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An Annotated Translation of the Life of St. Thomas Becket By An Anonymous Author Number 2

Mary Aimee du Sacre-Coeur Toutant
Loyola University Chicago

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AN ANNOTATED TRANSLATION OF THE
LIFE OF ST. THOMAS BECKET
BY AN ANONYMOUS AUTHOR
NUMBER 2

By
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VITA

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INTRODUCTION

"If we are prepared to maintain that the life of the Spirit requires a Visible Body to sustain it, then the man who fights for the autonomy of the Catholic Church is fighting the battle of human freedom. Such a man was Thomas Becket: a man with the courage of his convictions; a man who concerned himself with the concrete issues of ecclesiastical privilege.

Evident as it was that Thomas had his defects, that they were the cause of many of his mistakes, that he was not always endowed with perfect intellectual discretion, yet it would be unfair to say that he was wrong altogether. More than likely, he knew further than he saw, and in spite of the fact that he appeared narrow and almost too conservative in his standpoint, the reason for that attitude may well have been that he was not always prepared to look the two sides of a question in the face.

To be so bold as to condemn St. Thomas Becket, to refuse to believe in his miracles, would be to condemn as well St. Anselm, St. Hugh of Lincoln, and St. Bernard of Clairvaux.

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It might be alleged, however, that St. Thomas's principles might have been defended with greater tact, with equal courage but greater common sense, although it cannot be denied that on the main issue of the struggle St. Thomas had the best of Christendom on his side. None of his supporters questioned the essential justice of his cause, in spite of the fact that many of his staunchest allies contradicted him on detail. Be that as it may, it is none the less interesting to discover and to show the kind of man he was and the nature of his struggle for holiness.

Much has been written of St. Thomas's personal and political relations with Henry II. That he was, as Henry's chancellor, the most powerful subject in England, there can be no doubt. From the outset, both had but one heart and one mind; both were hard workers; and both, we may believe, had the prosperity of the kingdom deeply at heart. In many matters they saw eye to eye, but even at the risk of incurring Henry's displeasure, St. Thomas had clear principles with regard to the claims of the Church and he upheld them with determination. St. Thomas identified himself with his master's interests to the very limits of what his conscience permitted, and when, finally, they came to blows, St. Thomas could truthfully say,

"I served our Theobald well when I was with him; I served King Henry well as Chancellor; I am his no more, and I must serve the Church."

2 Tennyson, Becket (New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1894), Act I, Scene 1, line 59, p. 31.
As St. Thomas had sought to model his life on the pattern of Jesus Christ, it was fitting that treachery should contribute to his end. And when, at the end, his enemies who had butchered him and stamped out his brains and blood cried out

"Let us away, knights; he will rise no more."

there arose on the part of his people a cry so loud in favor of his sanctity that, to this very day, it reverberates to the farthest corners of Christendom. God had placed His "imprimatur", as it were, on the policy for which Thomas Becket had stood.

This life of Thomas Becket occurs in the fourth volume of a series edited by James Craigie Robertson at London. Dr. Giles has styled the biographer "Anonymous Lambethiensis", probably from the fact that the manuscript is preserved in the archiepiscopal library at Lambeth. It is also supposed by Henry Wharton, who, as librarian to Archbishop Sancroft, had this volume in his care, that this life was composed by a monk of Canterbury, who had been an eye-witness of the murder. It seems strange, however, that although, in the preface, he claims to have been present at the murder, and although its details are fully related with many circumstances not found

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elsewhere, he makes no further assertion of his claim in the narrative itself.

This Life is less circumstantial and broader in its treatment of the subject than other biographies; and the writer, by avoiding the mention of names and details, seems to imply that he was not personally mixed up in the story which he relates. The author owes much of his information to John of Salisbury, and the composition of the Life may be placed between May 1172 and July 1174, as the writer mentions Henry's reconciliation with the Church at Avranches, but says nothing of his penitential pilgrimage to Canterbury. Certain it is that whoever the biographer was, he shows throughout a sympathetic attitude towards the saintly Archbishop, and that he does his utmost to excuse his weaknesses and to magnify his virtues, especially his fortitude, his perseverance, and his invincible courage.

In point of style, the strictly mediaeval tone of this biography is apparent, not only in the very wordy and loose constructions which abound in it, but in the frequent allusions to the Sacred Scriptures. More than two hundred verses, both of the Old and New Testaments, are incorporated into the content of the Life, but most of them in such a way that the author's expression blends into the scriptural text.

Throughout the Life, variations of text and corrections are to be noted. Giles, especially, has annotated the Latin in many instances. Other differences from the original
manuscript occur, and there are also annotations from the Bodleian Manuscript as found in the Lambeth copy.

Worthy of note, too, is the division of the Life into its fifty-three chapters. Whether or not the chapter headings were affixed by the original writer or by the compiler is a matter for dispute. These chapters cover the matter concerning his ancestry; his early years; his life as archdeacon, as chancellor; his dispute with Henry II; his exile; his defense of the rights of the Church; his martyrdom and death; and the fame which the See of Canterbury acquired as the result of the miracles of Thomas Becket.
INTRODUCTION.

Since, indeed, many people dislike length and obscurity in speech, I shall narrate the martyrdom of the most Blessed Archbishop, Thomas of Canterbury, in a concise and easy way, because the facts are known under God\(^1\), and I, who relate these things, was present and very many others likewise. And since it might be like approaching the table with unclean hands if I were to start suddenly without a preface, the foregoing facts of this life may be freely offered. Blessed is he who has heard the words of this reading and has kept them as an incentive to martyrdom, that if perchance the opportunity arises, he may be ready to give his life, or, in any case, "to suffer reproach for the Name of Jesus"\(^2\).

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1 Compare Genesis 31.50

2 Acts of the Apostles 5.41
CHAPTER I.

HIS ORIGINS.

Among the towns, villages, and cities of England, London is the best and greatest. After it had been brought under the dominion of the Normans\(^1\), many of the natives of Rouen and Caen, which are the more famous places of Normandy, crossed over to this city, because it was more suitably and amply provided with merchandise which they were accustomed to use. Among them was a certain Gilbert, whose surname was Becket, from the district of Rouen, well-known among the rest because of his ancestry, his activity, and the influence of his riches. He traced his honorable origin from the middle class, and was a man diligent in the management of business, maintaining his own home satisfactorily and honorably in accordance with his station in life, living among his fellow citizens not only without quarrel, but even known as a good man. Moreover, he had a wife by the name of Rose\(^2\), a native of Caen, also of the same social standing, beautiful in appearance, but more beautiful in character, well-appointed for his home, and faithfully subject to him in the fear of God.

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1 The Norman Conquest of England under William the Conqueror in 1066.

2 John Fox, the author of "Acts and Monuments" says that her name was Rose, other authorities say it was Matilda.
CHAPTER II.
A FOREBODING OF HIS BIRTH.

While she bore him in her womb, she found herself in dream before the doors of the church of Canterbury, and as she was advancing to enter, she could scarcely go in on account of the great swelling of her womb. This was, therefore, a foreboding of things to come: She was at that time carrying a son in her womb, and the enlarging of her womb prophesied plainly his future greatness. Great even before his birth, he was carried after birth into the church of Canterbury, because though illustrious in the palace, he was yet to be born into the service of Christ and to be elevated to the pontifical throne of the same church. She could scarcely enter on account of her great size, because at first he was to be promoted in his generation to much dignity for himself, to the disgust of those who envied him. Later as an exile he was to be brought back with difficulty, and finally he was to be united to the number of saints in the Church by the narrow gate of martyrdom. These things, however, are more fully and more distinctly evident from the series of events which follow.

1 Compare Matthew 7.14; Luke 13.24
CHAPTER III.
HIS BIRTH AND EARLY YEARS.

And so, in proper time after this dream, this son of comely appearance was born. They called him Thomas with the prophetic consent of his godfather, that the name of an apostle might not be wanting to him who was to have the life and death of an apostle. Soon after he was born, his parents destined him to the service of the Church, and after his childhood they gave him over to the rudiments of letters.

Keen in mind and with a retentive memory, he advanced in learning as he grew in age, and soon he was able to compete with the better scholars, (so that) if he had begun to learn so speedily, he would have passed beyond the course of all knowledge. But after he had escaped the fear of his teacher and become his own master, true to the levity of his youthful years, he started wanton talk and giving up the more serious study. He indulged in the frivolities of worldly studies, and gave himself over to the exercises of hawking and hunting, and embraced the vanity and foolishness of courtiers. In these

1 Compare Luke 2.52
things, however, he was found to have done nothing notably shameful, because, avoiding any boorishness, and taking on the polish of city manners, his first aim was to be numbered among the more elite.
Divine grace, however, had decreed that he be raised up to a sublime dignity in the Church, and it finally won him over to submit to the yoke of ecclesiastical authority. Because it was not fitting that the future greater light in England be hidden "under a bushel"¹, grace transferred him to a more famous Curia of England to have an office in the king's court. It caused him to be an attendant of Theobald², arch-priest of Canterbury and primate of England, so that he, who was to succeed him, might learn to imitate him in the art of diplomacy.

Therefore, putting away the many "things of a child"³, he endeavored in mature manhood to correct his youthful errors. Giving his attention to the serious things of the Curia, which he considered great, he soon disclosed his inborn ability, and in the service of his master was found to be both prudent in advising and prompt in carrying out orders.

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1 Matthew 5.15; Mark 4.21; Luke 11.33
3 1 Corinthians 13.11
Gaining more and more favor on account of his friendship with him, he obtained a place even among the first of his advisers. As an evidence of his great honesty of purpose, he was by degrees enriched with many benefices of the Church, and at length he was even made archdeacon of Canterbury. Thus it was that divine grace arranged for him the approach and the opportunity for the episcopal dignity. For the more outstanding and the greater he was in his own Church, the closer he came to receiving the government of the same.
CHAPTER V.

HE BECOMES CHANCELLOR.

Since the approval of the king could be of great help in carrying out this program, Divine Providence arranged an easier way of advancement to make him the confident of the king\(^1\). For when, on the death of King Stephen\(^2\) not long after, it came to pass that the grandson of King Henry I\(^3\), Henry II\(^4\), was raised by the right of hereditary succession to the throne of England, he obtained, in preference to the other ecclesiastics of the kingdom, the position of chancellor to the newly appointed king, since he had already been named archdeacon. Indeed, such a delegate\(^5\) was befitting so great a prince; for he was handsome in figure, honorable in appearance, discreet and quick in counsel, clear and brief in speech, and the object of respect because of a certain natural perfection of carriage.

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1 The text reads "assecretis", but Giles' Manuscript reads "a secretis".


3 Ibid., p. 138

4 Ibid.

5 Apocrisiarius - a general name given in early times to what we should now call nuncios and delegates.
He surpassed the other great men of the Curia by the glory of his splendor, in proportion to the uniqueness of his office. By these qualities he deserved the privilege of love on the part of the king and first place among his advisers, advancing and growing from day to day, until he became the most outstanding. For he governed everything belonging to the king and everything tended to be subjected to the commandment of his mouth.

6 Compare Genesis 41.40
CHAPTER VI.
HE IS MADE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Theobald having shuffled off his mortal coil, it was the king's pleasure to find an opportunity of conferring a distinction on his favourite. For, having experienced his greatness and fidelity in many things, he believed him well equal to such great dignity, as he was always easily bent on his (the king's) services. If an early death should cut off his days, he considered him above all a trust-worthy guide for his heirs. Therefore, he used all his power, and did not stop before he obtained from the clerics of England that he be appointed to the archbishopric.
CHAPTER VII.

OBSESSION TO HIS PROMOTION.

However, his promotion seemed to some not entirely canonical, because it was brought about more by the importunity of the king than by the vote of the clergy or of the people. Also, it was thought to have been the part of presumption or indiscretion, that he who scarcely seemed fitted to hold an ear, received the first place of pilot; this especially so in a Church served by a senate in the garb of religion and whose leading exponent of the religious life he had been. But he, hardly showing himself to be a cleric by his attire or carriage, but more addicted to the changing fashions among the effeminate of the Court, and well acquainted with worldly things, in no way recoiled from the holy heights of such a great dignity. He was thought to have been elevated beyond what was proper, since he conducted himself altogether differently than either Moses, the friend of God, or Jeremias, who was sanctified from the womb ¹. For when he was sent by the Lord to prophesy to Jerusalem, he replied modestly, "Ah, ah, ah, Lord God, I do not

¹ Compare Jeremias 1.4,5
know how to speak, because I am a child. And Moses too, although chosen by God as a leader of his people, nevertheless, feared the task greatly, and said, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" And again, "I beseech Thee, Lord, I am not eloquent, send him whom Thou art about to send." Frequently do we read about the saints of the New Testament elevated to the position of bishops more by force than their own will. For even Blessed Gregory was brought back from flight and was placed in the see of Rome against his will. Again, Blessed Ambrose, reluctantly enough and confessing his crimes that he might escape the office, nevertheless, on the order of Valentinian, received the episcopate. Also, Blessed Martin, surrounded and made captive by the people in their religious fervor was constrained and con-

2 Jeremias 1.6
3 Exodus 3.11
4 Ibid., 4.10,13
secreted against his will. Influenced by the example of these men, many judged that the chancellor should have more correctly excused himself as unworthy and unfitted; they accused him bitterly of being driven on by the king.

