures.

Prior Thomas de Wynton took part in the election of one Bishop, William de Marchia, who was elected to the see of Bath and Wells in succession to Robert Burnell on 28th January 1293. The see of Canterbury was vacant at the time, and so we read that the prior and convent of Canterbury, in whom rested the rights and jurisdiction of the metropolitan see, *sede vacante*, confirmed the

⁵⁷ See Lingard's *History of England*, Edward I, chapter vii. This assessment, known as the Taxation of Pope Nicholas, continued to be the standard until Henry VIII, when a new valuation was made.

⁵⁸ The Obedientiaries were the different chief officials of the monastery, who were appointed by the abbot and carried out their duties 'jussu' and 'sub moderamine abbatis.' The chief officials were the precentor, chamberlain, sacristan, almoner, infirmarian, cellarer, kitchener and pitancer. Certain portions of the monastic property were set apart for the different officials, who had to give account to the abbot of the use of the same.

⁵⁹ Certain places, usually monasteries or cathedral treasuries were made depositaries of the money collected and the different heads of those places had to give an acknowledgement by way of security.

election, and he was consecrated at Pentecost 1293. We find the Canterbury chapter also giving dismissorial letters to several clerks, some of them at least being monks of Bath, for their ordination; the sees both of Canterbury and Bath and Wells being at that time vacant (1292-93). Among those monks were Robert de Clopcote and Robert de Sutton, who were destined to be successively priors of Bath.

One weather notice is recorded in the time of Prior Thomas, the only one that the Bath scribes happened to note. 'On Monday the fourth of the nones of January 1300 (2nd January 1300) there came from the south parts of England a strong wind, by which many belfries were overthrown, many men and animals killed, and great damage done to houses and trees.'⁶⁰ With the experience of recent times we can in some way realise this calamity. The prior himself was now failing; he had been compelled in March 1300 when summoned to parliament, to excuse himself to the king 'through weakness of body' and at length on 10th April 1301, 'on account of illness and age' he resigned his office. Provision was made for him by way of pension, by a grant of the revenues of the manors of North Stoke, South Stoke and Staunton, and an allowance from the common chamber of the monastery.⁶¹

Bath seemed fated now to experience a succession of weak or unworthy superiors, at the very period when it needed capable and good men. The Bishops, being now rarely, if ever, resident at Bath, had next to no influence in advancing the good estate of the monastery, while their position of quasi-jurisdiction which they possessed in *loco abbatis* may have prevented the remedial measures which the Benedictine General Chapters might devise from having practical effect.

Within four days of the resignation of Thomas de Wynton, the sub prior of Bath, John de Derham, had obtained the Bishop's licence and summoned the prior of Dunster and the brethren who were there; and at the election held on 14th April, Robert de Clopcote was chosen prior. Almost the first noted official act of the new superior was his taking part in the election of Bishop Walter Haselshaw, William de Marchia having died on 11th June 1302. The new Bishop himself ruled only till 1308, when he died and gave place to John de Drokenford. As the registers of Bishop de Marchia are missing,⁶² there is little evidence of his dealings with Bath; Bishop Haselshaw is set down on the roll of its benefactors as giving the impropriation of Corston and Bathampton, paying convent debts to the amount of over fifty pounds, and leaving, by his will, a hundred pounds to the prior, twenty pounds to the convent, and to Brother Robert de Sutton, 'familiari suo' the sum of twenty marks. Later on, in 1329, the prior got into trouble with the king for appropriating Corston in defiance of the statute of mortmain, but received full pardon on payment of a fine.

Before this proof of Bishop Haselshaw's liberality, a welcome aid had come to the convent in 1304 by a grant from the king, Edward I, to hold two annual fairs, one on their manor of Lyncombe

⁶⁰ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 195; *Somerset Record Society*, ii. 533

⁶¹ *Ibid.* p. 211; ii. 578

⁶² Two curious notices regarding his episcopate occur in the Bath register. The first refers to his calling for the interference of the king to restrain a certain Simon Savage from considering himself rector of Widcombe. The parson had been contumacious and had been excommunicated, but having a soul above censures he persisted in keeping the keys of the church, so the secular arm was needed in order to evict him. The second notice touches upon the great work of building the Chapter-house at Wells. The canons were involved in great debt thereby, and Bishop Haselshaw granted them a pension of ten pounds a year, out of which they were to put aside ten marks per annum for the sustentation of two chaplains, who were to say each a mass daily in the church of the blessed Andrew of Wells for certain specified benefactors. Also the dean and chapter were to pay four shillings a year 'for keeping a light, the ornaments, and bread and wine, at the altars of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Blessed Andrew the Apostle, built on each side the choir, where the chaplains shall say mass.' (*Lincoln's Inn MS*, pp. 236 and 229; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii. 633, 625.)

The beautiful chapter-house at Wells, over the treasury, was built through the energy of Dean Godfrey, and finished in 1319.

on the eve and feast of the Finding of the Cross (3rd May), and the other on their manor of Barton on the eve and feast of St Lawrence (10th August), 'nisi ferie ille sint ad nocumentu vicinarum feriarum.'⁶³ These must have been fertile sources of income, but nevertheless they did not suffice to place the convent finances on a good footing. In truth Prior Robert seemed not to be the man fitted to use his advantages. He was careless, if we may judge only from his imprudence in granting many corrodies when his house could ill afford it, and from his readiness to enter into bonds for loans. To do him justice, however, one form of corrody he could hardly avoid.

At the very commencement of his prior ship the king sent a request to the convent to receive and provide for life for a sick servant of his named John of Windsor. The monks may have felt this rather hard, but they made no complaint against the injustice of the plea, and accordingly John was received. And so well did Bath agree with him that he lived a very long time – till 1337. In 1330 Edward III bethought him of the Bath precedent, and forced another pensioner on the monks, whom they received with much grumbling. This was John of Trentham, called 'the Harper' and he also lived a long time – 23 years. But when John of Windsor at last died, the king appointed a certain William Joye to take his place. This was too much. The monks cried out and said the king had no claim, but that their property had been given to them in free alms. An inquisition was accordingly held at Bath by the king's orders and it was clearly shown that the monks held their goods by charter in free and perpetual alms that the king had no claim, and that John of Windsor had been admitted only by favour. The king therefore ceased to trouble the convent till 1352, when he attempted to secure John the Harper's place for one Andrew de Brooks. Of the proceedings we know nothing except that the monks neither affirmed nor denied the king's right, but simply said 'We cannot; the substance of the monastery is exhausted.' This was an unanswerable plea; but at the same time we find that Prior de Clopcote was in continual arrears with his rent to the king for the manor of Barton, and he was actually summoned for the amount of £260, many year's rent due. The details of the prior's defence do not appear: he undertook to pay, however, and was allowed a respite.

Prior Robert, though poor and in debt, was not averse to an external dignity which, after possessing it himself, he was quite willing to leave to his successors. Through Edmund, Earl of Kent, the king's brother, he strove in 1321 to obtain from Pope John XXII the right to *pontificalia* such as were worn by mitred abbots. The Pope sent a courteous letter to the prince, saying that he hoped he would not be offended at his declining his request 'cum ad honorem vel decorum ecclesiae non pertineat ut quis insignia deferat suae non congruentia dignitati.'⁶⁴

Bishop John de Drokenford evidently tried to improve the condition of Bath, for he made a visitation of the convent in 1313 and exercising his right of patronage, he made frequent changes in the office of sacristan,⁶⁵ appointing the following monks – William de Hampton in 1315, William de Canyng in 1316 and John de Cumpton in 1319, and later on, in 1325, Hugh de Dover. These were patent signs of his dissatisfaction, and seem to bear some reference to the dilapidation of the cathedral fabric, which decay was becoming more serious, and was aggravated by the emptiness of the Bath treasury and the consequent neglect of the structure. Perhaps it was at the instance of the Bishop that the prior sent proctors in 1310 to beg for the cathedral fabric; the Bishop at any rate seconded the monk's efforts by ordering the rectors of churches 'to admit them after mass on festivals and give them the whole collection.'⁶⁶ In 1324 he again licensed a collection throughout his

⁶³ Warner. *History of Bath*. Appendix 89

⁶⁴ *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, introduction, p. lxi. – From BM Vatican Transcripts. Add. MS. 15327. John xxii, an. 6, ep. 151

⁶⁵ The sacristan's office in those days was a most important one, as that official had charge of everything connected with the sanctuary and the treasures of the church. On him, too, would devolve the care of the fabric; the Bishop accordingly attached much importance to finding a competent man to fill the post.

⁶⁶ *Bishop Drokenford's Register*, p. 60; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. i

diocese, and as late as 1354, as we learn by a memorandum, a certain John de Bridgwater had a proxy under seal of the chapter of Bath to collect alms from the faithful in Christ for two years, for the use of the fabric of the cathedral church of Bath.

In the midst of money difficulties the prior was bearing hardly upon his community. We know not if the letter of the Bishop hands us down the actual truth or represents in an aggravated form the complaints of the monks. Here is Bishop Drokensford, however, writing to the prior a formidable indictment.

The property of the aforesaid house (of Bath) is now so done away with or consumed by the exceeding folly or negligence of its custodians that the monks of the said church are not only – shame to tell it! – without bread and bear at meal time, but also are deprived altogether of the usual dishes of meat and fish, and common and unwholesome food which they cannot relish is inhumanly given them. And if anyone of them takes it amiss, murmurs or guardedly asks, even with that good zeal which is according to the rule and laudably exercised according to the old established custom of the house, that you would cause to be supplied the defect of the things that have been taken away or have been given of bad quality, he is at once threatened with contumelious words – that worse food shall be given him and heavier punishment follow.⁶⁷

We may suppose the monks did fare better after this, since the sub prior and convent wrote to the Bishop on 6th July 1323, ‘the ordinance lately made for our kitchen by unanimous consent of the prior etc., has been in use. We pray you confirm it, as one that works smoothly.’⁶⁸

Prior Robert visited Ireland in 1306, but there is no record that he did better there. The administration of Brother John de Sukeford, whom he appointed Prior of Waterford in 1307, is unknown to us; that of Brother Hugh de Dover, later on, as Prior of Waterford and warden of the Irish property, was by no means praiseworthy. This man acted so badly that he had at length to be peremptorily recalled by Prior de Clopcote’s successor. The last notable act of Robert de Clopcote’s term of office was his share in the election of Bishop Ralph de Shrewsbury, or de Salopia, in succession to John de Drokensford on 2nd June 1329. Weary, troubled and unsuccessful, the prior sent in his resignation to the Holy See in 1331, and, before the answer came from Rome, he died on 26th February 1332.

We must not easily assume that Robert de Clopcote was unworthy; and it is pleasurable to insert a proof of the care of the prior for his departed brethren, as we find it is told in the Bath register:

‘Be it noted that whereas the corrodies of all the brethren deceased have been from ancient times distributed for the benefit of their souls during the year following their death – consisting, that is, of bread, beer and a cooked dish – the venerable father Dom Robert de Clopcote, by the grace of God Prior of this place, moved by God with the deepest compassion, and wishing the more speedily and fully to help the souls of his brethren in the future, has decreed that in future the maintenance of the brethren wherever they die shall during the space of a year following their death be distributed for their souls in the place where they have died. Also that five *tricennalia* shall be celebrated out of the sum of twelve

⁶⁷ Extract as from the Register of Bishop Drokensford. Harl. MS. 6, 954, p. 70. The register itself is at Wells. The Bishop goes on to exhort the prior, by most sacred motives to be a careful steward, and a kindlier ruler in word and deed. (See *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 1; *Calendar of Bishop Drokensford’s Register*, p. 193.)

⁶⁸ *Bishop Drokensford’s Register*, p. 217; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. i

shillings and sixpence (set apart for the purpose). Within the octaves of the following feasts – Christmas, the Epiphany, the Purification and Annunciation of the Blessed Mary, Easter, the Ascension of Our Lord, Pentecost, Trinity Sunday, the Assumption and Nativity of the Blessed Mary – three masses of the particular festivals shall be celebrated, together with a collect for the brother or brethren departed in that year. And for the ten pence remaining, ten psalters shall be sung on the anniversary of the brother or brethren deceased.

To secure the faithful performance of this, he has ordained, with the consent of the whole chapter, that the sub prior for the time being, with an assistant chosen by the whole convent, shall receive in full the portion of the first term following the death of the brethren, the day after the said feasts, from the hands of the chamberlain then in office. As for the subsequent terms, they shall cause the prescribed masses to be celebrated and psalters to be sung, faithfully and with due observance of the times, and they shall themselves be held responsible. At Dunster and in Ireland the priors of those places shall on their own conscience cause the above to be observed.

And that this pious ordinance and wholesome satisfaction may be unfailingly observed in perpetuity, the aforesaid prior and the whole convent have unanimously issued sentence of excommunication against all who contravene – if, which God forbid, there be any such, and have decreed that this ordinance be inserted in the missal of the high altar of the places mentioned, and in the martyrology of Bath, and also placed for perpetual remembrance in the treasury on a public document sealed with the capitular seal, as an irrevocable testimony of such a praiseworthy deed. The above ordinance was appointed and made of the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary, in the year of our Lord 1316.⁶⁹

This worthy example must have aroused the zeal of some of the members of the house, as we find two of them devising further means of helping the dead.

