



Edited by Miriam Wendling

Cardinal Adam Easton (c. 1330–1397)

Monk, Scholar, Theologian, Diplomat

Amsterdam
University
Press

A X
U X
P X

Amsterdam
University
Press

Cardinal Adam Easton
(c.1330–1397)



Amsterdam
University
Press

Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West

Series editors: Brenda Bolton, Anne J. Duggan and Damian J. Smith

The essential aim of this series is to present high quality, original and international scholarship covering all aspects of the Medieval Church and its relationship with the secular world in an accessible form. Publications have covered such topics as The Medieval Papacy, Monastic and Religious Orders for both men and women, Canon Law, Liturgy and Ceremonial, Art, Architecture and Material Culture, Ecclesiastical Administration and Government, Clerical Life, Councils and so on. Our authors are encouraged to challenge existing orthodoxies on the basis of the thorough examination of sources. These books are not intended to be simple text books but to engage scholars worldwide.

The series, originally published by Ashgate, has been published by Amsterdam University Press since 2018.



Amsterdam
University
Press

Cardinal Adam Easton (c.1330–1397)

Monk, Scholar, Theologian, Diplomat

*Edited by
Miriam Wendling*

Amsterdam University Press



Amsterdam
University
Press

Cover illustration: Prague, National Library of the Czech Republic, III.D.10 (Antiphonarium), fol. 131v. Copyright National Library of the Czech Republic.

Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Lay-out: Crius Group, Hulshout

ISBN 978 94 6372 652 8

e-ISBN 978 90 4855 065 4

DOI 10.5117/9789463726528

NUR 684

© M. Wendling / Amsterdam University Press B.V., Amsterdam 2020

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.

Every effort has been made to obtain permission to use all copyrighted illustrations reproduced in this book. Nonetheless, whosoever believes to have rights to this material is advised to contact the publisher.



Amsterdam
University
Press

Table of Contents

Preface	7
Abbreviations	9
Figures and Examples	11
Introduction	15
The Early Years of Adam Easton: from Norwich via Oxford to Avignon and Rome	
<i>Joan Greatrex</i>	
1. Adam Easton and the Great Schism	29
<i>Patrick Zutshi</i>	
2. The Dating and Origin of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 180: Adam Easton's copy of Richard FitzRalph's <i>De pauperie Salvatoris</i>	65
<i>Lynda Dennison</i>	
3. Adam Easton and the Lutterworth Wall Paintings Revisited	101
<i>Miriam Gill</i>	
4. Easton and Dante: beyond Chaucer	119
<i>Nick Havely</i>	
5. Adam Easton and St Birgitta of Sweden: a remarkable affinity	139
<i>Ann M. Hutchison</i>	
6. Adam Easton's Office for the Feast of the Visitation of the Virgin Mary	155
<i>Miriam Wendling</i>	
7. Between Tradition and Innovation: the sepulchral monument of Adam Easton at S. Cecilia in Trastevere	175
<i>Claudia Bolgia</i>	



8. Adam Easton's Manuscripts	207
<i>Patrick Zutshi</i>	
Index	225
Index of Manuscripts	227



Amsterdam
University
Press

Preface

That a figure of such a varied life and output as Adam Easton had not had scholarly monograph dedicated to him since Leslie Macfarlane's doctoral thesis was completed in 1955 is surprising. A move to rectify this was undertaken by Joan Greatrex and Christopher de Hamel with a conference devoted to Easton, at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, in April 2014. It is to them that the first thanks of this volume must be given. We thank Anne Hudson, Nicholas Vincent and Julia Bolton-Holloway for their papers at the conference, which are not in the present volume. Patrick Zutshi travelled to Avignon to carry out further research on Easton's books for the catalogue, found at the end of this volume, as well as contributing an article on Easton and the Schism, and many thanks are due to him for this exceptional undertaking. Further thanks are due to Gill Cannell and Metta de Hamel for on-the-ground organization of the conference. Finally, thanks are due to a small group of singers who gave us a musical impression of parts of Easton's Office for the Visitation – something which had not been heard in the Corpus Christi Chapel for hundreds of years, if it had ever been sung there previously: Winifred Fisher, Catherine White, Frank Lee and Patrick Welche. Thanks to the choir as well for the spontaneous madrigals that accompanied the conference punt trip to dinner in a marvellous atmosphere!

This volume would not have been possible without the cooperation of a large number of librarians at a similarly large number of institutions, who allowed the authors of the papers in this volume access to the manuscripts necessary to undertake the project and gave permission for the publication of images from their collections. Further thanks to Brenda Bolton, without whose guidance this volume would never have materialized. For the time to work on this project, as well as for his humour throughout the editing process, thanks are due to David Burn at KU Leuven. Final thanks must go to my colleagues, particularly Marianne Gillion, and my family, Patrick and Katrin, for their patience.

Miriam Wendling
Candlemas 2019



Amsterdam
University
Press



Amsterdam
University
Press

Abbreviations

BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BIHR	<i>Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research</i>
BRECP	J. Greatrex, <i>Biographical Register of the English Cathedral Priories of the Province of Canterbury, c.1066–1540</i> (Oxford, 1997)
BRUO	A.B. Emden, <i>Biographical Register University of Oxford</i> , 3 vols (Oxford, 1957–59)
CFBC	Congregazioni Femminili Benedettine Cassi
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
JBAA	<i>Journal of the British Archaeological Association</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
Mon.	Dante Alighieri, <i>De vulgari eloquentia, Monarchia</i> , in <i>Dante Alighieri: Opere minori</i> 3.1, ed. P.V. Mengaldo and E.B. Nardi (Milan and Naples, 1996)
MS	manuscript
TLAAS	<i>Transactions of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society</i>





