



## The Road to Scottish Dominican Independence 1230–1511

Allan James White OP

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### Abstract

In 1221 the General Chapter of the Order of Preachers (Dominican friars) sent out groups of friars to various European countries. The largest group was sent to England where they established their first priory in the University city of Oxford on the Feast of the Assumption, 1221. Within a decade they had spread to Ireland and has established their first houses in Scotland. The Scottish Dominicans remained part of the English province for close on 300 years. The Scottish Wars of Independence forced a reconsideration of that relationship. In 1481 Scotland became an independent province and adopted the Strict Observance initiated by Raymond of Capua (1330-1399). The province flourished for the first sixty years of its existence before being overwhelmed by the Scottish Reformation.

In May of 1217, the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, Brother Dominic, a canon of the cathedral of Osma in Castile, announced to the astonished members of the international preaching community he had gathered round him in Toulouse, that they were to be dispersed to different cities. For the previous ten years Dominic, with a mostly *ad hoc* group of international companions, had been preaching against the Cathar heresy, which was then rampant in Languedoc. Dominic's actions were all-the-more curious since the little community of preachers had achieved greater stability through being formed recently by Bishop Folquet into a group of canons serving the diocese of Toulouse. In between the diocesan confirmation, probably in July, 1215, and the dispersal of the brethren, Dominic's plans for his community changed and developed. In November 1215, Dominic had attended the Fourth Council of the Lateran with Bishop Folquet. There he was confronted by one of the largest assemblies of bishops and patriarchs in the history of the Latin Church. *Vineam Domini*, the Bull convoking the council, had stated its aims clearly: to promote the liberation of the Holy Places from Moslem control, to crush the internal threat of heresy, to achieve the re-unification of the churches of the East under papal primacy, and to promote the moral and spiritual reform of the people of

God. Innocent believed that the loss of the Holy Land had been caused by the expansion of heresy and the general degeneration of morals, which had provoked the wrath of God. In order to promote the spiritual re-awakening of the faithful, clerical reform was necessary. Priests and religious had a vital role to play in the education of the Christian laity by preaching and teaching. The Council's comprehensive program of reform included one canon which decisively engaged the interest of Dominic. Canon 10 stipulated that bishops were to provide suitable men as preachers who would diligently care for the people committed to their care. Canon 11 ordered the foundation or re-foundation of schools attached to the metropolitan sees. These were to be pastoral rather than speculative in tone. Priests would be appointed to 'teach Holy Scripture to priests and others, especially to form them in things which concern cure of souls'. An additional ministry was established by Canon 21, whereby the faithful were to confess their sins once a year. The office of preaching was to be accompanied by the ministry of reconciliation so that the faithful might receive the Eucharist in good conscience at Easter. A stark new emphasis was placed on the pastoral care exercised by the clergy. Dominic could not have failed to be influenced by this vision. His project changed from that of a merely local community to that of a world-wide Order with a world-wide mission.

In the following years Dominic, in association with Cardinal Ugolino, a cousin of Innocent III and later pope himself as Gregory IX, spent the next two years forming the Toulouse community into what would become a dynamic religious Order known as The Order of Preachers. In 1217 the community was stable enough to embark on the next stage of its development implantation in various cities throughout Europe. In August of 1217 Dominic sent a small group of friars to Spain and two larger groups to Paris with the instruction that they were 'to study, preach and found a house'. The Parisian theology schools were paramount in the Europe of that time. Peter the Chanter (d. 1197), an influential Master of a group of Parisian scholars and students, constructed a pastoral strategy for the Church which placed a strong emphasis on the renewal of Scripture study, the revival of preaching, and the encouragement of the practice of individual confession.<sup>1</sup> Innocent III had studied at Paris under Peter of Corbeil and had probably known Peter the Chanter, Stephen Langton, and Robert de Courson. The latter two Englishmen were close collaborators of Innocent. The pastoral theological emphasis of the school of the Chanter formed an important part of the platform of Lateran IV and was influential in forming the apostolic vision of Dominic and his new Order.

<sup>1</sup> The definitive study of Peter the Chanter is to be found in, John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes and Merchants: The social views of Petr the Chanter and his circle* (2 vols) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

Major investments of new recruits to the Order of Preachers were made in the Universities of Paris and Bologna, the premier European universities of the time. Paris was noted for its theology and Bologna for Canon and Civil Law. Dominic sent the friars to these universities not only to study with a view to obtaining higher degrees that would permit them in turn to form other friars, but also to recruit suitable intelligent and academically inclined students and professors to fulfil the mission of the Order. At first, the communities in Paris and Bologna experienced hard times. It was only when Reginald of Orleans, who had formerly taught Canon Law in the University of Paris, before becoming dean of the Chapter of Orleans, joined the Order and took up residence in Bologna that things began to improve.<sup>2</sup> Whilst travelling through Rome in 1218, Reginald met St. Dominic through Cardinal Ugolino, later Pope Gregory IX, and subsequently entered the Order. The Bologna community was founded in 1217 but initially it had not flourished. Reginald arrived in 1218, and again with the help of Cardinal Ugolino, then papal legate in Lombardy, he secured a permanent church and residence for the friars. Through his preaching he attracted large numbers of recruits, including some who were to lead contingents of friars to establish the Order in their own countries. In 1219 Reginald was sent to perform the same task in Paris with similar success.