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS EXCUSE

But to tell the truth, as he was skilled in many things and accustomed to weigh well the future, so also, did he foresee and consider in full the danger of such a great administration. There was no doubt that he knew the dignity as well as the burden of that high office. It was evident that, as he became the ruler of the whole Church, so too, would every ecclesiastical deviation fall on his shoulders. Thus it behooved him to give up his wonted pleasures, completely "stripping himself of the old man", if he wished to enter the right path of duty. In the same manner, he would be the outcast of men and the reproach of the people, if the zeal of ecclesiastical correction should grow cold in him, again if he acted as he should, he would arouse the anger of many. Finally, he would lose either his beloved master, the king, or God. For he would not deserve to rule with God, if he complied with the ideas of the king, nor would he be able to rejoice with the king as co-guardian of the laws of the saints of God. Doubt-

1 Colossians 3,9

2 Isaias 53.3
lessly, foreseeing these things and turning them over and over in his mind, straitened and terrified by them, he was very much frightened at the height of the elevation and fled from it in spirit. He even tried to excuse himself and escape the importance of the king, not pretending to hide from him how he, when elevated, might be deprived either of God’s favor or the king’s. However, the more reluctant he was the more strongly did the king insist on his decision; to such a degree did he think well of his outstanding sincerity, to such a degree did he trust him concerning his faith and the fulness of his devotion towards himself. It was doubtlessly necessary to pay due respect to him, or to subject himself to the certainty of proscription and of hatred. In the same days, Henry of Pisa, a cardinal priest of the Church of Rome, held the office of legate in Normandy. His advice and encouragement were earnestly added, that he should not refuse the duty so pressingly offered for the Church of Christ, nor spurn such a fine opportunity whereby, free from human respect, he could finally give himself to the service of God. Finally, when the clergy of England had assembled to make him bishop, the requests of the mother church and the votes of the priests were found to have agreed unanimously and emphatically in this; and although (as is wont to

happen in such things) his rivals murmured not a little, nevertheless nothing was proposed openly which would either impede or delay the promotion. And so, unable to withstand these influences, he cast his care on the Lord⁴ and thinking rightly that the ordinance would be God's which the zeal of men so urged on, he chose rather to entrust himself into the hands of God, committing and submitting himself wholly to His mercy.

Lastly as his constancy appeared from his continuous life of suffering, so, for that very reason, did he not refuse that burden, that he might apply his zeal and attention to the liberation of the badly endangered Church in England. For contrary to the laws of the Church, in regulating ecclesiastical affairs, as well as those of the laity, the king was more active than canonical censure; for many ecclesiastics were worried by the manifold burdens of undue taxation and extortion. But, because the king was seen to take advice from him, he was said by his rivals to counsel and praise this great irregularity. However, more truly did the ill will of the king assume control. For he was puffed up by the glory of his extensive power, and led on by the impulse of his youthful will, and did not know how to esteem his kingship unless he held subject to his will those who had been committed to his rule, moreover the authority of his tribunal extended to clerics as well as to the laity.

⁴ Compare 1 St. Peter 5.7
The favor and influence of his friends even gave strength to
this bad will of his in the approval of those who sanctioned
the elevation because they desired to please the king and of
those who sought "the things which were their own, not the
things that are Jesus Christ's." For it seemed to those that
in the very things in which the king's power grew, the height
of their own pride must increase simultaneously with his emolu-
ment. To oppose all of these, it had been safe for the chan-
cellor alone. He did not assume the task of a censor to correct
abuses to whom remained the duty of obeying not the authority
of correcting. And therefore, as it was "the hour and the
power of darkness", he had more prudently steered a middle
course, disguising rather than advising, bearing up under the
usurpation rather than praising it. However, he had now and
then groaned with zeal for the house of God; sometimes he had
even presumed to dissuade such actions, but with a becoming
modesty lest he incur the offense of the king. But once the
grace of promotion had been offered, he certainly saw that, if
he were made a bishop of the Church, he would from then on be
more principally bound to aid her, and in justice would have to
rebuke the king more freely for her sake. Therefore, for her

5 Philippians 2.21
6 Luke 22.53
7 Compare John 2.17; Psalms 68.10
make, he submitted to danger, nor did he refuse the opportunity, but at the request of the clergy and the king, he accepted very unwillingly. For just as if one of the seraphim had come to him and touched his lips with "a live coal, which he had taken with the tongs off the altar," he replied to the Lord who was seeking whom he might send, "Behold, here I am, send me." For he had determined that from then on, in the midst of a people having "unclean lips," he would not be silent, he would not rest, and if he could not gain his point by the way of love, he would win by force of argument the freedom of the Church from the king.

8 Isaias 6.6-7
9 Ibid., 6.8
10 Ibid., 6.5
CHAPTER IX.
LIS LIFE AS ARCHBISHOP

Therefore, to realize this aim better and more effectively, before he was consecrated, he "condescended not to flesh and blood," nor sought after the pleasures, pompes or riches of the world, but he "put on the new man" and entered upon the path of religion valiantly and with determination. For definitely did he "decline from evil" from the very first, and he endeavored to repair the excesses of his early days by numerous curative measures, as when daily he spent the early hours of the morning in pouring forth many prayers and in shedding an abundance of tears, finally exposing his back to the discipline after having made his confession to the priest. After this, he heard, or more often celebrated Massa devoutly, and after finishing his Little Hours, he gave himself either to the hearing of cases or to conducting personal business. He was careful in arranging these personal affairs, prompt and just in deciding cases, not giving way to avarice and not going out of his way for gifts. He was the saintly consoler of the oppressed.

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1 Galatians 1.16
2 Ephesians 4.24
3 1 Peter 3.11
and the speedy avenger of the wronged. If ever, indeed, he was free from business, he gave himself wholly to reading or to important meetings with his associates.

Daily also, when he was able to do so more secretly, he was accustomed on bended knees to wash the feet of thirteen poor people in his inner chamber, after the example of that famous sinner, washing them with tears, in memory of Christ, and wiping them with the hair, and humbly kissing them. He also gave each one four silver coins. This work of piety he took care to have fulfilled through his deputy, if at times he lacked the opportunity of seeing to it himself. Finally, surrounded by an assembly of the great and noble of his Curia, and having had twenty-six poor brought in, he used to approach his table. As was becoming the archbishop's house, it was rich in abundant and splendid appointments which were deemed necessary. But in the midst of these delicacies of food and drink, he always held to the middle course of temperance, in such way as not to abstain from them entirely lest he be thought too religious, nor to partake of them immoderately lest he be troubled by drunkenness. To outward appearances, he conformed with others in dress and in food. He was happy and joyful among them, but he took care to be different within, according to the saying of the wise man: "Inwardly, we ought to be different in all

4 Compare Luke 7.37-45
respects, but our exterior should conform to society.5

So he remained poor in spirit though clothed in fine garments, contrite of heart though maintaining a joyful countenance, choosing scarcity at a sumptuous table, sometimes remaining with an empty stomach rather than a satisfied one, and more often refreshed than sated, always, however, temperate. For, steering clear of unusual and excessive fasting, that he might avoid the name of hypocrite, he thought it the best kind of fasting to observe reasonable sobriety. For this he was satisfied to have a richer and better table that he might the better help the poor from what was left. He had great care for the poor, and besides no beggar, going from door to door, went away from his doors unaided. He sedulously searched out the homes of the sick and the ailing poor through his agents and helped them by alms, even supporting a great many with daily food and clothing. Since his predecessor had been accustomed to double the established alms of his predecessors, this man after emulating the other in religious bounty by adding still more, also determined to double the other's contribution, persevering in the observance of this pious work and giving to it even "tithes of all that he possessed." After his meals and

5 Seneca, Ep. 5,2
6 Compare Matthew 6.16
7 Compare Luke 18.12
sleep, when necessity demanded it, he plunged once more into business matters or writing or pious colloquies beyond the regular hours of work, fleeing idleness at all cost, lest his enemies see him and criticize him for his easy life. Lying down on his couch at night for his time of sleep, he more often lay awake, especially when, with God alone as witness, he deplored very deeply the misdeeds of his early years, weeping with a great abundance of tears, instantly in powerful prayer, from time to time also wrapt in holy meditations.

This was the routine of his daily life after he became archbishop: with such mortification did he purge out the former habits of softness acquired in the world. This in him was "the change of the right hand of the Most High." For striving to become the "pattern of the flock" which he had undertaken to rule, he grew accustomed "to the sweet yoke of the Lord and His light burden", striving after chastity, holding to humility, observing modesty in speech, and justice in deed, so that those whom he was to teach by word, he might admonish more strongly by the example of his sanctity. However, whether he spoke to the laity or to the educated, he ap-

8 Compare Genesis 31.50
9 Psalms 76.11
10 1 Peter 5.3
11 Compare Matthew 11.30
peared remarkably learned and eloquent, and his preaching was pleasing and effective by the weight of his sayings and the purity of his words. In all of this it was evident that he was taught by the (interior)unction of his heart\textsuperscript{12}, for he had not received instruction nor learning from men, as is evident from the little time and effort he had devoted to literary pursuits. Glowing also in his zeal for justice among those under him, he strove to safeguard for each one that which was his, without consideration of persons and temporal gain. The Church entrusted to him gave him cause of worry. In the promotion of her welfare he was hindered in many ways; for her honor he was derided, and for her power he was humiliated. To this Church (of his) the power of some nobles denied certain right, and the Church of York, beyond all due right made herself equal to his own. In great measure this action towards its subjects was not permitted by the king's prohibition. An open injustice was done the Church because the lay power usurped the property and controlled the ministers of the churches in his diocese. Therefore, he was the more zealous to take a stand against these abuses and seek reformation of the rest, as his anxiety about them increased. Because of these conditions he entered more whole-heartedly the way to a saintlier life, so that divine grace might guide more surely these efforts of his, and there might be a greater opportunity for obtaining what he sought.

\textsuperscript{12} I John 2.27
CHAPTER X.
MISREPRESENTATIONS OF HIS ENEMIES

Beholding this transformation in him, the evil one was astonished and amazed, when he saw one who had so eagerly been wont to pursue the pleasures and glories of the world now holding all these things in contempt, and (when he saw) the man who, because of his lofty position, he thought would grow in pride, now growing accustomed, instead, to abject humility. However, thinking rather that this attitude (of humility) came from a bilious disposition because he was chagrined not to be able to use his acquired power as he wished, he endeavored from then on to entice him by the hope of even greater authority. He had by this time instilled into the hearts of people ill-disposed towards him the idea of defaming his deeds and character more boldly and shamelessly, that the very virtues by which he followed the narrow way which leads to heaven\(^1\) should become to him a source of jealousy. For they interpreted his more austere life, superstition; the justice which he championed, cruelty; his interest in the needs of the Church, avarice; his shunning the favor of men, severity; they called his keeping

\(^1\) Compare Matthew 7.14
of the splendor of his court, a seeking of personal glory; the
pursuit of his own mind, pride; and presumption, that he strove
to exceed the goal of his predecessors in matters ecclesiasti-
cal. Finally, he seemed scarcely able to do any good which
they did not misinterpret; and since his enemies were many,
they carried conviction by reason rather of their number than
of truth. This was why he incurred the hatred of many, and as
a result, numerous calumnies reached the king's ears. Finally,
it came to the latter's attention that he (Becket) proposed,
for the increase of his power, to prefer the canons of the
Church to all kingly honors. An indication of this was that
he would bind by oath all the better men of the kingdom under
his jurisdiction, that so he might contrive to have his epis-
copal power esteemed amongst men of high and low degree in the
kingdom. Thus it would seem that he said in as many words,
"I will exalt my throne and be superior to the king". This,
therefore, was the beginning of the king's evil suspicion; from
this seed sprouted his anger; from this cause (arose) the impa-
tient grief of his bitterness, for the very man whom he had
counted on as father and patron of himself and his people,
For many reasons he now found it impossible not to stand in
fear of him as a real adversary.

2 Isaiah 14.13
Since he was at this time on the continent, he made the remark, "I shall cross the sea, and I shall see whether this rumor which comes to me is intended to be really carried out". Arriving not long after, and in the presence of (Becket) who had come to meet him, he did not show himself angry nor reveal his thoughts, but he thought of enticing him first by compliments. Indeed, he kept him very close to himself and treated him as an intimate and dear friend. He had said about him, "I have found a man according to my own heart". He had often tested his fidelity and friendship in his actions, and he had moreover placed the greatest hope in him of safeguarding the long-standing stability of his kingdom. Therefore, he found it impossible at the moment to shatter this hope entirely and to refuse his advice or to cast off his devoted service; nor did he consider such action proper; rather he began by cajoling him. After the custom of courteous greeting and embracing had been discharged, he took care to show him deep reverence from then on, and to return in many ways honors for honor. For the evil spirit contrived that he (Becket) might be more softened at the humble actions of so great a prince, and be taken in more readily by the extent of his promises. After a site for a longer conference had been chosen, the king, not bitterly but kindly, not in the pride of superiority, but

3 Acts 13.22
in a spirit of friendliness, called to mind the rumors that
had reached him. In humble and pleading way he advised him to
correct what he had undertaken against his majesty, suggesting
that he refrain from any underhand dealing, so that striving
after happy concordance with himself (the king), he would not
go counter to his will. He desired and was really taking steps
that the status of ecclesiastics might be brought back in his
kingdom to the condition of former times. At that time, Rome
found little or nothing to be censured in him; for even then
everything in ecclesiastical affairs was conducted rather ac-
cording to the will of the king, with the archbishops of that
time presiding, but always keeping the proper decorum consistent
with the custom in the kingdom.

Therefore, he felt that he was justly assuming to himself
what his predecessors had obtained. Nor, as he was convinced,
the laws of his majesty did not militate against the law of
the Gospel, or of the Apostles, or of the Prophets, or of the
Saints; and therefore, he believed that respect for them ought
to be promoted lawfully, nor should it be abolished on account
of contrary regulations of rulers or bishops. To that same
law former kings were subject, many of whom are kept in memory
because of their outstanding sanctity. However, there was not
less glory and honor for his archbishop, as he said, and so he
hoped and thought that it could continue. He swore by oath
also that he would be vitally concerned that he (Becket) should
occupy his higher position for their happier issue and more efficaciously than they, and he promised that he would to the best of his ability help in this with every aid and advice. It would be his chief glory, both if he whom he had elevated obtained no less favor before God and men⁴, and if he (the king) endeavored to approve in his regard the divine character of his election. He detested strongly and desired to humiliate the arrogance and ambition of the Roman Curia, and his object was that his people become subject to the jurisdiction of the archbishop alone. Consequently, judging that they ought to be subjected to himself (the king), he even concluded that certain of the clergy with evil tempers or treacherous traits ought to be checked according to his will. For who could be an obstacle in a kingdom in which the efforts of the king and of the archbishop were united? Behold what a great degree of power he was procuring for him in ecclesiastical affairs.

Even more urgently and persistently did he plead with him to take upon himself the direction and care of the laity of his kingdom, in order that he himself might better and with greater assurance be able to care for overseas duties. He even (asked him) to assume the guardianship and tutorship of his son, the future king, lest anything be wanting to his sover-

⁴ Compare Luke 2.52
obey the rule of the king by his unstinted efforts and his counsel, he who was very new at a new task would not specifically submit to that other burden of authority. However, as to the kingly honors and the laws, he promised that while he would faithfully persevere in rendering "to Caesar the things that are Caesar's", he would also render "to God the things that are God's". Although he was often summoned and importantly annoyed, he remained unchanged in this answer.