Amsterdam
University
Press

Figures and Examples

Fig. 2.1.	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 180, fol. 1r. By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge	75
Fig. 2.2.	Oxford, Merton College, MS 310, fol. 1r. By kind permission of the Warden and Fellows of Merton College, Oxford	76
Fig. 2.3.	Oxford, New College, MS 242, fol. 2r. By kind permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford	77
Fig. 2.4a.	Oxford, New College, MS 242, fol. 2r (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford	78
Fig. 2.4b.	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 180, fol. 1r (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge	78
Fig. 2.5a.	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Liturg. 198, fol. 91v (detail). The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford	79
Fig. 2.5b.	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 180, fol. 1r (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge	79
Fig. 2.6a.	Oxford, New College, MS 242, fol. 2r (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford	80
Fig. 2.6b.	Oxford, Merton College, MS 310, fol. 1r (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Fellows of Merton College, Oxford	80
Fig. 2.7a.	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Don. b. 5, fol. 7r (detail). The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford	81
Fig. 2.7b.	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 180, fol. 1r (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge	81
Fig. 2.8a.	Oxford, New College, MS 242, fol. 112r (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford	82
Fig. 2.8b.	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 316, fol. 88v (detail). The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford	82
Fig. 2.8c.	Oxford, Merton College, MS 310, fol. 49v (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Fellows of Merton College, Oxford	82

Fig. 2.8d.	Cambridge, St John's College, MS A 12, fol. 210v (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge	82
Fig. 2.9a.	Oxford, New College, MS 242, fol. 178r (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford	83
Fig. 2.9b.	Oxford, Merton College, MS 310, fol. 26r (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Fellows of Merton College, Oxford	83
Fig. 2.9c.	Cambridge, St John's College, MS A. 12, fol. 29r (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge	83
Fig. 2.9d.	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 316, fol. 109v (detail). The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford	83
Fig. 2.10a.	Cambridge, St John's College, MS A 12, fol. 53v (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of St John's College, Cambridge	84
Fig. 2.10b.	Oxford, New College, MS 242, fol. 210v (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford	84
Fig. 2.10c.	Oxford, New College, MS 242, fol. 83v (detail). By kind permission of the Warden and Scholars of New College, Oxford	84
Fig. 2.11a.	Oxford, Pembroke College, MS 2, fol. 245v (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Scholars of Pembroke College, Oxford	85
Fig. 2.11b.	Oxford, Pembroke College, MS 2, fol. 47r (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Scholars of Pem- broke College, Oxford	85
Fig. 2.11c.	Oxford, Pembroke College, MS 2, fol. 11r (detail). By kind permission of the Master and Scholars of Pem- broke College, Oxford	85
Fig. 2.12.	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 180, fol. 88r. By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge	86
Fig. 2.13.	Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 180, fol. 90r. By kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge	87
Fig. 2.14a.	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Don. b. 5, fol. 7r (detail). The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford	88

Fig. 2.14b.	Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 316, fol. 8r (detail). The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford	88
Ex. 6.1.	<i>Accedunt laudes virginis</i>	163
Ex. 6.2.	<i>Accendit ardor spiritus</i>	164
Ex. 6.3.	<i>Venit ex te sanctissimus</i>	166
Ex. 6.4.	<i>Non fuit Christus</i>	169
Ex. 6.5.	<i>Surgens maria</i>	171
Ex. 6.6.	Incipits	172
Fig. 7.1.	New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art (Bequest of Mrs A.M. Minturn, 1890), manuscript leaf with <i>Incipit</i> of the Office of the Visitation, detail, from an antiphona- ry. Tempera, ink and gold on parchment, Venice, c.1400. Photo: www.metmuseum.org	177
Fig. 7.2.	Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Adam Easton (d. 1397). Photo © Alinari, Firenze	179
Fig. 7.3.	Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Adam Easton, bier, shield of the English Crown. Photo: author	180
Fig. 7.4.	Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Adam Easton, bier, shield of Cardinal Easton. Photo: author	180
Fig. 7.5.	Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Adam Easton, short side of bier, foliated cross Photo: author	180
Fig. 7.6.	Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Adam Easton, short side of bier, foliated cross, detail. Photo: author	180
Fig. 7.7.	Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Adam Easton, <i>gisant</i> . Photo © Vasari, Roma	181
Fig. 7.8.	Rome, S. Maria in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Philippe d'Alençon (d. 1397), <i>gisant</i> , head. Photo © Vasari, Roma	181
Fig. 7.9.	Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Adam Easton, <i>gisant</i> , head (frontal view). Photo © Vasari, Roma	182
Fig. 7.10.	Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Adam Easton, <i>gisant</i> , head (side view). Photo © Vasari, Roma	183
Fig. 7.11.	Rome, Museo Nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia, marble screen from the dismembered tabernacle of the Madonna <i>Advocata</i> in S. Maria in Aracoeli, the donor Francesco Felici, 1372. Photo: author	184

