Abstract
In this paper David Carpenter offers the first detailed examination of when and why Henry III became attached to the cult of Edward the Confessor, an attachment which dominated his spiritual life and inspired his rebuilding of Westminster Abbey. Carpenter argues that the attachment was established
very suddenly in the mid-1230s, later than is often supposed, being the
product of the distinctive circumstances of those years. These encouraged
Westminster Abbey to redouble its efforts to attach Henry to the saint,
profiting here from the influence of a particular monk, Richard le Gras, who
was rising very fast in the royal service. They also rendered Henry himself,
attacked and humiliated during the 1233-4 regime of Bishop of Peter des
Roches, desperate for the support of a spiritual patron who would never let
him down. The Confessor's model of lawful consensual kingship also
 accorded well with Henry's own adopted style after the fall of the bishop's
regime in 1234. The cult was consolidated by Henry's efforts to introduce his
new queen, Eleanor of Provence, to the Confessor, after their marriage in
1236, hence the commissioning of Matthew Paris's life of Edward the
Confessor. This work, Carpenter argues, exactly reflects the concerns of the
1230s which attached Henry to the Saint.
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