‘Be it noted that Brothers Roger de Anno and Robert de Radyng, monks of the church of Bath, divinely inspired with zeal for what is right, and considering that the funerals of the monks, and even of the lay brothers, dying in the said church were in past times not fittingly celebrated, acquired for the purpose of carrying out more becomingly in future the burials of the monks and the brothers, a rent of six shillings issuing from a certain house outside the Avon gate, and did, with the consent and will of Robert de Clopcote of pious memory, at that time prior of Bath, assign the same to the chamberlain’s office. That is to say, the chamberlain for the time being is bound to find thirty-six candles at the obit of each monk who dies in the said church, and twelve at the obit of each lay-brother. Moreover, on the feast of St John the Evangelist he must supply fifty candles to burn at the procession and at the mass at the altar of the same, one candle to burn continually from the first vespers till after the compline of the day following. And also, on the feast of St John at the Latin gate, the said chamberlain shall keep one candle continually burning from the first vespers till after the compline of the day following. On the feast of St Catherine, at the procession of the first vespers and at mass, the service is to be held solemnly, with thirty-six candles burning in her chapel; on the festivals of St Elphege, St Leonard and St Giles, at the procession and mass of each of these saints’ twenty-four candles shall be burnt. And the aforesaid chamberlain shall pay twelve pence to twelve clerks, who shall sing their psalters on the day of St John at the Latin gate, and the same on the day of St Catherine the virgin, for the soul of the Reverend Father Robert de Clopcote, who kindly gave his assent to this, and also for

⁶⁹ *Lincoln’s Inn MS*, No. 810

the souls of Brothers Roger de Anno and Robert de Radyng, and for the souls of all brethren deceased in the said church, and for the souls of all the faithful departed.⁷⁰

Sentence of excommunication was fulminated against all contraveners in this case also.

The monks buried Prior de Clopcote on 5th March, and, having received the licence of the Bishop, they proceeded to an election on the following day and chose Robert de Sutton, the 'familiaris' of Bishop Walter Haselshaw. His election was confirmed in the church of Claverton by Master John Martel, the *officialis* and commissary of the Bishop, and he was inducted and installed by the same on the 14th March. The new prior was a most worthy man, and he might have done much for his monastery had he been left long enough in office. He lost no time in remedying a crying evil; for as early as 30th March he recalled Hugh de Dover from Ireland, by command of Simon Meopham, Archbishop of Canterbury, and gave particular instructions as to the Bath possessions there. The said Hugh did not prove very obedient, for a little later the prior wrote to him again, commanding him to send a reply to his former letter, and yet once more he had to write, this time recalling him to Bath for certain excesses under pain of excommunication. Shortly after, 30th August 1332, Thomas de Foxcote was appointed in his place.

Yet rumours went abroad that the Pope had conferred the prior ship on Dom Thomas Crist, and Prior de Sutton sought private information from a noted lawyer, Sir John de Shoreditch, who had lately been at the Papal court at Avignon, as to whether the rumour was correct. The event proved the truth; as Prior de Clopcote had resigned to the Holy See, Pope Clement VI claimed the right to nominate a successor. An Italian cleric accordingly appeared before the Bishop, Ralph de Shrewsbury, bearing Papal letters which appointed Thomas Crist Prior of Bath. The Bishop was obliged therefore to admit the new prior, which he did on 24th September 1332, and Robert de Sutton resigned his office. He was honourably treated, being made Prior of Dunster and given a pension of twenty pounds, and permitted to choose what brethren he would as his companions in his new abode.⁷¹

Thomas Crist exercised his office for the space of eight years, but there is no evidence to prove whether he met with any conspicuous success. He confirmed his predecessor's appointment of Thomas de Foxcote as Prior of Waterford, who was particularly empowered 'to revoke any alienations made by Brother Hugh de Dover.' But in 1337 a change was resolved upon. On 30th March, Brother John de Kingswode was appointed 'prior, keeper and administrator of all their possessions, as well temporal as spiritual, in Ireland;' yet on 22nd April, when Thomas de Foxcote was ordered to retire, we find a secular cleric, 'Master Giles le Englys,' associated somehow in office with John de Kingswode. Two days afterwards we learn that the former was appointed steward of all the property in Ireland, and on 26th April John de Kingswode received notice that his appointment as keeper was annulled and that the office was committed to Master Giles alone. It is not easy to understand this continued change; but we may conceive that the trouble with the Irish property and recent exchanges for English property that had been allowed by the royal grant in 1334, gave cause for much anxiety, and that John de Kingswode still remained Prior of Waterford, while the agency of the estates was put entirely into the hands of the more worldly-wise Master Giles.

In the same year, 1337, it is probable that Robert de Sutton died at Dunster, for on 5th July Brother Adam de Cheddar was appointed to be prior there. Almost at that very date occurs clear proof that the Bishops of Bath and Wells had quite given up any residential connection with the old church of Bath, for on 25th June Bishop Ralph leased the old Episcopal palace – the building first erected by Bishop John de Villula – to the prior and convent of Bath for an annual rent of twenty

⁷⁰ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, No. 811

⁷¹ *MS Register of Ralph de Shrewsbury*, f. 71 verso

shillings, and included with a place called 'Rokhye' adjoining; - 'a certain house called Bishopsboure and a place adjoining within the walls of the close of the Bishop's Palace, within which is called a place called Rokhye which house and place contain in length seventy feet and in width one hundred and thirty feet.'⁷² Of these buildings not a trace now remains above ground.

Prior Crist had his share of debts, of which we meet with evidences in the record of bonds given by him that amounted to more than £700 of money of that day. It has been suggested that some of the debts were due to losses in the trade in wool, and it is of interest to notice that the weaving industry in which at one time Bath had its share in the West of England, is said to have owed much to the encouragement of the monks of that city. Perhaps, too, purchases by Prior Crist from Marlborough dealers of three hundred and six hundred sacks of wool are evidences of this fact. Warner, in his *History of Bath*, speaks of the shuttle having been introduced into the arms of the monastery on account of this: there is no authentic record, however, that the monks ever used the shuttle as an armorial bearing.⁷³ What may have been the prior's embarrassment we know not, nor is it clear that age or sickness furnished him with a motive for retiring: he followed, however, the example of his predecessor, and resigned his office in August 1340. Like his predecessor he also received ample provision, but without any burden of office. He was granted 'a becoming house, with a monastic chaplain, a squire and a groom to attend him, and sufficient meat and drink and other provision for himself and them, and wood for his fire. The manor and church of North Stoke were made over to him, with all rights and the stock on the land, with the obligation of repairs and of leaving the same amount of stock at his death.'⁷⁴

The successor of Thomas Crist was Dom John Iford, or de Ford. If the accepted conclusion is warranted by the records, and the one great blot upon his character be not all a mistake, his term of office was a calamity for Bath and he was unworthy of his profession. But it is not evident that he ruled so ill as some are induced to believe, and the fact that he ruled for so many years points either to some error in judging him guilty or to a great laxity of ecclesiastical discipline in allowing any prelate to continue in office after conviction. He certainly had his share in the granting of corridors, and some of them were very liberal, and seemingly without warrant. Certain great debts he paid off, but he incurred others, as when he gave bonds to some Lucca merchants for the sum total of £1360.

Early in this prior's time we are favoured with a list of the Bath community as giving a power of attorney to certain agents on convent business, 'in the chapter house of Bath on the fifth of October 1344.'

John de Ford, <i>prior</i>	William de Badmyngton, <i>sub prior</i>
Stephen le Botyler	Thomas de Cyrcester
Hugh Dowe (Dover?)	Thomas de Keynsham
Robert de Grittleyngton	Simon de Shawe
John de Bocston	John de Overton
Roger de Kynardeslegh	John de Berewyk
Walter de Alyngton	John de Stonyeston

⁷² *Lincoln's Inn MS*, pp. 280, 303; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii, 732, 779. The 'Bishop's Bower' stood where the Pump Room now is. Traces of it are said to be still visible in the vaults of that building. In the report on the Wells Manuscripts (Historical MSS Commission, p. 206) occurs the notice of the licence granted by the king, Edward III, to the Bishop to convey to Bath 'placeam palatii sui in Bathonia vulgariter nuncupatam Bisschopesbour.' 4th July, an. Reg. 8 (1334)

⁷³ In the work of fostering the weaving trade the monks of Bath established a fulling mill on the banks of the Avon. The mill was known as 'the monk's mill;' and it stood till quite lately though in a ruinous condition, at the far end of the North Parade Gardens, below Orange Grove.

⁷⁴ *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, introduction, p. lxiii; Bishop Ralph's MS Register, f. 212

John de Kingswode	William de Haukesbury
Robert de Lak'	Thomas de Bruton
John de Kaynesford	William de Canynges
Roger de Lolham	John de Wodehous
John de Bathon	John de Norton
John de Shopton	John de Bradlegh
Hugh de Brystoll	John le Whyte
Walter Samuel	John Bloxham
Adam de Crystamalford	

These, thirty one in number, afford evidence of the strong local element in the community, the archaic spelling of the names hardly veiling the place of origin of the monks.

The two dependencies of Bath, the cell of Dunster and the priory of Waterford, were at this time of some interest, the former quiet and flourishing while the latter was in disorder and badly administered. It may therefore be an occasion to speak here of the varying fortunes of these two places.

The priory of St George at Dunster was founded, as has been before mentioned, by William de Mohun, in the time of Bishop John de Villula, and attached to the church of Bath. The priors were appointed by the prior of Bath, and the small community, perhaps never consisting of more than six monks, was made up of some who were sent from the chief monastery. From time to time also monks were sent from Bath to rest or recruit, and the mild climate and beautiful scenery by the western sea would have made the quiet Dunster cell a place of agreeable retirement. In August 1330 a deed was made by Prior Robert de Clopcote that the cell should consist of 'a prior and four brothers,' and so it remained. At the dissolution there were only three there. The little community did not serve the parish of Dunster, a secular vicar being appointed by the prior of Bath. Thus we find Prior Robert of Bath giving, about the year 1205, 'to Robert Vallibus the perpetual vicarage of the church of Dunster, to serve in his own person, with a corrody of a monk at the table of the monks, a corrody for a boy as one of the boys of the monastery and forage for his palfrey, with exceptions.'⁷⁵

Owing, doubtless, to some misunderstandings, Bishop Oliver King, in 1499 caused the priors of Bath and Dunster to make a definite settlement with William Bonde, the vicar of Dunster, and in 1512 Bishop Adrian de Castello brought about a new compact expressing minute conditions – 'that the vicar and his successors should have their commons and repasts, and a fire in winter time, with the prior of the cell of Dunster, and with the monks at their table, sitting next to the said monks but never getting higher, at the sole charge and expense of the said cell. That he should likewise receive an annual stipend of four pounds from the prior's hands, and should have a chamber adjoining the churchyard of the parish church of Dunster, together with a certain meadow and a rent of two shillings for the use of certain vats belonging to the fulling business, as also a rent of two shillings for a certain house of ancient time belonging and appertaining to the vicars. And that he should likewise have all the contingent contributions of the parishioners for the rehearsing and publishing the bead-roll after the service of high mass in the church of Dunster every Lord's Day.'⁷⁶

The relations of the Dunster monks with the founder's family seem always to have been very cordial. The last Lord de Mohun, John, who died in 1376, confirmed all the grants of his ancestors and added to them. It was Reginald de Mohun, in 1254, who founded a daily mass for the souls of all his family and of the faithful departed, and the Bath monks undertook that a mass should be said

⁷⁵ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, p. 20; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii, 70

⁷⁶ *Monasticon*, iv, 201; *Collinson's History of Somerset*, ii, 17, 18; from the Wells Registers

daily for ever by a monk of Dunster, or by 'an honest secular priest,' in St Stephen's chapel in Dunster castle; or failing this, as in war time, in the lower chapel of St Lawrence in Dunster church. The founder undertook to supply the necessary books, tapers etc. Besides the chapel of St Lawrence there was an altar of the Holy Cross in the church of Dunster, where we find that in 1276 a grant was made by the prior of Bath to a certain Walter Lucy that he might have a secular chaplain to say one mass every day after matins for the soul of his wife and others, 'not forgetting the Mohuns.'

The present church of Dunster is for the most part a later erection, built in the reign of Henry VII. The tower was erected by the laymen of Dunster in the time of Sir James Luttrell, whose family succeeded the Mohuns after 1376. In 1499, in consequence of disputes between the monks and the parishioners, it was decided, by award of the abbot of Glastonbury and two others, that the church should be divided into two parts, the monks retaining the eastern end, and the new nave remaining as the chancel and nave for the parish services. Though the monks have long disappeared, the division of the church remains much as it was to the present day, the old choir being a chapel of the Luttrell family.