The universities were attractive recruiting grounds because they were international institutions. Students gathered there from all over Europe. What was developing into an international Order needed able, spiritual, energetic, and cosmopolitan men to further its mission. In the early years, university students, Masters, prelates, and monks were drawn to commit themselves to this new community of preachers. Many of them, such as Blessed Reginald, and Blessed Jordan of Saxony, the second Master of the Order, were given office shortly after they joined the Order. It was a feature of the early years of the Order that friars were given responsibility for government very early in their Dominican careers. The influx of talented international brothers allowed the General Chapter of 1221 to send out friars to various parts of Europe to establish Provinces. The new provinces were usually established by natives of the lands to which they were sent. Brother Solomon of Aarhus was sent to Denmark, Paul of Hungary and Sadoc were sent to Hungary, Christian and a number of German friars were sent to Germany, Hyacinth and Henry of Moravia were sent to their native Poland to establish the Order there. The largest contingent of 12 was sent to England under the leadership of Gilbert of Fresnay.<sup>3</sup> It is believed that

<sup>2</sup> For a brief and accessible account of these events see, Christopher T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) pp.23-25.

<sup>3</sup> William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order: Origins and Growth to 1500* (New York, 1965) pp. 94-97).

Gilbert was an Englishman and a Master in Canon Law from Bologna. He may very well have been one of those recruited by Blessed Reginald. A ‘Lawrence the Englishman’ is listed amongst St. Dominic’s first followers in Toulouse. It is also recorded that Dominic took his friars to study in the Toulouse school of the English Master Alexander Stavenby. Bishop Stavenby’s brother, Richard, also joined the Order. In the summer of 1221 Gilbert and his companions reached England in the company of Peter des Roches (d. 1238), Bishop of Winchester. The friars first stopped at Canterbury, where they were invited to preach before Archbishop Stephen Langton. He offered them a house in the city, but they pressed on to Oxford, which was their destination and intended to be their first foundation.<sup>4</sup> Langton may very well have known St. Dominic since he had also preached against the Cathars during the Albigensian Crusade. Stavenby certainly knew the original community as Dominic and some of his brethren had attended his school in Toulouse. Stavenby had also taught at Bologna. The newly arrived friars would have been able to count on Stavenby’s support when he was nominated Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield in 1224.

It has been observed that the Order was rather slow to be implanted in England, but that is to forget that the English friars were also making foundations in Ireland. By 1230 there were only five houses in England: Oxford 1221, London 1224, Norwich 1226, York 1227, and Bristol 1230. The English province of the Order, however, encompassed not only England but Ireland as well. Six houses were founded in Ireland during the same period: Drogheda 1224, Dublin 1224, Kilkenny 1225, Waterford 1226, Limerick 1227, and Cork 1229. All were founded in towns dominated by English or Anglo-Irish inhabitants. The fact that so many priories were founded in such a short time suggests that there was no shortage of benefactors; neither was there a dearth of friars. Where did these friars come from? In the early days in Paris and Bologna it was mostly clerics who had completed their theological and religious formation who joined the Order, many of them had been engaged in university teaching. Dominic’s intention in drawing them into his net was that they could immediately begin or continue their teaching and preaching work. John of St. Giles, an English Master in the University of Paris is a good example of this. He was expert in Medicine and Theology. Allegedly in the midst of a sermon on voluntary poverty, John descended from the pulpit, was clothed in the habit, and then returned to complete the sermon. After his entry into the Order, he continued his teaching and later became head of the Dominican school in Oxford and a companion of Robert Grosseteste, the Bishop of Lincoln.

<sup>4</sup> Bede Jarrett, OP, *The English Dominicans* (Burns, Oates and Washbourne, London, 1921) pp.2-3.

Jordan of Saxony (c.1190-1237) obviously exercised a powerful attraction to many university students whom he charmed into the ranks of the Order. He was able to write of his success in recruiting to various members of the Order telling them of how many had joined and how well-educated and connected they were. Amongst his recruits was Albert the Great. He received 24 friars in Paris during the course of a week, and in 1231 he wrote of a larger group of about forty novices ‘of whom several were masters and others suitably educated’.<sup>5</sup> It is highly likely that Jordan’s zeal for new members did not stem from a concern to ensure their proper formation in the Dominican tradition, which at that time was still evolving, but from a concern to staff the new foundations with already qualified friars. The Order expanded rapidly in the 1220s and, as we have seen, 12 houses were founded in England and Ireland alone between 1221 and 1230. Such phenomenal expansion can only have come about through the incorporation of already ‘formed’ clerics, some of whom were already academically qualified and who had been put to work in the vineyard immediately or soon after their incorporation into the Order. Ireland was to remain part of the English Province until the Reformation ‘liberated’ it in 1536. The appearance of a Scottish Dominican reality in 1230 added a further historical community different in culture and heritage from the English polity. Both the Irish and Scottish friars were to be caught up in the story of war and colonialization waged by successive English kings against their respective countries.

The embrace of Ireland and Scotland by the English Province was to make that Province the largest in Europe at one time. The English Provincial, although nominally the superior of the Order in the other two countries, governed through Vicars General. In Ireland Dominican government was made much more complex by the cultural diversity of the country. At one point there was a Vicar General for the English friars, then another for the Anglo-Irish friars, and yet another for the Gaelic friars. Neither Ireland nor Scotland had a university. The lack of university inhibited recruiting and limited the educational opportunities for the friars in formation. The friars therefore had to evolve their own schools. The Irish Dominicans, for example, maintained two significant *studia* at Athenry and Dublin. Scotland developed its own study house at Perth and another possibly at Ayr, but for higher studies the friars were obliged to go to Oxford or further afield. The Irish mendicant study houses also became centers of learning for non-Dominican clerical students. It is significant that while the number of Dominican foundations had declined or halted completely by the beginning of the fifteenth century, in Gaelic Ireland they were increasing. Many Gaelic

<sup>5</sup> Jordan of Saxony, *Epistulae* ed, A Walz, *Monumenta Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum Historica* xxiii, (Rome, 1951) p. 46 Ep 40.

chieftains founded priories in what were rural areas, and these became centers of Irish language and literature keeping the native Irish culture alive. The relation of the Irish and Scottish portions of the Province to their English brethren became increasingly strained as time went on. They began to stress their different Dominican identity, which was expressed in both the Gaelic Irish and the Scottish friars' acceptance of the Observant Dominican reform.

