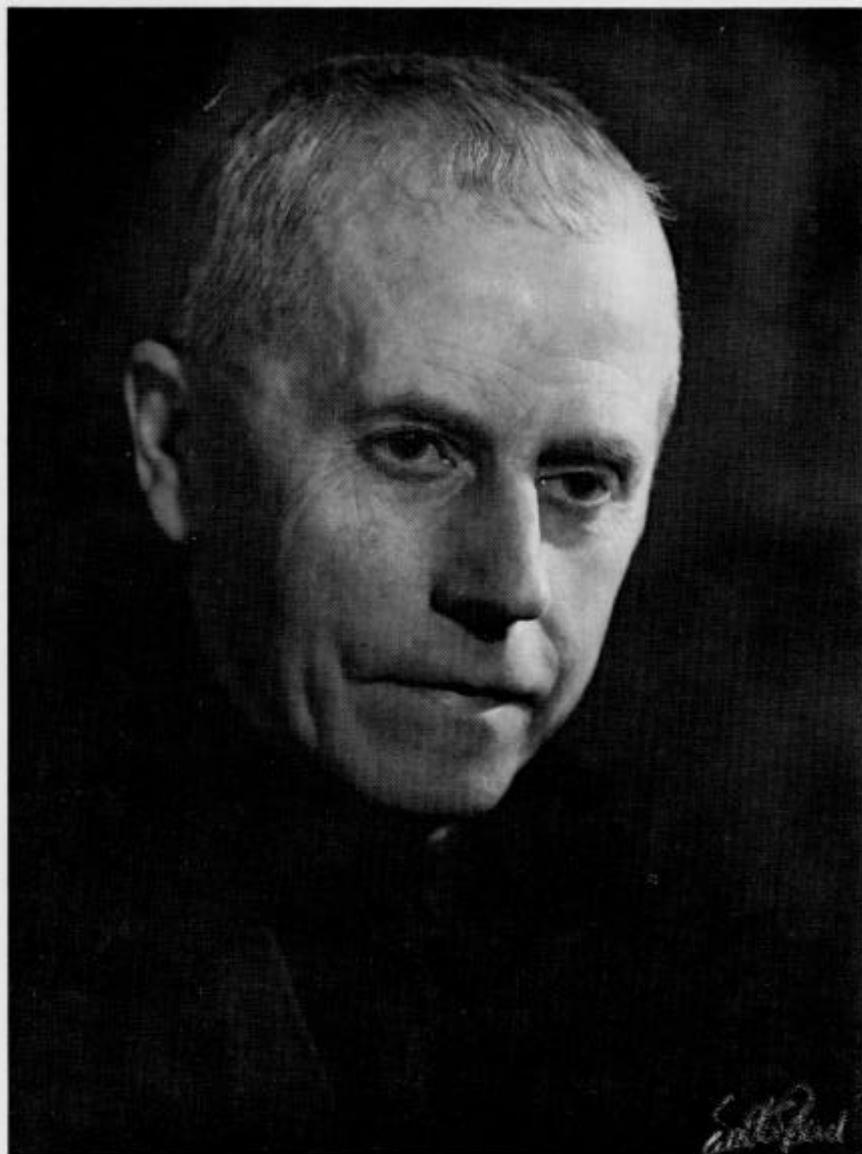


PLATE XIX



DAVID KNOWLES

DAVID KNOWLES

1896–1974

MANY a violinist, as he tunes his strings and tightens his bow, must have reflected how inadequate are his skill, his tone, the subtleties of his expression, to reflect the mind and genius of the composer he is trying to interpret. Anyone who seeks to interpret David Knowles as monk, friend, teacher, and scholar, must prepare for the task by re-reading his lectures on the Maurists and Mabillon, and 'The Historian and Character'; and by pondering *The Monastic Order in England*, his masterpiece.¹ It is a preparation at once disheartening and inspiring. For he was a magician with words, who had reflected on the ways of the human mind with subtlety and depth and humour, and was peculiarly fitted to describe what he had found. He was a shrewd judge of men, whose appraisals—occasionally severe—were tempered with a warmth of sympathy and charitable understanding. He was a man of prayer in whose presence many of quite different temperament felt the touch of his faith and ideals. He was a historian and a scholar who transformed the study of monastic history and in the process made his own approach to and interpretation of the medieval Church an indispensable part of the apparatus of a whole generation of medievalists. Like all rich personalities, his was complex, not easily caught in the simple phrase or thumb-nail sketch; not caught at all in a cliché. Let it be said at once that to a wide circle he conveyed an inspiration which seemed to lift the subjects and the personalities on which he laid his mark to a higher plane; and from a smaller group, which crossed the frontiers of age and communion, he won friendship and devotion of unusual warmth and depth.

¹ For Bibliography and sources, see note at end; the lecture on the *Maurists* is in *Great Historical Enterprises . . .* (London, etc., 1963); the other two in *The Historian and Character and other Essays* (Cambridge, 1963), which also contains many of the papers referred to below. These collections are abbreviated to *GHE* and *HC*; and frequent references are made to *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council, 943* [2nd edn., 940]–1216 (Cambridge, 1940; 2nd edn., pagination unaltered but with additions, 1963); *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1948–59). Full references will be given to individual works not in this note on the first occasion each is mentioned.

Background

David Knowles was born in 1896 at Michaelmas, and baptised Michael Clive—in a technical sense the first of his family to join the Catholic Church, since his father was a recent convert still preparing for reception and his mother was not received till some years later. He was an only child, brought up in Studley in Warwickshire, not far from Birmingham, and in Birmingham itself. He was devoted to his parents, H. H. and Carrie Knowles, and looked back with pleasure to his childhood.

My father was a very lovable and admirable man [he wrote in later life].¹ Although he was a successful man of business he was by tastes and interests a countryman and a lover of literature and art. He was also an excellent manager of men and things—gardens, poultry, animals—and did a great many acts of help and advice in the village society of Studley, where I suppose half the population were employed (someone in the family) by him. But I remember him chiefly for his goodness and love—and . . . for his mind. In my judgements and tastes I owe more than I can say to him. He was always sane and central, with no bees or whimsies. As a person, he reminded me more of Sir Thomas More (in his personal relations) than any other.

My mother was quite a different character—a very sweet, affectionate nature, simple in her tastes, happy in the common things of life such as the changing seasons and flowers. She had not my father's mental power, but many gifts—she was musical, and played the piano and sang, enjoyed games, had unusually good taste in clothes and decorations, was an excellent hostess. In all my life at home I never heard a single harsh or even impatient word between my father and mother, nor an unjust word of any kind about a third person.

Both my mother and father had a fund of affection and care for others, especially young people. Quite recently I thought of this, and added up all those who had been received into our house almost as children of it—and I counted up eighteen without having to think. . . . At the basis of it all was their strong and pervading faith, which gave a kind of peace to our home in its happiest days. . . .

And in a letter to Z. N. Brooke in 1944² just after his father's death, he spoke of his debt

including an example from childhood of deep reverence for the things of God, and a love of English history, literature and churches. We visited together all the old cathedrals of England (save two) and many in Wales and Scotland, and many a ruin from Melrose to Cleeve (Somerset) and from Strata Florida to Byland and Fountains.

The roots of the Knowles family lay not far away from Studley, near Bromsgrove, and the father of H. H. Knowles had

¹ Letter of 14 Nov. 1961.

² Letter of 13 Apr. 1944.

been a timber merchant in Birmingham. H. H. himself went into partnership with a friend called John Morgan who had inherited a factory making needles and pins at Studley; Carrie was his partner's sister. Their son was brought up in circumstances of modest prosperity, a prosperity which was later to make the publication of *The Monastic Order* possible, for to both the first edition and the first reprint his father made vital subsidies.

From 1906 to 1910 Michael Clive was at West House School at Edgbaston, a preparatory school where he laid the first foundations of his classical knowledge; and made friends, among others, with a member of one of the patrician families of Birmingham, 'because we were excluded from school prayers (he as a Quaker, myself as R.C.) and walked about like the forsaken merman while others murmured prayers'.¹ In 1910 he went on to Downside. Although he seems to have had little idea of his own academic prowess while he was a schoolboy it is clear that the school and the abbey made a deep impression on him; and in particular that he greatly admired the Headmaster, later Abbot, Dom Leander Ramsay. When the time came to leave he was already determined to enter the noviciate, and looked forward confidently to spending the rest of his days as a monk at Downside. In the event, it was to be divided between a period spent within the cloister, first at Downside (1914–33) then at Ealing (1933–39), and nearly twenty years in academic posts at Cambridge (1944–63), with an interlude (1939–44) and a coda (1963–74).

Downside

In October 1914 he was clothed in the habit, and took the name in religion of David. Contrary to what is sometimes supposed, long life in a monastic community tends to enhance the individual traits of a man's character, and there were many remarkable personalities at Downside in Brother—later Father—David's time. Of these, the two most significant for an understanding of his life were Dom Leander Ramsay and Dom Cuthbert Butler, Abbot from 1906 to 1922. 'Dom Leander's high seriousness and inflexible determination contrasted with Abbot Butler's more emotional and flexible nature';² but both greatly influenced Father David, and both were members of the remarkable circle of scholars among whom he came to maturity

¹ Letter of 17 July 1972.

² From D. K.'s memoir of Abbot Butler, *HC*, pp. 306–7.

at Downside. Perhaps the most distinguished of the circle was Edmund Bishop, not a monk but a frequent visitor in Father David's early years, down to his death in 1917; and the circle included Dom Hugh Connolly, a patristic scholar of exceptional finesse, and several historians and theologians of Father David's age and younger.

Edmund Bishop had been for many years the friend and collaborator of Downside's former prior, Dom Aidan Gasquet, promoted cardinal in the same year, 1914, in which David Knowles was clothed a novice. Gasquet was to be the subject of one of Father David's most searching and hilarious lectures, at once critical and sympathetic. He was a scholar whose 'capacity for carelessness amounted almost to genius',¹ and the friendship between Gasquet and Bishop, 'highly strung, fastidious, sensitive and lonely', one of the most meticulous of all English medievalists, has a paradoxical air. Bishop indeed was more than meticulous; he was a scholar of the finest sensibility, one of the immortals; and no one who dwells on the formation of the young scholars at Downside in his lifetime can fail to wonder how he influenced them. Direct contact between Bishop and Father David was evidently slight; there is a charming account by the latter of one long conversation; and it is characteristic of Father David's early bent that its theme was English literature, not history. Yet in some ways the influence of Edmund Bishop must have been important to him. The memory of Bishop, and the presence of his remarkable library in the Abbey, could not but affect him when he came to the studies from which *The Monastic Order* grew. At a fairly superficial level, one can see that the constant urge in that great book to curb a natural romanticism may be a reaction against one of Bishop's noted weaknesses;² and Father David (perhaps revealing in this more his generation than any particular influence) followed Bishop in his strange faith in national characteristics as a key (for example) to liturgical eccentricity. At a deeper level *The Monastic Order* reveals an exceptional sensitivity to the language and intellectual quality of scholarship. Two characteristics are manifest in almost every page Bishop wrote: precise accuracy, and a fine, almost philosophical, precision in the use

¹ *HC*, p. 254; for what follows, *HC*, p. 243.