- Fig. 7.12. Rome, Museo Nazionale del Palazzo di Venezia, marble screen from the dismembered tabernacle of the Madonna *Advocata* in S. Maria in Aracoeli, the donor's wife, Caterina Felici, 1372. Photo: author 184
- Fig. 7.13. Rome, S. Paolo fuori le mura, cloister, marble statue of Pope Boniface IX, c. late 1390s–early 1400s. Photo: author 185
- Fig. 7.14. Rome, S. Paolo fuori le mura, cloister, marble statue of Pope Boniface IX, head, c. late 1390s–early 1400s. Photo: author 185
- Fig. 7.15. Rome, S. Maria in Trastevere, tomb of Cardinal Philippe d'Alençon (d. 1397), *gisant*, head. Photo © Vasari, Roma 186
- Fig. 7.16. Reconstruction of tomb of Cardinal Philippe d'Alençon. Rome, S. Maria in Trastevere. From Kühnenthal, pl. 24 187
- Fig. 7.17. Vatican City, BAV, MS Barb. lat. 3084 (Joseph-Marie Suarès, *Schedae manuscriptae*), fol. 282r Photo © 2017 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 189
- Fig. 7.18. Naples, S. Chiara, tomb of Marie de Valois (1331–2). Photo © Alinari, Firenze 193
- Fig. 7.19. Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, nunnery, Madonna and Child, probably from the tomb of Adam Easton. Photo © Vasari, Roma 194
- Fig. 7.20. Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, nunnery, angel carrying candelabrum, probably from the tomb of Adam Easton. Photo © Vasari, Roma 195
- Fig. 7.21. Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, nunnery, angel carrying candelabrum, probably from the tomb of Adam Easton. Photo © Vasari, Roma 195
- Fig. 7.22. Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, nunnery, angel carrying candelabrum, probably from the tomb of Adam Easton. Photo © Vasari, Roma 196
- Fig. 7.23. Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, nunnery, angel carrying candelabrum, probably from the tomb of Adam Easton. Photo © Vasari, Roma 196
- Fig. 7.24. Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, left aisle, end wall, small pillar flanking the altar. Photo: author 198
- Fig. 7.25. Rome, S. Cecilia in Trastevere, left aisle, end wall, small door. Photo: author 203
- Fig. 7.26. Vatican City, Vatican Grottoes, tomb of Pope Urban VI (d. 1389) from Old St Peter's. Photo: author 205

Introduction

The Early Years of Adam Easton: from Norwich via Oxford to Avignon and Rome

Joan Greatrex

Abstract

Joan Greatrex sets up our understanding of Easton's background, tracing what we know from the few surviving documents of his early life, from the early education that he is likely to have received up to the time that he joined the household of Simon Langham.

Keywords: Easton, Norwich, Oxford

Given the considerable significance of Adam Easton (c.1327/1330–1397) in so many fields, it is remarkable that, over the past ninety years, this monk-scholar, outstanding preacher, distinguished theologian, diplomat and ultimately cardinal, has attracted only occasional scholarly attention. The essays brought together in this volume attempt to redress the imbalance by offering new insights on various aspects of Easton's life and work. Noted for displaying consistent loyalty to the papacy through his actions and writings alike, traces of Easton's origins and early life, nevertheless, remain few and far between. What does survive includes some evidence for his date of birth and family background, his formative years as a Benedictine monk in the Cathedral Priory of Norwich, his period of study as a monk student at Gloucester College, Oxford – to the head of which a remarkable letter from the Prior of Norwich emphasizes Easton's indispensability to his home institution – and the circumstances preceding and leading up to his arrival at the Papal Curia in Avignon.

Modern research in the field of medieval English Benedictine studies was led by the Oxford historian, William Pantin who, between 1931 and 1937, published a magisterial three-volume collection of documents on

Wendling, M., *Cardinal Adam Easton (c.1330–1397): Monk, Scholar, Theologian, Diplomat*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020

DOI 10.5117/9789463726528_INTRO



Amsterdam
University
Press

the General and Provincial Chapters of the Black Monks.¹ In 1936, Pantin's short but seminal note on Easton's *Defensorium ecclesiastice potestatis*² served to encourage a young scholar, the late Leslie Macfarlane, to choose Easton's life and writings as the ideal subject for doctoral research in the University of London.³ In 1953, two years before submitting his thesis, Macfarlane discussed the background to Easton's sworn testimony, solicited on two separate occasions by the Roman authorities in 1379 to illuminate the circumstances surrounding the turbulent election of Urban VI during the previous year.⁴ In 1955, Pantin's 1948 Birkbeck Lectures, published as *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century*, briefly discussed Easton as a personality⁵ but Macfarlane's short biographical entry in 1968,⁶ together with his doctoral study remained the basis of subsequent work until the 1990s, when Easton, as a monk student from Norwich Cathedral Priory who had progressed to Oxford,⁷ took his place in the *Biographical Register of the English Cathedral Priors of the Province of Canterbury, c.1066–1540*.⁸ Not long afterwards, in a monograph on *The English in Rome, 1362–1420*, Margaret Harvey included two detailed, informative chapters concerning Easton's later career in Avignon and Rome⁹ while, in 2004, the late Barrie Dobson provided a succinct and masterful summary of Easton's career for the *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* – a model of historical writing all too seldom achieved.¹⁰ More recently, although Macfarlane's thesis remained unpublished in his lifetime, it has now been digitalized and made accessible through the services of the British Library.¹¹

1 W.A. Pantin, ed., *Documents Illustrating the Activities of the General and Provincial Chapters of the English Black Monks, 1215–1540*, 3 vols, Camden Series, 3rd Ser., xlv, xlvii and liv (London, 1931–37).

2 W.A. Pantin, 'The *Defensorium* of Adam Easton', *EHR*, 51 (1936), 675–80.

3 L.J. Macfarlane, 'The Life and Writings of Adam Easton, O.S.B.', 2 vols, PhD dissertation, University of London, 1955.

4 Idem, 'An English Account of the Election of Urban VI, 1378', *BIHR*, 26 (1953), 75–85.

5 W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955), 175–81.

6 L.J. Macfarlane, 'Adam Easton', *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, vi (Paris, 1968), cols 5–8.

7 J. Greatrex, 'Monk Students from Norwich Cathedral Priory at Oxford and Cambridge', *EHR*, 106 (1991), 555–83, especially at 556, 576, 578, 580.