The beginnings of the Dominican Order in Scotland are cloaked in mystery. We know the name of the first Dominican friar to come to Scotland, but we are not sure when he arrived and with whom. The traditional date ascribed to the advent of a group of Dominican friars is 1230. The *Chronicle of Melrose*, the Cistercian abbey in the Scottish Borders, wrote: 'In this year (1230) the Jacobine friars enter Scotland for the first time'.<sup>6</sup> It is unusual for the Dominicans to be called 'Jacobins' in Britain. They were sometimes called that in France after the location of their study house in the rue Saint Jacques in Paris. The leader of this party of friars was a certain friar Clement. In 1250 the London General Chapter named him as a member of the English Province. He seemed to be well-known to the friars there and is described as speaking a number of languages. Traditionally, Clement is described as a Scot. This identification is plausible since it was the Dominican custom when making new foundations in other countries to send natives of that country to establish the Order. We know very little else of his life before his arrival in Scotland save that he was probably a Master and had studied at Oxford, Paris, or both. It is not clear if he knew St. Dominic, but he may have been part of the batches of students recruited by Jordan of Saxony in Paris in the 1220s. The English Province held its first recorded Provincial Chapter in 1230 and Clement's mission to Scotland may have been initiated by this body. It may be that the Dominican friars were invited by King Alexander II to come to his kingdom. A later chronicle described the Dominican friars as being particularly favored by the King who provided houses for them. Alexander also supported the Franciscans who arrived in Scotland in 1231, but on a much less generous scale. The foundation of eight of the nine communities existing in Scotland by 1250 were attributed to the generosity and piety of Alexander II.<sup>7</sup> All of these were in the urban centres of Scotland and were to come to depend on the generosity of the burgesses for their support and also for their new members, most of whom were the sons of burgesses.

Since the foundation charters and many of the documents of the Scottish Dominicans in the Middle Ages have disappeared it is difficult

<sup>6</sup> *The Chronicle of Melrose*, eds. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (London, 1936) 80, under year mcccxxx).

<sup>7</sup> Ian b. Cowan and David Easson, *Medieval Religious Houses in Scotland*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1976), pp 114, 116-117, 118-119.



to establish a precise foundation date for the priories. The first list of eleven Scottish Dominican houses dates from 1297 and was drawn up under English direction. It concerned the support of these houses to be drawn from burgh revenues. Edward I of England, whose armies were active in Scotland at the time, was a strong supporter of the English Dominican friars. He was largely responsible for the building of their renewed priory in London. His confessors were often drawn from the ranks of the Order, and he had been enrolled as a Dominican tertiary.<sup>8</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that during Edward's unwelcome visits to Scotland he lodged in Dominican priories. The priories still formed part of the English Dominican province. The strains placed on the Scottish Dominicans by their membership of the English Province intensified with the bitterness of the Wars of Independence and the challenge of the Great Schism which saw England following the Roman obedience and Scotland, along with France her ally, following the Avignon Obedience. The Order itself was divided into two with a Master for each Obedience. It is likely that most of the founding friars in Scotland were English. The universities had proved to be prime recruiting grounds in England and in Europe, but there was no university in Ireland and the first Scottish university was not founded in St. Andrews until 1413 by a bull of the Avignon anti-Pope Benedict XIII (1329-1423). The relatively slow development of the Order in Scotland may be related to the lack of suitable centres of recruitment.

Clement himself does not appear to have been particularly involved in the evolution of the Order in Scotland. In 1233 He was named Bishop of the dilapidated diocese of Dunblane, which was still a Gaelic-speaking area. This suggests that Clement spoke or understood Gaelic. His later involvement with the affairs of the Diocese of Argyll might seem to confirm that. Clement did not owe his appointment directly to the King but to a commission of the Bishops of St. Andrews, Brechin, and Dunkeld, although we may imagine that the king took a close interest in the appointment. They were ordered by the Pope to find a suitable bishop for Dunblane, which had been vacant for three years.<sup>9</sup> Doubtless, given the later relationship between the king and Clement, it is likely that Alexander had a strong hand in the appointment. Clement proved himself to be an energetic and dynamic pastor. In 1237 he was probably at Viterbo resolving disputes with other ecclesiastical bodies in his diocese at the papal curia. He may very well have been personally known to Pope Gregory IX (1141-1245), who had always taken a keen interest in the affairs of both mendicant Orders and who had encouraged and supported St. Dominic in his work of foundation of the Order. King Alexander's interest in securing the appointment of

<sup>8</sup> Jarrett, *op.cit.*, pp. 5, 13, 74, 210.

<sup>9</sup> A.A.M.Duncan, *Scotland: the Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1978) p. 307.

