

= William de Corbeil =

William de Corbeil or William of Corbeil (c . 1070 ? 1136) was a medieval Archbishop of Canterbury . Very little is known of William 's early life or his family , except that he was born at Corbeil in the outskirts of Paris and that he had two brothers . Educated as a theologian , he taught briefly before serving the bishops of Durham and London as a clerk and subsequently becoming a canon , a priest who lived a communal life . William was elected to the see of Canterbury as a compromise candidate in 1123 , the first canon to become an English archbishop . He succeeded Ralph d 'Escures , who had employed him as a chaplain .

Throughout his archbishopric , William was embroiled in a dispute with Thurstan , the Archbishop of York , over the primacy of Canterbury . As a temporary solution , the pope appointed William the papal legate for England , giving him powers superior to those of York . William concerned himself with the morals of the clergy , and presided over three legatine councils , which among other things condemned the purchase of benefices or priesthoods , and admonished the clergy to live a celibate life . He was also known as a builder ; among his constructions is the keep of Rochester Castle . Towards the end of his life William was instrumental in the selection of Count Stephen of Boulogne as King of England , despite his oath to the dying King Henry I that he would support the succession of his daughter , the Empress Matilda . Although some chroniclers considered him a perjurer and a traitor for crowning Stephen , none doubted his piety .

= = Early life = =

William de Corbeil was probably born at Corbeil on the Seine , possibly in about 1070 . He was educated at Laon , where he studied under Anselm of Laon , the noted scholastic and teacher of theology . William taught for a time at Laon , but nothing else is known of his early life . All that is known of his parents or ancestry is that he had two brothers , Ranulf and Helgot ; his brothers appear as witnesses on William 's charters .

William joined the service of Ranulf Flambard , Bishop of Durham , as a clerk , and was present at the translation of the body of Saint Cuthbert in 1104 . His name appears high in a list of those who were present at the event , implying that he may have held an important position in Flambard 's household , but appended to his name is " subsequently archbishop " , suggesting that his inclusion could have been a later interpolation . He was a teacher to Flambard 's children , probably in about 1107 to 1109 , but at some unknown date William appears to have transferred to the household of the Archbishop of Canterbury . Between 1107 and 1112 he went to Laon and attended lectures given by Anselm of Laon . By 1116 he was a clerk for Ralph d 'Escures , Archbishop of Canterbury , with whom he travelled to Rome in 1117 when Ralph was in dispute with Thurstan , the Archbishop of York , over the primacy of Canterbury .

In 1118 , William entered the Augustinian order at Holy Trinity Priory in Aldgate , a house of canons rather than monks . Subsequently he became prior of the Augustinian priory at St Osyth in Essex , appointed by Richard de Beaumis , Bishop of London , in 1121 .

= = Election as archbishop = =

After the death of Ralph d 'Escures in October 1122 , King Henry I decided to allow a free election , with the new primate to be chosen by the leading men of the realm , both ecclesiastical and secular . The monks of the cathedral chapter and the bishops of the kingdom disagreed on who should be appointed . The bishops insisted that it should not be a clerk (a non @-@ monastic member of the clergy) , but Canterbury 's monastic cathedral chapter preferred a monk , and insisted that they alone had the right to elect the archbishop . However , only two bishops in England or Normandy were monks (Ernulf , Bishop of Rochester , and Serlo , Bishop of Séez) , and no monks other than Anselm of Canterbury , Ernulf , and Ralph d 'Escures , had been elected to an English or Norman see since 1091 ; recent precedent therefore favoured a clerk . King Henry sided with the bishops , and told the monks that they could elect their choice from a short list selected by the bishops .

Perhaps unsurprisingly , the list contained no monks .