8 *BRECP*, 502–3.

9 M. Harvey, *The English in Rome, 1362–1420: portrait of an expatriate community* (Cambridge, 1999), 188–237.

10 R.B. Dobson, 'Easton, Adam (c. 1330–1397)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8417>.

11 Available at <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.282794> (accessed 8 March 2018).



While the antiquarian historians, John Bale (1495–1563)¹² and Thomas Tanner (1674–1735),¹³ provide contradictory statements on Easton's parental background, there is little if any doubt that the family name of Easton, de Easton or Eston, was derived from the village of Easton in Norfolk, six miles to the north-west of Norwich.¹⁴ The exact year of his birth is unknown but, from Easton's own evidence, it must have occurred between 1327 and 1330. This may be deduced from the two public instruments of 1379 to which he attested in Rome, one in March and the other in November of that year. In the first he stated that he was 'forty years and more',¹⁵ while in the second he claimed to have 'crammed for thirty years and more in the world's great centres of learning'.¹⁶ Macfarlane argues persuasively for the earlier date of 1327, thus making Easton's second statement more likely on the grounds that it was rare for professed monks to be sent to university before they had attained the age of twenty-one or twenty-two.¹⁷ In common with other promising young boys, Easton probably received his early instruction in reading and grammar from the parish priest of St Peter's church at Easton. At some time between 1346 and 1348¹⁸ he sought admission to the Cathedral Priory of Norwich, a monastic community which numbered some sixty-four monks on the eve of the devastating plague known as the Black Death.¹⁹ This Benedictine monastery, unlike most of the other Benedictine abbeys and priories in England, served a dual role: it was not only a monastic community but also a cathedral chapter.²⁰ The head of the former had the lesser title of

12 Bale was bishop of Ossory (1552–60). John Bale, *Index Britanniae Scriptorum quos [...] collegit Ioannes Baleus/John Bale's Index of British and Other Writers*, ed. R.L. Poole and M. Bateson, *Anecdota Oxoniensia* (Oxford, 1902), part 9, 4.

13 Bishop of St Asaph (1732–35). For Easton's career and writings, see T. Tanner, *Bibliotheca britannico-hibernica* (London, 1748), 266.

14 Easton was not an estate in the hands of the Cathedral Priory although many of the Norwich monks were from families living on monastic property. N.P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich 1370–1532*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Studies and Texts 66 (Toronto, 1984), note at 25.

15 Vatican Archives, Arm. LIV, 17, fol. 46, 'xl annorum et ultra'; Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', ii, 20.

16 Vatican Archives, Arm. LIV, 17, fol. 70, 'quod xxx annis et amplius maiora mundi studi frequentavi'; Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', ii, 27.

17 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 1, n. 2.

18 *Ibid.*, pt 1, 2 n. 2, where he suggests this date for Easton's profession which would have taken place a year after his entry. Harvey prefers the year 1330 for his date of birth. Eadem, *The English in Rome*, 188.

19 Norwich Record Office, Dean and Chapter Records, DCN 2/3/7 (1347/8). Two years later, the number of monks had been reduced to 34. DCN 2/3/1 (1349/50).

20 The others were Bath, Canterbury, Coventry, Durham, Ely, Rochester, Winchester and Worcester.



prior while the diocesan bishop was recognized, albeit reluctantly by the monks, as the titular abbot. On account of this anomaly – the cathedral serving simultaneously as the monastic church and the seat of the episcopal throne – the monks of Norwich were obliged to share their church with the local community for episcopal and diocesan functions.

As a young novice in Norwich, Easton was taught by the novice master and, at the end of his first year – during which time he would have listened to three successive readings of all seventy-three chapters of the Rule of St Benedict – he was solemnly professed as a Benedictine monk. Over the next five to seven years, he was prepared for ordination, a four-stage process leading from acolyte and subdeacon to deacon and priest, the ceremony for each stage being performed by the diocesan bishop.

Easton's intellectual potential must have been recognized during the introductory years of monastic study which accompanied his training for the priesthood. Unfortunately, the surviving medieval catalogues of the cathedral library at Norwich are both few and far from complete, but there can be no doubt that by the early fifteenth century the priory possessed a wide range of books, calculated to have numbered some 1600 volumes by the early fifteenth century.²¹ He was, in fact, one of the few promising young monks selected to continue their education and, during his stay in Oxford, he lived at Gloucester College, the house of studies established for Benedictine monks.²² Macfarlane suggests that sometime between 1350 and 1351 he joined his fellow monk, Thomas Brinton (c.1320–1399), who had preceded him;²³ he is also of the opinion that he spent his early years in Oxford completing lectures in the normal Arts course which he would have begun in the Norwich cloister.²⁴ Corroboration for this comes from Easton's possession of an astronomical tract and also of the four volumes of Aristotle's *Meteora*, both texts in use at this time for the Natural Philosophy course.²⁵

Although the exact date of his arrival in Oxford remains unknown, he was certainly there in 1352 when he and a fellow monk were recalled 'for certain reasons' by William Bateman, bishop of Norwich (1344–55). Among these reasons there may have been a 'spirit of rebellion' which would have led to the accusation that Easton and his friend had removed books, goods

21 That is, after the acquisition of Easton's own books. R. Sharpe et al., eds, *English Benedictine Libraries: the shorter catalogues* (London, 1996), 288–90.

22 *BRECP*, 502–3; H. Wansbrough and A. Maret-Crosby, eds, *Benedictines in Oxford* (London, 1997), 41–2, 54, 58.

23 Pantin, *English Church*, 182–5; *BRECP*, 487.

24 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 2–3.