² See below, p. 457. Bishop's weakness is rarely apparent in his best work, e.g. in *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford, 1918); but his favourable view of medieval monks was (so Father David himself told me more than once) readily apparent to those who knew him.

of scholarly language. Father David never quite captured Bishop's minute sense of accuracy; and his style was of a different *timbre*. But he shared to the full Bishop's dedication to the use of correct and appropriate language; and it is not perhaps fanciful to see some direct influence here. In any event Father David can hardly have failed to reflect on the quality of the eminent, eccentric scholar he had met in earlier days.

Far more substantial is the evidence of Abbot Cuthbert Butler's influence upon him. In his early days Butler had been active in the struggle for the reorganization of the English Benedictine Congregation along lines more in accord with the historical tradition of Benedictine Monachism—to use the words which were later the title of one of Butler's best known books.¹ He had also laid the foundations of great learning in monastic history, of which the edition of the *Lausiac History* of Palladius (1906) was to be the main fruit. When Butler first came to Downside, it was a priory with only a limited autonomy; lacking its own noviciate, fostering a community most of whose members were destined to go out on 'the mission', that is to say to become parish priests. The monks' destiny lay wholly in the hands of the Abbot President and the rulers of the Congregation; and the consequence of this was illustrated by Father David himself in his account of how the young Gasquet, bent on scholarship, found the threat of the chaplaincy at Acton Burnell hang over him.² When the reforms were complete, Downside was an autonomous Abbey with its own noviciate, its commitment to the mission, though still substantial, had been pruned, and the full and regular observance of choir and cloister established. Thus it came to pass that within the cloister, from 1906 on, the reform was represented and symbolized by Dom Cuthbert Butler, now Abbot. In the world at large Downside came increasingly to be noted as a centre of scholarship, a place almost in the Maurist tradition.

Cuthbert Butler now lives for many who never met him in the remarkable memoir which Father David composed for the *Downside Review* in 1934.³ It was a 'memorial of words', a work of piety; but yet much more than that, for it is his most substantial essay in contemporary biography, and incorporates a brilliant character sketch and portrait, and a history of the movement in which the young Butler had been involved. It has

¹ *Benedictine Monachism* (London, 1919; new edn., 1961). On the *Lausiac History*, see *HC*, pp. 344 ff.

² *HC*, p. 244; cf. pp. 245, 255.

³ Reprinted in *HC*, pp. 264–362.

a warm and generous appreciation of the Abbot's kindly qualities and positive achievement; and an affectionate enumeration of his eccentricities: of his tactlessness, of such proportions that it was suggested of him that 'laying the first stone' of a new building be changed to 'dropping the first brick'; of his untidiness of dress, and practice of gardening in 'ancient trousers and tail coat green with age, with a shapeless green cap on his head, worn back to front . . .'. 'Even when so clad he would never have passed for an ordinary man.'¹ All this gives us an insight into Father David's lively humour and perceptiveness which those of us who only knew him after he had left Downside can still readily recognize and imagine. More surprising in a man who shows himself so just and charitable in this as in many of his writings is the stern note of criticism which enters from time to time. Above all, he observes how the reforms fell short of expectation: the mission parishes were not curtailed to the extent that had been hoped, the involvement with the school grew greater, both, in Father David's view, hindrances to the full and proper monastic observance.

Thus he wrote in retrospect in 1934. But he would readily have admitted that his idea of the Benedictine life, and the place in it of both communal and private prayer, and of spiritual reading and scholarly work, owed much to the Abbot's inspiration. There is some evidence of a more direct influence. The Abbot was given to encouraging the young monks to have a task in hand, 'a pot on the boil', as he put it, and he recommended Father David to the study of Cluny.² A reading of Sackur's *Cluniacenser* not surprisingly failed to inspire; and in the circle of Butler and Bishop, Cluny, though greatly respected, invited a certain reserve, since it had been one of the first major houses to break down the Benedictine tradition of autonomy. Yet there is no reason to suppose that Father David acquired at this time the dispraise which marked his later references to Cluny, especially in his papers on Peter the Venerable. Indeed, in his little book *The Benedictines*, published in 1929, he linked Peter the Venerable with Mabillon: 'No better expositions of Benedictine ideals and aims have ever been framed than the defences of Peter the Venerable and Jean Mabillon against the attacks of Saint Bernard and de Rancé.'³

¹ *HC*, pp. 333–6.

² A. Stacpoole, 'Making of a Monastic Historian I', *Ampleforth Journal*, lxxx, i (1975), 79.

³ I quote from the reprint of 1962 (St. Leo, Florida), p. 34.

The Benedictines, published shortly before the last phase of Father David's life at Downside began, and very soon before he started work for *The Monastic Order*, is a beautifully composed, succinct exposition of the doctrine of Benedictine Monachism. The true monastic community is inward looking; its *raison d'être* lies in its own work and worship, not in any exterior influence, vital and valuable though that may be. Yet the vocation is not a special nor a narrow one; variety, sobriety, moderation have been its keynotes as well as utter dedication and obedience. 'As a member of a family the Benedictine comes to realize that charity is often better than zeal and sacrifice; that it is ill quarrelling in a small boat on a long voyage; that he must accept from his brothers what they have and not demand from them what they lack; that many things are healed by time.' Yet there is already a personal note in his emphasis on the total dedication and inner life of a monk. 'Neither habit nor choir nor community life are essential to sanctity and a life of prayer. If the end of all monastic observance, the monasticism of the soul, be once attained, it may be retained no matter where one is.'¹ From Abbot Butler Father David derived much fundamental instruction on the nature of the monastic life; though not the personal impress of a close friend and pastor, which Abbot Ramsay gave him in more abundant measure; nor the direct teaching in scholarly technique, for which too he probably owed more to Ramsay.

The Benedictines laid stress on the variety of the monastic life, and Father David's growth between 1914 and 1929 had several branches. No one who knew him in later life, or read his monastic writings, could fail to realize the deep foundations laid in his early monastic years. Some elements in his idea of the monastic life deepened, or changed direction, in the late 1920s; doubtless it was the deepening of an experience moulded by reflection over his first fifteen years as a monk. Still, in *The Benedictines*, he does not speak of contemplation or the mystical life as enjoying the central place in the monastic scheme or in his own interests which one might have expected from his later writings; and his references to St. John of the Cross are somewhat critical. Yet it is clear that he had long before formed—from his own experience and inclination, no doubt, as well as from the teaching of Abbot Butler and others—the notion that the monk's life was dedicated wholly to the cloister; and with

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34–5, 29.

this went a growing concern for contemplative prayer which issued in the first edition of *The English Mystics* in 1927.

For the rest, we must be content to observe the externals of his life. He was clothed as a novice on 4 October 1914, took simple vows on 9 October 1915, minor orders on 17 October 1915, solemn profession on 18 October 1918.¹ Thus he passed the years of the First World War, in which many of his boyhood friends were killed; and in 1919 he set off for Cambridge, to spend three years at Benet House, the Downside house of studies then in Park Terrace, as an undergraduate of Christ's College. In 1920 he was awarded a College scholarship, and in October he characteristically followed this up with the Skeat Prize for English Literature; he went on to take a first in both parts of the Classical Tripos with a Distinction in philosophy in part II. *Pari passu* he was advancing in the orders of the Church: sub-deacon on 12 December 1920, deacon on 25 September 1921, and priest on 9 July 1922. The jubilee of his priesthood in 1972 was the central event of his last years.

Throughout his life Father David was a voracious reader, but everyone who has tried to follow the course of his early years must wonder how so much came to be fitted into the dedicated life of full monastic observance. In part this may be attributed to the exceptional power of his memory. To a scholar memory is a two-edged sword: it provides him with a weapon which he must have, his most basic equipment; but if it is too good, and he learns to trust it, it will let him down. In later years he was inclined to trust to it too much; but those of us who say this say it in part out of envy, for his marvellous memory was even more the key to many of his most notable successes. His literary skill owed much to his power to produce the apt quotation, the lapidary phrase, from every corner of his extensive reading; and this gave the impression that he had spent one lifetime scouring English literature, and another in the Greek and Latin classics. Great and constant as was his delight in such literature, it was in later years fed mainly from his memory, for perhaps by an act of deliberate renunciation he spent little time in such reading. He would himself have laid equal stress on the time he spent on philosophy and theology. The groundwork for these was laid at Downside in his earliest years, and developed side by side with his studies in classical philosophy, culminating in a rapid programme filling

¹ These details were kindly furnished from records at Downside for use in *HC*.

the summer of 1922. Later he spent the best part of a year, from October 1922 to the summer of 1923, at Sant'Anselmo, completing his theological studies.

Philosophy and theology were to enter many areas of his later life and writings, and three especially: into his work on mysticism, into his study and teaching of medieval thought at Cambridge, and into the articles and leaflets of his last years. To the study of mystical theology he made an important contribution; and many of his most distinguished pupils were to be inspired by his lectures on medieval thought. Yet it is hard to think that theology brought out what was most gifted or original in his mind. He developed and sustained a carefully founded, but essentially simple, respect for St. Thomas, and showed no profound sympathy for any more recent philosopher. From the early 1930s on mysticism came increasingly to be judged in his eyes by the single standard of John of the Cross. His success in these studies witnesses first to the general power of his mind, and second to his skill and influence as a teacher, but it is as a historian that he will be remembered and honoured. Meanwhile, at Sant'Anselmo, he studied theology, talked German—as he later said, learned hastily out of Goethe and Schiller and spoken with a fine disregard to grammar—in the mainly German community, and saw Rome.