It must be supposed that the list of the priors of Dunster is very imperfect; from various records, however, we are able to present the names of a considerable number:

Martin was prior in 1274. (*Dunster Castle Muniments; Historical MSS. Commission, Wells*, pg. 57)

Walter was prior in 1308. (*Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii, 560; *Lincoln's Inn MS.*)

Robert de Sutton, appointed 24th October 1332. (*MS Register, Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury*, pg. 71, v)

Adam de Cheddar, appointed 5th July 1337, was prior in 1345. (*Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii, 780, 876; *Lincoln's Inn MS.*)

John Hervey was prior in 1376. (*Dunster Castle Muniments*)

William Bristow was prior in 1412. (*Dunster Church Book*, pg. 44)

John Henton was appointed 28th July 1425. (*Harl. MS. 6966*, f. 156; *Register of Bishop Stafford*)

Thomas Lacock prior till 1447. (*MS. Register of Bishop Beckington*. He chose him prior of Bath on 16th September 1447, from being prior of Dunster)

Richard (Hopar?) was prior in 1449. (*Dunster Castle Muniments*)

John Abingdon was prior in 1489. (*Harl. MS. 6966*, f. 147)

Thomas Brown was prior in 1499. (*Register of Bishop King*)

Richard Griffith was prior in 1535 and 1539. (*Valor Ecclesiasticus 62*, Henry VIII; RO Augmentation Office Miscellaneous Books, vol. 245, f. 109)

The Dunster property, made up mostly of grants from the Mohun family, included, besides the church and tithes of Dunster, the villa of Alcombe, a hide of land at Minehead and half the tithes there, property and tithes at Newton, Branfield, Stockland, Kilton, Havelham, Exford and Bradwood, and the church and tithes of Carhampton. Prior Thomas of Bath (1223-61) made over to the community of Dunster the church of Carhampton for an annual payment of twenty marks, half the rent to be paid on the feast of St Carentoc (16th May), and half on the feast of St Martin (11th November). The cell collapsed with the surrender of the church of Bath. Its revenue was estimated

at £37 4s. 8d. at that date, and its prior, Richard Griffith, received a pension of £8 as one of the monks of Bath.⁷⁷

The prior and hospital of St John the Evangelist at Waterford had by no means so simple and so quiet an existence. Founded in 1185 by King John, when Earl of Morton, as a hospital served by a community of clerks, it was not long coming into Benedictine hands. In 1204, Peter, the master, and the brethren of the hospital of St John agreed with Prior Robert and the convent of Bath to surrender their house to be made a cell of Bath. This was confirmed by King John, and minute directions were set down for the admission and training of candidates and for the place of their profession. Other properties were added at various times to the Waterford hospital; and all these at Cork, Youghal, Desmond, Rothmoylan, Ballycohyn, Kilkee, Kilcop, Ballytruckle and Lissenelsy, were governed by the prior of Waterford as warden of the Irish estates of Bath. That they were by no means always flourishing is evident from many entries in the Bath register. Their unsatisfactory condition was due partly to the disturbed state of the country or to the exactions of the royal officers, and sometimes to the neglect or carelessness of the priors sent from Bath, and in one or two instances to their gross maladministration. So great a trouble ensued from this state of things, that in 1334 the convent of Bath made suit for and obtained licence to exchange their Irish property for lands in England. But this could not have taken effect to any extent, for after that date we find the troubles of the Waterford estate continuing, and even at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries we read of the prior of Bath trying to propitiate Crumwell with a gift of Irish hawks, for which the lands at the convent at Waterford seemed famous: 'the prior of Bathe hath sent unto yowe,' writes the visitor Layton to Crumwell, 'for a tokyn a leisses of yrisse laners brede in a selle of his in Yrelonde; no hardier hawkes cane be as he saith.'⁷⁸

After the appointment of Brother John de Kingswode and Master Giles le Englys in 1337, difficulties only increased. Thomas de Foxcote, who had been appointed in 1332 and suspended in 1337, seems somehow to have regained his position. The Bishop of Waterford on 14th December 1345, evidently doubted Foxcote's position, for he commanded him to certify him more fully of his election as Prior of St John the Evangelist near Waterford, and some of the citizens made an inquisition to the same end. Whether his position was canonical or not, he did no better than before, but rather worse, so that he was in a very short time again superseded for putting 'the charities of the said hospital to profane and evil uses,' and the custody of the erring brother and 'of all things spiritual and temporal in Ireland pertaining to the Priory of Bath, together with the appointment as prior of Waterford and Cork,' was given to Brother John de Bloxham. Brother Thomas managed to excuse his acts in some way, for as a result of disputes with his successor he was enabled to obtain from Prior John de Ford 'a chamber in the infirmary of the Hospital of St John of Waterford, and that he may also have a groom, and a hundred shillings for the sustentation of himself and groom.'⁷⁹

John de Bloxham had no easy task before him, and we know not whether he was successful. He received a letter from Bath, 'calling attention to the ruinous condition of the houses of Waterford and Cork, and commanding that no tithes, lands, rents or possessions of those houses should be sold or alienated without licence.' The same John de Bloxham, was again appointed, or perhaps only continued in office, in 1357, this time in conjunction, as to the wardenship, with one William Sawndehull, a citizen of Waterford.⁸⁰ With this we must close the record of the Waterford priory, only noticing that the name of the last prior, Nicholas Bathe, alias Jobbyn, occurs as one of the Bath

⁷⁷ Much information regarding Dunster is to be found in an interesting book entitled *Dunster and its Lords* by H. C. Maxwell Lyte. The manuscripts of Dunster Castle were collected and arranged by William Prynne, the celebrated Puritan, who was for some years imprisoned there.

⁷⁸ RO Crumwell Correspondence, dated 7th August 1535.

⁷⁹ *Lincoln's Inn MS; Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii. 896, 885, 887, 889

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* ii, 897, 941

pensioners at the dissolution in 1539, receiving, like his fellow prior of Dunster, the annual pension of eight pounds.

It was in 1346 that Prior John de Ford was summoned before the Bishop's court on a charge of adultery with one Agnes Cubbel, a woman on the convent's manor of Hameswell in Gloucestershire. According to the register of Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury in that year he was convicted. What punishment was meted out to him does not appear. It has been said that he resigned or was deprived of office in consequence. Such deprivation would have been a natural penalty; but we must conclude that any deprivation he incurred amounted only to suspension, for the Bath Register (ii, 939) names him as prior in 1352, and as being at that time in trouble with the king for maintaining the quarrel of a certain Robert Gyen. We cannot say for certain when he died – perhaps in 1359 – at which date we read that the sub prior, John, presented a priest, Sir John de Melksham, to the vicarage of St Mary de Stall in Bath.⁸¹

Prior de Ford had to pass through the ordeal of the Black Death. In the early part of January 1349 the scourge came upon Bath. No record of it, however, is to be found in the Bath Register, nor any evidence of frequent appointments to the living in the gift of the Bath priory. But in 1377, when a subsidy was levied on the clergy by the king, the Subsidy Roll gives only sixteen as the community of Bath. Their names are as follows:

Dom John Berewyk, <i>prior</i>	John Rokebourne
John Bradlegh	Henry Godleye
William Tondre	John Preston
John Brok	John Pleicce
John de Circestre	Thomas Bampton
Michael de Comb	Philip Pekelynych
Nicholas Vinor	Nicholas Huse
John Kymeilton	John Milverton

Of these, only the prior and Brother John Bradlegh were survivors from 1344. Brother Nicholas Vynour appears as chaplain to the prior on 30th November 1381. John de Berewyk seems to have been prior in 1363 and again in 1385.

It is about this date that a calendar exists of the church of Bath, perhaps adapted to the cell of Dunster. From internal evidence it was probably written in 1383, and it is the only known indication of the feasts observed by the Bath church, and of their grade. From the apostles SS. Peter and Paul being titulars of Bath we find all their feasts to be of a high rank; thus the conversion of St Paul (25 January), the chair of St Peter at Rome (18th January) and at Antioch (22nd February), the commemoration of St Paul (30th June), and the octave day of SS Peter and Paul (6th July), were solemnised with 'two copes'; the feast itself of SS Peter and Paul was of course of the highest rank, of 'four copes' as also was the feast of St Peter's Chains (1st August), doubtless on account of Bath possessing a notable relic of these. Strange to say, the feast of St Benedict (21st March) was kept only with two copes, not with four, as also was the feast of his translation (11th July); while the feast of the Relics (15th July), of which Bath possessed a great number, was a 'four cope' feast. The feast of St George (23rd April) was kept in Bath 'in white' while at Dunster, being the titular of the church, it was kept with 'four copes' and its octave day with 'two copes.'

Some festivals which are not in themselves of particular rank hold a high place on account of circumstances interesting to Bath. So we find SS Fabian and Sebastian (20th January) kept 'in white', there being a chapel in Bath church dedicated to them. Probably the copyist erred in setting 'in

⁸¹ *Lincoln's Inn MS; Somerset Record Society, vol. 7, ii, 917*

white' opposite St Agatha's name instead of St Werburge's, the latter being especially distinguished at Bath. St Elphege (19th March), formerly a monk of Bath, was honoured with two copes. St Carentoc (16th May), a local saint and titular of the Bath church of Carhampton, was honoured with 'twelve lessons.' St Mary Magdalen, a patroness of a hospital in Bath, marked in red in the calendar, was a feast either 'in white' or of 'two copes.' St Euphemia (16th September) was kept with two copes, Bath possessing her body, which had been given to the monks by Bishop Reginald. The feast of St Leonard (6th November), kept with the twelve lessons, is written in red, probably on account of his altar being in the monastery church. So great was the repute of St Catherine (25th November) in Bath, both in the church and the city, that she was honoured with 'two copes.' The two festivals of the Holy Cross (3rd May and 14th September) were also honoured in the same way and it will be remembered how Bishop Robert in 1155 set up a great cross at Bath, obtaining many indulgences for those who visited it on those days. The great day of the dedication of the church of Bath was 13th October, kept, of course, on a par with Easter day 'in four copes.'⁸²

In connection with the liturgical observances of Bath, it will be interesting to note the undertakings of the Bath monks towards the benefactors of their church and towards brethren of other monasteries with whom they had communion of prayers, as we find mention in the Bath register. The indications are of nearly same date as the above calendar, as we find them written about the time (1363) of the death of Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury.⁸³ Benefactors who were *in fraternitate* of the church of Bath were to have daily two solemn masses there, one for the living and the other for the deceased benefactors of the fabric. There was also a daily psalter of them, and they participated in all the good works of the diocese of Bath and Wells and of the whole Cluniac order. Many other privileges and indulgences were also granted them, and all who said a Pater and Ave for the benefactors were granted each one hundred days indulgence by Popes Alexander, Constantine (Celestine?) and Boniface. Those who gave a ring or brooch, or even a penny, were written down and granted an absolution on the anniversaries of the Bath monks.

Among themselves the monks held communion of prayers with their brethren at Glastonbury, Canterbury, Chertsey, Rochester, Winchcombe, Tewkesbury, Gloucester and Malmesbury; for the Cluniacs at Lewes and Farleigh; for the brethren at Caen and Dean⁸⁴; for the canons at Bruton, Hereford and Bradenstoke; and for the nuns at Wilton and Wherwell. Naturally the Glastonbury monks had the closest connection: for them there were said at Bath thirty masses in community, and every priest had to say one mass and every brother not a priest had to say one psalter; while for the abbot each priest said two masses and each of the others two psalters; 'and they will so as much for us.'

The next of whom we have notice as prior is John Dunster, upon whose death John Tellesford was elected on 11th February 1411 or 12 and confirmed by Bishop Nicholas Bubwith. During the time of these two priors arose the almost solitary instance of dissension between the monks and the citizens of Bath. Throughout the records there is no evidence to show that the relations between them were anything but friendly. Nay, most of the citizens seem to have been in a measure dependent upon the priory, and also their numbers were not great, as the tax roll of Richard II's reign (c. 1370) gives the number of males over sixteen, liable to taxation, as four hundred, and represents them as not wealthy people. The monks were to them as fathers and advisers, and not as enemies. Warner, in his *History of Bath*, makes much of this little disturbance, but what was it? A suit about bell ringing! The monks seem to have had the right from time

⁸² *British Museum Additional MS.* 10628. *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7; *Lincoln's Inn MS.* 530, 809

⁸³ *Lincoln's Inn MS.* *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7; ii. 530, 809

⁸⁴ 'Pro fratribus Dinae' – probably referring to the Cistercian abbey of Dean, or Flexley, in the Forest of Dean, Gloucestershire.

immemorial of having their bell rung first in the morning and last in the evening. In 1408, the citizens and some of the rectors of the churches infringed this rule and annoyed the monks by the clamour. In spite of remonstrance's the dispute continued, till in 1421 the case was brought before the king's justices at Frome, and judgment was given in favour of the monks. So ended the dispute.