25 *Ibid.*, i, 3, 61–2, 90, 88.



and precious plate from the priory church and had put some of these to 'nefarious use'. The accused were not only ordered to return, bringing with them everything that belonged to the cathedral priory but were also to appear within the space of three days on pain of excommunication should they fail to heed the bishop's warning.²⁶ We may never know what underlay this stern episcopal mandate – such struggles being far from unknown between seculars and regulars – but Easton responded in a surprisingly forceful manner considering his relative youth and inexperience. In a letter of 5 June 1352, he argued that as a scholar and a student, he had the prior's licence to remain at Oxford until 12 June of that year. The prior to whom he referred was Simon Bozoun, about whose recent death he seems not to have been informed.²⁷ He further complained that he was not summoned when Laurence de Leck was elected prior on 24 April,²⁸ and that this omission had led him to appeal to the pope, then Innocent VI (1352–62), against the bishop and also against the sub-prior for failing to recall him as required.²⁹

This exchange of correspondence and the circumstances which provoked it, together with the temerity of a scholar of more or less thirty years of age who had dared to make an appeal to the pope, does not appear to have harmed Easton's Oxford career in the least. In 1355/6, by which time he was certainly deep in his studies on the Bible and the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, he was summoned back to Norwich to preach in the cathedral on 14 August, the vigil of the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary.³⁰ The next positive information concerning his status and whereabouts between 1357 and 1363 is contained in a remarkable letter sent from Nicholas de Hoo, prior of Norwich,³¹ to the *prior studentium* or head of Gloucester College. The college had requested that Easton, then approaching the end of his studies but having again been temporarily recalled to Norwich, should return to Oxford the following year on the grounds that 'out of the whole order of Black Monks there are scarcely to be found three bachelors

26 Lydford, *John Lydford's Book*, ed. D.M. Owen, Devon and Cornwall Record Society, New Ser., 19 (20) (1974–5), 106–7.201; *BRECP*, 502. See the Appendix to this article for the Latin text and translation, below 26.

27 Simon Bozoun, prior of Norwich (1344–April 1352). See D.M. Smith and V.C.M. London, eds, *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales: II, 1216–1377* (Cambridge, 2001), 56. See also Lydford, *John Lydford's Book*, 107, no. 202, and *BRECP*, 502.

28 Laurence de Leck or Leek(e), prior of Norwich (1352–57). See Smith and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 56. His election confirmed on 24 April 1352.

29 Lydford, *John Lydford's Book*, 107, no. 202, and *BRECP*, 502.

30 Norwich Record Office, Dean and Chapter Records, DCN 1/12/29.

31 Nicholas de Hoo, prior of Norwich (1357–81). See Smith and London, *Heads of Religious Houses*, 56. His election was confirmed on 12 December 1357.

studying theology at the present time'.³² Although Easton was the senior monk-scholar and the closest to obtaining his doctorate, Nicholas de Hoo wrote back to explain how urgent was the need at the priory for either Easton to remain or for Brinton, by then back in Oxford, to be recalled for a short time.³³

Referring to Easton as the 'subtle and experienced overseer of the reapers',³⁴ Prior Hoo made it clear that he was amply fulfilling his task to organize preaching by monks in the cathedral to confound and silence the mendicant friars who were accused of unorthodox teaching and unsound doctrine, and whose permission to preach in the cathedral had been withdrawn. Indeed, Hoo claimed that Easton's exceptional preaching enjoyed such special favour among clergy and people alike that, should his absence from Norwich become known, then the friars 'would at once come up like mice out of their holes, and we have no one else to resist them in wisdom or learning'.³⁵ William de Saint-Amour (1200–1272) had first challenged the 'intrusion' of mendicants into academic positions in the University of Paris, defending bishops and other secular clergy against the friars in the strongest terms in his *Collectiones*, a copy of which Easton actually owned.³⁶ In Easton's day, the dispute had been taken up by Richard FitzRalph and the Benedictines were included since they were classed among the possessioners as owners of property who were losing not only tithes and burial fees but also their congregations to the preaching of the new orders.³⁷ This letter was written as Richard FitzRalph was attacking the friars in Avignon and the English Benedictines were subscribing money to support him.³⁸

32 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 692, fol. 116. Cited by Pantin, *Documents*, liv, 28–9, no. 203, and no. 1, 'ut asseritis, quod vix de toto ordine nigrorum monachorum reperiantur tres bacularii insistentes studio theologico tempore tam instanti'; idem, *English Church*, 175–6, at 175 for the English translation.

33 Pantin, *Documents*, liv, 29, 'Eapropter ne predicta vel hiis deteriora contingant, nobis videtur necessarium, vel confratrem nostrum Thomam de Brinton' revocare, vel predictum confratrem nostrum Adam ad modicum retinere.'

34 Ibid., 'tanquam prepositum subtilem et sciolum'.

35 Ibid., 'Si eius igitur absentia pateat in recenti, timemus quod concito exurgent tanquam mures de cavernis, nec superseset de nostris qui eis resistat sapiencia vel doctrina.'

36 M.-M. Dufeil, *Guillaume de Saint-Amour et la polémique universitaire parisienne, 1250–1259* (Paris, 1972); J.D. Dawson, 'William of Saint-Amour and the Apostolic Tradition', *Medieval Studies*, 40 (1978), 223–38; P.R. Szittyá, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton, 1986). For Easton's copy of *Collectiones*, see Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 189 n. 9, citing Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 151.

37 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 5–9, 135–99; Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 189.