On 2 February or 4 February 1123 , William was chosen from among four candidates to the see of Canterbury ; the names of the three unsuccessful candidates are unknown . He appears to have been a compromise candidate , as he was at least a canon , if not the monk that the chapter had sought . William was the first Augustinian canon to become an archbishop in England , a striking break with the tradition that had favoured monks in the see of Canterbury . Although most contemporaries would not have considered there to be much of a distinction between monks and canons , William 's election still occasioned some trepidation among the monks of the Canterbury chapter , who were " alarmed at the appointment , since he was a clerk " .

= = Primacy dispute = =

William , like every other Canterbury archbishop since Lanfranc , maintained that Canterbury held primacy ? in essence , overlordship ? over all other dioceses in Great Britain , including the archbishopric of York . Thurstan had claimed independence , and refused to consecrate William when the latter demanded recognition of Canterbury 's primacy ; the ceremony was performed instead by William 's own suffragan bishops on 18 February 1123 . Previous popes had generally favoured York 's side of the dispute , and the successive popes Paschal II , Gelasius II , and Calixtus II had issued rulings in the late 1110s and early 1120s siding with York . Calixtus had also consecrated Thurstan when both King Henry and William 's predecessor had attempted to prevent Thurstan 's consecration unless Thurstan submitted to Canterbury .

After travelling to Rome to receive his pallium , the symbol of his authority as an archbishop , William discovered that Thurstan had arrived before him , and had presented a case against William 's election to Pope Callixtus II . There were four objections to William 's election : first that he was elected in the king 's court ; second that the chapter of Canterbury had been coerced and was unwilling ; third that his consecration was unlawful because it was not performed by Thurstan ; and fourth that a monk should be elected to the see of Canterbury , which had been founded by Augustine of Canterbury , a monk . However , King Henry I and the Emperor Henry V , Henry I 's son @-@ in @-@ law , persuaded the pope to overlook the irregularities of the election , with the proviso that William swore to obey " all things that the Pope imposed upon him . " At the conclusion of the visit the pope denied the primacy of Canterbury over York , dismissing the Canterbury cathedral chapter 's supposed papal documents as forgeries . The outcome was in accordance with most earlier papal rulings on the primacy issue , which involved not taking sides and thus reinforcing papal supremacy . William returned to England , and was enthroned at Canterbury on 22 July 1123 .

The archbishop 's next opponent was the papal legate of the new Pope Honorius II , Cardinal John of Crema , who arrived in England in 1125 . A compromise between York and Canterbury was negotiated , which involved Canterbury allowing York the supervision of the dioceses of Bangor , Chester , and St Asaph in return for Thurstan 's verbal submission and the written submission of his successors . The pope , however , rejected the agreement , likely because he wished to preserve his own primacy , and substituted his own . The papal solution was that Honorius would appoint William papal legate in England and Scotland , which was done in 1126 , giving William the position over York , but it was dependent on the will of the pope , and would lapse on the pope 's death . The arrangement merely postponed the problem however , as neither Thurstan nor William renounced their claims . That Christmas , at a royal court , Thurstan unsuccessfully attempted to claim the right to ceremonially crown the king as well as have his episcopal cross carried before him in Canterbury 's province . As a result of his lengthy dispute with Thurstan , William travelled to Rome more frequently than any bishop before him except for Wilfrid in the 7th century .

= = Archiepiscopal activities = =

Legatine councils in 1125 , 1127 and 1129 were held in Westminster , the last two called by Archbishop William . The council of 1125 met under the direction of John of Crema and prohibited

simony , purchase of the sacraments , and the inheritance of clerical benefices . John of Crema had been sent to England not only to seek a compromise in the Canterbury ? York dispute , but to publicize the decrees of the First Council of the Lateran held in 1123 , which neither William nor Thurstan had attended . Included in canons were the rejection of hereditary claims to a benefice or prebend , which was a source of consternation to the clergy . Also prohibited was the presence of any women in clergy 's households unless they were relatives . In 1127 the council condemned the purchase of benefices , priesthoods , or places in monastic houses . It also enacted canons declaring that clergy who refused to give up their wives or concubines would be deprived of their benefices , and that any such women who did not leave the parish where they had been could be expelled and even forced into slavery . Lastly , in 1129 the clergy were once more admonished to live a celibate life and to put aside their wives . This council was presided over by King Henry , who then undermined the force of the prohibition of concubines by permitting the clergy to pay a fine to the royal treasury to keep their women . William 's allowance of this royal fine was condemned by the chronicler Henry of Huntingdon . The festival of the Conception was also allowed at one of these councils .