Among the many renunciations of his later life, he very rarely travelled. He never toured the congresses, but in the twenties he had travelled as extensively as an observant monk reasonably could. First there was the year in Rome; then, in the mid and late twenties, there was an almost annual visit to the Chalet of F. F. Urquhart on the borders of France and Switzerland. Urquhart was a Fellow of Balliol who invited a number of the brightest and most remarkable Oxford undergraduates of the twenties to his legendary Alpine retreat, where they read and walked and talked. He was a Catholic and a native of the Mendips; hence a not unfrequent visitor to Downside where he met Father David and served his mass. By these visits David Knowles came to meet men of such varied talent as R. H. S. Crossman and Cyril Connolly, and to form friendships which later matured with future colleagues in the British Academy, Kenneth (Lord) Clark and Sir Roger Mynors. Once, breaking his sequence of Alpine visits, there was a tour of Greece in 1927. In his last years he looked back to his visit to Greece as 'one of my real infidelities',¹ believing that a devotion to its

¹ Stacpoole, art. cit., I, p. 81.

beauty and the haunting remnants of the pagan classical world were ill fare for a monk. Yet his broad culture was an essential element in his greatness. It was the range of vision and reading which he could bring to bear, with intense concentration, on a single way of life in a particular epoch, which accounted for much of the stature of *The Monastic Order*, and of his influence as a professor at Cambridge.

His first article, 'A preface of Mabillon' (*Downside Review*, 1919), comprised the last and most mellow version of the great Maurist's defences of monastic studies; and Father David's vision of the monastic life never excluded scholarly work. But it was a long while before he found his own *métier*. For a time in 1918–19 he served as assistant to Leander Ramsay as he worked, in convalescence from a major illness, on an edition of the works of St. Cyprian;¹ this was no doubt a useful introduction to textual study. Most of Father David's writings in the 1920s reflect the broad interests of a man of culture, especially deeply read in English literature. If 'The religion of the Pastons' shows already a medieval bent, and 'Italian Scenes and Scenery' (1924) and 'A Greek August' (1930) his wonderful sense of the history behind countryside minutely and devoutly observed, 'The Thought and Art of Thomas Hardy' (1928) and 'Honest Iago' (1931) hardly suggest an author embarking on a major historical enterprise. Even more surprising is his adventure into modern history, *The American Civil War* (1926). He has himself described the story which lay behind this, and its influence on his growth as a historian, in an address to a gathering of historians in London in 1962.²

May I give you for a moment the story of my own search for Clio, not on account of its personal value or interest, but because I am sure it reflects our common experience. What did I love in the Muse and how did I approach her?

At school I was never, either in fact or in desire, an historian. I was a classic, and in my school days the only spell that bound me was that of great literature. The classics were supreme, and apart from Greek and Latin I read all I could find of English poetry. I took Roman history as an examination subject, and as an exercise in memory. Thucydides stood out for me among all writers of prose, but almost entirely as recording the splendour and tragedy of Athens, and as an analyst of the motives of men. On leaving school there was an interval of some years

¹ Stacpoole, art. cit., I, pp. 79–80; also *ex inf.* D. K. For what follows see Bibliography in *HC*.

² Printed in *History*, xlvii (1962), 229–30.

before going up to Cambridge, and in those years I read widely in English, French, and some German literature. History formed a part of this, and by the pure accident of their presence on a bookshelf I read Macaulay's *Essays* with avidity and went on to the *History*, or part of it, and the *Life*. I read Gibbon through in ten weeks, the last six or so volumes of Grote, Clarendon's *History of the Great Rebellion*, Robertson's *Charles V*, Prescott and Hallam, Creighton and Pastor, Acton's *Lectures*, Holland Rose's *Life of Napoleon* and Thiers's account of the Moscow campaign. All these I read simply as literature. When I went up to Cambridge it was to read classics, and I took the minimum then possible of history. I re-read Thucydides, but still as literature rather than history, and I would have echoed Macaulay's judgement upon him as the *ne plus ultra* of human genius while still regarding history, as perhaps Macaulay himself always regarded it, as essentially a literary discipline, almost as a kind of drama that had been lived. Yet in Roman history I saw for the first time the growth, development and dissolution of a great political system, accompanied by the growth and decline of an immense empire, where both processes could be seen as it were *in vacuo*, with cause and effect clearly visible, and without the innumerable cross-currents and off-stage catastrophes that obscure the story of medieval or modern institutions and nations. It is for this reason that Roman history is a text-book without rival for an historian in training, showing as it does the inexorable march of time and the sequence of wisdom and error and their consequences, in which every problem has been isolated and debated by some of the acutest minds of Europe for five centuries.

During these years I had retained a particular interest from childhood in a period remote from all this—the history of the United States before and during the war of North and South, and I wrote for my own amusement a long essay which I later revised in the light of further reading. . . . My inspiration came, at an infinite distance, from Thucydides. I did not approach the subject primarily in order to discover the truth, but to share with others what the story had meant for me. Some reviewers of that book were justifiably severe on the lack of depth and technical knowledge, and I realized for the first time that history was a totalitarian business—that one could not produce work of any historical value without exhausting or eliminating all the sources available.

Yet the book has remarkable qualities: it is beautifully written, and the portrait of Robert E. Lee, whom he deeply admired, shows already his interest in portraying human character. Meanwhile, his mind was turning towards monastic history, for many influences in Downside and from without must have combined to set him to work on *The Monastic Order*. Among these must be set the influence of a remark of G. G.

Coulton's that the history of medieval English monasticism was still to be written, as Father David hinted in the preface to the book, and stated more fully in a letter to Dr John Moorman.¹ In the late 1920s he began serious work on monastic history, and at the same time a new phase opened in his religious life.

*Prelude to Cambridge*²

At the deepest level, and with the benefit of hindsight, one cannot but think that in the scholarly studies of the late 1920s he found at last his vocation as a scholar, and a profound reconciliation between his intellectual and spiritual aspirations. Between 1929 and 1938 *The Monastic Order* was written, and it is the fruit of mature reflection on a major theme, calm, peaceful and full of wisdom. These years in Father David's life were anything but calm. From 1923 to 1928 he had taught classics in the school, and in spite of the happy relationships that this brought him, he suffered from a feeling that the school, growing rapidly into a large public school mainly for the well-to-do, was capturing a disproportionate amount of the community's attention. In common with a number of the younger monks, he feared a retreat from the age of reform: he saw no abatement in the mission, but ever larger involvement in the school—though in truth the mission was being curbed (and was to be much reduced later) and the place of the school in the community's life was less than he allowed. In the late 1920s he was coming to a more intense vision of the monastic life as having a contemplative centre. After recovering from a serious motor accident—he was the passenger in a collision in July 1928—he was in September 1928 made temporary novice master; later, from 1929 to 1933, he was junior master. These positions brought him in closer contact with the younger monks and face to face with his responsibility for their formation.

The anxieties of those years brought into the minds of some of the community that a new start should be made, a new foundation away from Downside, still Benedictine, but unencumbered by any responsibility for school or mission. Of this group Father David became the head, and permission was sought. The story had a sad end, and the time is not ripe to give

¹ *Monastic Order*, p. xvi. The letter is quoted by Dr. Moorman in *The Report of the Friends of the Lambeth Palace Library for 1975*, p. 18. Cf. Stacpoole, art. cit., I, pp. 88–9.

² An inadequate summary of these years, permissible perhaps in an academic memoir.

more than the outline; but some attempt must be made briefly to do justice to the protagonists. The Abbot was reluctant to see some of his most talented confrères depart, and it seems that the gifted Abbot Chapman, not far from his death, failed to handle a difficult situation with sympathy or tact. In the event, after Chapman's death, Father David led an appeal to Rome on behalf of the new foundation. The appeal failed; his supporters accepted that Rome had spoken and made their submission. In such a community a movement of this kind is bound to cause a trauma, and if it persists it will be viewed as a faction. But to Father David it seemed that his superiors and confrères had forsaken the inner vision of the monastic ideal to which he held, and he never quite entered into an imaginative understanding of their predicament. From then on, the monastic life became for him personally an inner vision, 'the monasticism of the soul . . . retained no matter where one is'. Some day the full story will be told, and a clearer light thrown on the way in which he reconciled in his own personality the ability to be a delightful, warm, inspiring leader of a group, and the inner firmness, the sharp and individual vision that forbade any compromise, even under obedience.

From 1933 to 1939 he lived in exile at Ealing, then a priory of Downside. He was an exile, and seems to have been already withdrawn into the deeper reserve which still in the early 1940s made him an exile from all but his closest friends. None the less, these years had a positive, creative side; for they witnessed the writing of his greatest book, and his first meetings with Dr. Elizabeth Kornerup, the skilled physician under whose devout and expert care he was nursed back to health and so enabled throughout his last thirty-five years to live a full and active life. In 1939 the tension in his relations with his monastic community became, in his eyes, finally impossible, and he left Ealing, living in London and later partly in Sussex through the central years of the war. His departure from Ealing involved an automatic suspension; but happily as the years passed this was relaxed, and Dom Christopher Butler (now Bishop Butler), when he became Abbot, was able to arrange a formal process of ex-claustration, which left Father David's monastic character, restored to him his priestly functions, but set him under no obligation to reside at Downside. The Abbot at the time of his departure, Dom Sigebert Trafford, never lost his admiration and affection for Father David; and it is pleasant to record, after the separation of the thirties, that many years later

they met in the chambers of the Athenaeum; and there, over a dish of tea, they were reconciled.

Meanwhile, by a strange irony, the fugitive monk had become an eminent historian. His work was already known to a small circle of experts through the important series of 'Essays in Monastic History' published in the *Downside Review* between 1931 and 1934. *The Monastic Order*, after some vicissitudes, was published in 1940, and won immediate acclaim. My father, Z. N. Brooke, read it in 1941, and I still recall his warm approval, the more striking since in later years he was inclined to be over-critical of new books and new authors. It fell to his lot as Chairman of the History Faculty at Cambridge to present its author for the degree of Doctor of Letters in November 1941; and I still possess the copy of the book (by now reprinted) which Father David presented to him on that occasion. In the course of that winter or the following spring I read a considerable part of it, and as a brash schoolboy did not hesitate to note a few misprints and minor inconsistencies in the large array of its scholarship. My father passed these on with glee, and the author replied (17 May 1942): 'It is a sobering reflection that I have two generations of Brooke to sift out the chaff. I feel something of Macbeth's dismay at the escape of Fleance.' It was at this time that my father unfolded a project for compiling a who's who of twelfth-century churchmen, and Father David (in a letter of 28 May) suggested collaboration on the monastic part of this. Many years later our work on monastic *Fasti* with Father David issued in *Heads of Religious Houses*, of which he and Vera London and I were the joint editors.¹

Meanwhile, this letter led directly to my first meeting with him. On my way back from school in July 1942 I met my father and brothers, and we all went to call on Father David in his flat in Pimlico, in Warwick Square. There was little to see of the richness of mind revealed by his book, only a slight touch of the wit shown in his letters. I was greatly impressed by

¹ *The Heads of Religious Houses, England and Wales, 940-1216*, ed. D. K., C. N. L. B., and Vera C. M. London (Cambridge, 1972). The story is told (mainly in his words, save for the sentence quoted at p. 453 n. 1) in the preface, p. vii. The completion of the book was made possible by the work of Miss London, and its final shape as a mass of indigestible references was mainly of my devising; but both of us felt throughout that the work in inspiration and basis was his, and even in the last stages owed much to his constant interest. At one time or another we sifted several hundred cartularies; and almost at the end of our work he was visiting the British Museum Department of Manuscripts to help me by disposing of some of the remaining cartularies.

the thought that such learning and accomplishment could be hidden in a frame so small, so silent, so reserved; yet already I felt the touch of his presence which many felt later, however near or far they were from him in faith, the presence of a man of the spirit. From the visit we took away the black note-books of abbatial *fasti* later to be over many years my constant companions, and I 'left them on the top of a bus. Fortunately, a swift pursuit on foot led to their recovery; and the pursuit has continued ever since', as we wrote in the preface to *Heads*, 'though rarely at the original pace or with the same hazard'.¹ Soon after, I received the first of many letters, in which he characteristically and immediately treated me as friend and colleague; I was then fifteen.