Clement stemmed from a desire to ensure that the nomination of the bishop did not fall into the hands of the earl of Strathearn, a major and powerful magnate in the region. Clement had no ties to any family or kin group and could be counted on to act as an independent operator. Bishops could act as a check on the power of local nobles; it was in the interest of the crown to exert as much influence over episcopal appointments as possible. From the first, Pope Gregory supported Clement in his efforts to restore and reclaim the alienated finances of the diocese. Once reclaimed these revenues were directed, amongst other things, to the erection of a proper chapter for the rebuilt cathedral. Clement continued to stand high in the king's counsels. In 1244 he supported the king in securing a treaty of peace with Henry III of England. In 1247 Clement became administrator of the diocese of Argyll, which had been vacant for six years. He began the reconstruction of Argyll rather as he had done in Dunblane, and in 1250 a new bishop was named. As with Dunblane, Clement and the King were striving to limit the influence of the Lord of the Isles over the see of Argyll. In 1247 papal confidence in Clement was expressed by his being appointed a collector of the papal tax for a projected crusade. Papal tax collectors for the crusades were frequently drawn from the ranks of the friars. In 1249 Clement supported King Alexander in his campaign against Argyll; unfortunately the king died on the island of Kerrera on 8 July, 1249. Bishop Clement was with him. Clement was named one of the Guardians of the Realm during the new king's minority. He was ousted in coup *d'état* mounted by one of the powerful Scottish families and died in 1258.<sup>10</sup> Clement was obviously well-known in the Order since the General Chapter of London stated that: 'we grant to Friar Clement of our Order, a bishop of Scotland, after his death, one mass throughout the Order by every friar whomsoever is a priest'.<sup>11</sup> Clement was a national and an international figure, probably a friend of St. Edmund Rich, and an advisor to the king. His influence ensured the favor that Alexander II would show to the newly established Dominican friars.

Clement's position at court and on the king's council rather overshadows the work of the other Dominicans at that time. King Alexander's intention in supporting the friars had been to introduce reforms into the Scottish Church, which was plagued by pluralism, non-residence, and the baleful influence of family loyalties. Some families had practically seized control of major Scottish benefices. The king's authority was reduced in the localities by the existence of power blocs based on kinship. Networks of kin loyalty also affected the proper

<sup>10</sup> For biographical details see: D.E.R. Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to AD 1410* (Oxford, 1977) p 103A.A.. Duncan, Clement (d 1258) in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in James Hutchison Cockburn, *The Medieval Bishops of Dunblane and Their Church* (Edinburgh, 1959) pp. 62-63.



functioning of the Church since benefices were not always occupied by the worthiest of candidates. The campaign in Argyll, on which both king and bishop agreed, is a case in point. Bishop Clement wished to break the influence of the ruler of Argyll over the appointment of the bishop and hence promote episcopal and ecclesiastical independence of the secular power, which was a constant feature of the Gregorian reform and the policies of the popes who succeeded Gregory VII, whilst the king wished to extend royal authority over territory that still acknowledged the sovereignty of Norway and enjoyed too much independence of either crown.<sup>12</sup> Alexander was a consistent supporter of the three most austere and pure communities of the time. He was a consistent supporter of the Cistercians; he chose to be buried at Melrose and not in the emerging royal pantheon of Dunfermline abbey. He founded a Valliscaulian monastery at Pluscarden, a community which was French in origin and noted for its strict form of life and was extremely generous to the Dominican friars, although only three of their houses may be ascribed definitely to Alexander as founder with any degree of certainty: Perth, Ayr, and Edinburgh. The remaining eight may have owed their origin to King Alexander but it is impossible to prove.<sup>13</sup>

The Perth priory ranks amongst the houses probably founded by Alexander II. The friars were given a very valuable location described as being in the king's gardens, which were close to or within the abandoned royal castle.<sup>14</sup> Perth Blackfriars was linked with a royal residence, known as the King's House. This appears to have been a substantial separate building with living accommodation for the King and Queen; it even boasted a tennis court which was used by King James I and was in some sense the cause of his death. On the night of February 21, 1437, whilst he was staying in the Perth Blackfriars, James I, in an attempt to escape a group of assassins, climbed down into the latrine under the royal chambers hoping to escape his murderers. Unfortunately, he had recently ordered the access to be blocked so that his tennis balls would not fall into the soil. His only escape route was therefore blocked. He was hunted down and murdered. The Perth Blackfriars, like other Dominican priories, was used for public and government business, as well as for the accommodation of distinguished guests. Most of James I's parliaments met in the Perth Blackfriars, and during a session in 1433 James met an English delegation in the priory church. Earlier, on July 2, 1266, the Treaty of Perth, between Alexander III and King Magnus VI of Norway granting possession of the Western Isles and the Isle of Man to the King of Scots, was signed in the priory. On this occasion, the Norwegian delegation also lodged at the Blackfriars.

<sup>12</sup> Duncan, *op.cit.*, pp. 549-551.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Oram, *Alexander King of Scots 1214-1249* (Edinburgh, 2012) pp. 213-23.

<sup>14</sup> *The Blackfriars of Perth: The Chartulary and Papers of Their House*. Ed with an introduction by Robert Milne (Edinburgh, 1893) no 5.

When the center of royal and political activity shifted to Edinburgh, similar use was made of the Edinburgh Blackfriars.