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6 Matthew 22.21; Mark 12.17; Luke 20.25
eighty. For he saw that he would not be able, without the stigma of deception, to keep up with the expenses incident to his kingly rank, whose safeguarding he had undertaken. He also saw that while he yielded him the power of either sword (i.e., Church and State), neither would be lost to himself. Behold by what devices he beguiled him, by what considerations he tortured him, by what means he almost conquered him; to even such methods did this base and cowardly man venture little by little to stoop, that only the most perfect man could not be conquered (by them).

But he, (Becket) guided by a higher wisdom, did not at once approve nor openly oppose the will of the king. In his heart he had determined to follow neither course. For he did not consider that it was possible or safe to direct well the management of the Church along with the affairs of the kingdom, because "no man can serve two masters." He clearly comprehended the danger to both the priestly office and the spiritual life in allowing the condition of former days among his ecclesiastics to exist, because (in those days) to the priestly activity was added several interests. Furthermore, he himself had sworn fidelity to the Church of Rome which he would by no means serve, if he despised the censure of its laws. Therefore, he qualified his answer in such a way that while he offered to

5 Matthew 6.24
CHAPTER XI.
BEGINNING OF DISCORD

When the evil spirit saw his determination deeply-rooted in good, he was sorely vexed, and he plotted thenceforth to undermine by wrong-doings the man whom he had been unable to shake by worldly pomps. Indeed, he considered that in submitting to those usurpations which were perpetrated against the Church, he (Becket) would have to yield to him (the devil). For he judged that Becket would be swayed more by the adulation of the king than by the fear of God; that he would be more intent on the peace and glory of the world than that of heaven. He saw that the extent of his power was to him a source of virtue; that he had proved by his honor to "go from virtue to virtue". For that reason he centered his deceitful plans on this point: either to deprive him of honor, or to bring him into submission through fear of losing it. He judged that, in no way, would he more readily procure this than by establishing as his persecutor a man whom he had considered responsible for his elevation. Indeed, he thought if the king were to become his enemy, he could more easily turn the greater man against

1 Psalms 83:8
him, in so far as they hated to be subject to him through fear of the king. He felt that scarcely anyone would remain in submission to him when they perceived that the king was against him. Besides, he believed that through the might of the king's power, his downfall would be speedy and easy. When, therefore, the king did not find him docile to his wishes, as he had hoped, he began to be disturbed more and more by evil suspicion, and to see nothing but deceit in his words.
CHAPTER XII.

THE ORIGIN OF THE DISPUTE BETWEEN BECKET AND THE KING

Not long after, it happened that a gathering of bishops, abbots and priests took place in London to discuss the king's business and the maintenance of peace in the kingdom. Among the complaints which came up at that meeting, the archdeacons were blamed for not observing with propriety the dignity of preference above their subjects, and for exercising a tyranny in tormenting the laity with calumnies and with undue taxation. From among the clergy, certain ones were brought forth and charged with various accusations of disgraceful conduct. Such persons were said principally to disturb the peace of the kingdom and to revel in new excesses of crime, with the guarantee of escaping (blame) by reason of the privilege of their rank. The king demanded the immediate correction of these men by their bishops. But he urged more strongly that he might be allowed, with their consent, to try those clerics guilty of public offenses, a thing which, he recalled, had been done in his court in former days. It was then the practice for such culprits, once they had been convicted or had confessed, to be degraded at once, and thus, just like any layman, be subject
to public punishment. When the king demanded very emphatically that action be taken by the bishops to give him this right, they held out for a longer time, fearing to admit what seemed to be against divine law; for the prophet Nahum says, "Not even God judges the same offence twice". Therefore, it looked as though they could be judged twice before God, if they agreed that the penalty of death or mutilation be imposed upon those who were disgraced but not convicted. Salomon, that most prudent and just king, was on his guard against this judgment. For when the priest Abiathar appeared guilty of death, even as Joab, because they had taken a stand against Salomon's kingship in favor of his brother Adonias, Salomon did not punish Abiathar by death as he had Joab, but he removed this great man from the priesthood, saying, "Go to Anathoth, to thy lands; for indeed thou art worthy of death, but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou didst carry the ark of the Lord God before David my father."

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1 A reference to the Book of Nahum 1.3: the prophecy of the captivity of his people and the destruction of Nineveh.
2 Son and successor of King David.
3 Son of Achimelech, deposed from the priesthood by Salomon.
4 Son of Sarvia and a famous general in King David's army.
5 Son of King David.
6 City of the tribe of Benjamin, birthplace of the prophet Jeremiah.
7 3 Kings 2.26
Moved by such arguments and in agreement with the archbishop, the bishops hesitated to entrust the law to the judgment of the king. They feared that he might be drawn into prejudice and calumny of the innocent, or that they might be forced to a justification or be subjected to the lot of criminals. This, therefore, was the beginning of the dispute. For this reason the king thought that the archbishop and the bishops were plotting against him deceitfully, and that they were willing to stand against the dignity of royal prerogative. At first he grew very angry and then he stood forth boldly for a promise to keep these customs. After a longer consultation held alone, wishing to appease the anger of the king, they, in fact, considered that they had found a prudent reply, as long as they yielded that the petition be made "saving his order". The king's party, however, interpreted the addition which they had added as a precaution, as deceit and fought for its removal for a long time, but without effect, as the bishops resisted unanimously. When the assembly was broken up, the king was wild with anger and departed with threats. He ordered his officials to oppress the bishop more seriously with extortions.

Through fear of being molested, some of the bishops afterwards turned back and breaking the sacred unity of resisting, followed the will of the king. And then the steadiness of the others who feared the same trouble began to waver, so that it
happened in this case as Truth says, "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation." But the determination of the archbishop himself was in no way disturbed, even when he saw that the Church was endangered by the injury done to him; that he lacked the support of his coadjutors, and that even the whole cause and weight of the dispute fell back on him. He had already lost the privilege of his intimacy with the king; the usual calmness of his countenance had become clouded; with love cast by the boards, gradually hatred (of him) had begun to grow. Many, too, who were accustomed to follow him at first, now "walked no more with him" openly, to avoid offending the king. Following this, his attempts were derided, his power despised, his dignity set at naught, and after his glory came growing dishonor. Behold by what great scandals the devil attacked him, because he refused to submit to his blandishments! And so, cut off by the disturbed sinews of the Leviathan's testicles, he knew not what to do, what to choose, nor whither to turn. It was not clear which one of the dangers threatening he would more conveniently avoid. If he stooped to the king, he was clearly courting danger for his position (as archbishop) and for his soul; if he persisted in

8 Luke 11.17
9 John 6.67
10 Compare Job 40.12
resisting he could fear immense harm for the Church. Besides, if he sought advice from those under him, there was no one who could be counted on to give him a complete and wise counsel. If he endeavored to punish offenders, there was no one who would dare to side with him in dispensing justice. At that time the official sanction of the Church had little force; the pretext was the German schismatic in as far as he oppressed and depressed the Church of Rome. For, in opposition to His Holiness Pope Alexander, another (man) had been raised to the chair of the Apostles as an imposter by the power of the emperor, and under his apostasies the whole of Italy groaned; the loyal clergy were hiding in fear; others were driven from their sees, and due to the curse of avarice, others took their place. Since this fear existed in the other provinces, the activity of the bishops of the Church was relaxed and the insolence of the secular princes was emboldened.

In view of this schism, Gilbert, then Bishop of London, had persuaded them to give way to the king for a short while in order that something more effective might be done against

11 James F. Loughlin, "Alexander III", The Catholic Encyclopedia 1. p. 287. Victor IV, elected by the agents of Frederick Barbarossa, who refused to sanction the appointment of Alexander III because the latter had asserted that the imperial dignity was a papal "beneficium".

the apostates and the offending clerics; but the opinion of
the others prevailed in opposing him. This man had at first
been Bishop of Hereford and there had been murmuring among
the people about the character of his reputation and about the
wishes of the king to make him archbishop. Now among the ec-
clesiastics of England, he was a religious man, it would seem,
from his appearance and life. He was also considered quite
outstanding in eloquence and learning. The king listened to
him willingly and did many things on his advice. However,
since he was more pleased with his chancellor for the arch-
bishopric, and wishing some honor to be granted through the
authority of the Apostolic See, he succeeded in having him
transferred to the See of the Church of London. For this See,
next to the metropolitan, enjoyed a greater dignity, and any-
one called from this See could more easily take part in the
affairs of both Church and State. However, this was done and
brought about on the advice of the archbishop, who, relying and
placing his hopes in the religious disposition and foresight
of that man (Foliot), thought that he would be a trustworthy
colleague and a strong advocate in ecclesiastical maintenance.
Later he found out differently.

14 Compare Mark 6.20
CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE DISPUTE WAS TO HAVE BEEN SETTLED

Having often used this mediator (Foliot) after the contest for a better peace had begun, Becket at last succeeded in obtaining an audience. After others had requested the king to settle this controversy, they called a new meeting at Clarendon, and went into the problem more deeply. Holding to his original promise unalterably and with determination, the king, on behalf of peace in this emergency, settled the agreements that had been made between the archbishop and his bishops, so that, after every deceit had been removed, they could promise, in the Name of the Lord, observance of any addition to all the royal decrees, just as they were asked. For they had gone through the whole question beforehand, that this could be done without sin and without danger, in the name of customs—and only good customs should be understood—because evil customs are properly not customs but more truly abuses; they are good only in as far as they agree with the laws of the Church. Therefore, in

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1 Wiltshire, England, near Salisbury.

2 Compare Josue 9.19
this sense, they believed that the guardianship of all customs would be properly protected, and more rightly so, because they took in all customs, not expressly certain customs, (for things expressed in writing cause harm, things not expressed do not harm,) and in this way they satisfied the king and his associates who follow rather the use of words than the proper meaning of words.
CHAPTER XIV.

THE INVECTIVE AGAINST THE BISHOPS

But didn't they go against the direct statement of Holy Scripture which says that in whatever way one swears by word, God accepts it as such, as He knows to whom the oath is sworn? And didn't they care less for their reputation when rumors were spread and believed by the laity that the leaders of the Church had approved the abuses of the king? Better, indeed, would Eleazar at that time have recalled his strength, who, when pressed by the satellites of Antiochus to abuse the law, influenced as he was by his friends to eat legitimate food and thus pretend that he had eaten the flesh of swine in order to escape the issue; he said, "It doth not become our age to dissemble; whereby many young persons might think that Eleazar, at the age of fourscore and ten years, was gone over to the life of the heathen; and so, they, through my dissimulation and for a little time of a corruptible life, should be deceived,

1 Probably a reference to Ecclesiasticus 23.12 sq.
2 2 Machabees 6.18
3 1 Machabees 1.11
and hereby I should bring a stain and a curse upon my old age. Having said this, he was dragged to torture and chose to die an honorable death rather than to endanger his own position and that of others by this false pretence. Likewise the bishops should have agreed with him (Becket) and should have more honorably taken care to resist "in simplicity of heart" than to evade the issue in the irreligious use of words. For, where was greater force exerted to constrain him to give in? Certainly, up to this time nothing had been done through brutality, but through threats; nothing was even then being done that was worthy of death or prison. But the danger did not lie in the treachery of the heretics or in the brutality of the pagans. The faithful of God, sons of the Church, had brought up a charge against their fathers rather than a persecution; for they were not thirsting for blood, but they were defending the right of the king. It would have been fitting to resist boldly and consistently these men who could have been more easily overcome by a strong stand against them. For the bishops should have said emphatically and with one accord, "It behooves us to fear God rather than men." It behooves us to honor the Church, the Spouse of God, rather than earthly power. It behooves us to

4 2 Maccabees 6.24-25
5 Wisdom 1.1
6 Compare Acts 5.29
look out for her liberty rather than to stand by the custom of men". For the integrity of honor is not observed towards the emperor, where anything is taken away from the majesty of the law. Then they should have pondered bravely in their hearts that it was only a mist rising for a little while or a little cloud that would pass away quickly. But if, according to his threats, cruelty of action should follow, then they had better rise up against him and place themselves as a protecting wall around the house of the Lord to stand strong in battle. They should have opposed the sovereign power with the free voices of the priests and should have fought those evils by solid reasons, by admonitions and threats. Then they would have annoyed him on all sides with the sting of severe chastisements. In this way they would not become torpid under the name of endurance, nor grow furious under the pretence of diligence. Neither would the kingdom have borne longer this common and constant censure of blame, nor would open violence have resulted, because it would not have been safe to resist the whole assembly of fathers and shepherds of the kingdom. In all justice it could be surmised that no harsher act would have been tried against all; and even against some of them, supposing they had settled on some particular wrong, would a common wrong have

7 Compare Wisdom 8.17
8 Compare Ezechiel 13.5
beem imputed. For there was not a more glorious king among the kings of the earth. He would not have been willing to be marked forever by the record of such a great act of tyranny, so that he might be said to have forsaken the flock and the law of Christ, that his name might even be darkened in all the ages by the ignominious note of having gone over to the ranks of the schismatics and the apostates. And even if this could be justly feared, nevertheless, it would have been more than sufficient to have then disguised the evils, and tempered the enforcing of severity, than to have fallen into the disadvantage of having made a dangerous promise. For where the undoing of many is obvious, to mitigate severity is not a sin, provided that he who is in charge does not approve by remaining silent, nor irritate by disputing haughtily. To no one who takes such a stand does God impute personal sins because he did not commit them, nor the sins of others because he did not approve, nor carelessness, because he did not remain silent, nor pride, because he remained in agreement. Either because they did not foresee this or closed their eyes to it, the bishops seemed to have completely failed; because like dumb dogs incapable of barking, they were not shepherds but hirelings in their silence and in their yielding, even while they saw only the shadow of the wolf and not the wolf.

9 Reference to Zachariah II.17
10 Aug. Ep. 185, c. 45; Gratian Decr. II. xxiii. q. 4, c. 24.
11 Compare John 10.12
CHAPTER XV.