In the early forties knowledge of his gifts was spreading, especially in Cambridge, where it was fostered by my father and other medievalists, including Philip Grierson and Munia Postan.² The immediate credit for bringing him to Peterhouse must go to Herbert Butterfield, who in 1944 took the initiative in arranging for him to be invited to a Fellowship. In 1946 he became a University Lecturer, and a few months later, following my father's death in October 1946, he was elected to succeed him as Professor of Medieval History (1947-54). He started late on the academic ladder, but few have climbed so rapidly. From his exile a new and very fruitful life was to grow, a reminder, as a friend who knew him over many years has observed, of the exile of Thucydides and Dante.

The Monastic Order

The register preserved in the Library at Downside records that on 20 May 1929 he borrowed the Surtees Society's 107th volume, which is the *Rites of Durham*, that nostalgic vision of the monastic round written after the Dissolution by a man who recalled the happy past. Sterner stuff was to follow: on 2 June, *Domesday Book*.

When . . . I began to study English monastic history—to resume his own lecture of 1962—the first task I set myself was to go through *Domesday Book* . . . copying out every entry relating to a monastic house, with Maitland and Vinogradoff as constant companions. I seemed to

¹ *Heads*, p. vii.

² The three are linked with Sir Herbert Butterfield in the closing paragraph of the preface to *Religious Orders*, iii. The date of his University Lectureship is given as 1945 in *HC*, p. xxiv; I am grateful to Miss Anne Boyd for verifying in the Faculty Records that the appointment was made in November 1946.

leave all subsequent history behind me and to sink into the England of the eleventh century with its ploughlands and meadows, woodland and waste, crofts and tofts, sheep and swine, mills and churches. . . . For almost ten years I read little but contemporary documents—chronicles, charters, letters and lives. I can well remember the purely mental satisfaction of unravelling a complicated story, such as a disputed episcopal election, and finding that in some details at least the documents had yielded something new, and that the truth had been to that extent attained. I remember also the intellectual satisfaction of discovering for oneself the movements of institutions and ideas. The subject was a remote one, the exemption of certain religious houses from the jurisdiction of the bishop. The documents showed two completely different situations, separated sometimes by more than a century; the earlier group of charters were grants by Anglo-Saxon kings or the Conqueror of fiscal and other immunities, together with a prohibition addressed to all bishops forbidding their interference with the monks; the later group were papal bulls of the twelfth century, giving, with increasing definition and amplitude, exemption from episcopal jurisdiction and immediate subjection to the Apostolic See. Suddenly I saw a whole climate of ideas changing before my eyes. The purely secular, quasi-feudal protection of the king, standing wholly outside any Roman or canonical tradition, was suddenly replaced by the hand of the centralising Gregorian papacy and the machinery of canon law. The monks of Chertsey or Battle cared nothing for this; they were concerned solely in making sure of what the kings had given them. The popes, without a thought of the past, were concerned solely in defining the categories of their client churches. Yet one world had slipped into another; the *Eigenkloster* had become an abbey subject to the Apostolic See *nullo mediante* . . .¹

The Monastic Order is a work of literature; Father David's formation had prepared him to write such a book, and the inspiration he had derived from Thucydides and Macaulay help to explain why it is primarily a narrative history, in the grand manner, one of the few to emerge in its generation. His choice of Domesday as the first solid reading shows that he had conceived a history from the sources at the outset. The same was revealed by the black notebooks, which, in their original form, were virtually untouched by any material drawn from modern lists. *Heads*, as it was eventually published, owed an immense debt to other scholars, notably to the many who had laboured for the *V.C.H.*, to Sir Charles Clay, doyen of Yorkshire historians and by 1972 an old friend of Father David and myself, and Diana Greenway, Editor of *Le Neve*. But Father David had

¹ *History*, xlvii (1962), 230–1.

in the beginning cast aside all help from the misty collections of lists in the *Monasticon*, in many early volumes of *V.C.H.* and elsewhere, and betaken himself to the documents. From these he constructed a framework which supplied something of the bone structure underlying the narrative itself. The lists played something of the role in *The Monastic Order* that similar lists, of kings and bishops, arduously gathered, had played in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Bede. In both cases a wonderful capacity for converting often unpromising materials into a flowing and coherent story has hidden the structure from the eyes of a casual reader.

But there is a deeper quality also very apparent, one which reappeared constantly throughout his best work; and that is a deep intuitive understanding of how other scholars' minds worked. It is this, coupled with his determination to be objective—to put the matter crudely, to avoid being written off as another Gasquet—which help most to explain the maturity and shrewdness of his judgements. He started with the documents, but he went on to take careful note of what other scholars had said. Meanwhile, his articles in the *Downside Review* had won him a measure of recognition, and as the work proceeded he had conversations with Z. N. Brooke and correspondence with F. M. Stenton; the preface to the book shows that in the later stages he had had advice from a circle of scholars, who read part of the book in proof, notably W. A. Pantin, F. M. Powicke, and J. C. Dickinson. The book is full of hints of what he learned from these and many earlier scholars. Very early in it he acknowledges the debt for tenth-century monastic history which he owed to Armitage Robinson, who, as Dean of Wells, had been a familiar visitor to Downside twenty years before. He hints at the inconsequence of some of the Dean's studies and the difficulty of using his work, while paying tribute to 'his clear mind and sober judgement'. It is very instructive to see the way in which the pages on Dunstan and his contemporaries bring order out of chaos.¹

Large as it is, the book must still impress a careful reader as in some ways selective; and this partly because some chapters were omitted before publication. These included a sketch of the

¹ *Monastic Order*, p. 31. Since the chapter on Dunstan was written, the monastic revival of his age has been illuminated by several other scholars, including Father David's former confrère, Dom Thomas Symons, later monk of Worth and titular Abbot of Glastonbury, editor of the *Regularis Concordia* (Nelson's Medieval Texts, 1953).

history of monastic architecture, and of Gilbert of Sempringham; the Press, acting on the advice of Professor A. Hamilton Thompson, recognized the value of the book, but blenched at the cost; and, as it was feared that it would have few readers in 1940, the type was allowed to disperse after a small first edition had been printed. Yet even if it had been complete as originally planned, there are certain notable omissions. It was the work of a monk, writing from a monastic viewpoint, inward looking, little concerned with the relations of the monastic communities and their patrons. To him a monastic church was a place where monks worshipped, and he never gathered or seriously meditated the evidence for the lay use of monastic naves for worship. To monastic involvement in pastoral work he was naturally unsympathetic, and has seemed to many who know the eleventh century in particular to underestimate the evidence and significance of the monastic 'mission' in that age. His reserve towards Cluny was mainly due to his powerful sense of the inspiration of St. Bernard and Cîteaux; but it perhaps owed something too to his acceptance from early youth of Abbot Butler's view of autonomy as of the essence of Benedictine monachism.¹ Yet it would be a mistake to read too much of the influence of his own circumstances into the rare lapses into prejudice or subjectivity in his major works. No one can fail to be influenced by his own experience; and contrariwise few can read *The Monastic Order* without being impressed by his steady, firm judgement. Integrity lay at the heart of his scholarship. He was never a man to be blown by every wind, and in later years showed many signs of intellectual conservatism; yet there are few more impressive *retractations* in medieval scholarship than those implicit in his Birkbeck Lectures on the *Rule* of St. Benedict and its relation to the *Regula Magistri*, and on the early Cistercian documents.² The former, in particular, in its wit and candour, accepts the virtual *bouleversement* of the fundamental assumption of Benedict's originality. In my early twenties I presumed to castigate some points in his Ford Lectures. He wrote to me from Peterhouse (the letter is dated 21 November 1949, 'written during College Audit Meeting'), 'There is nothing I value more than your criticism, because it helps me to learn'. I quote this, not in vanity—for the sentiment, though sincerely and affectionately

¹ Cf. his own note on the reserve with which Benedict of Aniane had been treated (*Monastic Order*, p. 27 n.).

² Printed in *GHE*.

meant, is absurd—but because it shows his deep and genuine humility as a scholar.

Yet the power of *The Monastic Order* owed much to his involvement in the story. If there is an austere restraint in many passages, and a general absence of the humour which gives an edge to much of *The Religious Orders*, iii, there are moments when his literary flair is given full rein. The chapter on 'The New Model of Cîteaux' is a striking example. The marks of Cîteaux are listed at the outset almost in note form; the account is formal and strictly economical. But on Bernard's entry the author changed to a new key, and in the section 'The Cistercian Vocation' there is a fervour and inspiration which has carried many a reader in imagination inexorably into the Cistercian fold. At the end of the book comes a note of sombre warning, that the historian may judge the external works of the monks by their contribution to contemporary life, but

the inward, spiritual, individual achievement of their lives . . . by the abiding standards of Christian perfection . . . He . . . must resist with all his power the siren voice of romanticism. Few indeed who have written with sympathy of the monks of medieval England have wholly escaped the spells of that old enchantress, who has known so well how by her magic of word and brush to scatter the golden mist of the unreal over the generations of the past . . . By the prescriptions of [the Rule of St Benedict], understood not indeed with antiquarian literalness, but in full spiritual strength, must the monasticism of every age be judged.¹

In his warning against romanticism he speaks with the fervour of the convert, for there was a deep romantic streak in his nature, and he first knew medieval monastic life through its most romantic ruins. But the stern call to obey the Rule lies at the heart of the whole project, and explains why many a reader has felt—for all the balance of the picture, for all the charity that he brings to so many erring monks and human errors—that his judgement, at heart, was sterner than Coulton's.