Bishop Nicholas Bubwith proved a very good friend to Bath. He built for the monks at his own expense a chapel in the nave of their church, on the south side, and dedicated there an altar to SS. John the Baptist, George, Fabian and Sebastian; and Prior John and the convent bound themselves to say two masses daily on his behalf, the first at the seventh hour '*secundum devotionem celebrantis,*' and the second at the tenth or eleventh hour, '*magis lucescenti,*' '*de Sancta Maria.*' The Bishop also gave the priory 320 marks for the rebuilding of certain houses, and also vestments worth £200. This covenant is dated 16th October 1424, and the masses were to be said 'ffor Bisshop Nychol and for his fader and moder saulis, and al his goode doerys sawlys, and all the good doers sawlys of this chirche.'⁸⁵

Prior Tellesford died in 1425 and was succeeded by William Southbroke. A case occurred under his administration which may point to a very lax government, but at the same time shows how energetically remedies were applied. A monk of Bath, Dom Robert Veyse, was said to have lived for years as a secular at the church of Stokeney, where he had engaged in worldly matters, and had, in spite of warnings and promises, fallen into adultery and an evil life. Bishop Beckyngton in a letter to Prior Southbroke, dated 24th June 1445, called the prior's attention to this, and told him that he had caused the offender to be arrested by royal writ as an apostate monk and was sending him to Bath to be punished according to the statutes of the Order, to be kept on perpetual bread and water, or at least in strict prison till further commands. This letter failed of its full effect, for on 27th December following, the Bishop addressed another letter to the prior, saying that he had heard that Veyse had left the monastery and had gone back to Stokeney, and that the king was very angry.⁸⁶ But this, we may be sure, was an isolated case, for the Bishop would have been still more vehement in his remonstrance's and in his action had there been any more widespread scandal. It is asserted in the Monasticon that the Bishop raised new Conventual buildings so extensive as to constitute a new monastery. What proof there is for such assertion is not known: the Bath register and the usually available records of the time contain not a word upon the subject.

On 7th July 1447, Prior Southbroke's death brought on a fresh election. The monks could not decide whom they should choose, so they agreed to ask the Bishop to nominate a prior. In Bishop Beckyngton's register is given the process of this election, with a list of the Bath community. Since the great pestilence of 1349 the numbers had somewhat increased, and as we scan the list we find that the offices held by some of the monks and their different places of residence were mentioned.

William Hampton, <i>subprior</i>	John Wydecombe
Stephen Glastonbury	William Pensford, <i>subsacrist</i>
Robert Bath, <i>precentor</i>	Richard Whyting, <i>chamberlain</i>
Robert Chrewe, <i>third prior</i>	Richard Wallenth, <i>kitchener</i>
John Lynde	John Laycock, <i>infirmarian, pitancer</i>
William Saltford, <i>sacrist, cellarer, guardian,</i>	<i>refectorian</i>
<i>'capellae B. Mariae'</i>	Robert Butteler
Willam Welles	John Bradford
John Saresbury, <i>sub almoner</i>	Peter Twiverton
John Keynesham	John Norton

⁸⁵ Historical MSS. Commission, Wells, p. 203

⁸⁶ MS. Register of Bishop Beckyngton; *Somerset Record Society*, introduction, p. lxvi

Thomas Bath

Thus nineteen in all lived at Bath. Also there were

William Bristowe, *studying at Oxford*

Thomas Lacock, *prior of Dunster*

John Beryngnton, *living at Dunster*

William Bonar, *living at Dunster*

Richard Hopar, *living at Dunster*

John Newton, *a senior staying at Dunster, as tem.*

Robert Veyse, *did not appear*

John Appleby, *did not appear*

The Bishop's choice rested upon the prior of Dunster, Thomas Lacock, who ruled at Bath till about 1460, for shortly after that date occurs a prior named John, as appears from a grant made by him to Humphrey, Lord Stafford of Southwyk,⁸⁷ between 1461 and 1469. His successor was probably Richard, who was present at Tewkesbury on 7th August 1476, at the baptism of Richard, son of George, Duke of Clarence.⁸⁸ Of this prior nothing else seems to be known, and the next name we find is that of Dom John Cantlow, who was sacristan of Bath in 1483 and appears as prior in 1489. During his prior ship the monastery was visited by John Cardinal Morton, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Little is known of this prior's administration. There still exists, however, by Holloway in Bath, the little church of St Mary Magdalen, which was rebuilt by him in 1495, and in the east window of which is to be seen a figure of the prior. Near the church, and in connection with it, Prior Cantlow re-established a hospital for idiot children, a continuation of the leper hospital which had always been there.

It is to be regretted that the records about the fifteenth century priors of Bath such scanty information. We have no means of judging what they did and how far they failed, nor can we be sure to what extent they merited the implied reproof given by Bishop Oliver King in his celebrated mandate of 1500. The prelate succeeded to the see of Bath and Wells in 1495, and with all the zeal of his vigorous character he set himself to improve his diocese. In 1499 he made a visitation of the priory and thoroughly examined into its state; and finding drastic measures to be necessary by reason of the ruinous condition of the fabric, he determined to take the matter into his own hands. Prior Cantlow died in August 1499, about a month after the visitation, and the convent proceeded to choose in his place Dom William Birde, without securing beforehand the licence of the Bishop. The prelate was angry thereat, and he declared that by their action the monks had forfeited their electoral privilege, and that he should therefore reject their election and himself nominate the prior. The monks pacified him, however, by humble apology, and he admitted Birde as prior, probably recognising that the man was worthy and was likely to carry out any proposed reforms. Those who united in the election of William Birde were twenty one in number, whose names were as follows:

Dom David Pensford, <i>subprior</i>	Thomas Beckynton
William Gilys	John Clement
Thomas Brown, <i>prior of Dunster</i>	Thomas York
Thomas Bath	John Chew
Robert Pavy	Thomas Bristow

⁸⁷ *Lincoln's Inn MS*, pg. 410; *Somerset Record Society*, vol. 7, ii. 940

⁸⁸ *Monasticon*, ii. 64

Thomas Keynesham
John Eyton
John Norton
Richard Wydcombe
William Ryall
John Weke

Thomas Gregory
John Worceter
Richard Pestall
John Keynesham
John Coupar
Thomas Gregory, *proxy*

On 9th October 1500, the Bishop issued the following mandate of reform:

Oliver, by the Divine Bishop of Bath and Wells, to our beloved brethren in Christ, the prior and convent of Bath, health, grace and benediction.

With sorrow we have found among other things that our cathedral church of Bath by the negligence of several of the priors has not been repaired or restored, nay, has gone utterly to destruction, and that they themselves have frittered themselves away in pleasures, and we deplore with paternal sorrow that the present prior, to whom we do not ascribe the fault of his predecessors, is remiss and not zealous for the repair or rebuilding of the said church. We therefore, under these considerations and by the advice of many nobles, Bishops and abbots, and other legal experts, confiding in the mercy of God and the patronage of His Apostles, Peter and Paul, and trusting to the alms of our fellow Christians and of our friends, have decided to put our helping hands to the work, without sparing our labour or expenditure, and the more willingly in proportion as we see a speedy despatching and completing of the said work. With such a desire, therefore, of seeing the work finished, we hope to do in a few years what we think can never – or scarcely within a hundred years – be done at the expense of the said prior and convent if they lack or contemn the assistance of our self and our friends. Therefore, with the intention of preventing the above defects of the monks, their pleasures, their slothfulness, and the ruin of the church, arising from over-indulgence in pensions, in clothing, food, and drink, and also not to risk the loss of the goodwill of the faithful in giving alms if we leave the said prior and convent unreformed and backward in meeting the expenses of the said work according to their resources, we decree that these present injunctions are to be faithfully observed by the same.

The Bishop then proceeds to note that the total revenue of the convent amounts to £480 16s 6d, and he assigns eighty marks for the maintenance of the prior and eighty pounds for that of the community, 'which is now sixteen in number.' That sum he considers sufficient 'since only food and clothing are allowed to monks, not pension or peculium.' Other assignments are made for departmental expenses on what the Bishop considers an ample scale, and he commands the residue to be assigned and actually expended *sub poena juris* on the building of the cathedral church. Lastly, within a month after their own general audit the monks are to render an account to him.⁸⁹

The above injunctions are sufficiently strong, and follow upon a very strong preamble, and the whole implies that there was need of firm measures to secure happy results. But that there should have been a Bishop urgent to remedy and a community ready to accept and carry out the injunctions affords evidence of vigorous life. The designs of the Bishop were heartily seconded by Prior Birde, and the old church of John de Villula was gradually pulled down and a new church began to be built in its place. Leland, writing about 1536, expresses himself thus: 'This (John de Villula) was buried in the middle of the Presbyteri thereof (of the church of Bath), whos image I saw lying there nine yers sins, at the whiche tyme the chirch that he made lay to wast and was onroffed, and weds

⁸⁹ Tanner MS. 105, f. 64, ex Registro Oliveri Kyng, Epi. Bath. Wells, f. 62

grew about this John of Tours sepulchre.⁹⁰ This reads like horrible desolation, but when we look at facts we find an explanation of the antiquarian's words. The work of rebuilding the church was slower and more laborious than had been contemplated, and Bishop King unfortunately died on 29th August 1503, regretting that in his lifetime he had not pressed on the work more quickly. Prior Birde zealously proceeded with it, but it was not easy at that time to find generous benefactors, and the resources of the convent were not what they had been, and the prior's death on 22nd May 1525 was a second serious blow to the great project. Leland saw the church in 1526 or the year following, and at that time the site would have been in confusion. The church must have been pulled down only bit by bit, for the monks could not spare the whole of it at once; and having probably completed a part of the nave as a temporary choir, it is likely that they were proceeding with the demolition of the old choir when Leland visited Bath. This would be sufficient to account for the unroofing and the weeds. We know at present, however, of no contemporary description of the rebuilding; much therefore is left to conjecture. Prior Birde built for himself the beautiful chantry known by his name and now existing at the side of the present chancel, and it is not unlikely that another was intended to be built for Bishop King, had his will been carried out, for in it he directed that his body should be buried, 'in the choir of the new church of Bath, near the first arch on the north side, towards the altar.' He found his tomb, however, in St George's chapel at Windsor, where there is a chantry chapel founded by himself and known by his name.

A month after Prior Birde's death the convent met to elect his successor, and the following list of twenty-two electors' shows, in union with former lists, that the numbers of the community had remained very much the same during the last century or more of the convent's existence.

Dom Thomas Avory, <i>sub prior</i>	Alexander Bristow, <i>fourth prior</i>
Richard Griffith	Richard Lynchcombe, <i>sub-elemosinar</i>
Richard Witcombe, <i>chamberlain</i>	John Ballyngton, <i>subsacrist</i>
William Salford, <i>precentor</i>	Thomas Powell
William Ryall	Richard Gule
Nicholas Bath, <i>third prior</i>	William Beachyne
Thomas Bath, <i>prior of Dunster</i>	Thomas Worcester
John Chestre	William Clement
William Holleway, <i>pitancer</i>	Thomas Keynesham (<i>by proxy</i>)
John Pyt	Robert Pavy (<i>absens causa infirmitatis</i>)
Stephen Tysbery, <i>refectorian</i>	John Eyton (<i>absens in partibus transmarinis</i>)

Only five of these appear to have been in the community in 1499, twenty six years before. The account of this election is found in the register of Bishop Clerke, who succeeded Cardinal Wolsey in 1523. The choice was made *per modum compromissi*, and William Holleway, the pitancer, was elected. The name Holleway probably came from his having been born at Holloway, near Bath; he is also known by the name of Gybbs. He appears to have been a man of good life and undoubted ability; though the king's visitor, Richard Layton, does pass him off as 'a man simple and not of the gretesteste wite.' At any rate he admitted him to be 'a right vertuouse man, and I suppose no better of his cote.' The prior did what he could to proceed with the building of his church, which at this time was known under the title, 'of the Holy Saviour and of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul;' but the structure was never finished, and what we see of it now is due in great measure to the post-reformation period.

⁹⁰ Leland, *Itinerary*, vol. 2, fol. 38

The duration Bath Priory was now near its end. Into the history of the dissolution of the monasteries it is unnecessary to enter, nor need we go into much detail of the proceedings in the case of Bath. The story was much the same everywhere. It was in August 1535 that the king's commissioner, Richard Layton, held his visitation of Bath. The letter which he wrote to Crumwell thereupon bears its usual lying evidence, and it is a marvel that he should find the prior 'ryght vertuose' and all the rest of the monks 'worse than any I have fownde yet.'⁹¹ A by-joke he utters in sending his master a book: 'Ye shall receve a bowke of our lades miracles well able to mache the canterberie tailles; such a bowke of dremes as ye never sawe wich I fownde in the librarie.' The prior tried to propitiate Crumwell with a gift of Irish hawks (laners), and with an annuity of five pounds. But of course all was of no avail: the final moment arrived and Prior Holleway had not the fortitude to resist, and he accordingly surrendered the house into the king's hands on 27th January 1539.