THE REVIVAL OF THE DISPUTE

The evil spirit tried all the more to embroil them because they sought to free themselves and their head, the archbishop, whom he was trying to thwart. As if in return for his hypocrisy, a greater crisis of the whole dispute soon developed. For, through the very noblemen of the Curia, the king caused the customs to be entirely revised in writing and to be restored. He ordered them to be stamped with the seals of the bishops and the archbishop so as to remove from them any doubt or disagreement. There, however, statements were made which clearly opposed the ecclesiastical statutes. And lest the past remain unknown, these were some of them, namely:

That no one might appeal to the Apostolic See for any reason whatsoever without the king's permission.

That neither the archbishop nor any bishop, nor any abbot, not even at the summons of the Pope, might leave the kingdom, without the king's knowledge.

That it was not permitted to excommunicate anyone who was subject to the king, unless he was consulted.

That clerics were to answer to the king and his justice for any reason whatsoever.
That no lay man was to be summoned before the ecclesiastical court for a broken promise or for perjury in money matters.

Therefore, it was clear by these points that the freedom and power of the Church were considerably diminished. If the bishops should agree to these constitutions, they would openly attack the Church; if they did not agree, they would not escape the wrath of the king. Thus, placed in a difficult position, they submitted at last to the required armistice, and their last deeds were worse than the first. For some saw clearly the apparent deceit of the king when they refused to sign in writing what they were believed to have promised by oath. And so, growing very indignant, and thundering terrible threats, the king seemed on the point of breaking forth in extreme cruelty against some of them, some of his own suite even adding fuel to the fire. Nor was a just cause of fear wanting since according to Salomon, "As the roaring lion, so also is the anger of a king." And again, "As the roaring lion so also is the dread of a king."

1 Compare Matthew 12.45; Luke 11.26
2 Compare Acts 9.1
3 Proverbs 19.12
4 Proverbs 20.2
CHAPTER XVI.

THE FALL OF THE ARCHBISHOP

The burden of the trouble fell chiefly upon the archbishop, without whose advice, as their head, the priests undertook nothing. They even feared to advise him to yield. Man that he was, it was impossible for him not to be moved. He was more distressed about the salvation of his bishops and of his people, than he was anxious about his own welfare. Against these the fierceness of the king was to be feared more justly because they were mistrusted, the more so because he could not depend much on the constancy of the rest for protection. Therefore, since signs of greater evils were evident, with the evil spirit prevailing on one side, and the spirit of giving in to the flesh\(^1\) on the other, at last he yielded and promised that the king's request would be granted as far as the meaning of the word went. He was influenced in this because he was deceived by the pretence and promise, to himself and to the king, of some of his associates who persuaded him that the king would not go farther if he should seem to have won that much. The king reckoned that he had prevailed against the others after

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\(^1\) Compare Galatians 5.17
he had conquered the leader. He placed little value on the consent of all, trusting also that under the pretext of troubled times, the authorization of the same men ought to be obtained easily from Rome. This he sought later, but did not obtain it.
CHAPTER XVII.

HIS REPENTANCE

The archbishop was more grieved when he came out. Struck as it were by the scourge of God for his fall, and urged toward better things, he later on gave far more attention to progress in sanctity, being more careful to avoid the evils that surrounded him and he became more interested in works of virtue. To atone for his past excesses more courageously and lay aside his customary pleasure, he wore against his flesh a rough hair-shirt. Having laid aside the changes of clothing, he began to wear garments which were neither vain nor degrading, but neat and clerical. He was often wont to rest in these while he slept, very often lying down at night on the ground rather than on his bed, and chastising his flesh by much fasting. Worried and impatient over his fall, he took care thereafter to be braver and more daring against the king's stubbornness. For he endeavored not to be enslaved by his examples and judgments because he had made a mistake in the promise he had made. The saintly King David swore by the Lord that he would kill Nabal, the fool; but the fact that he did not fulfill his
oath was a greater deed\(^1\). Even wicked Herod swore that he would not deny the daughter of Herodias what she asked; but because he gave her the head of John when she asked for it, a greater crime resulted\(^2\). For Divine Law points out that an oath by which one promises to do wrong ought not to be kept. However, so that he might more thoroughly undo what he had promised so timidly, he often tried to go abroad to Rome to obtain pardon; but a persistent and contrary wind cast him back from the sea and did not allow him to cross. For the evil spirit was opposed to his noble efforts, and perceiving him better disposed on account of his fall, he deemed that he ought to be led into worse evils.

\[\text{1 Compare 1 Kings 25.22}\]
\[\text{2 Compare Mark 6.23}\]
CHAPTER XVIII.
THE CAUSE OF HIS FLIGHT

Finally, wishing to involve him more completely, he (the evil spirit) stretched forth a new snare for him (Becket). For, having been summoned to a third council at Northampton, he was overwhelmed by the king's request that he should give an account of the treasury money which, as chancellor, he had been managing. However, he had been given over to the Church free and absolute when he was elected in an assembly of the king's son and the nobles, to whom the whole administration of his elevation was entrusted by the king from abroad. This was announced to the Pope by the king's letter when the pallium was requested for him afterwards from Rome. Nevertheless, the king was angry and he demanded an accounting, or at least a reckoning, of his court or, at least, of some of the bishops of his Curia. Therefore, the archbishop seemed right in refusing to give an estimate of the accounts because of the evident unjust charge. Over and above this, he did not even consider it prudent for the case to be brought to the king's court, lest through the action of its head, something more be removed from the rights of the clergy; for when action was brought against the clerica, it was set down through laws and

1 One of the shires of the east midlands of England.
canons, that they ought to answer only before the Church. But special provision was written into the law about bishops, that in their case only the Church had the right to judge. And he (Becket) was not compelled to submit to the judgment of his bishops, since the sacred canons gave instructions that appeal should be made to a higher authority, and in all disputes action should be reserved to the judgment of a higher tribunal. He judged it better that they be avoided as being mistrusted. For they had already withdrawn their help from him, so that, while showing more favor to the king, they would look out more for their own security. They even advised him to give way to the king's wishes, that he (Becket) might gain his point the better if he permitted himself, as it were, to be vanquished. But he (Becket) knew the character and design of the king too well and rightly dreaded the harm to his Church and the disadvantage to himself.
CHAPTER XIX.

HIS FLIGHT AND HIS EXCUSE FOR FLIGHT

In the midst of these difficulties, abandoned by all, gravely harassed by the burdens of his Curia, fearing something dreadful for himself, where he had escaped the cross he now began to carry the cross. And then, since, as it was said, a harder sentence was about to fall on him, he chose to appeal to the Apostolic See, and he departed amidst insults and threats. For the king, considering his own reputation and not wishing the peace of his court to be violated, had even advised, in spite of the anger of some, that he (Becket) and his intimates be spared. The following night, when he had heard from the king's trusted men that prison or the sword threatened him, going out secretly in disguise with a few men, he turned aside to more distant parts of the kingdom, that he might evade his pursuers more easily. For he felt that in prudence, he ought to yield to (their) envy and give way to their frenzy as Jacob had done with his brother Esau, and David with the obstinacy of the enemies of Saul; and as Athanasius the bishop of

1 Compare Genesis 27.42-44; 28.5,10
2 Compare 1 Kings 20.1,43
Alexandria had done, when he fled over the whole earth during the persecution of Constantius, that he might defend the Catholic faith against the Arians\(^3\), and as the Apostle Paul had done when he was let down through a window in a basket that he might escape the soldiers of the prefect of Damascus and thus remain alive for the growth of the Church\(^4\); and finally even as Christ Himself had done, either when He was carried away from the plottings of Herod by His parents and hid in Egypt\(^5\), or when he hid from the Jews who wished to stone Him and went out of the temple\(^6\). Encouraged by so many examples, he even followed that advice of Christ Who instructed His disciples saying, "When they persecute you in one city, flee into another\(^7\)." Nor did he deserve the brand of a hireling who sees the wolf coming and flees because he has no care for the sheep\(^8\). Nor did he in his danger desert the flock entrusted to him\(^9\) since no frenzy had turned against it, but he removed himself cautiously from the hazard because against his life alone was

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4 2 Corinthians 11.32-33

5 Compare Matthew 2.14

6 Compare John 8.59

7 Matthew 10.23

8 Compare John 10.13

9 Compare John 10.15
there any snare laid. Not long after, returning secretly to a suitable port, he embarked and sailed safely to Flanders. Here he directed his steps to Pope Alexander who was then residing at Sens. He sought him, that he might have a judge, that he might even obtain pardon for his dangerous promise, and especially that he might re-establish the status of the Church. For the suffrance of those offences which were now apparent among the clergy was deserving of reproach, which, on account of the stress of the time could be venial. For certainly a promise proves open agreement which necessity holds excused. However, the mercy of the Almighty directed his steps to him, to whom, the more firmly he adhered in such great temptations, the less the attempts of the evil spirit could prevail against him.

10 Joseph Lortz, History of the Church, p. 228.
CHAPTER XX.

HOW THE DEVIL STROVE TO OVERTHROW HIM AFTER THIS

However, the evil spirit did not cease pursuing him; he even added open force to Becket's complete dejection. For his enemies having been enkindled the more through him, and having found by chance an opportunity for detraction and calumny, aroused the king more definitely in his own hatred. They even prevailed over him to such an extent that he (the king), having despaired of the conversion of one so directly hostile to him, and touched inwardly by grief of heart, said at length, "It repents me to have made man," and again, "I shall destroy man whom I have created." Unable to restrain himself further, he sent after him a retinue of many great archbishops and bishops, counts and barons, so that it would be impossible to stand up under the recriminations of so many great men. And so, the Lord wanted an adversary against him like Adad the Edomite who would cover him with blows lest he be exalted, and who would admonish him, as it were, by a certain sting of the

1 Genesis 6.6
2 Ibid. 6.7
3 Compare 3 Kings 11.14
flesh⁴, lest in the greatness of his virtues he be too wise⁵ and believe himself lifted up by the faults of others, and placed on high. The bishops of York⁶ and London especially were said to have conspired with the king for his undoing; York (posing) as his rival because of a dispute of equality; and London, it was said, sighing in his ambition after the position of archbishop for himself, and full of animosity against him. Therefore, entering the Roman Curia, they persistently and unanimously accused the present archbishop of imprudence and presumption hurling upon him the calumny of many, and demanding that he be sent back to the kingdom, as if there he could be better examined and openly convicted. For this (end) they sought a company of envoys to hear their case there and to accomplish it without the hindrance of an appeal. But they left without a hearing because the Pope in his strict prudence thought that the decision of such a momentous question should be reserved safely or properly to no one except himself. Neither did it seem canonical that the archbishop should be sent back to the province, from which he had fled in his just fear, and where scarcely anyone would help him where rather all were at the beck and call of the king.

4 2 Corinthians 12.7
5 Compare Romans 12.3
6 Roger, Bishop of York.
CHAPTER XXI.

HIS SUFFERING AT THE HANDS OF THE KING

The king being very much perturbed and indignant, from that time on withdrew his good will and the right of visitation of his kingdom from the Pope. He once more took under his authority and power all the property of the archbishop and even of the clerics, which had been withdrawn from their use. And beyond this, both his followers and those who, with their relationship were deprived of their goods, were compelled to leave the kingdom. Orphans and widows, children and innocent people who were altogether unaware of the entire dispute, were forced to the penalty of exile without pity. For the very man whom the evil spirit was not able to overcome, he tried to wear down at least by the loss of property and the suffering of his own people.
CHAPTER XXII.

HIS CONSOLATION FROM GOD

God is good, Who turns all things to good for the good. For the very insult of destitution that was openly devised turned to his solace, and from the very source that seemed to be his undoing there came a source of strength. He became stronger in the very exile of his own with him and among strangers he acquired a distinction by reason of the proscription of property. For all these losses in no way moved him, or very little, neither could flesh or blood in any way be turned from the straight path by reflecting upon them. The less he cared for these things, the more the grace of God helped him, so that even the king and the potentates of France looked after the needs both of him and of his followers.

1 Compare Romans 8.28
2 Compare Mark 1.3; Luke 3.4
CHAPTER XXIII.

THE POPE'S KINDNESS TOWARDS HIM

But through the help of God, he easily drew the Pope over to his side after he had made known to him the truth of his justification. The Pope, who was later truly advised of his prudence and sanctity, accorded him the remission of his fault if, in his subservience, he had contracted any. He even decreed with the authority of his See, that from then on he would rule the episcopacy, and gave him the office of legate to England\(^1\). By this outstanding title, he was not in the least changed, nor in any way puffed up, but entering the path of virtue unchanged, he made use of the opportunity of every grace for the honor of the Church and the service of God, being more firmly zealous from then on for the reformation of those in England who were not acting as they ought. For a whole year, in his position of authority, he withheld any censorship, trying and waiting quietly to see if, perchance, by his patience he might lead the evil-doers to repentance. Meanwhile, however,

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with all the means at his disposal, he endeavored to obtain support for his cause. For he knew the customs of the king very well, and presuming much from these, as a beginning, he would not give up what he had begun except under "a strong hand".

2 Deuteronomy 6.21; Ezechiel 20.33
CHAPTER XXIV.

HIS EXCUSE AGAINST THE REPROOF OF SOME

A common objection was this: if he were really interested in the truth of religion, then he would not have remained among the dangerous enemies of his master, nor would he have brought upon himself the annoyances of revenge. Contrary to the example of David, who fled from Saul, his king, he went over to strangers, preferring to be exposed to his enemies than to the envious. But he did not enter into partnership with his enemies, but rather he was first concealed at Pontigny in the religious house of the Cistercian monks, that here he might more effectively atone for his sins, and more easily obtain the mercy of God. When, on account of the displeasure of the king, the Cistercians dared not assist him any longer, the generosity of Louis, the saintly king of the French, finally came to his aid, assisting him and his followers abundantly and richly in the metropolitan City of Sens with whatever they needed. With Louis he in no way, either by entreaty or any...

1 Compare Mark 14.66-72
2 1 Kings 19.18
3 allophyllos - Greek word derived from allos--other and files--friend.
activity whatever, harbored any enmity, but since on account of the far-reaching dominion of his king, could he elsewhere have a place "whereon to lay his head", he was mercifully taken in by him. In all justice he should not be taken to task for this; he implored the help of earthly power to carry out the ecclesiastical censorship. For, as holy people believe, defenders are rightly sought for by leaders to take a stand against the powers of riches, by whose annoyances the Church is tormented. But since he did not act this way against his own king, the very love that was deep in his heart obtained this effect, not only to give way to those who were persecuting him but also to have regard for his personal danger.