Cambridge 1944-63

The passage of time, the devoted care of Dr. Elizabeth Kornerup, the widening circle of friends at Cambridge and the growing sense of achievement all doubtless helped to bring Father David out of the deep, withdrawn reserve of the early 1940s. W. A. Pantin summed up the impression of those who

¹ *Monastic Order*, pp. 692-3.

knew him well in his middle years, of a personality that

is a combination of quietness and strength, and it is a combination which commands instinctive respect. It would be difficult to imagine anyone further removed from the combative, self-assertive, self-important personalities that are sometimes to be found in the academic jungle, or from the dons

Who shout and bang and roar and bawl
The Absolute across the hall.

At the same time, no one who has met him could fail to see at once that his quietness is not due to timidity or to lack of conviction or of toughness.¹

He combined in quite an exceptional degree two characteristics of sensitive academics: an inextinguishable determination never to compromise a principle, with a natural wish to avoid fuss, a hatred of noisy debate. This could give the impression of timidity. His quiet dignity and command of English, coupled with a quick mind and ready humour, made him often a good and effective chairman or committee member; but he was not quick to handle or turn rising temper or opinions fiercely stated, and he sometimes shrank from human difficulties. In his later years he became increasingly deaf, and this made it difficult for him to take part in discussion or mingle socially; but in the late 1940s and 1950s he had no such difficulty, and he mingled freely in combination room and committee; one was always aware of his character as a man of God, of his dignity and austerity; but he never allowed these qualities to disguise his genial good humour, and sometimes the humour bubbled freely. His sense of pure fun, carefully controlled, sometimes broke through in unexpected situations. At the end of his lecture on Macaulay he noted how his greatness was recognized by contemporaries—and in particular by ‘the two young ladies at the Zoo, when they caught sight of him, “Is that Mr Macaulay? Never mind the hippopotamus!” . . . I am not prepared to challenge either their preference or his greatness.’²

Of Father David as a teacher I have two abiding impressions. First, of his power as a lecturer, which was sometimes quite beyond the effect of the words themselves. He normally wrote his lectures out in full—except for some of his more specialized inquiries into the sources for St. Francis’s life. He had no training as a teacher, but an instinctive feel for an audience,

¹ *HC*, pp. xxiv–xxv.

² *Lord Macaulay, 1800–59* (Cambridge, 1960), p. 31.

especially on a set occasion; the contrast of his small figure and slight voice—he impressed one friend as ‘a boy whose voice has never quite broken properly’—with the beauty of his language and the depth of his thought made his best lectures memorable and impressive. In nearly all, the care and thought and effort of preparation was apparent. In both his inaugurals many in his audience felt the impress of a feeling and a culture rarely associated with a historian’s utterance; and the first inaugural,¹ much the slighter of the two when reread twenty years later, affected me at the time as much as any lecture I have heard.

The other impression is of the consultation or the class in his room. If one went to ask his advice on work in hand, or if one attended the classes attached to his special subject, he sat quietly in his rooms in Peterhouse, listening carefully, talking little. My wife, who was his first research student, and I both found him rather sparing in advice and instruction. In my case to be sure this was due to my talking too much; he listened in the most friendly and respectful manner to the outpourings of a very young disciple—plying me the while with a sumptuous tea. Perhaps I wasted my opportunities; but I have never regretted the manner of our conferences, for a few words can be savoured more readily than a torrent, and one always learned as much from his silence as from his talk. In his classes he listened with like respect, helping and directing and sowing seeds; and it must have been equally so with his lectures and classes on medieval thought, since his own series of *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought*² was much enriched by studies in theology and philosophy which he had partly or mainly inspired.

He was elected Professor of Medieval History in 1947, and in 1954 he received a letter from Winston Churchill translating him to the Regius Chair; in the late 1940s and 1950s began a long tale of honours—as Fellow of the British Academy (1947), as Ford’s and Raleigh Lecturer (1949), and President of the Royal Historical Society (1956–60); and honorary degrees

¹ *The Prospects of Medieval Studies* (Cambridge, 1947).

² The ‘New Series’, between the first, edited by G. G. Coulton, and the third, by Walter Ullmann—two scholars very different from him, and from one another, for whom he had deep respect. His own series is wide in scope, but is most obviously a major contribution to medieval thought, with volumes by Brian Tierney, Gordon Leff, J. A. Robson, M. J. Wilks, and D. E. Luscombe, all of whom acknowledged a debt to him, three of them specifically as his former pupils.

which he piled up, if not with the collector's abandon of some distinguished academics, at least with the steady and sure stroke of a good cricketer; starting in Oxford, going on to Bristol, Leicester, Kent, London, York and Birmingham,¹ where he felt a little like a prophet being accepted among his own people; and the University of Cambridge, having given him a Litt.D. long before, sought to honour him *honoris causa* in Divinity. In Cambridge too he became in due course Honorary Fellow of both Christ's and Peterhouse. The list could be extended to a characteristic conclusion, for he died President-elect of the Classical Association. The last was a singular delight. 'I somehow feel like Newman', he wrote to a friend on 31 March 1974, 'when he received the red hat, that "the cloud is lifted from me for ever"—the cloud with which my early classical masters covered me when they cursed my stupidity in dealing with North and Hillard and similar hurdles . . . There are few gifts of my education that I value as much as the ability which still remains with me, to read the Iliad or the Agamemnon with no more than the occasional failure to know the meaning of a word.'

In the meantime he gave a helping hand to many historical enterprises. He served on the Board of Management of the Institute of Historical Research, and freely and frequently gave help and advice to the Editor of the *Victoria History*.² He attended regularly meetings of the Committee intended to re-edit Wilkins's *Concilia* and gave much needed encouragement to the younger scholars attempting to join that endless adventure. He served on several Committees of the British Academy, and in particular its Medieval Texts Editorial Committee, and he completed a term as Chairman of Section 2. He was for many years a member of Council of the Canterbury and York Society. His help and encouragement played a crucial part in the successful launching of the Ecclesiastical History Society, of which he was first President. In this the initiative came from C. W. Dugmore, whose work for the *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Father David also steadily supported over many years.³ He gave much

¹ Stacpoole, art. cit. (p. 477), I, p. 71, gives the most comprehensive list I have found.

² The Editor, Professor R. B. Pugh, has often spoken to me of his work for the *V.C.H.*, which went a good deal beyond the article he wrote on religious houses in *V.C.H. Middlesex*.

³ His last public appearance was at a lunch of his own arranging to celebrate the jubilee of Professor Dugmore's work as Editor, on 31 October 1974.

encouragement, which was deeply appreciated, to H. P. Morrison, the enlightened Managing Director, later Chairman, of Nelsons.¹ His name first came to Parkside Works in 1945 in a letter from G. G. Coulton as an author to watch; one of the last books which Peter Morrison commissioned as Chairman was *Great Historical Enterprises: Problems in Monastic History*, reprints of his Royal Historical Society presidentials and his Birkbeck Lectures, delivered at Cambridge in 1962.

In 1963 he retired, and his friends and disciples, with the ready collaboration of the Cambridge University Press, which had already provided so elegant a setting for his greatest books, presented to him a collection of his own papers, *The Historian and Character and other essays*. Giles Constable and I were the editors; but we consulted with many senior friends and colleagues, and above all with W. A. Pantin, who wrote for it a fine *Curriculum Vitae*. We felt that no 'memorial of words' could compete with his own, and that it was a singularly appropriate opportunity to force him to reprint his best studies; and we tried to make it reflect the range of his mature published work.

The range and scope of his later scholarly work²

The Historian and Character includes essays on most of his scholarly interests—on medieval thought and culture, on Thomas Becket, on monastic architecture and monastic historians; and by-products too of his major studies of monastic history. Its range was not all-embracing: it does not include any of his early articles on English literature, on which time had set its mark; nor on mysticism and mystical theology, since much of his early work had been recently garnered in *The English Mystical Tradition* (1961), which was much more than a reissue or new edition of *The English Mystics* (1927). Nor does it include any of the 'essays in Monastic History' in which he had first shown his paces as a monastic historian, since they were repeated in substance in *The Monastic Order*. His most substantial lectures on historiographical themes, by a happy treaty with H. P. Morrison, were assigned to the Nelson volume, and so we were able to find space for all that we chiefly wanted.

Two of the papers in *The Historian and Character* show at

¹ As I know from many conversations with the late H. P. Morrison; what follows is in a letter temporarily in my possession.

² In this section the items in *HC* are used to provide a frame to consider the range of his best work: it cannot be comprehensive, and I am particularly aware that I have done scant justice to the theological tracts of his last years.

their best his work on medieval thought. His book on *The Evolution of Medieval Thought*¹ is one of his more conventional works; it grew from lectures which undoubtedly influenced a generation of students who attended them more profoundly than one can readily grasp from the printed page. In particular, his devotion to St. Thomas and his distaste for most fourteenth-century thought gives the book a disappointing conclusion, though one should pause before making too much of this, for he inspired pupils to work on such formidable thinkers as Bradwardine and Wyclif.² 'The Censured Opinions of Uthred of Boldon' shows him at work himself in the fourteenth century, revealing the interest and importance of a monastic scholar, a thinker not of the front rank yet of great significance for understanding Oxford and Durham in the late Middle Ages. And 'The humanism of the twelfth century' was one of his most inspired papers. Here a classical learning and a width of culture rare in students of the twelfth-century renaissance revealed to him many aspects of the period which had not been grasped; and it was a remarkable insight for the dedicated, ascetic disciple of the Cistercians, to sketch, in a profound and moving passage, the ground common to St. Ailred and Abelard and Heloise. 'Heloise in truth, so far as her own deepest utterances go, has nothing of the Christian in her.'³ Though personally I would differ in my judgement of Heloise, this sentence makes the more striking his appreciation of her greatness.

The character study of Thomas Becket (his Raleigh Lecture) distilled some of his most brilliant ideas on a theme to which he returned many times in his later years. It was complementary to the Ford Lectures on Becket's *Episcopal Colleagues*;⁴ and it was followed by his centenary book and lecture on the martyr. Compared with his massive work on monastic history, the studies of Becket and his circle are relatively slight; yet all who have written since 1949 have been substantially affected by what he wrote. Becket has always had a singular power to stir admiration or hate; and the contrast in A. L. Poole's *Domesday Book to Magna Carta* between the portrait of Becket in the text, which is hostile, and the commendation of Father David's Raleigh lecture in the bibliography, is a good indicator of the influence he has had in checking the harsher condemnations.

¹ London, 1962.

² And see below, p. 470, on *Religious Orders*, i.