Thus, after a life of six hundred years since the days of St Dunstan's reform, did the community of Bath come to an end. Such records of its vicissitudes as have been collected together may serve to lead to the discovery of more minute details of its past; and if the evidences of fault and imperfection seem to be somewhat frequent, it must not be forgotten they are but isolated cases throughout long periods of years. The daily round of religious life, the solemn choral office, the care of the poor and the stranger, the education of youth, the management of convent property, are features which were common to every monastery, and no chronicler recorded them and no man noted them. But any departure from prudence, any flaw in observance, any scandal, gains prominence from being recorded, and seems to occupy the whole field. The old monks have therefore experienced what Shakespeare so truly set down:

'The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones.'

It remains only to speak of the fate of the community of Bath. The estimated net revenue of the monastery was set down in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* at £617 2s 3d. In recompense for compliance with the king's wish, the following pensions were bestowed upon the monks, as they are given in the books of the Augmentation Office, and the list serves to show us who were members of the Bath convent at the dissolution.

	£	s.	d
First to William Holleway (alias Gybbs), <i>prior</i> , for his yearly pension in money	80	0	0
Moreover is appointed to him for his dwelling-house One tenement set and lying in Stall Street, within the South gate of Bath, wherein one Jeffrey Stayner lately Dwelt, being of the yearly rent of		20	
To John Pytt, <i>subprior</i>	9	0	0
To Richard Griffith, <i>prior of the cell of Dunster</i> ⁹²	8	0	0
To Thomas Bath (alias Copton) <i>impotent</i>	8	0	0
To Nicholas Bath (alias Jobben) <i>batchelor of divinity</i>	8	0	0
To Alexander Boyston (alias Bull)	6	13	4
To Richard Lyncombe (alias Bygge)	6	0	0

⁹¹ Record Office. Crumwell Correspondence. xx

⁹² Here, and in the list of the Bath monks at the election of Prior Holleway, Dom Griffith is styled Richard, whereas in the *Valor ecclesiasticus* (l. 220) his name is given as John.

To John Beckynton (alias Romeston)	6	13	4
To Thomas Powell	5	0	0
To Richard Gules (alias Gybbs)	5	6	8
To Thomas Worceter (alias Stylland)	5	6	8
To William Clement	5	6	8
To John Arleston (alias Browne)	6	0	0
To John Edger (alias Godbury)	5	6	8
To Edward Edwey (alias Style)	5	6	8
To Patrick Vertue (alias Archer)	5	6	8
To John Humility (alias Colyn)	5	6	8
To John Gabriell (alias Style)	5	6	8
To William Beachyne	5	6	8
To John Benet (alias Parnell)	5	6	8
To John Patience (alias Long)	4	13	4

The aliases were probably the real family names of the monks, and the first names derived in most cases from the place of origin. Sixteen of the above are found receiving pensions in 1553, according to Cardinal Pole's pension book. The prior himself, however, died in the reign of Henry VIII, and it is said that he was 'blind and poor.' With regard to the others we cannot be certain what became of them; but Mr Archbold, in his *Somerset Religious Houses*, shows probably that the above Thomas Powell was rector of Tellesford in 1554, and William Clement incumbent of St Mary's within the north gate of Bath from 1541, and John Pytt priest of the chantry of St James's, Taunton.

The fate of the fabric of the church and priory of Bath, and the record of the work of Benedictines in the city to the present day, will be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR. SINCE THE DISSOLUTION

Though Prior Holleway had shown himself so weak in prematurely taking the oath of supremacy and surrendering his monastery, no resistance of his could have long averted the end. The dissolution was decreed, and the monks might only strive to get what they could from the mammon of iniquity. Their work of rebuilding and their monastic observances were to end together, and their home was to become the prey of the spoiler.

Doubtless all that was moveable and of value found its way at once into the king's hands – abundant toll having first of all been taken by the rogues who acted as his agents. The church and priory of Bath and all that lay 'within its site and precincts' as well as the monastic property in Lyncombe (including the prior's park), Widcombe, Holloway, Walcot and Combe, with the seigniorial rights and emoluments that had belonged to the prior's of Bath, passed by a grant of Henry VIII, dated 16th March 1543, to Humphrey Colles. The latter had to pay for this into the Augmentation Office the then goodly sum of £962 17s 4d, together with an annual rent of eight shillings and four pence. But the purchase seems to have been a mere speculation on his part, for two days after the date of the grant he received the royal licence to sell the property to Matthew Colthurst.

The above grant, excepting so far as it dealt with the priory site and precincts, did not touch the monastic property within the city. The ancient city was very much more circumscribed than it is now, being limited by the ancient walls, which contained within them an area less than a quarter of a mile in diameter.⁹³ In the city the monks possessed several houses and shops, and they also held

⁹³ The streets known as the Borough Walls and Orchard Street clearly indicate the boundaries, while Northgate, Westgate and Southgate Streets show fairly the position of the ancient gates.

the advowsons of the churches and chapels of the city and suburbs. By the act of suppression these advowsons fell to the crown. Prior Holleway, however, before the surrender, had granted the next presentation of the several churches to sundry persons, so that the claim of the Crown did not become operative for many years. It was therefore not till 21st November 1572, that the queen granted to the citizens of Bath the advowson of the churches of St Mary inside the walls, St James, St Michael outside the walls, the hospital of St John the Baptist, and the church of St Michael inside the walls thereto annexed, and the church of St Mary de Stalles with the appendant chapelry of Widcombe.⁹⁴

By the same letters patent, Queen Elizabeth I gave Edmund Colthurst, the then owner of the priory church and precincts, licence to alienate and the citizens licence to receive the church. The citizens having obtained possession, they took the necessary steps to make their new acquisition the official parish church of the city, putting the building in sufficient repair for use; and in 1583, by consent of Dr Aubrey, who was administrator of the diocese during the vacancy of the see, the parish of St Mary de Stalles became the parish of SS Peter and Paul.

The usual results of the suppression of religious houses followed in Bath as elsewhere. The care of the poor and the ignorant was forgotten. A petition on their behalf was made to the Crown by the Mayor, Edward Ludwell, and in answer thereto the property within the city, 'parcel of the lands of the late dissolved priory of Bath,' was granted on 10th July 1552 to the citizens in trust for the maintenance of a free school and some alms-houses. The hospital or alms-house was built early in the reign of Queen Mary, and was called St Catherine's Hospital, probably from St Catherine being the patroness of Bath.⁹⁵ The Grammar School was maintained for more than a hundred years in a house near the West Gate, after which it was removed to the desecrated nave of the Church of St

⁹⁴ St Mary de Stalles was the parish church of the city, where the Mayor and council attended Divine service officially. It stood at the corner of Cheap Street and Stall Street; but falling into disuse after the abbey became the city church, it was pulled down in or about 1605. St Mary within the walls, or St Mary's by the North Gate, stood across what is now the upper end of Bridge Street. It was desecrated in 1588, the nave being used for the free grammar school and the tower for the city prison. The tower existed till 1780. St Michael's within the walls lay not far from St John's Hospital. It was annexed to the hospital in 1548, but it has long since disappeared. The church of St James by the Southgate stood on the site of the church of that name in New Orchard Street. St Michaels without the walls was the original church on the site of the present one at the bottom of Broad Street. The present church is the fourth on that site, and was completed in 1837. Outside the city there was also the church of St Mary without the walls. Its site and history are uncertain. It stood by the River Avon, some say in Bathwick; but from the title also given to it of St Mary's by the Southgate, its position would seem to have been somewhere by the old bridge.

⁹⁵ The chapel of St Catherine, dedicated to St Werburge, virgin, St John the Evangelist, and St Catherine, virgin and martyr, by Nicholas Bishop of Llandaff, about the year 1170 (see Bath Chartulary, *Corpus Christi College MS.* cxi. pg. 54, printed by the Somerset Record Society, vol. 7, i. 3.) lay on the site of the present Fountain Buildings. It was specially mentioned in the oath taken by each newly admitted freeman of Bath, as may be seen in the *MS. Ruber Codex Bathoniae*, preserved at Longleat: 'I schal buxom and obedyent be to the mayr of bathe and to al hys successowyr and Y schal mentayne me to no lordschyp for hynderans of eny burges of bathe. Nether Y schal nozth plete wyth no burges of bathe but on the mayr curte yf hit so be that the mayr wyll do me ryght or may do me ryght Seynt Katern day Y schal kepe holy day yerely and Sent Katern Chapell and the brygge help to mentayne and to susteyne by my power. All other custumys and fredumys that langit to the fore sayde fredum Y schal well and truly kepe and mentayne on my behalfe selme God and halydome.' (Quoted by King and Watts, *Municipal Records of Bath*, pp. 45, 46.)

The bridge stood where the present bridge stands, at the end of Southgate Street. On it was erected an ancient chapel to St Lawrence. There was also a chapel to St Winifred, which stood on Sion Hill, below Cavendish Crescent, but these have disappeared.

The old parish church of Walcot has also disappeared. The present Church of St Swithin was built only in 1780.

Mary by the North Gate. This church, the gate and the adjoining walls were demolished in 1752, a new building for the school being erected in Broad Street and still used for its original purpose.

The two ancient Catholic charities of Bath, the hospital of St John the Baptist and that of St Mary Magdalen at Holloway, yet remain. The former has been mentioned as having been founded by Bishop Reginald FitzJoceline and placed under the direction of the Bath monks in 1180. They held the appointment of the masters until the dissolution. The hospital escaped the fate of the monastery in 1539, and became vested in the crown, which transferred its administration to the citizens in 1572. It stands on the ancient site, between Westgate Buildings and the Cross Baths, but the structure is of comparatively modern origin. The hospital of St Mary Magdalen, believed to have been originally founded before the Norman Conquest, for the benefit of pilgrims to Glastonbury, was rebuilt by Prior Cantlow, about 1495, and devoted to the reception of lepers and lunatics. The ancient chapel and some of its connected buildings still exist, and somewhat of its original purpose is carried out in a home for idiot children.⁹⁶

By the side of Widcombe Hill remains Old Widcombe Church, dedicated to St Thomas of Canterbury. It occupies the site of an ancient chapel whose record goes back to early Norman times. The present church was built in the days of Prior Birde, a special rate being levied in the parish for its erection. The population of the district has long outgrown the capacity of the little church, and the hand of the restorer has not failed to modify the original features of the building. It still stands, however, nestled amidst its beautiful natural surroundings, and it and the ancient chapel of St Mary Magdalen look down upon the city and the abbey church, the sole visible remains – excepting the great church itself – of old Catholic Bath.

Turning now from Holloway and Widcombe, we come to the once noble church of SS Peter and Paul, and consider the fate that befell it. The royal commissioners were still about the work of dissolution, when they offered to sell the fabric to the citizens for five hundred marks. These, however, declined to purchase, and Harington gives as the reason, that they feared ‘they might be thought to cosen the king if they bought it so cheape, or that it might after (as many things were) be found concealed.’⁹⁷ But they did not hesitate to plunder. The glass, iron, lead, and bells were

⁹⁶ The ancient chapel seems to be about 50 feet long, 15 feet broad, and 24 feet high. The chancel is almost all modern. A good modern perpendicular window of three lights is at the east end. At the west end is a small tower, of which the upper part is decidedly post reformation and ugly. The side windows are of three lights, square headed, and of perpendicular style. The walls have unfortunately been plastered in recent times, and a plaster waggon roof probably hides the ancient timbers; but there exist on the walls three pedestals and canopies for statues, the canopies dating from 1495, the statues of course destroyed. It would seem that there was once a gallery at the west end, perhaps for the sick from the adjoining hospital, for two small square headed windows pierce the north wall there at a high elevation. In one of those windows are a few fragments of ancient glass, which are very interesting. They seem to have been taken from the tracery of the original east window. Two full length figures of saints, on separate pieces of glass, are in good preservation. One represents St Benedict in his cowl, having the book of his Rule, and with his pastoral staff turned *inward*. It is interesting to note that the saint wears the English Benedictine hood. It is a mistake to suppose that this is meant for Prior Cantlow; the nimbus disproves this. There may, however, be an attempt to show the portrait of the prior under the guise of St Benedict. The other figure is that of a saint and a Bishop, having his cope and mitre, his stole crossed over the alb, contrary to present episcopal usage, and his staff turned outward. In his left hand he seems to hold manacles (is this a figure of St Wulstan, the Saxon Benedictine Bishop of Worcester, who put an end to the slave trade in Bristol?)

The porch has over it a graceful canopied niche, long since robbed of its statue. Within the porch is the following curious verse on a slab inlaid in the eastern wall. It is in incised Old English letters, probably contemporary with the erection of the chapel.

‘THYS CHAPPELL FLORYSCHYD WT FORMOSYTE SPECTABYLL IN THE HONOWRE OF M MAGDALEN PRIOR
CANTLOW HATH EDYFYDE. DESYRING YOW TO PRAY FOR HYM WT YOWRE PRYERS DELECTABYLL. THAST SHE
WILL INHABIT HIM IN HEVYN THER EVYR TO ABYDE.’