As well as the councils , William was active in his diocese , and was interested in reforming the churches in his diocese . A conflict with Alexander of Lincoln over a church in Alexander 's diocese led to further condemnation by Henry of Huntingdon and prompted Henry to write that " no one can sing [William 's] praises because there 's nothing to sing about . " William seems to have been somewhat eclipsed in ecclesiastical administration and appointments by Roger of Salisbury , Bishop of Salisbury , and King Henry 's primary advisor . William reformed the nunnery of Minster @-@ in @-@ Sheppey however , and he installed a college of regular canons at the church of St. Gregory 's , in Canterbury . He also secured a profession of obedience from the newly installed abbot of St Augustine 's Abbey in Canterbury . His legateship from Honorius lapsed when the pope died in February 1130 , but it was renewed by Honorius ' successor Pope Innocent II in 1132 .

During William 's last years he attempted to reform St Martin 's , Dover . The king had granted the church to the archbishop and the diocese of Canterbury in 1130 , and William had a new church building constructed near Dover . The archbishop had planned to install canons regular into the church , and on William 's deathbed dispatched a party of canons from Merton Priory to take over St Martin 's . However , the party of canons , who had been accompanied by two bishops and some other clergy , were prevented from entering by a monk of Canterbury Cathedral , who claimed that St Martin 's belonged to the monks of the cathedral chapter . The canons from Merton did not press the issue in the face of the Canterbury chapter 's appeal to Rome , and after William 's death , the cathedral chapter sent 12 monks to St Martin 's instead .

The construction of the keep of Rochester Castle ? at 115 feet (35 m) , the tallest Norman @-@ built keep in England ? was initiated at William 's orders . Built for King Henry , it is still intact , although it no longer has a roof or floors . The work at Rochester was built within the stone curtain walls that Gundulf of Rochester had erected in the late 11th century . The keep was designed not only for defence but also to provide comfortable living quarters , which were probably intended for use by the archbishops when they visited Rochester . In 1127 , the custody of Rochester Castle was granted to William and his successors as archbishop by King Henry , including the right to fortify the place as the archbishops wished , and the right to garrison the castle with their own men . In the view of the historian Judith Green , the grant of the castle was partly to secure the loyalty of the archbishop to the king , and partly to help secure the defences of the coast . William also completed the construction of Canterbury Cathedral , which was dedicated in May 1130 .

= = Final years = =

The archbishop swore to Henry I that he would support Henry 's daughter Matilda 's claim to the English throne , but after Henry 's death he instead crowned Stephen , on 22 December 1135 . He was persuaded to do so by Henry of Blois , Bishop of Winchester and Stephen 's brother , and Roger of Salisbury , Bishop of Salisbury . The bishops argued that Henry had no right to impose the oath , and that the dying king had released the barons and the bishops from the oath in any event .

The royal steward , Hugh Bigod , swore that he had been present at the king 's deathbed and had heard the king say that he released the oath .

William did not long outlive Henry , dying at Canterbury on 21 November 1136 . He was buried in the north transept of Canterbury Cathedral . Contemporaries were grudging in their praise , and William 's reputation suffered after the accession of Matilda 's son , Henry II , to the English throne . William of Malmesbury said that William was a courteous and sober man , with little of the flamboyant lifestyle of the more " modern " bishops . The author of the *Gesta Stephani* claimed that William was avaricious and hoarded money . None of the chroniclers , however , doubted his piety , even when they named him a perjurer and a traitor for his coronation of Stephen .