4 Matthew 8.20; Luke 9.58
5 Compare Ephesians 3.17
CHAPTER XXV.

HIS ZEAL

Meanwhile, zeal for the Church was eating him up\(^1\) in no little degree, and the burden of the dignity imposed upon him very greatly urged him on. For he considered and often pondered in his mind the words of Augustine, that "There is nothing in this life more difficult, more laborious, more dangerous than the episcopal office, but before God there is nothing more blessed, if the bishop serves as a soldier in the manner in which his leader orders\(^2\)." He knew that he was made the under-pilot and that he held the tiller of the ship; he was not ignorant of the fact that his ship was being battered by a heavy storm. He knew for certain that the laity, sons of perdition\(^3\), more inclined to any type of crime were hankering for the property of his Church. They were forcing the issue by plunder and oppression of that property, and keeping his people in bondage. He also realized that ecclesiastical persons were being attacked by calumny and oppression of every kind, and

\(^1\) Compare John 2.17; Psalm 68.10
\(^2\) Aug. Ep. 21, ad Valerium.
\(^3\) Compare John 17.12; 2 Thessalonians 2.3
were being brought by force to the secular tribunal against
the canons of the Church; even holy places were openly trampled
upon⁴, and his own income and that of his followers, revenues
destined for the use of the poor were now unjustly distributed
as pay for the soldiers. It was, therefore, no longer safe
for the pilot of the ship to sleep amid so many violent storms⁵.
It behooved him, rather, to try with all his might to escape
the danger.

⁴ Compare 1 Machabees 3.51
⁵ Compare Mark 4.38
CHAPTER XXVI.

HIS FIRST ATTEMPT AT RESTRICTION

Therefore, after striving to influence the king to his course of action by many pleadings, remembrances, and threats, but prevailing in no way, at last after waiting a year, on a market-day of his people of Vezelay, he posted an edict about the old customs and condemned the counsellors of the king, the executors and observers of these same measures, and in general, those consenting to them, and declared an anathema against certain friends of the king and the instigators and executors of his violence. Since he had accomplished nothing in such a long time by his patience in yielding to the tempest, now by fighting against it, and by breaking the waves of the storms, he believed that redress could be procured only by strong rowing against the storms. For he feared no danger from the king nor any disturbance of greater force, thinking that never was strength greater than in adversity, and that constancy of purpose was never more useful than in persecution. For the Church often took a stand in persecution through its timorous

1 Compare Galatians 1.8,9
2 Compare 2 Corinthians 12.9,10
souls, and gained strength through its brave champions. This was foreshadowed by that ark of Noe, which rose higher the more the floods grew in intensity. Therefore, he took his first stand against the king's retinue, against those who advised him so evilly against his own welfare. And, as if weighing the proposition that he should apply the axe to the root, he even solemnly summoned the king himself, as if he were going to declare him anathema by name on the day stated unless he corrected and gave up what he had begun.

3 Compare Genesis 7.17
4 Compare Matthew 3.10; Luke 3.9
5 Compare Galatians 1.8, 9
CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CURBING OF HIS RESTRICTION AND ITS REASON

An appeal to the Pope on the part of the king upset and disturbed this bold attempt. The Pope, consequent to this appeal, curtailed his power for a short time. The suggestion was made that he might overcome even more easily by patience. It also seemed a better counsel, under the pretext of a schism, to proceed even more gently. For he recalled a writing, whenever any of the brethren has been taken unawares in such a sin that he is deemed worthy of anathema, let this be done where there is no danger of schism. A rumor was current that the king was worried by the growth of a schism and was on the point of being overcome by promises made on the part of the schismatics themselves. Therefore, the Pope judged it better that he should be dealt with kindly rather than be cut off with severity. Because of this he took care that those of the faithful who had been excommunicated, be absolved. This wise provision of moderation the archbishop took lightly, since in the restraint of his former power, it looked as though he had neglected his official duty.

1 Aug. c. Parmen. iii, 13.
CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE REASON FOR THE RESTRICTION

His rivals interpreted his remarkable steadfastness in severity as rashness. Nevertheless, after he had lost all hope of gaining his point by patience, he thought rightly that he had to act this way. For he had read the text, "Wherever any accusations have become manifest, if they have not been corrected with the mild remedy of patience, they ought to be cut off and burned out as if by the fire of devout rebuke. If the source of the evil continue, in one who will not quietly submit and under pious pretext continues to be obstinate; then those who have long been tolerated, though reprimanded without showing change of heart, they should be cut off by the sword of excommunication as though they were corrupt members of the body. And he was fully confident that the king, whom he well knew and who had often been put to the test, would by no means any longer carry out, either against himself or among his associates, a more severe censure. And he was well aware that any easing of correction, when it came to a point of apostasy,

1 (Pseudo) - Prosper, ap. Gratian II. causa xxiv., qu. 3, c. 18.
would redound to the diminution of his own glory. The Pope, perhaps, thought otherwise, perhaps because he was less experienced in the ways of the man, and farther away was alarmed by rumors. For that reason he relaxed his severity for a little while.
CHAPTER XXIX.

HOW HE WAS OFTEN ANXIOUS FOR THE RETURN OF PEACE

Not to leave his son entirely abandoned and an exile for his sake, he despatched not long after "a latere" men of great reputation, cardinals of the Church, so that by their mediation, a reconciliation with the king might more easily be secured. After the discussion of peace was undertaken and protracted for a long time, they withdrew without gaining their point. Once more the king's party had recourse to the court of appeal. The obligation of securing peace was later dropped by the Pope and once more delay ensued. Finally the question of peace was again taken up by another legation of French clergy, but it came to naught. However, after this, a conference was held with the king of France. In this conference, surrounded as he was by many bishops, counts and princes, the king was asked to grant peace, and he conceded it to the archbishop, provided only he would observe the regulations which a very holy archbishop of preceding days had kept with the weakest of the kings that preceded him. This concession

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1 Conference of Montmirail, January 6, 1169.
2 Theobald, Becket's predecessor.- King: Louis VII.
seemed very just and unexpected by the whole assembly. But
the archbishop wished that there should be added, "Saving the
honor of God and of the king himself". The king rejected this
as superfluous and captious, and he secured the approval of
all, since, against their united counsel, the archbishop refused
what he was offered. Behold how the evil spirit brought about
his complete undoing in every way, while even the very solace
which alone remained to him on the part of the Church of
France seemed to be taken away from him. In no way could he
be influenced even by this fear to yield even to the many im-
portunities of the great. For in their words, he saw deceits
which others did not see; because the most saintly of the arch-
bishops had perhaps served their kings in evil as well as in
good, their compliance being universally requested. The obser-
vance was not to be agreed on--especially so, since the king,
without the agreement of the rest according to promise, re-
called the promise of observing the customs which was the crux
of the question. Therefore, in the very point in which he
seemed to be completely abandoned, he was made glorious and
obtained among his hosts more renown in proportion as he had
been found wiser in his stand against the deceit and more

3 Ibid.
invincible against the advice of so many people. For, from then on, he seemed to be led more by the Spirit of God, than to follow the favor of men.  

4 Romans 8.14
CHAPTER XXX.

WITH WHAT ASSURANCE THE CHECKING WAS AGAIN TAKEN UP

By this time, the schism had lost some of its power and its rage had greatly subsided; because the leader of this same schism, the emperor, had been quite humbled and driven from Italy, and the power of the Church at Rome had revived in great measure. Among the people and the clergy across the sea, it was clearly perceived that the king could not attack the growth of the schism without a very great and evident hazard to himself. Therefore, it was rightly thought that his policies of coercion in England could be checked more easily.

Therefore, the archbishop was animated by renewed hope. Since the discussion of peace had not come to any definite decision, and since he was wearied after so long a wait of continued postponement, and since the danger grew, he judged that the due harshness of punishment should not be deferred any longer.

And yet, he thought that he should take cognizance of the person of the king, and in all respect due to his position follow the order of the Pope's restriction. At least he took action against the princes of the realm and against the more familiar

friends of the king. It was by their advice, that the king was doubtless being influenced. It was their help that he was using for his extortions, though, even at this time in their appeal they looked to themselves, but the appeal so often made seemed once more useless. For the very resort to any appeal had been stopped by the Pope.
CHAPTER XXXI.

THE CANONICAL AND JUST CENSURE

He judged it lawful that even those who had been instigated, though absent, should be duly punished, as open and undoubted patrons and promoters of the well-known offence of the king. Judicial action is not necessary in the case of those who act above board; a criminal who admits his crime on the evidence of his deed is soon punished. Therefore he put under the ban certain bishops, namely those of London¹ and Salisbury², though they knew nothing of it and were not summoned. With these he involved others who neglected their duty and who promoted disorder because they did not enforce the necessary discipline. Neglecting to reprehend the wicked when one is able, is nothing else than to encourage the crime. He who fails to take a stand against an open crime cannot escape the presumption of secret consent. He had learned that these same men had been wanting in his defence against all the statutes of the saints. For as it is written: "God has preordained to this all those who administer the plenitude of the

¹ Foliot: Speaight: Thomas Becket, p. 166.
² Jocelyn of Salisbury: ibid., p. 166.
priesthood, so that they may remove all injustice and stop all arrogance, and especially come to the help of those who are laboring in the priesthood. Whoever would withdraw himself away from their help, is proved to be a schismatic rather than a priest. He found that, among the others, the bishop of London and of Salisbury failed not only in their help, but openly opposed him in the cause of God. For the bishop of London had not hesitated to take upon himself the whole burden of the strife, setting himself in opposition to the demands of justice on the part of the archbishop, and turning from them under the pretext of avoiding a break, and ever placing against the good of obedience the more drastic remedy of all evil men—the obstacle of an appeal. He drew, as it were, into this stand, the Church of England as his ally, which, in all truth, dared not protest. In reality he had as friend and helper the bishop of Salisbury in all the subterfuges of his undertakings and appeals, to avoid justice in the king's cause which was so evidently unjust, winning to his side the action of the legates and means of concluding an armistice.

3 Gratian II., causa iii. qu. i. cc. 5, 6.
CHAPTER XXXII.

IN ALL JUSTICE, THE PUNISHMENT COULDN'T HAVE BEEN HARDER

It was clear by reason and by examples that, on account of this, they had been worthy not only of anathema but even of deposition. For we read that this same action was taken against certain defenders of the notorious crime of which the Emperor Lothair was guilty\(^1\). For Pope Nicholas says, "The crime which King Lothair committed by having two wives, Thietberga and Waldrade\(^2\), is known to all. And nearly the whole world flocking to the Apostolic See stated that for a long time the bishops Thietgaud and Günther\(^3\) had been his protectors and patrons in this deed. Therefore, in a holy synod\(^4\) judging with us, they were deposed from their priestly office, excommunicated, and are, without a doubt, today separated from the office of their episcopacy\(^5\). The same Pope said to

2 Ibid., 2. p. 276: Thietberga was Lothair's lawful wife; Waldrade was the sister of Günther.
3 Ibid., 2 p. 277: Thietgaud, archbishop of Treves, Günther, archbishop of Cologne.
4 Ibid., 2 p. 277, 278: The Synod of Metz.
5 Nic. I. Ep. 56 (Migne, cxix); Gratian II. c. ii. q. 1.c.21. 78
Lothair, "In this manner, you have given in to the movements of your flesh and you have cast yourself into a pool of misery, so that you, who had been appointed to rule your people, have brought about the destruction of many. The legal case of the former bishops, Thietgaud and Günther proves this, not only in the fact that they did not instruct you but more so because they tried to cover your transgression by their arguments and under a certain guise of justice to obscure all right by their false subterfuges. They are deposed by our authority and according to rule, set apart from every right of their office as priest and bishop. Though similar judicial action should have been taken against the above named bishops, still the archbishop, on his part, spared them, when he placed them under the sentence of anathema only. He did so in order that they would not be completely undone, but rather that they would be frightened and come to their senses and then, in turn, influence the king and make him return to his senses. Up to that time he had indeed spared the Pope expense and labor, freeing them of the need for following up appeals. In this regard of his liberality, peace would result more easily and more quickly by the power of these men. But this indulgence had no influence on them at all, nor did the hope of a decline in the schism,
or grief at the growing scandal on their part awoken them, so that after some time they were reinstated in their priestly power and cried out against such great irregularities. Indeed, the abuse of his patience had rendered them not only more secure, but even more vehement in bringing about a complete change in their policy. Since, therefore, the unsavory salt was good for nothing but to be thrown out of doors and to be trodden on by men, they were at last with the rest of the king's advisers, in all justice, cast out of the Church by an anathema. This was done that the anger of the lion might quiet down when its cubs are punished in its presence, and that he who had strayed unmindful of the heat of the day might return in his fear to the way of sanctity and salvation. But his wrath waxed stronger with the cause of his sadness. For he could well believe that his undoing and that of his people had been brought upon him because of himself.

7 Compare Matthew 5.13; Luke 14.34
8 Henry II.
CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ARCHBISHOP IS VINDICATED IN SPITE OF

THE OBJECTIONS OF SOME

There were not wanting those who openly accused the archbishop of being an enemy and a disturber of the kingdom, and who inflamed the hatred of the king against him as though he detested him. Nevertheless, he had done nothing, either cruel or hateful. He wished to reprove the king as a very dear son, since he was mindful of only one master, and most ardently sought his good in everything. For everyone who chastises is not an enemy, just as everyone who spares is not a friend. Indeed, the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of an enemy; it is even better to love with severity than to beguile with gentleness. The deceivers were those who fostered his wrongdoing, and who increased the danger by neglecting to correct. He loved truly who sorrowed over the danger, who sought to avert it, who was interested in extricating even the unwilling. It was real love which had already cast that long standing fear out of doors, which had driven out the fear of

1 Compare Matthew 6.24
2 Compare Proverbs 27.6
offending, which had more regard for the safety of one in danger than it feared his anger. If he fled as man,—this was a reproach many levelled against him—he was now ready in the full spirit of his priesthood to cry out freely and to take a strong stand against abuses. For he was now walking along the royal road of suffering, a seeker not of earthly gains nor an acceptor of persons. He was the strong champion of justice who was unwilling to spare any one who resisted.