⁹⁷ Harington, *Nugae Antiquae*, vol. ii, pg. 141

stripped away and sold to certain merchants, who shipped the whole to Spain. The lead alone is said to have weighed 480 tons, which seems incredible. It is likely, however, that vast stores of material had been collected for the completion of the church, and had never been used. This action of the citizens must afterwards have brought them into trouble. We find them as late as 1596 paying to one Mr Henry Osbourne a sum of more than ten pounds for procuring them a pardon under the great seal for the 'ceasure' of the great church. We may be sure, therefore, that the building was in a lamentable condition when the citizens received it from Edmund Colthurst in 1572, for it warranted being described in the royal letters patent as '*totam illam ecclesiam ruinosam sive templum ruinosum.*' And no wonder that it was in such a condition when, besides having been in an unfinished state, it would have been despoiled of those things which would have secured it from dilapidation.

The truth is mildly indicated in a remembrance which the mayor and burgess sent to Lord Burghley in 1576, that they might be permitted to finish building 'the fair church commenced by the late prior there, and not fully finished at the time of the suppression, and so yet remaineth.'⁹⁸ The queen granted permission for collections to be made throughout the kingdom for seven years for the completion of the church, and by slow degrees steps were taken to carry out the work. It appears that when Edmund Colhurst made his grant, 'the walls of the great tower and of most part of the church were then standinge.'⁹⁹ The north aisle of the choir was repaired by Major Peter Chapman, son of a clothier of Bath, and with the money that had been collected the choir, or 'upper' part of the church was all covered, as well as the north transept. A few years later a second effort was made to carry on the work, and this time the south transept was raised nearly from the ground and covered as it is now, the tower was raised and leaded and a clock and bell were added. Much of this work was due to the zeal and liberality of Thomas Bellot, steward to Lord Burghley. The third effort towards completion was carried out during the episcopate of Bishop Montague, and largely by his donations, when the roofing of the nave and the glazing and flooring of the church were completed by 1616, the year of the Bishop's translation to the see of Winchester. But the development of the abbey church – so it is always styled – to its present condition may be read in the histories of Bath, where the account of the maladministration by the Corporation of its ecclesiastical property makes it clear why the completion of the church has only been accomplished within the last twenty years.

Whatever we may think of the beauties or faults of the church at the present day, we must not forget that we see something different from the scheme of the monastic builders. The church of Bishop John de Villula was much larger. Its nave alone extended almost the entire length of the present church, and the ancient choir and apse reached some distance into the present Orange Grove. From the remnants of the Norman piers which lie beneath the pavement of the church it is evident that the earlier nave was wider than the present one, and the aisles were probably narrower; while the Norman remains at the base of the eastern buttresses reveal that at that point rose the western arch of the old central tower. But only excavations can reveal where the lines of the old choir were laid. We do not know the complete design which Bishop King and Prior Birde had in view; their work has been so dilapidated and so interfered with that we probably never shall know. It may at least be conjectured that the Bath monks would not willingly be content with a church insignificant in comparison with their old cathedral, while the sister cathedral of Wells had added to its own grandeur. The existing tower and transepts are poor apologies for what they stand for, and they were to some extent built in post reformation times. The east end is not carried out according to Catholic ideas; the eastern wall is built up in an awkward manner that reveals itself in

⁹⁸ *State Papers, Domestic. Elizabeth*, vol. cx. 24

⁹⁹ Peach's continuation of Britton's *Bath Abbey Church*, p. 95, Appendix

the interior, and the small doors and windows at the ends of the choir-aisles are meaningless in a Catholic church. Indeed, we read that 'the newe wall with the doore therein, and the windowe as it now standeth at the east ende of the north allie of the quire,' was built up at the charge of Jefferay Flower, Esq. of Philip's Norton, in Somerset.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the position of the beautiful chantry of Prior Birde suggests that the great altar was not meant to be where its modern representation stands; rather we may seek for an explanation of the truth in the objective illustration to be seen in the nave of Wells Cathedral – the chantries of Hugh Sugar, the treasurer, and Bishop Bubwith. It is possible that great transepts and choir and presbyterium were intended. But whatever be the truth of this surmise, no such work was ever carried out. The suppression came upon them too soon, and neglect and pillage succeeded to their work.

The material of the abbey seems to have been used for various municipal purposes; and, as we have seen above, much was stolen and sold. In the accounts of the city chamberlain and of St Michael's parish it may be read how stones and tiles were hauled from the abbey on several occasions to mend waterworks and roads; one would think that a vast quantity of material must be represented by the sum of twenty shillings of that date that was paid for carriage 'of rubbel out of the abbey to mend the waie by the burwales (borough walls) and the gate between southgate and the bridge.' We should be glad to think that this was taken from the ruins of the old Norman choir, and not from the new structure.

Of the monastic buildings no trace remains. Much of the monastery is said to have been rebuilt towards the close of the fifteenth century, and there existed till the year 1755 a long building which had probably been the prior's quarters. It ran parallel to the west end of the church, on the south side, and was known as the Abbey House. Collinson says¹⁰¹ that the house was again rendered habitable sometime after the dissolution, and that parts of it 'obsolete offices and obscure rooms and lofts,' were left in their former state and never occupied after their desertion by the monks. It is impossible to verify Collinson's statement as to the find of old vestments and other ecclesiastical garments in a walled up apartment in 1755; the things fell to dust, and we have no description of them. But it is not unlikely that they were vestments for the use of priests who might come to the house and be compelled to hide away during the penal times. The place was let to a Catholic physician – Dr John Sherwood – from 1590 until his death in 1620; and he used to receive patients who came for the Bath waters, and perhaps he used to harbour priests.¹⁰² The palace of the Bishops – 'Bisshopsboure' – rented by the monks, must have been in a very dilapidated condition at the date of the suppression. No doubt it gradually crumbled away: much of the stone was hauled from the 'pallis' to build the first guildhall in 1569.¹⁰³

The former community disappeared gradually like their monastery, and their end is unknown. The house 'late in the occupation of Wm. Gibbes, alias Holwaye,'¹⁰⁴ in Stall Street, was leased to one Richard Frampton on 16th August 1547, and this may very probably be the year of the death of the last prior of Bath. Perhaps some of the monks who survived continued secretly to minister to the Catholics round about, and we hope some information may one day come to light.

Between the old and the new order of things occurs a pleasing reminiscence connecting the Benedictines with Bath. The venerable Abbot Feckenham, who had been a monk of Evesham and in the reign of Queen Mary had been appointed abbot of the restored abbey of Westminster, found

¹⁰⁰ Peach's continuation of Britton's *Bath Abbey Church*, p. 99, appendix

¹⁰¹ *History of Somersetshire*, vol. ii, p. 85

¹⁰² Two English Benedictines – Dom Robert Sherwood, professed at St Gregory's, Douai in 1613, and Dom Elphege Sherwood, professed at St Lawrence's, Dieulouard, in 1626 – were probably his sons or relatives. They were both born in Bath.

¹⁰³ See King and Watts, *Municipal Records of Bath*, p. 58

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, Appendix, p. xii

himself on the accession of Elizabeth a second time cast out. In one of the intervals between his many imprisonments, he resided on parole in Bath. During his sojourn there he was moved with compassion to see how the poor, deprived of their charitable foundations, were excluded from the use and benefit of the medicinal waters. He therefore built them, with his own means, a small bath and hospital. Wood, in his *Description of Bath*, written nearly two centuries after, thus speaks of it: - 'The lepers hospital is a building of 8 ft. 6in. in front towards the east on the ground floor, 14 ft. in front above, and 13 ft. in depth, but yet it is furnished with seven beds for the most miserable of objects, who fly to Bath for relief from the hot waters. This hovel stands at the corner of Nowhere Lane, and is so near the lepers' bath that the poor are under little or no difficulty in stepping from one place to the other.' A notice of the good abbot's work is found in the accounts of the City Chamberlain in 1576:- 'Delyuered to Mr Fekewand, late abbot of Westminster, Three Tonnes of Tymber and x foote to builde the howse for the poore by the whote bath.' Feckenham put his little hospice under the direction of the hospital of St Mary Magdalen, and it appears that when the Corporation pulled down 'the hovel' without warrant in 1804, they paid a sum of £200 to the hospital in Holloway by way of compensation. The old bath was utilised by Wood as an underground tank when he built the Royal Baths.¹⁰⁵

A long period of more than a century passed by after Feckenham's leaving Bath, and of that period history reveals nothing to tell us what spiritual help was being given to its Catholic inhabitants. The terrible days of Elizabeth and James I made only secret and perhaps occasional ministrations possible, and the troublesome time of Charles I and the Commonwealth added the evils of civil war and the fanaticism of the Puritans to the difficulties under which Catholics groaned. But at length the Benedictines again came into connection with the city, though under altered conditions from those of their first foundation.¹⁰⁶ Times had changed; the penal laws necessitated new methods of work, and the monks had to commence anew their apostolate in England – not preaching to a nation that had not known Christianity, but striving by slow and laborious toil to win back one by one a people that had lost their ancient faith.

It is not known who first commenced missionary labours in Bath. The earliest notice that we have is of Dom Anselm Williams, a monk of St Benedict's, at St Malo, who is said to have founded the mission in Bath, coming into England about the year 1679. It was probably to aid him in his establishment that the Benedictine Chapter of 1685 granted him £20 per annum. In his time James II and his queen, Mary of Modena visited Bath during the pageant they made in 1687 through some of

¹⁰⁵ See King and Watts, *Municipal Records of Bath*, p. 58

In one of his intervals of freedom Feckenham lived in Holborn and built an aqueduct for the public. There appears also, in the records of St Margaret's Church, Westminster, a beautiful instance of his charity towards the poor in a bequest of £40 to the churchwardens thereof, in order that distribution might be made annually to the poor to enable them to buy firewood at a farthing the bundle in winter time. Similar evidence of his charity is seen in what he did for the poor during his residence in Bath. Doubtless the same spirit prompted him to write a medical work: indeed its title indicates this. It is headed, '*This booke of soveraigne medicines against the most common and knowne diseases both of men and women was, by good prooffe and longe experience, collected by Mr Doctor Ficknam, late Abbot of Westminster, and that chieflie for the poore which hath not att all tymes the learned phisitions att hande.*'

¹⁰⁶ The story of the revival of the English Benedictines has been often told. The transmission of the old monastic line through Father Sigebert Buckley, in 1607 was solemnly approved by Pope Paul V, and the newly professed monks of the English Congregation united in 1617 with many Englishmen who had been professed in the Spanish Congregation. Monasteries were established abroad; St Gregory's at Douai (now at Downside), St Lawrence's at Dieulouard, in Lorraine (now at Ampleforth), St Edmund's at Paris, (now at Douai, Reading), St Benedict's at St Malo (resigned to the Maurist Congregation about 1670), and the Abbey of SS Denis and Adrian, at Lamspring near Hildesheim (afterwards removed to Broadway in Worcestershire, but now extinct). The cathedral priory of St Michael, near Hereford, was founded in 1859.

the populous cities of the west. Warner says¹⁰⁷ tradition hands down to us that the king commanded a Benedictine, Dom John Huddleston, to say mass in the abbey church and preach a sermon to the people, and that a great commotion ensued, the famous Bishop Ken getting up into the pulpit immediately afterwards and preaching against him. The story may be true, for James II's imprudence lends colour to it.

Soon after 1693 Father Williams died and Dom Austin Llewellyn, a monk of St Edmund's, Paris, took his place. He was a man of power and zeal, and this is evidenced by the fact that when he died in 1711, he was much regretted on account of the services he had rendered his congregation in Bath. For a time he had with him one of the priests of his own monastery, Dom John Dakins, who served at Bath from 1695-6 to 1700, when he was forced to retire to Paris on account of illness contracted from attending an infectious case.

The successor of Dom Austin Llewellyn was Dom Bernard Quyne, a monk of St Lawrence's, Dieulouard. He stayed only three years, and went to Lisbon as chaplain to the Brigittine nuns there.¹⁰⁸ In a brief notice of his life it is said that he repaired Bell Tree House, and that public subscriptions were raised for that purpose. He may have been the first to acquire that house for the purposes of the mission, but it is not likely that at that date Catholics would have dared to attempt anything by public subscriptions. Bell Tree House was the ancient rectory of the parish of St James. It was held by the Corporation of Bath, and by them leased to Catholics. In one of the Bath mission account books a memorandum informs us that the lease of the house was dated 30th June 1719, although it was certainly used as the mission house in 1713. The lease was for twenty one years, and we are further informed that a renewal was granted on 29th March 1736 for twenty five years, a ground rent of ten pounds per annum being then determined instead of the preceding rent of eight pounds. No further lease has come to hand. It would seem that the house itself was bought by the Benedictines, and that towards the purchase of it a sum of four hundred pounds was borrowed from Mr William Stourton on a mortgage of the property, and that the mortgage was paid off before 1730.