A charter of 1242 granted to the Dominican friars of Edinburgh the place where the king's manor house was situated.<sup>15</sup> The priory received royal alms from Alexander II and Alexander III, but the sums granted to the Perth priory were much larger, suggesting that Perth was the more important foundation originally. In the succeeding centuries the Edinburgh Blackfriars served as a meeting place for the town's hammermen's guild, the royal Exchequer, and the court of the Archdeacon of Lothian, as well as a storage place for the Lord Treasurer's accounts, a place for the meetings of the Court of Session, and a place for heresy trials. Various Scottish Provincial church councils also met in the priory, including the series in the decade preceding the imposition of the Reformation in Edinburgh. The Edinburgh Blackfriars sheltered the exiled King Henry VI and Queen Margaret and later still Perkin Warbeck, an impostor claimant to the English throne. Royal generosity can also be seen in the gift to the priory of rich hangings taken from the tent of King Edward II after the Battle of Bannockburn. Hector Boece (1465-1536), the Aberdeen theologian, recalls seeing them during a visit to Edinburgh. The priory's situation made it vulnerable to attack. In May 1544 an English army burned and looted the town, and the priory suffered along with everybody else. It was not only the English who caused mayhem in Scottish towns. The Inverness priory was founded in 1240, but the town was subject to attacks from various local magnates. In 1372 the priory was burned along with the town by mercenaries hired by the Abbot of Arbroath, who was engaged in a dispute with the Bishop of Moray. The town was once again burned by the Lord of the Isles in 1416, again in 1428 and once more in 1455. A similar fate befell Elgin, founded between 1233 and 1235. In May 1390, Alexander Stewart, younger brother of King Robert III, burned Elgin cathedral and the town due to a dispute with the bishop. He was later absolved from the resulting excommunication in the church of the Blackfriars in Perth. The town was again burned in 1402 by the Lord of the Isles. The resultant expense of rebuilding the destroyed priory buildings and the lack of benefactors adversely affected the life of the priories and led to the shrinking of the numbers of friars.

Due to the lack of contemporary documents, it is not clear how the life and ministry of the friars unfolded in the centuries before the Reformation. The appearance of some friars amongst the bishops gives hints of Dominican involvement in the ecclesiastical polity of Scotland. As we have seen, appointment to the episcopate often depended on family connections. In 1275 a well-connected friar, William Comyn, was

<sup>15</sup> A collection of documents along with an historical introduction relating to the Edinburgh Blackfriars may be found in William Moir Bryce, *The Blackfriars of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh, 1911).

named as Bishop of Brechin.<sup>16</sup> Comyn had joined the Dominican Order later in life. He had formed part of the *familia* of Bishop Gamelin of St. Andrews. Gamelin had been banished from the kingdom in 1256 for supporting the Comyns in a struggle against the Durwards for control of the government during the minority of Alexander III. After the fall of the Durwards Gamelin returned, and a few years later William Comyn was appointed Bishop of Brechin. He joined the Order, though already a priest, and was sufficiently well-educated to serve as lector in the Perth priory, which was presumably the study house at the time. We are told that he hesitated before accepting the see of Brechin because it was so poor. Once ordained bishop he undertook various diplomatic missions to Edward I on behalf of King Alexander III. He also visited the papal curia and in 1286 was a delegate of the Scottish magnates to Edward I to consider the situation of Margaret of Norway, who had inherited the Scottish throne after the death of Alexander III. Although he gave his assent to the treaty of Birgham in 1290, which stipulated the conditions for the future government of Scotland, his signature is absent from the ‘Ragman’s roll’ of June 1291, along with his fellow-Dominican bishop, Laurence of Argyll. The Ragman’s Roll was the name given to the instruments by which the Scottish nobility and gentry swore allegiance to Edward I of England. Comyn is not heard of again and died about 1296 or 1297.

The tradition of Dominican friars being rewarded with the poorest episcopal sees is clear in the succession of three bishops of Argyll, all of whom belonged to the Comyn affinity and were members of the McDougall clan. In 1262 Laurence (called *de Ergadia*) was named Bishop of Argyll. At first, the Pope refused to confirm the election on a technicality but then authorised the bishops of St. Andrews and Dunkeld to perform the consecration. Laurence was one of four bishops present at the Second Council of Lyon in 1272. The surname *de Ergadia*, meaning ‘of Argyll’ was used by the McDougalls of Lorne, to which family the three Dominican bishops were related. Andrew *de Ergadia* was named Bishop of Argyll in 1299 in succession to Laurence. Andrew’s tenure of the see was overshadowed by the enmity between the Bruce faction and the Comyns and their allies the McDougalls, who were struggling for supremacy in Scotland. In 1309 the forces of Robert Bruce defeated the McDougalls of Lorne at the Battle of Brander forcing Bishop Andrew, John of Lorne, and his father, Alexander, to flee to England. Bishop Andrew remained there, living at the expense of Edward II until after Bannockburn in 1314. He returned home and remembered his loyalty to his Order by giving a grant to the Glasgow Dominicans. He died about 1327. The next McDougall bishop of Argyll was Martin in 1342–44. With the approval of his Dominican superior of his

<sup>16</sup> Watt, *op.cit.*

nomination, he made his way to the papal curia at Avignon. There he found a rival claimant to the see, *Angus de Ergadia*, and litigation followed.<sup>17</sup> The problem was solved with the death of Angus. Martin's election was confirmed, and he appears to have remained in Avignon until April, 1345. He was involved in the negotiations for the ransom of King David II from England but does not appear further and died in 1387.

Probably the most influential Scottish Dominican bishop, after Clement, was Adam of Lanark. Adam came to prominence as the long-term confessor of King David II. He may have been a member of the Edinburgh priory and by 1364 was styled as Master, indicating prolonged study at a university outside Scotland. He played some part in raising the ransom for David II and acted as proctor for his fellow-Dominican, Martin Bishop of Argyll, in raising his share of the king's ransom. He is first mentioned as the king's confessor in 1356. In this capacity he was granted safe-conducts through England to meet the king. In 1360–1361 he acted as royal envoy to the papal court at Avignon. In fact, he became a frequent visitor during his remaining years. In 1362 he was elected and confirmed as Bishop of Galloway. In 1371 David II died to be succeeded by his uncle Robert III, who did not retain Adam's services. Adam's name is notably absent from the list of bishops doing homage to the new king. He was also absent from significant parliaments. He died during a papal vacancy in Avignon, in 1378. He was at the time transacting business in Avignon, where he was a familiar figure.