3 Compare 1 John 4.18
4 Compare Matthew 22.16
CHAPTER XXXIV.

HIS PROGRESS DURING HIS DAYS OF EXILE

As regards himself, he had profited not a little by such a long time of exile. During the interval, he applied himself with his whole strength to the study of law and the decretals, and he made up for the losses of his early days and the occupations of the court by the ardor of his study, so that he became more learned for the carrying out of the dignity which he had assumed. Nor did he apply himself less to atoning for the mistakes of his former years by his severe penance. These were not public, but hidden, so that now the seven years' time of penance was almost up by which he sought pardon for his great sins; he came forth purer and safer and more determined to demand penance from those who had sinned.
CHAPTER XXXV.

THE INCREASE OF HIS TRIALS AT THE HANDS OF THE KING

But the insolence of the butting bulls in England waxed bolder against this zeal of his. Soon the storm increased; with the guarding of the ports all permission of sailing was withdrawn throughout England; orders were issued not to receive him or to observe his orders and those which the Lord Pope had laid down. In this way the malice of the ill disposed had advised and the power of the schism was kept alive or at least the correction which they feared would be left to the judgment of the king and the king's party.

1 Compare Psalms 21:13
CHAPTER XXXVI.

A MEASURE OF PEACE AT LAST THROUGH THE POPE

The growth of the schism began to grow in the very threshold, had not the Apostolic See put a limit, as it were, a stop to it because of the repeated pleas of the king to apply a remedy. A little while before, the Pope had tried by prayers, admonitions, and threats, for a reconciliation, addressing the king, as was fitting, by letters and new mediators sent over "a latere\(^1\)". The obstacle to peace was this, that the king permitted the return and due power to the archbishop saving the dignity of his kingdom, whereas the mediators wished to have added saving the freedom of the Church. Because they did not seem able to agree on this, neither could they agree on peace. However, so as not to carry the scandal any farther, the Pope judged that that clause could be removed on either side, and entrusting the negotiations to new intercessors, he dictated a method and outline of peace, entreating the king in kind prayers and admonitions, and even offering him the remission of his sins as a reward. In order that his heart would

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\(^1\) A legate \textit{a latere} is a Cardinal sent by the Pope to represent him in important and confidential matters of Church and State.
be softened more quickly, he had previously granted to his bishops the grace of absolution. Overcome at last by these pleas, he (the king) restored peace and his favor to the archbishop, and as the mediators had demanded, he permitted him and his followers to return and recover their property in its entirety, as it was three months before their departure. He allowed Becket to administer it by the power which the authority of Holy Scripture granted him. Then, through these same mediators, the rest of the king's associates, who had been placed under the anathema, received absolution.

2 Compare 1 Timothy 3.5
CHAPTER XXXVII.
AN INTERVENING INSULT FOR THE ARCHBISHOP

Some time before this, a very great dishonor had been
done to the principal privilege of the Church of Canterbury.
By an ancient law, as it was said, it was the right of the
Archbishop of Canterbury alone to crown the new king. Taking
advantage even of his absence, the Bishop of York\(^1\) as if making
himself his equal, arranged to consecrate as king the king's
son according to the desire of his father. This took place,
not in his own province, but in that of Canterbury, namely at
London, which City, it was clear, was known as his (Becket's)
province. Even those who were assisting the minister at the
coronation were metropolitan suffragan bishops of Canterbury,
through whom, the honor that belonged to the archbishop with
regard to the creation of a king seemed to be abrogated, an
honor that was not to be given to anyone else at the whim of
a prince. Because of the loss of prestige for his Church, the
archbishop was deeply grieved at heart. He wrote to the Pope,
saying how this was being added to the anguish of his misfortunes, admitting that he despaired entirely of peace. There-

\[^{1}\text{Roger of York: Thomas Becket, p. 170.}\]
fore he received a rescript before he received peace, by which
the Bishop of York, as if he had presumed upon another's right
was suspended from his episcopal dignity, chiefly because he
had erred by overstepping his bounds in the province of another,
and especially, so in behalf of justice to the one who was
exiled, which he could not assume to himself either in any good
reason or in the constitutions of the holy fathers. Besides,
he asked for and obtained another rescript by which the suffra-
gan bishops were reproved in a sufficiently harsh way, because
they had neglected, after such a long delay, to cry out in
priestly fashion against the irregularity of the customs, may
rather, to the prejudice of the metropolitan church, at the
coronation of the king's son, shown favor to a minister who
was disallowed. The Pope deposed these also from their epis-
copal dignity. Besides, once more put under the sentence of
excommunication certain of them, namely, the Bishop of London
and the Bishop of Salisbury, as being more guilty because they
had received greater honor in the grace of the prior absolution
and remission. From this it is clear that in the case of the
archbishop zeal had anticipated justice, which, the vicar of
Peter, later exercised against certain bishops, and imposing
his hand more heavily, he renewed it against the former, al-
though at first he had eased it by dispensation. Meanwhile, as
it was said, peace had been negotiated. But the archbishop
did not attend to the abolishing of the threat, because he was
not certain about the stability of peace. For what had been promised was not being carried out and many actions were taken against the even process of peace. The restitution of their property was not being made to him and his own, but instead there was quite a lessening and dividing of it taking place through the king's officials, as if the evil spirit disapproved of his return, so that he might hinder his impending martyrdom.
CHAPTER XXXVIII.

HIS RETURN AND ITS IMPORTANCE

After promising the reformation of everything and at the urgent request of the king, he hastened to return to England. This had been the plan of the Pope and the cardinals. He was influenced to return because of the great scandals distressing the Church, and like a strong and brave champion to give his life for his sheep. He believed that his time had come; and it was now sufficiently clear what type of man he was; the uprightness of his cause was sufficiently apparent to the world. Before his flight he could look ahead to his own martyrdom, but no immediate help would have come to the Church by his loss; because his death would have availed little as a remedy unless it had procured the approval of authority for his life and his cause. In this way he would be a model for the churches.

The Church of France had readily subsided, so that, from that quarter, provided with better counsel, more secure in the assistance given it, when need would arise, stronger in the weight of his greater name, he could go on to the struggle and be more

1 John 10.11

90
sure of the victory. Therefore, as he had already greatly fulfilled his vow, he deemed it neither suitable nor safe to give himself up any longer for the king's pleasure, to false anxieties of peace and security attended with so much danger. And here was another very special reason: the whole trouble was raging because of him, and the status of the Church was in great hazard, and so following the example of David, and contrite of heart, he now said, "These that are the sheep, what have they done? let Thy hand, Lord, be turned against me." He was likewise mindful of the consolation that Isaias gave to Achaz: "Fear not, and let not thy heart be afraid of the two tails of these firebrands that are smoking." He had taken on the spirit of Mathathias saying, "Fear not the words of a sinful man, for his glory is dung, and worms; today he is lifted up, and tomorrow he shall not be found." He was zealous for the censure of John who had baptized Christ, who did not fear to say to the king, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife; nor was it lawful to defile the spouse of Christ. If, therefore, he had at first fled, in imitation of

2 2 Kings 24.17; Grex....me. This does not correspond exactly with the Vulgate, either of 2 Sam. 24.17, or of 1 Chron. 21.17.
3 Isaias 7.4; Incomplete; add: "with the wrath of fury".
4 1 Machabees 2.62-63
5 Mark 6.17
Christ, and after the example of Paul and some of the other followers of Christ, choosing a more opportune time, and the greater advantage of the Church, surely, as the time was now ripe, a time after a period of a more saintly life and the proof of the justice of his cause, and amidst the more urgent scandals of the Church, because his co-bishops neglected their official duty with subsequent danger to themselves, he followed the example of Christ Who addressed those sent by the chief priest to overtake Him, with the words "Whom seek ye? If therefore, you seek Me, let mine go their way." His determination was to return. He was ready to go to death or to prison; he was ready to spare not even his very life if the safety of the Church could be obtained in no other way. As if he knew beforehand that he was about to give his life, he foretold the future to some. The remembrance of his many great deeds worthy of confidence bore witness to this after his trial. And his letter afterwards appeared which he had written to the Pope on his return, thanking him humbly and ardently that he upheld his cause so mightily and steadfastly, and begging earnestly that he might deign to bestow on his Church his fatherly protection, on behalf of which, (as he added), he was certain that he was going to die.

6 Compare Matthew 10.23
7 2 Corinthians 11.33
8 John 18.7,8
CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE TIME OF HIS RETURN AND THE CAUSE OF A NEW DISTURBANCE

He returned in the seventh year of his exile, after a long penance during all this time, a penance almost unbearable, after having increased his learning in things ecclesiastical, and after having acquired far and wide a reputation for sanctity and wisdom. By an indulg of the See of Rome, he now had the proper dignity of a primate in England besides the authority of a legate. However, before he boarded the ship he sent ahead the above mentioned letters of the Pope. The first to receive these were the Bishops of York, London and Salisbury, who were then waiting for a favorable wind on the opposite shore to cross over to the king at his command. He (the king) was waiting on the mainland in order that new bishops might be appointed in the vacant sees of England on their advice; persons even from vacant churches were summoned thither as if to hold elections.
CHAPTER XI.

HOW THE MARK OF RASHNESS WAS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM

It seemed to some that, after peace had been established, he sent these letters, in a vindictive spirit, which had been issued only because of the loss of peace. Even the Pope had expressed a reason for sending these letters, namely, that he had merely used, on behalf of the archbishop, a lot of words without any request. Since there was now no reason behind them, they judged it would have been more prudent, that even these letters should have been suppressed, or that he should have provided a dispensation with regard to the absolution of the bishops for the establishment of peace, lest he seem unworthy of peace who in no wise followed the course of peace. For, as they judged, it would have been better to put off the reforming of his law until more peaceful days.
CHAPTER XII.

A NEW TROUBLE

At this juncture, the evil spirit in his slyness was contriving a greater evil against him. For the very one whom he knew he could not deceive in prosperity, nor break by adversity, who knew how to profit by every trial, tried to turn his very victory to death. He did this, in order that the Church might not recover under his guidance, and that in the crime of his persecutors he might compensate what he was not able to do against him. Under his suggestion, therefore, it looked as though the action taken against the bishops who were crossing redounded to the discredit of the king; soon a new disturbance took its rise. There followed the strong indignation, which could scarcely contain itself, of the faithful followers of the king, and a hatred of the officials. This was a clear indication of impending trouble. At his landing, a seditious meeting of soldiers and guards took place at the sea, and the impatience of these furious men would have taken vengeance (on him), if a guide appointed for him by the king had not checked their madness. Besides, in the Providence of God's retributive justice, a nobler death and a greater glory of suffering was in store for him.
CHAPTER XLIII.

HIS RECEPTION AND ESTEEM

Standing firm and fearless amidst these trials, he entered his see with supreme pomp and ceremony¹. He was received with the attendant manifestation of joy; his return was splendid and solemn. Then there followed much murmuring in the kingdom, some saying, "He is just and noble of heart", others said, "No, he seduces even himself², and acts in fear". For where would there be greater danger than the terrible vengeance over a crown which was not correctly placed? Or in what could the honor of the kingdom be more abused than in that point where the respect due to his pontifical dignity was denied him?

¹ hypapanti - derived from the Greek; hypo-pas-pa-sa-pa-pan--supreme.
² Scriptural language; compare John 7.12
CHAPTER XLIII.

HIS EXCUSE

To tell the truth, he was not able to disguise the harm of the injustice that was to come upon him. For after the prerogative of placing the crown on the young king had been taken away from him, to his even greater confusion it was brought about that the consecration of the suffragan bishops to be appointed would take place without his services; even the question of their consecration was to have been handled without his knowledge. Because of this, while he was returning to the kingdom, an assembly of the vacant sees was summoned outside the kingdom, so that no party would be under his rule. In this way, against his own better judgment, his rivals might do everything on the advice of the Bishop of York. As long as London and Salisbury chose to be united, it was clear that they were working to his undoing. Likewise, they were preparing to do this in spite of the laws of the Church, because while the freedom of election according to the custom of the kingdom did not belong to the churches, but only the necessity of obeying, there was no election in their preferment, but only the order of the king's will was waited for. Therefore, an open and apparent danger was impending. This was a proof
that peace was not being observed. On account of this, he deemed it wise that a letter of restraint be sent ahead, so that the chance of doing harm might be less because his adversaries would be checked. While they had to look to their own interests, they would not be free to work his undoing. Moreover, he complained to the king, before his return, about those who presumed on his position and obtained his sanction, to follow his own right in everything feasible. And lest he be branded as a disturber of peace, although it was dangerous for him to absolve those whom the Pope had bound, he nevertheless, offered them absolution provided that they would take upon themselves the customary and required oath, that under pain of excommunication they would obey either his own or the Pope's will. Their request was that they would be permitted full freedom, in view of peace which had been established, and in view of the honor of the king which they had at heart. Their hearing was without avail and they departed silent.
CHAPTER XLIV.

HIS STEADFASTNESS

Meanwhile, though the force of the disturbance grew from
day to day, he was not remiss or fearful in regulating the af-
fairs of his house. He took care to be a fearless and stead-
fast defender of the liberty of the Church, and was like the
tower built in Jerusalem over against Damascus\(^1\). And so that
he might visit the new king at Winton\(^2\), he went as far as
London, where, although received and visited with due honor
by clerics and lay-people, he aroused much envy among the ill-
willed and no little danger for his visitors. There too, the
new king ordered him on the advice of some who were schemers,
not to dare to go abroad through the cities and villages of
the kingdom but to confine himself to his own domain. So,
having gone back, he chose to remain at home in his own See of
Canterbury. Nevertheless, in all these adversities, his anger
was not turned away, but his hand was still stretched out\(^3\).
For, holding firm the resolution of protecting the right of the

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1 Canticle of Canticles 7.4
2 A part of Bournemouth, Hampshire, in southern England.
3 Isaiah 5.25: The word is "furor" in Isaiah 5.25; 9.12,17, 21, Vulgate.
Church, and "always keeping strictly to honor" he stepped upon the way of severity, and turned neither to the right nor to the left.