38 Pantin, *English Church*, 177.



During the year 1363–4, Easton, by this time a bachelor of divinity, was back once more at Oxford in order to complete his studies. By then he would have been required to lecture on Peter Lombard's *Sentences* and subsequently to give lectures on one book chosen from the Old Testament and one from the New Testament. Following these tests, he would have had to undergo his Statutory Responsions to the regent masters in all the theological schools.³⁹ In this same year the Norwich obedientiary known as the communar paid his travel expenses to Oxford on two occasions, for one of these with all his belongings, which would have included a small library of books, the total cost was 154s. 8d.⁴⁰ At some point during the following year he incepted, a two-stage procedure by which he formally received his university degree. This began with his disputation *in vesperis*, a fragment of which has been unexpectedly found in a Worcester Cathedral manuscript, MS F. 65,⁴¹ containing the statement that 'the determination of Adam of Easton: whether [Adam] in the state of innocence had a direct vision of the divine essence'.⁴² Then, in the same manuscript on folio 20 verso, is a second statement: 'the *questio* of Easton and the *responsio* of Radcliffe: whether Adam under the law of innocence had a direct vision of God similar to that received by the angels'.⁴³ On a subsequent folio⁴⁴ follows the statement: 'the question discussed in the *vesperis* of Adam of Easton, monk of Norwich, to the respondent, Nicholas Radcliffe'. The question under discussion was whether all vows made to God must be kept.⁴⁵ The responding bachelor, Nicholas Radcliffe, was a Benedictine monk of St Alban's Abbey, a student at Gloucester College at the same time as Easton, and later, like Easton, an opponent of Wyclif.⁴⁶

Contributions to the heavy expenses of Easton's inception are recorded on the accounts of several Norwich obedientiaries. These expenses included prescribed gifts to several of the university academic authorities in addition

39 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 9; Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 189.

40 Norwich Record Office, Dean and Chapter Records, DCN 1/12/30.

41 R.M. Thomson, ed., *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Medieval Manuscripts in Worcester Cathedral Library* (Cambridge, 2000), 40–1. The inclusion of these items in this manuscript probably results from the presence of a monk student from Worcester who made notes as he listened.

42 Worcester Cathedral, MS F. 65, at folio 13 recto: 'Determinacio Ade de Estone. Utrum pro statu innocencie visionem habuit immediatam divine essencie.'

43 *Ibid.*, at folio 20 verso: 'Dei essencie habuerat sicut natura, Q[uestio] Eston et R[esponsio] Radclyf. Utrum Adam ex lege status innocencie visionem immediatam angelica optinebat.'

44 *Ibid.*, at folio 21 recto: 'questio disputata in vesperis domini Ade de Estone monachi Norwyci responsali Nicolao Radclyf'.

45 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 94–114; 2, 1–13.

46 *BRUO*, iii, 1539; Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 189.

to the costly inception feast to which a large number of dignitaries were by custom invited.⁴⁷

Shortly after the completion of his studies Easton was singled out by the provincial chapter of the English Black Monks as the most promising candidate eligible for promotion to the position of *prior studentium* of Gloucester College. This office has been described by Margaret Harvey as ‘the high point of a Benedictine monastic academic career, often followed by high office in the order or in one’s own monastery’.⁴⁸ His presence as *prior studentium* is attested on 20 September 1366.⁴⁹ At the same time he would have been serving his year as a regent master as required by the university statutes.⁵⁰

Macfarlane rightly insists that this long period of study and teaching, amounting to about seventeen years in all, was crucial and formative with regard to Easton’s future recognition in the field of biblical scholarship and his reputation as a papal theologian.⁵¹ His reputation as a Hebrew scholar, acquired and honed largely during his stay in Avignon, is attested by two pieces of evidence.⁵² In the prologue of his *Defensorium ecclesiastice potestatis* he states that he had worked for many years to produce a complete translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Latin, and among his surviving books is a copy of *The Book of Roots* by David Kimhi (1160–1235).⁵³

The date of Easton’s first encounter with Simon Langham,⁵⁴ a fellow Benedictine monk, remains uncertain. The latter had been sent from the abbey of Westminster as a monk student to Oxford in the late 1340s, and by 1360 he had become the abbot of that community. Two years later he was provided to the see of Ely, and in 1366 the monks of Canterbury were successful in electing him as their archbishop. In this latter role Langham became also the nominal abbot of the cathedral priory and, as such, he was involved with the affairs of Canterbury College, the monastic house at Oxford for student monks from Canterbury.⁵⁵ With their shared background

47 *BRECP*, 502.

48 Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 191.

49 *Ibid.*, 190, and Pantin, *Documents*, liv, 60.

50 Macfarlane, ‘Life and Writings’, i, 10.

51 *Ibid.*, i, 10.

52 For the significance of the learned ghetto in Avignon, see Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 192.

53 Macfarlane, 143–5, and Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 192, 232–3. Easton’s copy of the second book of Kimhi’s Hebrew Bible dictionary is now MS 218 in the library of St John’s College, Cambridge.

54 For biographical details of Langham, see *BRUO*, ii, 1095–7, and also E.H. Pearce, *The Monks of Westminster* (Cambridge, 1961), 57–8.

55 W.A. Pantin, *Canterbury College, Oxford*, 4 vols, Oxford Historical Society, New Series (Oxford, 1946–85) viii, vol. 3, 14–20.

as Oxford-educated Benedictines there would have been ample opportunity for an initial meeting.