The house stood in what was known as Bell Tree Lane, now called Beau Street, and on its site is now built the eastern part of the Royal United Hospital. It was a large house, suited to the accommodation of several lodgers, and the names of those who went there form a list of great interest in the Bath Mission account books. The fact is that it was a real asylum to the Catholics under the penal disabilities, and a necessary source of income to the resident priest; the chapel occupied the top storey, so that it was removed from the observation and interference of Protestants.

Dom William Banester, a monk of St Gregory's, and Dom Francis Bruning, a monk of Lamspring, were the next incumbents of Bath, the former holding the post from 1714 to 1726 – at which year he died at Bath on 16th May – and the latter from 1726 to 1730. In that year came one who was destined to high honours, Dom Laurence York. Born in London in 1687, he was professed at St Gregory's, Douai in 1705. He was prior of that house from 1725 to 1729, after holding the same office in St Edmund's, Paris during the preceding four years. On 20th October 1730, he took up the work of the mission at Bath and laboured continuously there for eleven years, when, in 1741 he was appointed, at the instance of Dr Matthew Pritchard OSF, the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District, to be his coadjutor. He was consecrated by the title of Bishop of Niba, in the monastery church of St Gregory, Douai in the same year; and greater solemnity was given to the occasion by the presence of

¹⁰⁷ *History of Bath*, p. 257

¹⁰⁸ The Brigittine nuns had their great convent at Syon House, near Brentford. It was restored by Queen Mary, but again suppressed under Elizabeth. The community went to Lisbon, and has since been removed to Syon Abbey, Chudleigh, Devon (1887), having thus existed continuously from its first foundation.

the capitular fathers of the English Benedictine Congregation, who opened their General Chapter on that day, 10th August, the feast of St Lawrence. In consequence of the elevation of Bishop York, the Benedictine superiors determined at once to appoint a successor to serve the mission and administer the temporalities, but it seems that for want of a fit person, and perhaps later on through the troubles of the Stuart rising, the Bishop continued his former work till November 1746. Some ill-disposed person tried to embroil him in the affair of Prince Charles Stuart by sending in forged letters showing the Bishop to have supplied the Jacobite party with arms; the mayor of Bath, however, with great kindness went to the Bishop and showed him the letter. The Bishop confirmed him in his belief that it was a forgery, but the mayor advised him to withdraw for a time during the popular excitement. On the death of Bishop Pritchard in 1750, Bishop York became Vicar Apostolic. For fourteen years, during which he continued to reside in Bath, he administered 'with prudent zeal' says Dr Oliver, his vast district, after which time he obtained permission to resign by reason of age and infirmities. The last six years of his life he passed in his monastery at Douai, where he died of paralysis in his eighty third year, on 25th April 1770.

In 1746, a fit person to take charge of the Bath mission was found in Dom Bernard Bradshaw, a monk of Lamspring. Of his ten years work there we know little. He had the reputation of being a great preacher, and during the last five years of his life he was the provincial of Canterbury, the superior of the missionary fathers of the South Province. A full length portrait of him exists at St Michael's Priory near Hereford. Dom Placid Naylor, a monk of Dieulouard, succeeded him at Bath in 1757, and was incumbent for nineteen years, showing great zeal and success in bringing over his countrymen to the Catholic faith. In his later years he became confessor to the Benedictine nuns in Paris, and during the French Revolution he was imprisoned for some time. He recovered his liberty in December 1794, and died within a month in Paris.

Another monk of Dieulouard, Dom Bede Brewer, was appointed to Bath upon the retirement of Father Placid Naylor. He was a man of great force of character and of conspicuous talents. He had taken the degree of DD at the Sorbonne with great éclat, and when he afterwards became President-General of the English Benedictines in 1799, which office he held till his death in 1822, he showed himself fully able to cope with the difficulties of most trying times.

After a short residence in Bath he found himself obliged to make new arrangements for the mission. There was by this date, 1777, more liberty for Catholics in the exercise of their religion, and the old chapel at the top of Bell Tree House was inconveniently placed and now much too small for its purpose. A general circular was therefore sent out, asking for subscriptions for erecting a new chapel, and a sum of more than £1200 was collected. The new chapel was built, but it was never used. The Gordon Riots of 1780 spread from London to Bath, and on 9th June – a week before the day appointed for the opening – the mob destroyed the building and other Catholic property adjacent. Bell Tree House also suffered to some extent, and the registers and valuable papers of the Bath mission were in a great measure destroyed, as well as the books and manuscripts of the illustrious Bishop Walmesley. The Bishop was fortunately absent at Wardour at the time, but Father Brewer had a narrow escape with his life. Pursued by the mob he could find no shelter, till at last he was compassionately aided by the host of the White Lion Inn, and by his help he contrived to escape from Bath.

The riots were quelled, and the day of reckoning came. Something like martial law had been proclaimed in the city, and a leader of the rioters – one John Butler – was tried and executed before the close of the month at the end of Pear Tree Lane. A claim for compensation was brought against the hundred of Bath, represented by Walter Wiltshire (mayor in 1780), Francis Bennett (mayor in 1781) and Simon Crook, the plaintiff being Mr John Throckmorton, who was the legal owner of all the property. The claim was for four houses, as also for a dwelling house and long room or outhouse adjoining (these would be the new presbytery and chapel), 'pulled down or otherwise destroyed by

the rioters, on Friday evening, the 9th of June 1780.' The amount claimed was £2810 17s 10¼ d, and also a sum equivalent to the loss of rents and satisfaction for the loss of use of the houses. The case was tried at Taunton by Judge Perryn, and Mr Throckmorton obtained a verdict on 30th March 1781 with damages to the amount of £3734 19s 6d. Though the property had to be rebuilt according to the conditions of the lease, it does not appear that it was ever used for mission purposes. Father Brewer was removed from Bath in 1780, and Dom Benedict Pembridge, a monk of St Gregory's, was appointed in his stead, and came to Bell Tree House¹⁰⁹ on 8th January 1781. That place continued to be used till 1786; we read that Bishop Walmsley confirmed as many as forty persons there on 20th May 1785. In the following year the clergy took up their residence at No. 13 St James' Parade, there being an approach by the back to the chapel erected in Corn Street at the same time for Catholic worship.

Father Pembridge now retired from Bath for a time, and Dom Cuthbert Wilks took his place. He was a monk of St Edmund's, Paris, a man of brilliant parts, a ready preacher and one who by his great gifts brought the Catholic body much into notice. His powers were perhaps the very cause of his troubles. When he had passed with applause the examination for the doctorate at the Sorbonne, he would not take the degree because he could not take the oath to maintain the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, as was required of each of its doctors by that university; and at Bath he took a prominent part in the proceedings of the notorious Cisalpine Club, thus coming into collision with the Bishop. Opinions differed at the time as to the justice of his cause, and it is not the place here to deal with that matter. He twice incurred ecclesiastical suspension, and was finally removed by his superiors in 1792.

About this time additional priests were placed in Bath as assistants. Dom Cuthbert Simpson was there from 1784 to 1785, in which year he died in Bath, Dom Jerome Digby was there in 1785 and the year following, and Dom Jerome Heatley from 1787 till 1792. Dom Heatley was a monk of Lamspring and a nephew of Abbot Maurus Heatley. His work in Bath ended while he was still young, for he died there of typhus fever at the age of thirty three, on 29th April 1792; and it is recorded in the registers of Bath that he was 'buried in the abbey church, left hand aisle, May 2nd 1792, close to the wall, under Bostock's monument.'¹¹⁰ Many Catholics are buried in the abbey church, as the numerous monumental slabs testify; most of them, if not all, being in the north aisle.

Upon the death of Dom Jerome Heatley an excellent missionary was sent to Bath, Dom Ralph Ainsworth, a monk of St Lawrence's; and the labour of his life was spent in the city. Bath was already honoured by the presence of another Bishop. This was Dr Gregory Sharrock, who came as coadjutor of the Western District in 1781, in which year he was consecrated at Wardour as Bishop of Telmessus, though his appointment is dated from 1779. He was a monk of St Gregory's and had been prior there for six years preceding his consecration. He had been held in great love and veneration by his religious brethren, and everyone bore him the same affection when he was Bishop. Such was his character that it merited for him the title of English Fenelon. When Bishop, whether as coadjutor or as Vicar-Apostolic, he lived as a simple monk with his brethren at the Chapel House, and died attended by their loving care, on 17th October 1809, in his sixty seventh year.

It was in 1797, on 25th November, that Bishop Charles Walmsley, Vicar Apostolic, died in Bath. Professed at St. Edmund's, Paris, and a Doctor of the Sorbonne, he was Prior of St Edmund's

¹⁰⁹ This is evidenced by his own statement in the registers at St John's, Bath. The property destroyed by the rioters lay between the Lower Borough Walls and St James' Parade, to the west of St James' Burial Ground. It was in a part of ground called the Ambury, where anciently the almonry of the monastery was situated. There is a street of that name close by at the present day.

¹¹⁰ There seems to be no trace of the grave, and the small slab recording Dr Bostock's appears to have been moved from its original place. The doctor was very probably the same one who was for some time (1729-37) a lodger at Bell Tree House. Richard Bostock MD from Shropshire, died in 1747.

from 1749 to 1753. Bishop York petitioned for him as coadjutor, and he was consecrated Bishop of Rama in the Sodality Chapel of the English College at Rome by Cardinal Lanti on 21st December 1756. Until 1786 he resided with the Benedictine priest of Bath, and for the rest of his life he kept his own house in the city. So great was his learning, particularly in mathematical science, that he was in much repute throughout Europe and was a Fellow of our own Royal Society and of several learned academies abroad. Through him in some measure the adoption of the New Style was brought about in England. But in the riots of 1780 all his papers were destroyed and he is said to have regarded the calamity as a judgement of God for his too great attachment to science, so that from that time he gave up all such pursuits. In his pastoral work he devoted himself with great zeal to the interests of religion, and he was foremost in maintaining the truth amidst the dangers arising at that time from the proposed measures of Catholic relief. To him the dioceses of the old Western District owe the custom, introduced in 1788, of the Mass with Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, which is still observed four times every year, for the protection of the Catholic Church in England. The Bishop was a man of somewhat austere views, and is noted as being the last vicar-apostolic to yield the dispensation for the use of flesh meat in Lent. There seems to have been in him throughout a strong will to uphold the discipline as well as the faith of the Church. An excellent portrait of him exists at Downside, showing him in the full vigour of his age and revealing evidence of his great intellectual power and force of character. A few years ago, on the celebration of the centenary of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States, he was of some interest to Americans as having been the consecrator of Dr John Carroll, the first Bishop of Baltimore. That noteworthy event took place in the chapel at Lulworth on 15th August 1790. The body of Bishop Walmesley was buried in the vault of St Joseph's chapel in Bristol, where afterwards his successor, Bishop Sharrock and his friend Dom Benedict Pembridge were laid to rest near him.

It is not very clear who held the position of incumbent in Bath during the closing years of the last century. Father Pembridge was at Bath in 1791 and the following year, and it is possible that he was sent back there on account of the suspension of Father Wilks. But he appears to have left again until 1798, after which date he at least resided in Bath till his death which took place on 20th November 1806. He was then eighty two years of age and had probably been unable for some time to do missionary work. The zealous Father Ainsworth was there, however, and may have been incumbent from the year 1792; he certainly held that position from 1806 till his own comparatively early death at the age of fifty, on 5th February 1814.

As assistant to Father Ainsworth came Dom Henry Lawson to Bath in 1793, and he served there till 1800. He was a Gregorian, and the elder brother of Dom Augustine Lawson, who was the first prior of St Gregory's after its removal to Downside. Of Father Lawson there is a contemporary record in the archives of Downside – a certificate, dated 26th January 1795, that 'Henry Lawson, of the said city of Bath, Roman Catholic priest, did subscribe the oath appointed to be taken by Papists, according to Act of Parliament, 31 Geo. 3.' After his departure the following came to Bath:- Dom James Calderbank, a monk of St Laurence's (1800-1805), Dom Bede Rigby, of Lamspring (1805-1806), Dom Austin Birdsall¹¹¹, also of Lamspring (1806-1809).

The chapel in Corn Street having become too small and inconvenient for the Catholic congregation, Father Ainsworth found an opportunity of purchasing the old theatre in Orchard Street, and this was opened for Divine worship on 3rd December, the first Sunday of Advent, 1809. This chapel was used until the consecration of the present church, St John the Evangelist, in 1863. It boasted no architectural beauty, but it served its purpose very well, and became endeared to the generations of Catholics who worshipped in it. The sanctuary did not lack a certain dignity, and

¹¹¹ He was provincial of Canterbury from 1822 to 1826, after which he held the office of President General till his death, which took place at Broadway, in Worcestershire, on 2nd August 1837. His portrait is at Downside.

solemnity benefitting its sacred purpose, and it is a pleasure to be able to present a view of what it was in the later days of its existence as a chapel.¹¹²

After the death of Father Ainsworth, Dom James Calderbank, who had left Bath on account of ill health, returned as incumbent. He was a man of good sense and sound judgment, but he did not stay long enough in Bath to do all that his character might have enabled him to do. His assistants were Dom Clement Rishton (1814-1815) a monk of St Lawrence's, who left Bath to become prior of Ampleforth, and Dom Austin Rolling, a monk of St Gregory's (1815-1817). Probably on account of his delicate health, Father Calderbank left Bath in 1817, and was succeeded by him who was afterwards the celebrated Bishop Baines.