The last Dominican bishop of Argyll was Finlay of Albany. Finlay is recorded as being a Bachelor in Sacred Theology. His career illustrates the incorporation of the medieval Dominicans into government service. Like his predecessors, it was always possible for him to choose the wrong side in a highly factionalised society.<sup>18</sup> He was allegedly chaplain to Robert, earl of Fife and later first Duke of Albany, the son of King Robert II. During the eighteen-year captivity of King James I in England, the Albany Stewarts ruled Scotland. It is suggested that Finlay joined the Order in 1409 and in 1412 served as Prior of the Ayr house. This suggests that like many friars his previous formation was counted as adequate for him to function as a member of the Order and to hold office. In 1416, he presented letters from Governor Albany to the Council of Constance, which was concerned with reducing the plurality of popes at the time, and the reform of abuses within the Church. Scotland was part of the diminishing number of nations pledging allegiance to the 'Avignon' pope, Benedict XIII. In 1418, Finlay returned to Scotland, sent by the Council, with the purpose of detaching

<sup>17</sup> Theiner, *op.cit.*, p. 283.

<sup>18</sup> Ranald Nicholson, *Scotland : the Later Middle Ages* (Edinburgh, 1978) pp. 245, 287, 343, 344.

Scotland from Benedict XIII. In the meantime, Finlay was proposed for the diocese of Argyll, but that confirmation would not be given until Scotland returned to the Roman obedience. This was an added incentive to plead the cause of the Council. At a meeting of the Three Estates in Perth in 1418, the Governor made a tactical error in nominating an English Franciscan to defend the cause of Benedict XIII. Whatever sense he might have made was undermined by the fact of his nationality. It was already clear that in remaining loyal to Benedict Scotland would be ranking itself with the county of Armagnac and Peniscola, the only other places to recognize Benedict XIII as the true pope. Finally, the Governor capitulated and sent procurators to the new pope, Martin V, to offer him Scotland's allegiance. Finlay was duly consecrated as Bishop of Argyll. His association with the Albany Stewarts was to cost him dearly. In 1424 James I returned from 18 years captivity in exile in England. He bided his time before exercising vengeance on his Albany Stewart relatives whom he believed had prolonged his captivity for their own benefit. In 1425 Duke Murdoch and his sons were executed at Perth; they were later buried in the Dominican church at Stirling. The remaining members of the Albany party led by James Stewart fled along with Finlay of Albany to Ireland where Finlay is presumed to have died in 1426. It was clearly perilous to come too close to the throne. In 1539 James V was to write to Pope Paul III: 'The see of Lismore (Argyll) is vacant. The land is mountainous and sterile, the rents small, and the people uncivilized, so that very few desire to hold the bishopric'.<sup>19</sup> Apparently, its poverty was not a disincentive to poor Dominican friars.

The Mission and status of the Scottish Dominicans within the Order were gravely affected by the developing political situation in relation to the Wars of Independence (1296–1328, 1332–1357). The untimely death of King Alexander III in 1286 prompted a disputed succession for the crown. The various competitors for the throne of Scotland turned to Edward I of England to arbitrate. King Edward made use of the opportunity to reassert the English crown's overlordship of Scotland. Apart from increasing his own power, Edward was also concerned to ensure a stable Scottish realm that would enable him to pursue his ambitions in France. Both considerations were enough to secure his intervention. The resulting gradual English encroachment on Scottish liberties precipitated a prolonged struggle for Scottish independence. The entanglement of the English in Scottish affairs resulted in a disastrous pattern of Anglo-Scottish relations that was to endure for centuries, and in some ways persists still. The effect of the struggle for independence was to weld a community of different languages, diverse cultures, and differing social customs into a unity which defined itself over against

<sup>19</sup> *The Letters of James V, collected and calendared* (Edinburgh, 1954) p. 364.

the hostile invader. As Michael Lynch has written: ‘the War of Independence rightly holds a central place, both in the history of Scotland and the making of the Scottish national psyche’.<sup>20</sup> In many ways it engaged the Scottish Dominican friars, hitherto closely allied with their brethren in England, in reinforcing their own independent identity precisely as Scotsmen within the community of the Order. It would appear, that before the bitter struggles with England, the Scottish friars did not manifest undue hostility to their English neighbours. As the war progressed and atrocities were committed on both sides, a more intense hostility developed. During his invasions of Scotland, Edward I, who was a sincere supporter of the Dominicans, often stayed in Dominican priories and paid for the privilege. When he departed from some religious houses, he was careful to burn them behind him.

In 1275 the Dominican General Chapter allowed Provincials to establish vicariates for the easier government of their provinces. The Irish and Scottish friars had been established as vicariates of England and were given the right to elect their vicars, who then had to be confirmed by the English Provincial. The Irish made one or two attempts to achieve provincial status, but this was usually thwarted by the English friars, presumably acting in concert with the English government. A brief Irish attempt to achieve provincial status took place in 1376 but failed. The last attempt to establish an Irish Province took place in 1484, when the General Chapter established a Dominican Province in Ireland. In 1491 this was suppressed by the General Chapter under pressure from the English province and crown. The wars of independence in Scotland and the relationship of the Plantagenet kings to the English Province increased the movement for greater freedom from the English friars amongst the Scots. The matter was further complicated by the Great Schism of 1378–1417, which not only divided the Western Church, but also religious Orders. Scotland chose the Avignon Obedience along with France, while England remained with the Roman Obedience. The relationship with the English friars had caused grave clashes of loyalty and obedience amongst the Scottish brethren during the English invasions. In 1314, the year of Bannockburn, the English Provincial was ordering that those Scots friars who had persuaded others to throw off their allegiance to England were to be punished. Edward I traded on his friendship with William of Hotham (c.1255–1298), the English Dominican Provincial (1282–1287, 1290–1296), to try to discipline some of the Scottish friars. Hotham was an unashamed supporter of the rights of King Edward and even served on the commission whose task was to rule in the matter of the Scottish succession. He supported Edward I’s claim to be overlord of Scotland. After Edward’s conquest of Scotland, Hotham appointed a