Langham was appointed cardinal priest of San Sisto in September 1368,⁵⁶ and he resigned as archbishop shortly after this date in order to take up his new appointment.⁵⁷ Easton had travelled to the Curia, then located in Avignon, earlier that same year and returned bearing a message for Edward III with regard to papal taxation.⁵⁸ Harvey speculates that this appointment may have been prompted by Langham.⁵⁹ She also suggests that when Langham departed for the Curia in the spring of 1369, Easton probably accompanied him.⁶⁰ From this time on Easton was Langham's *socius*, the term which he used to describe himself and which is recorded in several Vatican documents.⁶¹ He was present at the Curia in May 1370 and witnessed the papal order settling the dispute over the management of Canterbury College which removed the seculars and reinstated the Canterbury monks.⁶² He accompanied Langham on a diplomatic mission to restore peaceful relations between England and France between 1371 and 1373, which took him to Paris in May 1371; and he was probably with Langham on a visit to Westminster Abbey in October of this same year.⁶³

From this time onwards Easton's activities remain hidden, although he is known to have played a significant role in Langham's household in Avignon. At the time of Langham's death in July 1376 in Avignon he described himself as having been *capellanus commensalis* to the cardinal since 1368. He was a beneficiary as well as one of the executors of Langham's will and, in the latter role, was responsible for fulfilling the terms.⁶⁴

Macfarlane attributes Easton's writing of the *Defensorium ecclesiastice potestatis* to Langham's influence by drawing his attention to the writings of Wyclif and to the dangerous implications of his attacks against the

56 Simon Langham (22 Sept 1368, translated to Palestrina 1372). C. Eubel, *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, 2 vols (Regensburg, 1898), i, 45.

57 *BRUO*, ii, 1096.

58 W.H. Bliss and J.A. Twemlow, *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal letters*, 14 vols (1893–1960), iv, 27.

59 Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 191.

60 *Ibid.*, 191.

61 *Ibid.* She concludes that this is a more accurate term than the English 'secretary'.

62 Pantin, *Canterbury College, Oxford*, iii, 201–6, which is a copy of the document removing Wyclif from the wardenship of the college.

63 Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 191

64 *Ibid.*, 192

Benedictine order and the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁶⁵ This, his major work, was intended as an introduction to the study of the proper limits of ecclesiastical and secular power, but only the first of the proposed six volumes seems to have been completed. The source of Easton's ideas can be traced back to his student days at Oxford and to the lively debates in which he would have participated there; and no doubt his preaching experience against the mendicants when recalled to Norwich would have sharpened his intellectual probing. In the prologue to this work he states that his interest in the subject dated back some twenty years.⁶⁶ The impact of the Avignon papacy fostered growing doubt with regard to the limits of papal authority and resulted in increasing pressure on the part of secular authorities to challenge the claim to the supremacy of theocratic government. Residence in the Curia in exile brought home to Easton the formidable implications that underlay the questioning of the papal prerogative with regard to temporal affairs. The increase of political tension brought about by the Schism strengthened the conviction that it was his task to prove the supremacy of papal rule over all affairs both of church and state. It was in Avignon that he had studied Hebrew under Jewish teachers in order to have a clearer understanding of the Bible, in particular of the four books of Kings which were especially relevant for his purpose.⁶⁷ By 1381 Easton had acquired all Wyclif's major writings⁶⁸ and it was probably his influence that lay behind Gregory XI's condemnation of a number of Wyclif's conclusions as early as 1377.⁶⁹ He had also acquired a complete copy of the *De Pauperie Salvatoris* of Richard FitzRalph.⁷⁰ These were his two principal opponents whose anti-clerical stance was based on the conviction that the church and clergy should be deprived of all temporal authority and rights.

65 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 14. Harvey provides an astute and penetrating outline of Easton's argument as developed in the *Defensorium* in eadem, *The English in Rome*, 213–20.

66 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 143.

67 Ibid., i, 144–5. He was concerned about the accuracy of Jerome's translation, Harvey, *The English in Rome*, 192.

68 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 14–15. As early as November 1376 Easton had requested copies of Wycliffe's works from the abbot of Westminster; these would have included his *De potestate regali* and *De civili dominio*. Macfarlane cites here Pantin, *Documents*, liv, 76–7.

69 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 145–6.

70 This is now Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 180. Katherine Walsh states that Easton was very likely to have been present in Oxford in 1356–57 when FitzRalph launched the part of his *De pauperie Salvatoris* which initiated the controversy between the mendicants and the seculars. See K. Walsh, *A Fourteenth-Century Scholar and Primate: Richard FitzRalph in Oxford, Avignon and Armagh* (Oxford, 1981), 472–3. For a biographical summary of the career of FitzRalph, see *BRUO*, ii, 692–4.

With the return of Gregory XI to Rome in 1377 the Avignon exile came to an end, but the pope's death in March 1378 necessitated an election under difficult circumstances and with unfortunate results. Easton was an eyewitness to the events that followed and one of several who suffered in the papal cause. Unfortunately for him, as Macfarlane remarks, he was alive during a period of extreme political tension within western Christendom and, as a result of the Schism, it was the fate of his *Defensorium ecclesiastice potestatis* to become a mere academic exercise.⁷¹

Nevertheless, again according to Macfarlane, Easton merits our admiration for several reasons. The courtesy and respect with which he addressed his opponents, for example, his unswerving loyalty toward the papacy, and his integrity as demonstrated in his writings and his actions.⁷² Moreover, he was both a Benedictine theologian and a biblical scholar; his *Defensorium* had been rooted within the Victorine tradition of scholarship⁷³ and his remarkable and profound knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures. Finally, Macfarlane concludes that he 'wrote rather to show forth the truth as he saw it, than for any popular acclaim'.⁷⁴

It is surely legitimate to wonder why Easton never returned to his community in Norwich. Had he lost touch with his brethren during so long an absence? For over thirty years he had remained abroad but, from time to time, he was involved in negotiations at the Curia on behalf of the English Benedictines. For example, he is known to have obtained a papal bull in 1383 on behalf of the presidents of the English Benedictine chapter, but the details remain uncertain because the document was stolen in transit.⁷⁵ The remaining evidence provided in these pages suggests that he decided to remain in Rome, rather than return to the cathedral priory in Norwich where he would have found himself in a community of strangers. There is, however, one puzzling entry in three Norwich obedientia accounts for the year 1389/90. The master of the cellar, the almoner and the prior of the cathedral priory cell at King's Lynn all include contributions towards the expense of transporting Easton's books to Norwich. The master of the cellar specified that his payment was toward covering the cost of transport from Flanders to Norwich while the other two obedientiaries merely referred to

71 Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 255.