³ *HC*, p. 24.

⁴ *The Episcopal Colleagues of Archbishop Thomas Becket* (Cambridge, 1951), the Ford Lectures for 1949.

At the same time it was characteristic of him that he constructed all his work on Becket directly from the Rolls Series *Materials*, which he read and re-read, taking copious notes and attempting to sort out for himself problems of chronology in the quagmire of the correspondence. He generously acknowledged my aid in constructing the appendices to *Episcopal Colleagues*, but they still represent his own contribution on minute, significant points which had helped him to build up the picture of the drama and the character of the contestants. When I came to revise the footnotes for *Thomas Becket* (1970) I was slightly vexed to discover—two or three years after the publication of Gilbert Foliot's *Letters*—that he was still citing Foliot from the *Materials*. But a moment's reflection brought it home that it was always in the character of his best work that, for all his appreciation of help and criticism, for all his subtle understanding of other scholars' minds, in the end it was his own reading of the sources on which it was based. One of his latest articles (with Anne Duggan and myself) was the reappraisal of an episode and a document in the struggle in which he had detected, by comparison with his own notes and reconstruction, an error of mine.¹

More obvious than the groundwork was the penetration and the justice of his portraiture. On this all who read with discernment have commented; in the Raleigh Lecture² in particular he practised the art later preached in his second inaugural on 'The Historian and Character', and in the grand manner. He showed the development of a curious and difficult personality, and made sense of the personal tragedy of his relations with the king. He has been accused of seeing Henry II in the image of Henry VIII. Very likely he was right to see a likeness; but he had little appreciation of the structure of lay society or the working of patronage. Thus he took it for granted that the bishops were spiritual pastors with a single overriding obligation; and he failed to see the deep tension in Becket as chancellor, servant of the king, and archdeacon, servant of the archbishop, which is revealed in John of Salisbury's letters to him. Since the main lines of advance in studying the dispute seem now to lie

¹ 'Henry II's Supplement to the Constitutions of Clarendon', *English Historical Review*, lxxxvii (1972), 757–71. Dr. Anne Duggan has incorporated her very important study of the correspondence in her Ph.D. thesis, 'The Manuscript Transmission of letter collections relating to the Becket dispute . . .' (London, 1971).

² 'Archbishop Thomas Becket: a character study', in these *Proceedings*, xxxv, 177–205; repr. *HC*, pp. 98–128.

in detailed investigation of the sources and in penetration of the social structure, Father David's books and papers are bound to leave younger scholars unsatisfied; but Becket lives in them, and especially in the Raleigh Lecture, as in no other recent writing. Nor can one readily forget the lecture's conclusion, when the clatter of swords and argument is stilled, and the corpse of the archbishop, lying alone in the cathedral, is likened to the corpse of Patroclus, κείτο μέγας μεγαλωστί, λελασμένος ἵπποσυνάων.

Father David's interest in monastic history had its origin in his early travels with his father; and the one paper formerly unprinted in *The Historian and Character* was an essay originally intended for *The Religious Orders* on 'The monastic buildings of England'. It covers much the same ground as the introduction to *Monastic Sites from the Air*, which he published with J. K. S. St. Joseph in 1952. This was the first Cambridge Air Survey, the first major fruit in print of Professor St. Joseph's distinguished and original work; and it is primarily an example of his skills—not only in monastic archaeology, for one of the problem photographs at the end led to the uncovering of Yeavinger. But Father David's encouragement undoubtedly helped forward St. Joseph's work in all its aspects; and his lucid and distilled description of the sites has greatly increased the value of the book both as a guide to many sites and a major treatise on monastic planning. Soon after, a second fruitful collaboration with an eminent archaeologist issued in his book with W. F. Grimes on the London *Charterhouse* (1954), in which Father David's historical learning elucidated the story behind the buildings which had emerged from one of Grimes's most successful excavations in and around the City.

The last three items in *The Historian and Character* are studies of famous scholars. Of Abbot Butler enough has been said, and a little already of Gasquet. It was a singular pleasure to set side by side his portraits of Mabillon and Gasquet. The Mabillon is sober, almost hagiographical; the Gasquet burlesque. But both go much deeper than that. Mabillon's greatness is set off with an account of his failings: of how he was deceived by a forger who by careful study of *De re diplomatica* produced a document to whose authenticity Mabillon himself was prepared to give testimony; of the delinquent brother Denys of whom he could believe no ill.¹ By such means the portrait of the great scholar who was human and fallible and full of charity is given shape and point. On any showing it is remarkable that in the scientific

¹ *HC*, pp. 235–9.

revolution of the seventeenth century the science of history should have owed so much to the holy monks of Saint-Maur. Father David brought out in an unforgettable manner the union of faith and integrity, the passion for learning and candour, quite simply for truth, which marks all that Mabillon wrote and did.

The paper on Mabillon touches the heart of Father David's faith as a historian, and reflects his constant interest in historians and how they worked. This was evident in his understanding of scholarly technique in *The Monastic Order*; manifest in his later lecture on Macaulay; displayed, above all, in the larger canvas of his Nelson *Mélange*.¹ Here the Royal Historical Society Presidentials, a quartet of historical enterprises, set out the story of the Bollandists, the Maurists, the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, and the Rolls Series; and the skill and kindly judgement, not unmixed with criticism, with which he conducted the enterprise, were recognized by the living members of the two institutions which still live—by cordial recognition from the Bollandists, and by appointment as Corresponding Member of the *Monumenta*.

In the Creighton Lecture, 'Cardinal Gasquet as an Historian', the epic struggle of Coulton and Gasquet is revealed in a vein which Polonius might have termed comical historical, but in faultless taste. He pursues Gasquet's errors with glee: 'he could print a stanza of *In Memoriam* in five or six lines of type without any ascertainable metre or rhyme. . . . Gasquet had inherited from his Provençal ancestors little of the Gallic lucidity of thought. . . . Towards the end of his life, indeed, Gasquet's capacity for carelessness amounted almost to genius.'² He gives free rein to Coulton, but at the last moment pulls him up short: Gasquet was a bad scholar, not—as Coulton supposed—because he was a scheming ecclesiastic, nor because he was a bad man; Gasquet had virtues, even some virtues as a historian; and in a conclusion of notable generosity the comic muse is dismissed, Knowles sets himself firmly by Coulton's side, but Gasquet is given his due. It is beautifully done, and the one notable weakness is freely admitted: there is no close investigation, nor ever has been, of the debt Gasquet owed to Edmund Bishop, nor any satisfactory explanation of Bishop's readiness to guide and help in a spirit of real friendship a scholar in all points so inferior to himself.³

The general condition of monastic scholarship in England

¹ *GHE*: on the Birkbeck Lectures, see p. 456.

² From *HC*, pp. 254–5.

³ But see *HC*, pp. 252–3.

when Father David took it in hand may be judged from the fact that the latest attempt at a full list of medieval monasteries was Gasquet's, based on the 'new' *Monasticon* of 1817-30. Much had been done of the highest quality in various parts of the field; no comprehensive study of the whole was tried between the new *Monasticon* and *The Monastic Order*. The lists of abbots and priors on which Father David based his work were later expanded into *Heads*; the list of houses was published in 1940 as *The Religious Houses of Medieval England*. It was for a decade an extremely useful pioneer catalogue, and it carried an introduction which brilliantly distils the whole of medieval English monastic history. A similar enterprise had (unknown to Father David) been for many years in the making by R. N. Hadcock; and a review to which Father David returned a friendly answer led to the collaboration and friendship which produced *Medieval Religious Houses, England and Wales*, the editions of 1953 and 1971. The enlargement of the enterprise to include hospitals and secular colleges and the military orders, and the copious notes which make the later editions a mine of valuable information, were mainly Neville Hadcock's work. But the form of the book, and the inspiration which was later to issue in Hadcock's remarkable pioneering work with Professor Aubrey Gwynne, S.J., *Medieval Religious Houses, Ireland* (1970), owed much to Father David. British medievalists have been too little inclined to collaboration, have even viewed it sometimes with suspicion; yet in serious scholarly enterprise a substantial proportion must be collaborative to be fruitful. Effective joint work in a scholar of Father David's standing involves a measure of modesty, a readiness to listen, a warmth of friendliness, which help to explain the success of *Monastic Sites from the Air*, *Charterhouse*, and *Medieval Religious Houses*; he would have been the first to give for *MRH* the chief credit to Hadcock, but the enterprise came out of an act of humility, and a real wish to be useful, which were his.

This wish played a part also in his one substantial piece of textual work, the *Monastic Constitutions of Lanfranc*,¹ and in his

¹ Nelson's Medieval Texts, 1951. The text, which owed much to R. A. B. Mynors, was reprinted with corrections, and a new introduction and notes, in Dom K. Hallinger's *Corpus Consuetudinum Monasticarum*, iii (Siegburg, 1967). Dom Hallinger was one of a group of continental scholars with whom Father David kept in close touch and to whose ventures he lent a hand; Dom Jean Leclercq was another. He also projected a text and translation of *The Rule of St. Benedict* in the same series (now Oxford Medieval Texts), and for this a draft translation was prepared, which it is hoped may yet be published.

more secondary books—his useful and readable contribution to *The Christian Centuries*; his *Christian Monasticism*; and the theological work of his last years.¹ In the margin of his work on monastic history there was naturally a group of papers and lectures, of which the eloquent centenary article on St. Bernard and the Dr. Williams Library Lecture on ‘Cistercians and Cluniacs’ are characteristic specimens. Both show his reverence, this side idolatry, though not so far as most of us would be, for Bernard; and in the second the monastic judge, after an appraisal which is cool and kindly, and with a just aside on Cistercian intolerance, finds for the Cistercians on almost all the points at issue.

Yet even more characteristic of his monastic papers is the brief but effective disentangling of the case of ‘The last abbot of Wigmore’, round which Froude and Gasquet had woven a tapestry of fiction. It is a reminder of the vast amount of original work which underlay his major works.

The Religious Orders in England

It was already indicated in the preface to *The Monastic Order* that a sequel was planned to carry the story to the Dissolution. Like many great projects, it grew as it developed, both in scale and scope. The next volume was simply entitled *The Religious Orders in England*, and nearly half of it allows the intrusion of the Friars into a scheme originally monastic in the narrow, English sense of the word. A discreet star on the cover again indicated that a sequel would follow, though author and publisher refused to tempt providence by displaying it on the title-page; the next two items in the great work were called volumes ii and iii. But he saw them himself, and every attentive reader has seen them, as the conclusion of four consecutive volumes.