<sup>20</sup> Michael Lynch, *Scotland a new History*, (London, 1996) p. 111.



new vicar of English origin, Robert de Wynethorne, and sent more English friars to Scotland.<sup>21</sup> This evidently did not have the desired effect, since some years later in 1333 Edward III, during his invasion of Scotland, complained about the ‘nationalist’ sermons of the Scots medicant friars. He particularly suggested that the Scottish friars in Berwick should be sent south of the Trent and treated with kindness. They were to be replaced by loyal English friars.<sup>22</sup> The experience of hostility between the two countries doubtless increased the demand for more autonomy for the Scottish Dominican friars.

By 1342 the Scottish Dominicans were holding vicariate chapters. In 1348 two papal letters were addressed to the ‘vicar general in Scotland of the Prior Provincial of the Province of England’. In the next year 1349 a letter from the Master of the Order addressed ‘the vicar general of the Order of Preachers in the kingdom of Scotland’.<sup>23</sup> This movement towards domestic religious government was to become more pronounced over the next century and a half. In the course of the fifteenth century the vicariate of Scotland set about repairing the damage wrought by the Anglo-Scottish wars and by the Black Death of 1348–1349, which decimated religious communities. The principal achievement of the vicariate was to offer accommodation to the establishment of the new University of Glasgow in the Dominican priory in that city in 1451. The University was founded on a bull of Pope Nicholas V proposed by Bishop William Turnbull of Glasgow with the support of King James II. Glasgow began as a liberal arts school; in 1460 civil and canon law praelections started in the priory church. Three friars are listed as being admitted by the University in 1457: Patrick Sharp, John Simpson, and Andrew Hasting. Sharp had the honour of serving as the first diffinitor of the Scottish province at the General Chapter of Rome in 1484. There is no further record of Simpson. Hasting went on to become prior of Elgin. The foundation of three universities in Scotland, (St. Andrews founded by Bishop Henry Wardlaw in 1413, with its charter of confirmation granted by James I in 1432; Glasgow founded by Bishop William Turnbull in 1451; and finally Aberdeen founded by Glasgow born Bishop William Elphinstone in 1495) gave greater scope for the involvement of Scottish Dominicans in university life. The Dominican friars’ closest initial ties were with Glasgow and Aberdeen. They were deeply involved with foundation of both universities. It was not until the first decades of the sixteenth century that the Scottish friars transferred their intellectual and academic resources to St. Andrews. The move was prompted by a bequest from Bishop Elphinstone in 1514

<sup>21</sup> *Rotuli Scotiae in Turri Londensi Et in Domo Capitulari Westmonasteriensi Asservati: Edwardi I. Edwardi II. Edwardi III. -v.2. Ric. II. Hen. IV. V. VI. Ed. IV. Ric. III. Hen. VII. VIII* (London, 1814) 24, Edward I, m 6.

<sup>22</sup> *Chronicon de Lanercost*, ed. J. Stevenson (Maitland Club, 1839) p. 275.

<sup>23</sup> Denmyln, *Advocates manuscript*. 15.i.18, n 77.

and the support of the Archbishops of St. Andrews. The St. Andrews priory was expanded and rebuilt to accommodate a larger community, and by 1517 John Grierson, later Provincial, was in residence as prior of the community. In previous centuries a select number of Scottish Dominicans, as members of the English Province, had studied at the *stadium generale* at Oxford. In 1352 the Scottish Dominican students, who were part of the ‘Avignon obedience’, were given permission to continue studying in Oxford. Similarly, in 1382 the Scottish Dominican students were permitted to remain at Blackfriars, Oxford, during the truce between England and Scotland. The foundation of the Scottish universities permitted the Scottish Dominican friars to ‘repatriate’ their studies, although some were still found at Paris, Bologna, Cologne, and Leuven, the latter two being staunch defenders of Catholic orthodoxy. An academic conflict broke out at St. Andrews soon after its foundation between the followers of Lawrence of Lindores, a committed nominalist, the Master of St. John’s College, and those who supported the Albertist school influenced by the Cologne Dominicans. This may have discouraged ‘realist’ Dominican friars from closer involvement in St. Andrews. Lawrence was formerly the Inquisitor charged with the prosecution of heresy. He was responsible for burning the English priest, James Resby, in 1406 or 1407 for Lollardy. Despite this theological struggle, a stream of St. Andrews students joined the Order: John Mure, John Musselburgh, Thomas Dunning, and Adam of Cruden, all of whom were to achieve prominence as the Scottish Dominicans, moved toward Provincial status.