72 *Ibid.*, i, 247, 249.

73 This is made clear by his many references to the writings of Hugh of St Victor for example, and by several references to Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Macfarlane, 'Life and Writings', i, 243–4, provides a list of all the authors quoted.

74 *Ibid.*, i, 256.

75 Pantin, *Documents*, liv, 81–2.

the expenses related to the carriage of the cardinal's books.⁷⁶ He may have intended to hand over some of his personal book collection for the benefit of his brethren in Norwich or, alternatively, he may have been contemplating a possible return home; but there is no further evidence to confirm that a consignment of his books reached Norwich until 1407, ten years after his death.⁷⁷

The chapters that follow in this volume will provide the reader with details of the broad range of Easton's significant achievements in his later career and of the price that he paid for being present at the centre of the conflict at the time of the Schism. The succinct judgement of David Knowles merits our thoughtful consideration. 'His [Easton's] ability is unquestionable, and he did nothing, so far as is known, to further his advancement, from which in fact he reaped more sorrow than honour, and both in his opposition to the outrageous behaviour of Urban VI and in his advocacy of the Swedish saint he shows a sense of spiritual principles and obligations. At the least he is, as he has been justly called, "one of the worthiest products of the English Benedictines' contact with Oxford".⁷⁸

Finally, it is perhaps legitimate to wonder whether or not Easton remained a Benedictine at heart, one who continued to be faithful in his obedience to the Rule or, because of his exceptional intellectual gifts, scholarly expertise and continuing pre-eminence at the centre of church polity, one who was seduced at least in part by a degree of self-justifying ambition?

Appendix

Item no. 201 from John Lydford's Book, pp. 106–7

W.[illiam Bateman] permissione divina N.[orwich] Episcopus dilecto filio B.[?] etc. salutem Nos dudum fratres Jo.[?] et A.[dam Easton] monachos nostre cathedralis ecclesie Nor' professos in universitate Oxon' exercicio scolastico insistentes certisque causis decrevimus ad ecclesiam nostram predictam eorumque monasterium revocandos eosque cum certis monicionibus revocavimus in nostris litteris patentibus. Et licet premissa

76 Norwich Record Office, Dean and Chapter Records, DCN 1/1/65, 1/6/23, 2/1/17. The three contributions came to the impressive total of 78 s. 7 d.

77 See the final chapter in this book concerning Easton's book collection.

78 D.M. Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England, Vol. II: The End of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1961), 57–8.



ad eorum noticiam provenissent ipsi tamen spiritu rebellionis assumpto dictis mandatis et iniunctionibus nostris huiuscunq[ue] parere contemptibiliter non curarunt libros bona et iocalia magna et preciosa ecclesie nostre predictae penes se contra nostram et capituli nostri voluntatem dampnabiliter retinentes et ea seu eorum aliqua ut fertur in usus eorum nepharios consumentes. Vobis igitur iniungimus et mandamus quatinus tam in ecclesia nostra cathedrali predicta publice et solempniter quam eos personaliter in loco quo degent moveatis iterum ex habundancia [...] quos etiam tenore presenci monemus primo secundo et tercio ac peremptorie ac sub excommunicationis pena quatinus infra trium dierum spacium a die monicionis etc.

Translation

W[illiam Batemen] by divine permission bishop of Norwich, to his beloved son B.[?] etc., greetings.⁷⁹ For certain reasons we ordered the professed brothers Jo.[? Thomas Brinton] and A[dam Easton], monks of our cathedral church of Norwich who are continuing their scholarly studies at the University of Oxford to return to our aforesaid cathedral church and to their monastery. This command with several admonitions was sent by our letters patent and, although this has come to their notice, they have replied by a contemptible gesture of resistance to our orders and injunctions.⁸⁰ Moreover, against our will and that of the cathedral chapter they have failed to take care of the books and of numerous other costly valuables belonging to our church.⁸¹ In fact they have retained these and other items and have wickedly wasted them, thus incurring the threat of damnation.

We therefore order and command you to appear in our cathedral church in person and in our presence together with the numerous items you have wrongfully removed [...] and by the tenor of these presents we issue a three-fold warning of excommunication if you fail to appear within three days.

79 It should be noted that, as the second paragraph makes clear, this is a 'form letter', the first paragraph supplying the details of the incident which resulted in the formal denunciation in the second paragraph. For this reason, John Lydford, a prominent canon lawyer (c.1337–1407), had copied it into his memorandum book as a form for possible future reference.

80 Bishops from the ranks of the secular clergy often had an uneasy relationship with their cathedral chapter when it was composed of members of religious orders who were, in this case, Benedictine monks (see p. 17); this is made clear here by the harsh accusatory language.

81 Monk students had permission to take with them books from the monastic library and other articles which they needed in their university lodgings.

About the author

Joan Greatrex has taught at the University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, and Carleton University, Ottawa. Her publications include *A Biographical Register of the English Cathedral Priors* (1997) and the *English Benedictine Cathedral Priors, Rule and Practice, c.1270–c.1420* (2011).