The entry of the Friars, and in their wake a major study of scholastic thought in England, still did not render the work as comprehensive as its title. The canons were only represented by the Augustinian Order: save for a brief summary, St. Gilbert had been banished by the publisher from *The Monastic Order*, and the Premonstratensians had effectively to wait for volume iii.

¹ Of the first book, an international history of the Roman Catholic Church published simultaneously in Britain, the U.S.A., the Netherlands, Switzerland, and France, he was one of the Editorial Board and author of vol. ii with Dmitri Obolensky (London, 1969). The second book, also published in 1969, is in the World University Library, and contains an all too brief excursion into the modern history and destiny of monasticism.

The Military Orders never aroused his interest, and the orders of women are only slightly represented anywhere in the scheme. To the encouragement and advice of Eileen Power he owed some of his understanding of economic history; and she had lived long enough to write one of the first reviews of *The Monastic Order*. The excellence of her early book *Medieval English Nunneries*¹ may have made him less inclined to intrude among them. In any case, whatever omissions may be found, few will regret that he was selective, for it made possible the ample nature of his text, and its completion during the years of his full power.

Many readers have noticed the changes of plan in successive volumes.² First of all, *Religious Orders*, i and ii contain no flowing narrative such as provides the core of *The Monastic Order*. This is in part due to the nature of the sources: the basic evidence for *The Monastic Order* lies in monastic narratives and lives and literature which, with all its ups and downs, can command the lively and continuous interest of a historian looking for excellence. Further, he never carried on the notebooks of monastic *Fasti* which provided the other foundation for his studies down to 1216. This may have been partly the effect of time and of other concerns and preoccupations; but it was also due to a sense that it could not bear fruit for his own work in the same degree. The twelfth-century *Fasti* contained many names which live and move in his narrative; relatively speaking, later volumes of *Heads* would contain far more who are ciphers.

The monastic chapters at the outset of *Religious Orders*, i take shape round major sources—Pantin's Benedictine Chapters and Salter's Augustinian at the start,³ the visitation records at the end—and substantial themes. Some readers have been surprised by the large part economics and administration play in these themes; and no doubt his moving tribute in the preface to a young friend recently dead when it was published, R. A. L. Smith, helps to explain this. 'Without his handful of papers and his enthusiastic companionship the chapters on those subjects could never have been written.'⁴ Nor could any historian work-

¹ Cambridge, 1922.

² See especially the penetrating reviews by R. W. Southern of *Religious Orders*, ii, iii, in *Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, viii (1957), 190-4; xiii (1962), 469-75.

³ *Documents illustrating the activities of the general and provincial chapters of the English Black Monks 1215-1540*, ed. W. A. Pantin (Camden 3rd Series, xlv, xlvii, liv, 1931-7); *Chapters of the Augustinian Canons*, ed. H. E. Salter (Canterbury and York Soc. and Oxford Historical Soc., 1922).

⁴ p. xiii: cf. his memoir in R. A. L. Smith, *Collected Papers* (London, 1947).

ing in Cambridge and Peterhouse in the 1940s or 1950s fail to feel the inspiration and importance of M. M. Postan's work. There was also perhaps in his mind a feeling, not only that these topics were strongly represented in the surviving sources, but that the interior life of the monasteries in these centuries was largely humdrum and ordinary, scarcely penetrable, indeed, and so not his chosen theme. In 1953 I submitted to him a draft introduction to an account book of a fifteenth-century almoner¹ in which I tried some general reflections on the life of a fifteenth-century monk. In his letter to me on the draft, he commented on the difficulty: first 'all that remains is, as you say, "getting and spending". But was this all the almoner's real life? Giving lectures and writing books is, I hope, not all my real life. . . . And . . . how bad (or good) were these places? There is the standing difficulty of the two standards, the two planes—are we to judge, so to say, with our eyes on the Last Supper and the Crucifixion, or looking simply for standards that would be passable for a hospital or a regiment? . . . ' The letter itself was written on two planes. On the one hand it was dated (approximately) on the eighth centenary of St. Bernard's death,² and the monk's true function was more than ever in his mind; on the other he was delivering a mild and kindly rebuke to me for passing judgement on monastic success where the sources did not permit any fair judgement. I suppressed the passage and learned from him the lesson he was by some critics supposed not to have mastered himself. Yet it is true that there are great gaps in volumes i and ii, and it is to be regretted that he did not make more use of liturgies and customals and monastic remains to reveal the normal round of monastic life in the late Middle Ages.

In the chapter on the Friars he set the English material firmly in the context of a great continental movement, as he had done so often in the earlier book. It is an admirable introduction to the history of the friars in general. It is not impeccable: his Francis is a little too slight, and here and elsewhere he was not able to take full note of work in progress which he had himself inspired;³ thus too the section on Matthew Paris later in

¹ *The Book of William Morton . . .*, ed. W. T. Mellows, P. I. King and C. N. L. Brooke (Northants. Rec. Soc., 1954).

² 'In festo S. Bernardi 1953'. Presumably this meant 21 Aug., the normal day of the feast; Bernard died on 20 Aug. 1153.

³ e.g. my wife's work on Brother Elias, later published in his own series as *Early Franciscan Government, Elias to Bonaventure* (Cambridge, 1959).

the book would have gained much from Richard Vaughan's work carried out under his direction in the fifties.¹ But in the middle chapters above all he put scholasticism on the map as an academic discipline for historians in this country, and put England on the map in a world which had been mainly German and French territory.

Even more than its predecessor, volume ii, 'The End of the Middle Ages' (1955), is a collection of essays. The lack of a clear framework and sense of direction have been sufficiently remarked by his reviewers; and it is easy to forget that some of the finest of his essays are here. The sheaves of monastic portraits include unforgettable studies of Thomas de la Mare, William Clown—in whom he saw a possible model for Chaucer's monk—John Whethamstede and the mirror of monastic life in Margery Kempe's Book. On the spiritual life of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries he gave admirable distillations of his work on the mystics, and much more. His chapter on Fitzralph, Wyclif, Langland, and Chaucer, as critics of the religious, is justly famous both for the brilliance of his Wyclif and the delightful insight of his Langland.

Of a truth he had a kind of nostalgia for the cloister, or for a golden phantasm of the cloister that had never wholly faded from his imagination . . . But these traits, while they soften the picture the poet paints, render his stern judgement on the religious and especially on the friars all the more impressive. They were to him corrupting what had been of the best; they had taken Love out of the cloister:

'For there that Loue is leder. ne lacked neuere grace.'²

In volume iii we are presented once again with a great story greatly told. As literature, it is perhaps the finest of his books; and though errors may be found both in the minutiae and in his broader understanding of the Tudor world, it is hardly likely that an account of the Dissolution deeper, fairer or more moving will see the light for many a decade. It is also of great importance to the understanding of how history can be written; for there is no error more common than to suppose that style is unimportant to scholarship. Medievalists have long recognized that the influence and effect of F. W. Maitland's writings were greatly enhanced by the lucidity and wit of a distinguished master of style; and we have observed the significance of correct and appropriate English in making Edmund Bishop's best essays immortal. Here it is not the effect of language only, but of the

¹ R. Vaughan, *Matthew Paris* (Cambridge, 1958).

² p. IIII.

structure of the book. It opens by setting the scene in the fifty years or so before the Dissolution; positive signs of monastic activity, in music and the chant for instance, and new movements such as that of the Franciscan Observants, have their part, as well as intimations of mediocrity or decay. There are some more monastic personalities, and the splendid full-length portrait of that early Tudor squire, Prior More of Worcester; the author of the Durham Rites, looking back in sorrow from Elizabeth's reign, is allowed his say. Then the storm gathers. By the time it breaks the whole stage has been set, without hurry or fuss, but also without longueurs; we feel ourselves at home in the England of the early 1530s. A severe judgement on a great number of religious has been passed—but with great restraint—for failing to resist the breach with Rome. All that is explicitly said is put in another's mouth: 'In the words of More's trenchant apologue, they were first deflowered that they might afterwards be devoured.'¹

The effect of this restraint, coupled with the implication of doom, is to make the cautious, searching, charitable appraisal of the evidence of the notorious *comperta* far more telling. Similarly with the king and his minister. If Henry and Cromwell had been treated at length as was Prior More, it would have been impossible to avoid the sense that the author was a partisan; for it is hard for anyone of strong sensibility to ponder Henry's treatment of his queens, his servants, and the religious without feeling nausea and repulsion. No doubt Father David felt this in good measure, and he made no attempt to disguise it. But Henry is revealed by deft and often surprisingly urbane touches of his brush.² After the first trial suppression, 'Henry's mind . . . continued to brood over the matter, and in the course of time the voice of conscience began to make itself heard'—that is to say, he began to ponder that it might be incompatible with his coronation oath to leave monastic property in monkish hands. And after it was all over, and Cromwell has followed the monks into oblivion, he advised his nephew the king of Scotland to follow his own 'example and realize the monastic wealth of his kingdom, thus putting to far better use what was at present spent on "untruth and beastly living".' Father David goes on, it is true, to probe the puzzle of how Henry, 'self-willed, obstinate and able as he was' could allow two such ministers as Wolsey and Cromwell apparently almost unbridled power; and

¹ p. 179.

² The quotations which follow are from pp. 201, 204, 205.

to mark the contrast (which perhaps Father David exaggerated) between 'the essentially traditional, orthodox, unbloody rule of the cardinal, and the revolutionary, secular and ruthlessly bloodstained decade of his successor'. Yet Henry and Cromwell remain background figures, and he restrained his rhetoric—in a book notable among all his writings for its range of literary effects—as he had not in his handling of Wyclif.

The consequence is twofold. First, monks, friars, king and minister are exposed to our inspection and our judgement in a manner which is wholly fair. He was perfectly aware that this was a drama still capable of arousing deep passions on one side and the other. Nor did he attempt to hide where his own feelings lay. For my eighteenth birthday he had given me a copy of Roper's *Life of More*, accompanied by a letter in which he already showed that insight into the slow groping which occupied much of More's life: 'his was such a keen, subtle, ironic mind, used for so many years to the most agile funambulism in the courts, at the Court, and in controversy . . . that I, for one, find it extremely hard at more than one crucial moment to be certain whether he is speaking with absolute frankness. . . . More, I think, is seen at his deepest and best in the letters he wrote in the Tower . . . I don't think I am used to the melting mood, but they are one of the few things in any literature that I can scarcely read without getting near tears—they and the account of More's last meeting with Margaret [here he returns to Roper's *Life*], which Wordsworth, I think, said was one of the three most pathetic passages in English.'¹ His feeling for More, and for the great cause in which he suffered, underscores the restrained passion of *Religious Orders*, iii; and the restraint had its reward, for it has been, I fancy, the most widely read and acclaimed of his books among men of quite different background and persuasion; still more, it is inherent in its success as a model of the historian's craft.