4 Lucan. ii, 389.
CHAPTER XLV.

HOW HIS FIRMNESS WAS CENSURED AND HOW IT WAS EXCUSED

Many judged that he should have, at that time, more advisedly turned to a path of mildness and moderation, and should have gone out of his way for a short time by enduring conditions, tolerating minor evils and avoiding worse, so that the peace of the Church, which had still scarcely entered its doors, might not depart from it by his coming. But as if secure in the purity of his life and more strongly inflamed with zeal for the honor of the Church, and on guard against the mistake of his former promise, he was prompt to carry out that which was proper to the dignity of the spouse of Christ, and ready to suffer fearlessly whatever might befall him. For whatever had been taken over wrongly in matters ecclesiastical through the breakdown of mildness could not be rectified except by the strong hand of a rigid policy. And therefore, care was to be had that the medicine would be more powerful than the disease, so that the immoderate abuse would more quickly yield; for, in such a way, opposites are cured by opposites; so also, as twisted branches are directed into an opposite, until the crookedness of wood is made straight, a flashback is not to be feared. Bearing the name and dignity of a legate of the Apos-
tolic See, contrary to the custom of the kingdom and without the agreement of the king, he pondered over the weight of his great authority. That was why the anger and hatred of those who envied him was keener; the fierceness of the assault, in his case, was greater; and the insults were more frequent. But yet, in all these adversities, his anger was not turned away, but with his hand still stretched out, he drew out his spiritual sword against those who deserved it. There were those who more frequently presumed to bring the annoyance of loss and dishonor on him and his Church, contrary to law and justice, so while he chastised them for this with ecclesiastical censure, the more did the anger of the envious grow against him. At last the boldness of the more powerful brought about what the madness of the latter did not effect.

1 Isaiah 5.25
CHAPTER XLVI.

THE REASON AND MANNER OF HIS DEATH

Meanwhile, his persecutors angered at the recollection of the old complaints and unable to endure this, drew up a plan of restraint—to take him and cast him into prison. For, in this way, they thought that the anger of their lord king could be appeased. Certain nobles of the Court and friends of the king hastened from across the sea, just as if the evil spirit were guiding them to this crime, and without any hindrance or delay, they arrived at Canterbury, on the fifth day after Christmas¹, having secretly sought for help from the inhabitants of the place and from those ill-disposed towards the archbishop. After luncheon, on the same day, when the household were usually dispersed, they came as if to visit him alone, but their purpose really was to see whether they could more easily catch him off guard. They were admitted into the interior chamber as though they were distinguished and well-known young men of the king's Court. There, with his clerics and monks, the prelate was having an afternoon conference on the love of God. They were received with kindness and with

¹ December 29, 1170.
dignity. They replied to questions concerning their own health and that of their lord king. Then they started bitterly to accuse him unjustly and rashly because action had been taken against the friends of the king. As he strove to defend himself against these (accusations) by valid reasons, they, as if extremely weary of the delay, went out quickly, shouting insults and threats, even violently dragging out with them some of the archbishop's servants, declaring in the king's name that there might be an easier way out for their conceived plan. Nevertheless, in all these things, "his anger was not turned away," but from then on, his heart was more attentive to seeking those things that are Jesus Christ's, nor was he in the least bit troubled. And indeed, he so conducted himself as though he thought there was nothing to be done in his predicament, all the time maintaining his purpose of enduring whatever might happen.

Meanwhile, these abettors of the crime rushed into the hall. There was a great noise of arms, so that the guards of the archbishop's house in honest fear closed the doors and barred them against the onrush of that mob. They did this to

2 Isaias 5.25
3 Compare Philippians 2.21
4 Compare John 14.1
5 Compare John 20.19
delay or ward off the evil which threatened. Excited and terrifed by the crowd and the noise, the group of clerics and monks which surrounded the archbishop could hardly persuade him, indeed, scarcely force him to betake himself into the Church. He was in no way frightened, but, as it were, master of himself, he believed that any delay of his martyrdom would be a lessening of his reward. Since they had locked the doors behind him, he ordered them to be opened, saying, "Far be it from us to make the Church of God a fortress". And surely, he could have put them to flight if he had wished, and he could have escaped the scoundrels but he thought it too unbecoming, and too evidently dangerous to give in further, especially as he had now publicly stated that he had come to give his life for the Church. That very day, after he had heard Mass he spent the time up to dinner in the chapter of monks, where he is said to have confessed his sins with the greatest sorrow to two monks of his Church that were more fervent. He performed his penance obediently, according to their judgment. For he had now been long accustomed to this practice of humility, so that, wheresoever there might be a number of these religious, he would submit himself to their advice. Then he proceeded, that he might stand before the high altar, and on his very throne, if the need should arise, he might accomplish the struggle, and pour forth his blood for Christ in the very place where he was wont to immolate Christ for his own and the world's
salvation. These cut-throats now drew their forces together since they had not been able to take him in his own house as they had planned, nor even enter the house. Under a certain Robert de Broc, a son of Belial, one who had always been more bitter in his attack upon him and his holdings and his faithful friends, and who had been excommunicated because of this, they broke a window and rushed into the cloister of the monks although these tried to oppose them and stop them.

When they cried out, "Where is the archbishop?" (for because of the late afternoon they could scarcely distinguish him), he met them on the steps which they had partly ascended, saying, "Here I am; what do you wish?" And as one of the soldiers cried out, "That you should die; for you can live no longer," he replied quietly, "And I am ready to die for God and my Church." They had come in armor and helmet and with drawn swords, in fear of which the monks suddenly dispersed hither and thither with the clerics, as if fulfilling again what is written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be dispersed." At first they tried to take him and kidnap him. But they lost hope of doing this, as he refused to follow them, and he told them so. Fearing that he would be saved by unexpected help, and would once more leave the kingdom, under the instigation of the devil, as it were, they became furious.

6 Compare 1 Kings 1.16
7 Matthew 26.31
against him in the terrible deed of murder. When, therefore, he was on the point of being struck, one of the clerics by the name of Edward Grim sprang ahead, and as if he were trying to rival the fidelity of St. Peter who defended his Master⁸. He boldly put forth his arm covered with his cloak against the raised swords, shouting in the meanwhile that they spare their archbishop. The bishop of Christ prevented this attempt, loyal though it was; he stopped it as being less proper, and (just as if mindful of the prohibition which Our Lord addressed to Peter, who had cut off the ear of the highpriest's servant, "Put up thy sword into the scabbard. The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it⁹?") "Stop, my brother", he said, "the Lord does not wish this defence". Meanwhile, the damnable soldier had no regard for the cleric, but enraged against him, with his sword he almost cut in two the arm that he had held against him, and by the strength of the blow, he laid him low on the pavement as though he were dead. O how praiseworthy is he who alone was found ready to suffer with his father¹⁰! And O how blessed, if it had been given to him from on high to die with him! Yes indeed, he

⁸ Compare Mark 14.47; John 18.10
⁹ John 18.11
would have merited the name and reward of a martyr, and he would have given his life for his master if he had had the courage to defend his cause. Surely you can believe that his escape is due to intervention from on high lest the holy man, whose contest it really was, be deprived of any praise and glory proper to him, and lest the perversity of the evil-minded judge the worth of the miracles which followed by the sole merits of his disciple.

Then the brave champion said to his executioners, "If you wish to take my life, I forbid you, under pain of excommunication on the part of God, to touch any of my followers, because they are not to be blamed for anything that I have done". Then following, as it were, not the words, but the meaning of the answer of Our Lord, he went on, "If therefore you seek me, let these go their way!". Finally, fortifying himself with the sign of the Cross, and joining his hands in prayer to God, bowing his head towards the swords that were raised, he stood quietly, and said these, his last words, "I commend myself and my Church to God and to the Virgin Mary and to the Saints of this Church and to Blessed Denis". Under the impulse of the devil, the attack of that frenzied mob soon fell upon him with swords; an onrush all the more wicked as he had not protected

11 John 18:8
himself and had not foreseen it and that it had not been thought of or discussed. And yet he remained quiet and in no way disturbed. For even still, "his anger was not turned away», but having then extended his neck, he bravely received the powerful blows on his head once blessed and consecrated with chriam. Why prolong the story? O the grief of it! The bitter crime of these cruel men killed him and laid him low by cutting off the top of the head of the Lord's anointed, the blessed of God, before the altar of St. Benedict, five days after the birth of Christ. It was by a wonderful dispensation of God, that he died before the tombs of the archbishops that had preceded him. He did not resist, nor complain, nor murmur, nor moan, but after some blows had fallen upon him he stretched himself, as it were, for prayer upon the floor, so that even here also, "his anger was not turned away», but from that time, the soul of that man, betaking itself towards Heaven, left a just fear of a more terrible vengeance. When one has gone into eternity, the Church is rightly believed to look for the punishment of injuries done in proportion to the bitterness of the passion she has suffered, but she bears her own sufferings more happily in proportion as she has hope of retribution

12 Isaias 5.25
13 Compare 1 Kings 24.7,11
14 Isaias 5.25
to follow. For he had finished his course and had kept his faith, and, as for the rest, correctly did he hope that a crown of justice was reposing for him. Then one of the soldiers, that same son of Belial, more abominable among the other criminals in all the ages by his crime, digging with the point of his sword in the skull of the dead man, threw out the rest of the brain and scattered it over the floor, not so much lest no doubt remain of death in one who was already dead, but rather to satisfy his madness for cruelty.

15 Compare 2 Timothy 4.7
16 Compare 1 Kings 1.16
CHAPTER XLVII.

THE INVECTIVE AGAINST HIS MURDERERS

What bitter cruelty! What terrible madness! What insensible wickedness! that he should undertake so irreverently to pry into the sacred parts of that blessed head, so brutally, so abominably! Our ears shrink back from hearing that terrible crime; the heart cannot grasp it and words cannot describe it. This unique and outstanding impious wickedness will not allow its memory to die out; its remembrance will always arouse new astonishment of horror for those who recall it. But the executioners were not contented and satisfied with themselves in consequence of this ignoble deed, for having accomplished this impious slaughter. They had proceeded in the manner of plunderers, as if ignoble in their greed and abominable in their crime. After accomplishing their crime, they broke into the palace of the Church, they thoroughly examined every corner of the rooms, and all the furniture and whatever they found in chests or in trunks or in saddle-bags, either those of the archbishop himself or those of his attendants. The gold, silver, clothing or vestments, and books and horses and all luggage, they claimed as their own with the violence of insatiable
avarice. They left nothing either to the rich or poor of the archiepiscopal palace except the garment they wore.
CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE ENORMITY OF THE DEED

That deed was as disastrous as it was abominable. If they did this in the green wood, the fear was—what wouldn't be done in the dry? Any house of God was formerly an asylum for any deed no matter how wicked. But if this was the mother church of the kingdom, if, having the title and name not of any saint but of all the saints of God, if it was enriched by many privileges, if it ought to be revered for its many relics of the saints, could it not be the protection of its father and pastor? Where, finally, could there be hope of any refuge? In truth, where was a place left for the perpetrators of a crime? If the blood of Abel, spilled upon the earth; if the blood of Zacharias, poured forth between the temple and the altar, cries to the Lord from the earth, how much more ter-

1 Compare Luke 23.31
3 Compare Genesis 4.8
4 2 Paralipomenon 24.21
5 Compare Matthew 23.35
rible would it sound where the Holy of Holies itself was defiled before the altar in so bitter a way and so profanely? In truth then, there is here more than a Doeg, the messengers of King Saul; because these criminals are to be the more condemned, the more sacred a bishop of our own day is than Achimelech and his whole household. But neither did this excuse them that they had persuaded him to annihilate himself as if he were cursed and a traitor to his Lord. For there was no clear evidence of any betrayal, but all the mistakes of past times had been blotted out through the intervention of peace and pardon. Finally, even thus to lay violent hands in wickedness on the Lord's anointed could be nothing but a sacriligious murder, and the more so as the place was more sacred, the season more glorious, and the person more elevated. For Saul was a criminal and rejected by God, and nevertheless David, whom he pursued, was holy and very contrite of heart because he had cut off the edge of his robe, and said, "The Lord be merciful to me, that I do not lay my hand on him, because he is the Lord's anointed." And again, the one who confessed that he had gone into the home of the Amalecite and had slain him

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6 Compare 1 Kings 22.9-22
7 Compare Matthew 27.5
8 Compare 1 Kings 24.7,11
9 1 Kings 24.5,12
said, "Thy blood be on thy own head; for thy own mouth hath spoken against thee, saying, 'I have slain the Lord's anointed.' Therefore, by that act they were more worthy of death, indeed, even of expiating by death, who had raised a hand against him who was not only the Lord's anointed, but one who had even consecrated bishops, and who had consecrated the king himself and had ordained priests, and who had conferred every Sacrament, and who did not fear to consecrate even Christ, the King of kings, at the altar.

10 2 Kings 1.16
CHAPTER XLIX.
A BUILD-UP OF THE CRIME

Surely, the holiness of the one who suffered greatly adds to the type of the crime. His sanctity was vouched for first of all on presumptive evidence and secondly on the many miracles that happened after his death. For when they were ready to bury him and he had been stripped of his garments to prepare him for burial, he was found entirely covered with a rough hair-shirt from shoulder to waist, and wearing over it a monk's habit as if he were a father of the monastery, and showing only exteriorly the garb of his office. So he lacked nothing of the religious habit. What was even more wonderful, and at first unheard of, was that he also had next to his flesh drawers of hair-cloth beneath his linen. Likewise, in his hair-shirt, there seemed to crawl so much vermin, that the greater part was covered by it. Very many of these had penetrated the skin, were seen to adhere very deeply in the flesh. Although only a few were aware of it, and as if they themselves were witnesses, he had lived out the whole seven years (of his exile) in this torture, dead so many days before his death and the food of worms. Truly wonderful was the fortitude of this
blessed man who, after wearing the purple and linen\textsuperscript{1}, subjected his flesh to mortifications under the shroud of death, condemned a flesh accustomed as it was to delicacies, to undergo such lowness. Truly he despises worldly things, when a man of such illustrious power and glory makes himself contemptible. What sighs, what grief on the part of all! What mourning on the part of the monks in whose sight they uncovered him! Who could restrain his tears? Who could even refrain from praising the Creator? Who would not compassionate his suffering? Who would not congratulate him removed from all these evils? Who would not give thanks to God Who gave such a great grace of perseverance? Who could rightly disbelieve in the retribution to follow? And indeed, he had truly borne the Cross in his body\textsuperscript{2}, crucified as he had been for so long with corruption and concupiscence. And indeed, he had finished his suffering by giving his life after having been so cruelly attached to the Cross. Nor could it be justly presumed that if he had not followed Christ faithfully, he would have been repaid by Christ with a happy reward.