Peter Baines had been a boy at Lampsring, and on the dissolution of that monastery he went to complete his studies at Ampleforth. He afterwards joined the Order, making his profession under the religious name of Augustine. In 1817 he was appointed to the mission of Bath, and a fellow monk of St Lawrence's, Dom Joseph Brindle, was given to him as assistant. Dom Augustine was a man of remarkable powers, with ideas in advance of his time; and he became famous through his care for the solemn observance of the ritual and by the eloquence of his preaching. Bishop Collingridge, OSF, then Vicar Apostolic, was attracted by his powers and obtained him for his coadjutor, and Dr Baines was consecrated Bishop of Siga on 1st May 1823, in the chapel in Sligo Street, Dublin, by Archbishop Murray. He shortly after went to Rome, and there doubtless his future schemes developed. He thought of establishing a grand seminary and quasi university for his district, and when he became Vicar-Apostolic by the death of Bishop Collingridge in March 1829, he proceeded forthwith to carry his design into execution. He appointed Father Brindle his vicar during his own absence in Rome, made the purchase of the estate and mansion of Prior Park, obtained the secularisation of Father Brindle and several other Benedictines of Ampleforth, and started upon his career. The history of Prior Park is outside the limits of the present subject. The Benedictine work in Bath went on as before.

In 1823, after Dr Baines's nomination as Bishop, the Benedictine superiors sent to Bath a monk of Ampleforth, Dom Maurus Cooper, to assist Father Brindle. Upon the secularisation of the latter, Father Cooper became incumbent, and he carried on his work faithfully till 1846, when he received permission to retire. In 1833 he obtained an assistant in Dom Jerome Jenkins, to whom succeeded Dom Peter Wilson (1836-1840), Dom Austin Shann (1840-1842), and in 1842 Dom Clement Worsley. Dom Jerome Jenkins returned to Bath as incumbent in 1846, upon the retirement of Father Cooper, and remained till 1850. He was during that time also Provincial Canterbury, and when he left Bath he appointed as incumbent the priest who had been assistant for eight years, Dom Clement Worsley.

Father Worsley, who now took charge of the mission, was destined to do a great work for the Catholic religion in Bath. Whatever were his natural talents, his power of administration was well adapted to his situation, his religious spirit and his zeal for the beauty of God's house were conspicuous, and he was endowed with a character that won the hearts of all. His missionary work in Bath is kept in the remembrance of many living, though very many may have gone with him into life eternal; but the outward manifestation of his zeal is present in the church and other buildings so honourable to the Catholic body.

Father Worsley was a monk of St Lawrence's, as so many had been who had hitherto served the mission of Bath. After a short missionary career he came to the city in 1842, and his eight years

¹¹² The place was sold and has become a Freemason's Hall. The vaults, however, still belong to the mission of St John's. There Father Ainsworth lies buried; there, too, lie Brother Basil Knapp, a young monk who died at Downside in 1816: the Reverend William Coombes, vicar-general of the Western District (died 1822); and the Reverend Francis Elloy, a doctor of the Sorbonne, who lived many years at Downside (died 1824).

faithful service was rewarded by his being appointed incumbent. But the appointment was only to more labour, and he was to make the transition from the old to the new. The hierarchy had been established, and the Catholic Church was commencing to put on its former beauty in this land; in Bath it would not be content with being pushed away into a side street. Father Worsley's first work was to build schools (1852) and the second to form a Catholic cemetery. A piece of land, which was part of the Prior Park estate, and probably a portion of the ancient property of the monks of Bath, he purchased in the year 1856 for the sum of £892 and the cemetery was solemnly consecrated by Bishop Clifford on 1st June 1858, with a beautiful mortuary chapel being added the following year.

But the great aim was to secure a new church. The first hope was realised by the acquisition of a fine plot of ground next to the river, the site of part of the orchard of the old Benedictine priory. On 2nd October 1861 was laid the foundation of the beautiful church of St John the Evangelist, on South Parade, and the consecration took place two years afterwards, on 6th October 1863. Bishop Clifford of Clifton was the consecrator, and he was assisted by Bishop Ullathorne OSB of Birmingham, Bishop Vaughan of Plymouth; and Bishop Morris OSB formerly of Mauritius. This great work so far achieved, Father Worsley would not rest. The adjoining presbytery was completed and inhabited within the following six months, and on 24th November 1867, he was enabled to celebrate the completion of the noble tower and spire which we see today. Year by year the interior of the church grew more perfect; sculpture was added to sculpture, window to window in their varied picture glass, till nothing seemed possible to be added to increase the beauty of the edifice.

On 13th November 1881, the festival of All Saints of the Benedictine Order, Father Worsley celebrated the golden jubilee of his monastic life. It was kept with great ceremonial, being honoured by the presence of Archbishop Errington, Bishop Clifford, and Bishop Hedley OSB, by a large assemblage of his brethren of the clergy, and by a vast crowd of his congregation and other friends in Bath; and a presentation of over £400 was made to him, which he lost no time in expending for the advancement of the mission. The needs of the day required more schools. The original schools, dating from 1812 and 1815, were held in parts of the buildings connected with the old chapel in Orchard Street until new schools were built near at hand, in the same street in 1852. These served their purpose for thirty years, when means that had been added to Father Worsley's jubilee presentation enabled him to commence the present new schools adjoining the priory. These were opened, after a lapse of two years, on 31st August 1883.

Father Worsley, like his predecessors, had assistants in his work of the mission. Dom Gregory Lane, of St Gregory's monastery, had assisted for a short time in 1849, and then Dom Maurus Hodgson, also of St Gregory's monastery (1850-1855); Dom Lawrence Shepherd, of the monastery of St Lawrence (1855-1859); Dom Paulinus Wilson, also of St Lawrence's (1859-1862); and lastly, Dom Norbert Sweeney, from 1862, laboured with him with brotherly cordiality during the period that elapsed before the opening of the new church. That event brought about a desire for extension of work and for greater solemnity in the services of the church, and since then a staff of three priests has been stationed at the priory of Bath. Dom Lawrence Shepherd went to St Mary's Abbey, Stanbrook as chaplain to the nuns on 2nd December 1863. Until 17th August 1864, Dom Cuthbert Murphy, a monk of St Edmund's, took his place and to him succeeded on 20th October, Dom Joseph Davis, a monk of St Gregory's, who remained at Bath until 1900.

The name of Dr Sweeney is widely known among English Catholics, and in Bath he was no stranger to any creed or class. He had been prior of Downside, and afterwards prior of the new foundation of St Michael's, near Hereford, before his arrival in Bath; and in this last sphere of work he laboured for twenty years in union with Father Worsley. His talents were of a high order, his aptitude for work very great, and his cheerful and gentle nature made him beloved by all. The record of his preaching and of his public work in Bath made him a man of note, and he was influential in bringing many souls back to the Catholic faith. In the last three years of his life he found little time to

devote to missionary work, as he was so much taken up with the business of his Order, but he resided in the city to the end. In 1879 he became titular abbot of St Alban's, and in 1881 Provincial of Canterbury. Work and anxiety, rather than age brought him soon to his death, which took place on 16th April 1883. He was buried in St John's cemetery four days after, and the magnificence of his funeral, the like of which no priest had ever before had in Bath since 1539, testified to the esteem which the city bore towards him. In his memory was erected a large hall adjoining the schools, and known as the 'Sweeney Memorial,' which was used for Catholic meetings and also for the purposes of a middle class school.

During the last busy years of Dr Sweeney's life, Father Worsley's growing age and delicate health called for further help. Dom John Stutter, a monk of St Gregory's, assisted for a short time; Dom Clement Clarke, also of St Gregory's, came on 3rd October 1878, and Dom Francis Fleming, another Gregorian, joined him in 1881. But the end for him who had served the Bath mission forty three years and had presided over it for thirty five, was now very near. On 2nd May 1885, Father Worsley passed away in the seventy third year of his life. He lies buried in the same grave with his brethren and fellow workers, Father Maurus Cooper and Abbot Sweeney. His afflicted people and the whole city mourned his loss, and his funeral was the sign of the sincere affection with which he was regarded; while his monument is not the simple inscription above his grave, but the great pile of buildings that he erected to the glory of God.

The death of Father Worsley closed an epoch in the history of the Benedictines in Bath. It has remained for those who succeeded him to keep and to foster what he secured. The three monks who had laboured with him at the last still continued to serve the mission, and Dom Clement Clarke was appointed incumbent. It was his privilege to celebrate in 1888 the silver jubilee of the opening of St John's church; and two discourses upon the mission in Bath, afterwards printed, were delivered in the church by Dom Francis Fleming in memory of the occasion.

In 1891 a momentous change took place in the English Benedictine Congregation. Up to that date the fathers serving on the mission had been governed by two provincials, those of Canterbury and York, the former having jurisdiction over the south province, the latter over the north. But the Holy See now decided to attach the missions and the missionary fathers to the monasteries, and in accordance with that decision the missions were divided among the monasteries by a commission appointed for the purpose. The church of Bath, among others, was attached to the neighbouring monastery of St Gregory at Downside. It naturally followed that each monastery served its missions with its own monks: as however the priests serving Bath were all Gregorians, no change was there made. But on account of the Benedictines taking over the mission at East Dulwich in 1892, the removal of Dom Francis Fleming from Bath took place, in order that he might preside over the new venture. Dom Dunstan Sweeney succeeded him in Bath, and in the autumn of 1894 replaced Father Clement Clarke as incumbent.

The Benedictines occupy indeed a very different position in the city from what was theirs in Catholic times. Then they were great owners and feudal lords: now they are but citizens. Then they boasted a community and all the splendour of the monastic choral services; now a mere handful, they must labour as missionary priests.¹¹³ And their work is still before them; the Catholics are yet

¹¹³ In accordance with the directions of the Holy See there has been a succession of Cathedral Priors of Bath, as of the other Benedictine cathedrals, elected in the General Chapters of the English Congregation. For some time in the seventeenth century certain monks were assigned to each prior as his community, in view of the possible restoration of the monasteries. The priors had no jurisdiction, but only a title of dignity, which gave them seats in the General Chapters. The following is a list of the Cathedral Priors of Bath up to the present time, with the dates of their election and the initials indicating monasteries of their profession: (G = St Gregory's, L = St Lawrence's, E = St Edmund's, B = St Benedict's at St Malo, AD = SS Adrian and Denis at Lamspring) :-

but a fraction of the population. How many held to the faith during the darker penal days we cannot tell. In 1781, just after the Gordon Riots, we find the Catholic census set down by Father Pembridge at 280; in 1792 we read that the number was 335. After this we find no record till 1830, in which year there was taken an accurate census on 16th June; under 14 years, 450; above 14 years, 465; above 30 years, 530; total 1348. At the present time there are two Catholic churches in Bath, the secular mission of St Mary's numbering perhaps 400 souls, and the Benedictine mission of St John's numbering about 1200. But what is this among a population of 56,000?

Faith and perseverance, are, however, lessons to be learnt from the history of the past. The catastrophe of the sixteenth century seemed at one time irreparable; but we cannot reflect upon the change from the obscurity of the days before Bell Tree House to the beauty of the church of St John, visible to the sight of all men, without consolation and hope. Upon the church property as it now exists a sum of more than £37,000 has been spent, and all is freehold. It is not the result of great monastic rent-rolls – there are not any such in this land; it is the outcome of self-denying efforts of generous souls.

It is hardly likely that the outward state of monasticism will ever be what it was. The world will never be as it was in past times; the conditions of life and the manners of men have completely changed. But we hope that this nation will yet be united in one faith, and we are certain that the Benedictine way of life adapt itself in the future, as it did in the past, to the needs and circumstances of the age. May therefore the Benedictine work, which was identified with the city of Bath a thousand years ago and under one form or another has gone on to this day, be identified with it to the end of all things.

1629 Dom Robert Sherwood (G)
1666 Dom Andrew Whitfield (G)
1689 Dom Austin Llewellyn (E)
1713 Dom Benedict Gibbon (AD)
1725 Dom William Banester (G)
1729 Dom John Stourton (G)
1745 Dom Placid Howard (G)
1749 Dom Alexius Shepherd (G)
1757 Dom Maurus Westbrook (AD)

1777 Dom Anselm Bolas (AD)
1798 Dom Placid Harsnip (AD)
1810 Dom Bernard Barr (G)
1818 Dom Wilfrid Fisher (AD)
1834 Dom Francis Cooper (L)
1850 Dom Jerome Jenkins (G)
1870 Dom Clement Worsley (L)
1883 Dom Austin O'Neill (E)
1888 Dom Romuald Woods (L)