The other effect of his treatment of the high political figures of the age is to make clear sense of his principle of selection. The Dissolution is an enormous subject, on which many interesting books have been written, but not yet the tithe of what is to come. It provides a mass of evidence, and a hundred mirrors, in which the political, social, economic, religious and intellectual life of sixteenth-century England and Europe are illuminated. Excellent books have been written on the Dissolution since 1959 which only modestly overlap the territory he explored in

¹ Letter dated 25 June 1945; cf. *HC*, pp. 3–9, esp. 7.

depth. He was fully aware that this must be so, even though he had set out to write a large volume of 500 pages. He was also aware that if the book was too selective, historical perspective, and much of the point of the story, would be lost. So he sketched in the background of an ample canvas, and in the centre of the picture told the story of the religious who had been his theme from the first pages of *The Monastic Order*.¹

At the end he looked briefly forward to the destiny of the monastic life in Britain, and of the crumbling buildings. 'In a still more powerful way the ghost of medieval monasticism remained and remains to haunt this island. The grey walls and broken cloisters, the

bare ruin'd choirs,² where late the sweet birds sang,

speak more eloquently for the past than any historian would dare, and pose for every beholder questions that words cannot answer.

At the end of this long review of monastic history, with its splendours and its miseries, and with its rhythm of recurring rise and fall, a monk cannot but ask what message for himself and for his brethren the long story may carry. It is the old and simple one; only in fidelity to the Rule can a monk or a monastery find security. A Rule, given by a founder with an acknowledged fullness of spiritual wisdom, approved by the Church and tested by the experience of saints, is a safe path, and it is for the religious the only safe path. It comes to him not as a rigid, mechanical code of works, but as a sure guide to one who seeks God, and who seeks that he may indeed find. If he truly seeks and truly loves, the way will not be hard, but if he would love and find the unseen God he must pass beyond things seen and walk in faith and hope, leaving all human ways and means and trusting the Father to whom all things are possible. When once a religious house or a religious order ceases to direct its sons to the abandonment of all that is not God, and ceases to show them the rigours of the narrow way that leads to the imitation of Christ in His Love, it sinks to the level of a purely human institution, and whatever its works may be, they are the works of time and not of eternity. The true monk, in whatever century he is found, looks not to the changing ways around him or to his own mean

¹ Including, of course, the story of the few, especially in the London Charterhouse, who resisted the Dissolution. What follows is from *Religious Orders*, iii. 468.

² The title (already chosen before his death) of the new edition of *Religious Orders* iii (Cambridge, 1976). The following paragraph was, partly at Dr. Kornerup's suggestion, printed at the end of Pantin's *Curriculum Vitae*; I have repeated it, since it represents an aspect of his mind and thought which can only be told in his own words.

condition, but to the unchanging everlasting God, and his trust is in the everlasting arms that hold him. Christ's words are true: He who doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple. His promise also is true: He that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

These words imply a judgement on the humdrum and the mediocre more fearful even than that on Henry and Cromwell, though a judgement tempered by his sense that there were good men and good lives hidden by the absence of record, and that many whom he condemned by Benedict's standard had never realized what was expected of them. As at the end of Thackeray's novel, the puppets were put away and the box closed. But the Rule of St. Benedict lived on.

1963-74

In 1963 he retired, and the remaining years of his life were spent between a tiny cottage in Sussex, of great age and charm, surrounded by rolling hills and quiet woods of the kind he most appreciated in English scenery, and a small house in Wimbledon. In both he enjoyed the care and companionship and medical skill of Dr. Elizabeth Kornerup. At Linch he had peace and quiet, and in a tiny study, like a summer house, out in the garden, he could read and write, away from traffic, and visitors. In London he could see his friends and keep in touch with libraries. He wrote and reviewed to the very end of his life; and in many ways these were years of peaceful content, though not untroubled.

He suffered first from a sense of failing powers; yet his touch never left him, and he was capable of clear and effective prose to the end. His second trouble lay in his health. But again, there was a remarkable compensation: Dr. Kornerup's care enabled him to live an almost normal life in a manner scarcely otherwise conceivable. He died of a heart attack on 21 November 1974, aged 78—no bad age for a delicate man; and it was the first discernible sign of serious illness that he had in his last years.

His third affliction was one common among those growing old, a sense of the excessive rapidity of change about him. He was particularly troubled by the changes in his Church. Always humane, always charitable, never a proselytizer, never narrow or rigid in his views of other men's faith, he gave a welcome and a cautious approval to the ecumenical movement. His view of ecumenism and his attitude to Christians of other folds

never substantially varied, in my experience. To a Free Churchman, also a distinguished ecclesiastical historian, with whom he felt a clear affinity of mind and spirituality, he wrote in 1963:

I agree with you in not being a full-blooded ecumenist, at least if ecumenism means agreeing upon an L.C.M. or lists of ἀδιόφορα. I prefer to begin at the other end, so to say, to recognise and rejoice at all real love and faith in God and our Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the unexpected happinesses of my work that it has brought me into relations of sympathy with yourself and others whom I should not otherwise have known. *Cor ad cor loquitur*.

And in 1974, 'A love of our Lord is the only—and a sufficient—criterion of a fellow-Christian.'¹ His friends included many non-Catholics and agnostics; his influence as historian and man of God was freely shared and widely felt. But in the wake of the Vatican Council he came to the conviction that a search for change for its own sake had seized his fellow Catholics and led to the destruction of much that was valuable and central to Catholic tradition, above all to the total destruction of the traditional Latin Mass and to the denial of authority. He was among those who welcomed *Humanæ Vitæ* as an attempt to assert that Rome could still speak, and its widespread rejection must have brought him sorrow.

The two most impressive celebrations of the Latin Mass which I have witnessed were Pontifical High Mass at Downside in the late 1940s, and the private mass in Father David's cottage twenty years later. His slender figure, in simple vestments, served only by Dr. Kornerup, stood in wonderful contrast to the majesty and richness of the liturgy beautifully enunciated in his small, clear voice; so that my Protestant ancestors would have been constrained to say, 'Vere Dominus est in loco isto'. In my visits to Linch I used also to note a pleasant contrast in his dress. All the friends of his mid and late years saw him most often in a simple suit of clerical black; and might also see him in his habit, worn with a doctor's scarlet at a Cambridge feast, when he ate little and drank nothing, yet was always as grave and gay as the occasion and his presence demanded. At Linch I saw him too in ancient gardening clothes, trimming the large hedge beside the cottage with exquisite care and precision. He himself likened Abbot Butler in similar garb to an

¹ Letters of 18 June 1963 and 13 June 1974 kindly shown me by the Reverend Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall.

impoverished nobleman; the monk turned Regius Professor savoured more of a genial dignified upper class peasant, and this helped one to understand his enjoyment of the novels of Hardy. In all these costumes he looked more frail than one who would pass, or had passed, the three score years and ten; and the slightly awkward step seemed hardly compatible with the former Chalet walker, who still in his sixties daily measured Grantchester meadows or another Cambridge walk, and in his seventies, even a few months before his death, on our last visit to him in Sussex, took a joyous ramble in wood and mud.

After one of the last lectures I heard him give, he became involved in a discussion of how great change appears to those who live with it; and with a rueful smile he observed that of all things in his world he had himself supposed the Latin Mass and the steam engine the most stable and lasting—and both were gone. It reminded me of a phone call from a Public Orator in search of Father David's minor pleasures, who asked me if it were true that he had a passion for trains and cricket. The second had always been a blind spot with me, and I confessed an ignorance for which Father David—once a dedicated follower of the fortunes of Warwickshire—later rebuked me. The first I confirmed, recalling a long hour spent with him in Bletchley returning from Oxford to Cambridge in the days when British Rail recognized the link between these places: I had expected it to be a pleasure for me, a trial for him; in the event he enjoyed it fully as much as I, hopping from side to side of the platform as the expresses approached with boyish glee. As a boy, I believe, he had driven a steam engine, and the devotion to railways was even to colour his appreciation of the English Carthusians, whose first house was founded near a Great Western main line.¹

Human, urbane and humorous; a great historian and master of prose, a professor and teacher of wide influence; an austere and solitary monk; a devout priest ministering to his household and his friends. He was all these things and none of them by halves. I have tried to show a little of how they all came together in his life and character; but it would be foolish to imagine that even those closest to him saw to the full his richness and his depth. Many of those who met him casually came to see that the world was a larger place than they had realized; when he died it was hard for those who knew him well not to feel the world much poorer for his passing. Yet few men, and very few

¹ *Monastic Order*, p. 391.

scholars, live so securely in their books; and for all his austerity, that is a judgement which would have given him pleasure. He was not without failings. But to his friends these served to sharpen their sense of his exceptional endowment. To echo an author whose works he savoured, he

was a good man, and did good things.

NOTE

The chief materials on which this Memoir has been based are the personal knowledge of myself and several of Father David's friends, his own writings and letters (cited in the notes above), W. A. Pantin's *Curriculum Vitae* for *The Historian and Character and other Essays* (Cambridge, 1963),—in which I have checked a number of facts not here documented—and Dom Alberic Stacpoole's articles, 'The Making of a Monastic Historian, I' and 'II', *Ampleforth Journal*, lxxx (1975), i. 71–91, ii. 19–38. A full Bibliography to 1962 (by Giles Constable, with the author's help) was printed in *The Historian and Character*, pp. 363–73; Dom Stacpoole has edited a continuation to 1974 in the *Ampleforth Journal* lxxx (1975), 48–55; lxxxi (1976), 40, 62 f. For help and guidance I am particularly indebted to Dr. Elizabeth Kornerup, Professor Sir Herbert Butterfield, Professor Giles Constable, Professor Edward Kenney, Dr. Leslie MacFarlane, Dom Adrian Morey, Professor Sir Roger Mynors, the Reverend Dr. Geoffrey Nuttall, Abbot Aelred Sillem, Dom Stacpoole, Dom Aelred Watkin, and my wife.

In due course his own *Autobiography* will be also a major source; but it has been decided not to publish it or open it to inspection for a number of years, since it might cause misunderstanding and embarrassment. By the generous provision of his will, I inherited his copyrights, and have therefore seen the book; I have at various points avoided pitfalls or confirmed impressions from it, but I have not quoted it nor (I believe) do any statements given here essentially depend upon it. I have rather, and deliberately, presented Father David in his public character, as a scholar, and in his private character, as I and his friends knew him: it will be evident to the reader that it is a small token of great affection and gratitude.

C. N. L. BROOKE