During the fifteenth century, while the Scottish Dominican community was undergoing something of an intellectual revival, a political debate was raging within the wider Order relating to the nature of religious observance. The movement for a return to the primitive observance of the original Dominican Constitutions had been inaugurated by Raymond of Capua (c.1330–1399), confessor of Saint Catherine of Siena, and elected Master of the Order in 1380. Raymond ordered that houses of ‘strict observance’ be established in every province, in the hope that their influence would gradually spread through the other houses. Eventually, these houses of strict observance were banded together in Congregations, which often transcended national or political boundaries and were not directly under the control of their province of origin. Successive Masters were concerned that the Congregations were promoting a form of separatism within an Order that had always been known for its unity. As the fifteenth century wore on the Congregations were achieving greater power within the Order, much to the concern of the ‘unreformed’ friars. The Observant friars were often outvoted in Provincial and General Chapters, but their growing strength in the fifteenth century was bolstered by the support of the secular powers to whom they did not hesitate to appeal against their brethren. Sovereigns were concerned to retain as much as possible of

the government of the religious Orders within their own frontiers. In this regard many European monarchs took the side of the Observant movement at the Roman curia, whilst agitating for the reformed Congregations to become genuinely ‘national’ provinces. James III took the side of the observant Dominicans and pushed for a reform of the Scottish Dominicans, which would ultimately involve the achievement of Provincial status.

In 1468, Master Andrew Cruden who, as we have seen, was a graduate of St. Andrews University and who had studied in the University of Paris, was commissioned by the General Chapter of Rome to reform the Scottish Dominicans. This was allegedly a response to a request from James III.<sup>24</sup> The General Chapter was held under the presidency of the Vicar General of the Order, Leonardo Mansueti (1406–1480). The Master of the Order, Martial Auribelli, had been deposed by the pope in 1462 for his lack of support for the reform movement. He was re-elected in 1465, but there were constant plots against him by some of the brethren. One of these caused Paul II to suspend him from office, and, as a result, he could not preside at the 1468 Chapter. The pope appointed Leonardo Mansueti, Provincial of the Roman Province, as Vicar General. In this capacity Mansueti presided over the Chapter. It was subsequently proved that Mansueti’s role at the 1468 Chapter was against the Constitutions of the Order. The General Chapter of 1470 annulled the Acts of 1468, including the commission to Andrew Cruden. In 1481, again in response to the request of King James III, the General Chapter granted Provincial status to the Scottish Dominicans. Whilst ending one chapter in Scottish Dominican history, another was opened. There began a struggle for the reform of the new Province, which was undertaken with the support of the reformed Congregation of Holland, which was a supra-national congregation stretching from France to Scandinavia.

The Scottish Dominicans had united to become a Province in 1481, but this was not the end of their troubles. In the succeeding years, as in other parts of the Order, internal strife intensified over the question of observance. The emergence of a university at Aberdeen in 1495, and the prominent part taken in it by friars such as John Adamson, the first Professor of theology in the University, seems to have made of Aberdeen something of a reformed convent. The members of this community were later influential in expanding the reformed vision to other communities, although not without opposition. Once again, the King of Scots was involved in the turmoil. In 1506, James IV wrote to the Master of the Order complaining that some Scottish friars have defied their superiors, disgraced their calling, and have fled to England

<sup>24</sup> *Acta Capitulorum generalium ordinis praedicatorum*, ed. B. M. Reichert (Rome, 1898 ff.) iii, 312.

to avoid the conditions of life then existing in some Scottish Dominican houses.<sup>25</sup> These friars obviously did not wish to be reformed. In 1508 the king wrote again to Rome complaining of the same thing.<sup>26</sup> The Master's response was to send Jean Frelin, the prior of Lille and a member of the Congregation of Holland, to act as visitator of the Scottish Province. In 1510, Nicholas Gonor, the Vicar General of the Congregation of Holland, one of the largest reformed Congregations in the Order, came to Scotland to resolve the situation. They were given the most emphatic mandate to carry out reforms in Scotland. One of their sanctions was excommunication. In 1511 a further delegation from the Congregation of Holland visited and was instructed to hold conferences with the Provincial, at that time David Anderson, and the prior of Aberdeen, the reforming John Adamson.<sup>27</sup> The outcome of this visit was the removal from office of a reluctant David Anderson and the installation of John Adamson as Provincial. A further letter from the Master of the Order stating that any friar who denies obedience to John Adamson as their lawful Provincial is to undergo excommunication.<sup>28</sup> The issue of Dominican reform spread outside the walls of the convent, since the presence of the visitators from the Congregation of Holland sparked a riot amongst the citizens of Edinburgh. Some of the Edinburgh friars who were unsympathetic to reform may have had relatives amongst the rioters. It may have been sufficiently threatening for the King to issue a letter of protection to John Adamson 'in speciale anent the reformatioun of their ordour...and religioun'.<sup>29</sup> In 1512 John Spens, newly returned from the General Chapter where doubtless all of these things had been discussed, was named Vicar and Prior of Edinburgh, which suggests that opposition to reform may have been particularly concentrated in the Edinburgh Blackfriars.

The journey to Scottish Dominican independence had been long and arduous, marked by war and schism. Its achievement in 1481 prompted a gradual revival of Scottish Dominican fortunes and promoted the expression of a distinct voice in the General Chapters of the Order. The adoption of reform as a Province sparked a renewal not only in conventual and apostolic life but prompted a revival of the intellectual and theological life which fired the imagination of a generation. It was that generation that was to experience the cataclysm of the Reformation, which was to divide the province between those who accepted

<sup>25</sup> *The Letters of James the Fourth 1505-1513*, ed. R. L. Mackie, (SHS, Edinburgh, 1953) n 23.

<sup>26</sup> *Letters of James the Fourth*, n 28.

<sup>27</sup> *Letters of James the Fourth*, n 348.

<sup>28</sup> *Reg. Lit. Cajetan*, MOPH xvii, 51.

<sup>29</sup> *Registrum secreti sigilli regum Scotorum: the Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, ed. M. Livingstone and others (1908 -) I, 2266.

the Reformation and those who continued to work against it. In 1560 the bright promise of 1511 seemed to be swept away never to be reawakened.

*Allan James White OP*  
*St. Mary's School, El Centro, California, USA*

*allan.white@english.op.org*