\textsuperscript{1} Compare Luke 16.19

\textsuperscript{2} Compare Galatians 2.19
CHAPTER L.
WHY HE SHOULD SOON HAVE THE TITLE OF MARTYR

He is a martyr who must be judged not alone on the record of his precious death; he is even greater as the cause of his death is more unique. Scarcely anyone will refuse to die for the faith of Christ, unless his faith be weak; only he who is more perfect in love will long to die for the laws of the Church. What is more rare and more difficult is also rightly to be judged as being more glorious, for he who is faithful in little things is faithful in greater things. And the glory of his death is illustrated in the case of him who "born of woman, there arose none greater." He was so zealous for the law as to say to Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to take thy brother's wife," he was martyred and is ranked amongst the greatest of martyrs. Even the Church considered and praised the Machabees as outstanding martyrs because they fought bravely even unto death for the laws of their fathers. So, too, was this man to

1 Compare Luke 19.17
2 Compare Matthew 11.11; Luke 7.28
3 Mark 6.18
4 Compare 1 Machabees 2.19,20
be numbered among the greatest of martyrs, as he in championing the cause of ecclesiastical liberty, obtained an equal glory.
CHAPTER LI.

THE OPPOSING VERDICT OF HIS ENEMIES

There were those who ventured to say that he had been a victim rather of the desire of vain glory and a longing for his own vindication; that he had fought, not without a certain kind of pride, although under the guise of justice. For it is written that, "The cause, not the suffering, makes the martyr"¹, because He Who is the Truth says, "Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake"². But if it was not the suffering, neither was it the cause alone. For, first of all, his zeal for justice was the act of a fool and not according to knowledge; for the Apostle spoke to all men "not to be more wise than it behooveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety"³. Secondly, being beyond bounds, his zeal was not proper; for Salomon says, "Be not over just: a just man perisheth in his justice"⁴. For not even the suffering of martyrdom is profitable without charity; as the Apostle says, "If I should dis-

¹ Aug. Serm. ccixxv. 2.
² Matthew 5.10
³ Romans 12.3
⁴ Ecclesiastes 7.16,17
tribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. The love of God cannot exist with the hatred of one's neighbor; "for he that loveth not his neighbor whom he seeth, how can he love God, Whom he seeth not?" Then too, without the love of God, one cannot attain the Kingdom of Heaven, nor escape the pains of hell. For there is no middle road, as He Who says it cannot lie, "He that is not with Me, is against Me." One must needs be a satellite of Babylon or a fellow-citizen of Jerusalem. But in this world there is no true virtue without the root of charity, even in the best of characters. Most people have the appearance of virtue, but not its reality. "For often", according to the testimony of Blessed Gregory, "vices disguise themselves as virtues, when obstinacy wishes to appear as frugality, prodigality as liberality, cruelty as zeal for justice, remissness as duty." From these facts, therefore, many argued stubbornly that if the archbishop was not really virtuous, he could not have won the crown of martyrdom, for in many ways he was pompous, puffed up, crafty, cruel, and harsh. This was not unknown to his own.

5 1 Corinthians 13.3
6 1 John 4.20
7 Matthew 12.30
8 Moral. xxiii.19; xxxii.45; Hom. in Ezech. I. xii.25.
For where there is a great array of vices, there can be no place for virtue. Virtue and vice cannot exist side by side. For Saint Augustine says that because avarice is the root of all evil\(^9\), and charity the root of all good, both cannot be present at the same time\(^10\). Unless one is plucked out by the root, the other cannot be planted. And where pride is supreme, there is no place for humility; where there is cruelty, there is no right of justice; where vain glory is found, there is no hope of reward. Therefore, they said, the edifice of martyrdom could not be erected on such a foundation. The more the people approved of him, the more they kept telling them to be on their guard lest there be applied to him the text, "Amen, I say to you, you have received your reward\(^11\)."

\(^9\) Compare 1 Timothy 6.10

\(^10\) De Gratia Christi, 20.

\(^11\) Matthew 6.2, 5, 16
CHAPTER LIII.

HIS VINDICATION

Truly, after the days of his early penance, no deed of cruelty or avarice could be alleged against him except falsely; indeed, it was quite right to believe that the faults of the past, if there were any, had been well atoned for by penance. Nor did he suffer from the vice of arrogance or pride or harshness, but preserving humility within, and on guard against any appearance of scorn from without, he considered the honor of the burden which he bore, and, by his own character, he increased the position of his dignity. In order to avoid the prestige (doxa) which he had sought, he strove to judge things rather according to his conscience than according to the favor of men. That was why he often chose that which was difficult in appearance, and, in his work, he always sought after those things which are of Christ. And he even went so far as to conceal the finer points which were so pronounced in him, so that no one was more interested in manifesting his faults than he was in concealing his virtues. Though there was no evidence

1 Compare Philippians 2.21
2 Compare Matthew 6.1
of his virtues, yet in all doubtful issues, a kinder interpretation must be followed, so that the very points which might cause a doubt in the soul should always be interpreted for the better. For that which is written, "By their fruits you shall know them," was said about those open deeds, which cannot be performed with a good intention, such as adultery, theft, and blasphemy. There are actions which are good in themselves, such as acts of virtue, namely, to feed the poor, to clothe the naked. These can be done with either a good or a bad intention. It is rash to judge these, especially so as to condemn them; it happened that many of these virtues appeared in the life and death of the archbishop, which can give us a better insight into his character in as much as they were more numerous and wonderful. Even as he had distinguished himself as one of the eminent men of his time, before his very promotion, so also afterwards did he strive, fighting for Christ, to be prominent among the leaders of the true faith. He knew only one thing, to be one of the greatest, no matter what station of life he would have chosen. And thus, soon after his elevation, he entered upon the narrow way of life. He walked upon it as it grew more narrow and more confined by the trials that

3 Matthew 7.16
4 Compare Matthew 7.14
he suffered, and as he became more zealous in the care of the Church he stood forth as a more generous emulator of the traditions of the Church. If he had disregarded these traditions, if he had chosen to please men more, and had prized more highly their statutes, even those of the king, and of all those who were around the king, he could have exercised a greater power as he was an outstanding teacher and ruler. But though he recalled the words of the tempter, "All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me," he embraced rather that word of Christ, "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." As if fearing the words of Pope Anacletus, "There is nothing more wretched than the shepherd who boasts of the praise of the wolves," he chose to be abject in the house of God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.

Who can deny these facts, since they are beyond doubt, or who should not interpret them in better part without the testimony of miracles that followed? He courageously defended the laws of the Church which curtailed the power of the king. Be-

5 Compare Galatians 1.14
6 Matthew 4.9
7 Ibid., 4.10
9 Compare Psalms 83.11
cause of this, their hatred began and grew, persecution raged, and finally, there came the sad condition of his cruel murder. It is known that he suffered, not at the hands of common and vulgar men or even of men of the middle class, but at the hands of outstanding men of the court and nobles of the kingdom. Bitter though it was, he was filled with honor. In that one act, the nobility of his murderers, the sanctity of the place, and the solemnity of the season, all wonderfully concurred to establish more prominently the shamefulness of the deed and the glory of his death. But what is still more remarkable is that midway between the death of this Thomas and the birthday of the Apostle Thomas there should be the Birth of Christ. It is noted: The fifth day followed the feast even as the fifth day preceded it. This happened as though the birthdays of those whose names are alike and also their martyrdom should be equally distant from the feast of Christ and they be not unlike Christ. But who can presume to compare him with the Apostle? Yet St. Augustine says, "I think that without any affront, Bishop Cyprian may be compared to the Apostle Peter when we consider the crowning glory of his martyrdom\textsuperscript{10}." I should fear lest I appear to cast any reflection on Peter. For who does not know that the topmost point of the Apostleship

ought to be preferred to the episcopacy? But if the honor of
rank is different, the glory of martyrdom is one and the same.
Therefore, in the case of him in whom no evil appeared, doesn't
it seem more just that his good points should be interpreted
for the better? His cause is so just, his life so praiseworthy,
and his death so wonderful. If in the very beginning of his
honored career there was any fault, he had corrected it, and it
can well be believed that he had atoned for it by the glory of
his extraordinary death. Therefore, it should appear evident
that through grace he attained Heaven, towards which he had al-
ways tended on earth, and that he obtained a prominent place
among the number of the other martyrs.
CHAPTER LIII.

HIS MARTYRDOM PROVED BY MIRACLES

Therefore, oppressed and blinded by the cloud of their old hatred, his enemies did not look upon the martyrdom and its attending circumstances as they should have. The simple faith of the common people was afraid at first to call for that which fear of the mighty prevented. The voice of God began to be heard, when the people's murmur came to His ears until the testimony of the truth came forth from the darkness and finally what the murmurings of the lesser people indicated became known among the unbelieving and the great ones by his miracles. How far removed are human (judgments) from those of God! Even we had thought his life madness\(^1\), when, not content with the rule laid down by those that had gone before, he was zealous for the rights of the Church contrary to the customs and against the very advice of his associates. He was not moved by any favor or fear. He feared neither loss nor death, but he resisted the king to his face\(^2\), to whom, besides

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1 Compare Wisdom 5.4
2 Compare Galatians 2.11
England, the greater part of the kingdom of France paid homage; at whose name kings and nations, all about, stood in awe; to whom anything that he sought became subservient. But the greater the adversary, the stronger was his opponent, and, from the events which followed, the truer champion. In truth he was counted among the sons of God. It appeared on all sides from the greatness of his power which followed at his tomb and at the place where he had been slain and in which his bier had stood. Then it went to many parts of the kingdom, then to the whole world, in which his help was implored. Among these (facts), since signs are for unbelievers, not for believers, Divine Providence was thought to have acted so that the justice of his cause might appear more certain to the unbelieving, and in reverence, those that would imitate him would do penance and the Church might become stronger.

It happened that his glory grew from then on, far above the wrong he had borne. Briefly, the fame of his reputation penetrated not only the nearest and farthest corners of England, but it also went over into many nations of the outside world. To such a degree did it stir up cities, towns, villages, and the very hamlets throughout England, that from the humblest even to the greatest, few remained who did not come to visit

3 Compare Romans 8.14
4 Compare 1 Corinthians 14.22
and honor the tomb of the celebrated martyr. To this place the same spirit of devotion attracted priests and laymen, poor and rich, the lower classes and the nobles, fathers and mothers with their children, masters with their servants. The roads leading to Canterbury were jammed with such a crowd of people who were running and frequenting shops and taverns, that everywhere large crowds could be seen like at a country-fair. The nights, scarcely less than the days; and winters, scarcely less than summers, slowed down the stream of wayfarers, and the more bitter the weather, the more delightful was it deemed to fulfill the promise of a visit, because when the going was more difficult, the hope of reward was also greater. From regions far away and across the seas the pilgrims gathered. There number was as great as the number of pilgrims from England. According to remarks made by men who had visited holy places throughout the world and who were well known and reliable, not even to the See of St. Peter (Rome), nor to the shrine of St. James (in Spain) or that of any other saint, no, not even to the sepulchre of Christ was there seen a more constant and a greater gathering of men nor a more distinct veneration shown by votive offerings. Certainly, the miracle that stood out more truly and more prominently among the rest of them, although these were certain and outstanding enough, was that so many men

of so many nations assembled here united in one great devotion.

Who would believe that that marvelous place had inspired so many hearts to the exaltation of Christ and especially of His Spouse, unless it was He Who is marvelous in His saints and who makes all of one mind to dwell in His house? Who would be accounted as having brought about that magnificent devotion, unless it was He Who crowns his servants with glory and honor, and gives the hundredfold to those who have left (all) for Him? Truly our glorious champion ascended with his Lord above the setting sun, because from the death by which he fell for justice's sake, he arose undoubtedly greater in the opinion of men. For God raised him up and gave him a name above the name of all the saints, so that their names having been forgotten for a while, they might swear in his name, and for his sake the poor might seek alms and the rich might give them. What was even greater—as the metropolitan church in which he had suffered had the title of the Blessed Trinity, as if he had won that title by the price of his own blood—, God yielded in

6 Compare Psalms 67.36
7 Compare ibid., 132.1
8 Compare Matthew 19.29
9 Compare Psalms 67.5
10 Compare Philippians 2.9
this respect to his martyr; it began to be called rather by his name, to such a degree that (anyone) coming to Canterbury or returning from there believed himself guilty of no small offence if he said that he had not gone to St. Thomas or had returned from St. Thomas. The very first (pilgrims) on their return were accustomed to bring back a sign of their pilgrimage either from the sepulchre of Christ or from St. James, from the latter stones, palm branches from the former. Those returning from St. Thomas received a third but more precious sign, as if the yoke of the martyr were sweet and his burden light\textsuperscript{11}, namely a phial made of lead and silver hanging from their neck on their breast, filled with a little holy water mixed with his holy blood. Its great virtue and efficacy among countless sick people in many lands of the earth cannot be told (in words).

This certainly can be credited to the glory of him to whom God in His goodness had given so much honor in this world. This also is known from his martyrdom, that his Master and Head, Our Lord Jesus Christ, obtained this in His own suffering. For, as we read in the History of the Church, when the report concerning Christ spread far and wide, Pilate reported His actions to the emperor Tiberius, and said how He was taken for God by most people. Tiberius made a report of this to the

\textsuperscript{11} Compare Matthew 11.30
Senate. The Senate is said to have scorned him because the opinion of the common crowd had overruled his authority.\(^\text{12}\) What, therefore, would be believed to have been done in this (case) unless that Christianity is more the work of God than of men? For it was God's plan that the faith of Christ should have more of His own inspiration than any authority that came out of Rome, and similarly in the case of our martyr, his enemies would find no cause when a request would be made of the Apostolic See and not obtained, that his name would be placed in the catalogue of the saints. Divine favor so arranged it that he obtained the very excellent honor of a martyr in a public celebration. And in the distinguished merit of honor the past history of the holy place fully compensated for the insults suffered; for over and above all the confusion occasioned by the damnable murder a far greater joy resulted from the glory of the deeds that followed. For their came both for the churches and all ecclesiastical personages that longed-for period in which all attempts at interference were stopped and peace, far above all the trials and a greater degree of honor resulted because of the honor of the martyr. There was hope that a statement that he made when still alive would be fulfilled, namely that the Church of God would be set free only by the shedding of blood. This he (Becket) had ardently desired

\(^{12}\) Euseb. ii. 2; Croesus, vii. 4. Cf. Tertullian, Apol. 5.
would be brought about by his own blood, nor had he ceased to pray (for it), and it was very evident that he was about to be heard for his reverence. In the end, fear and admiration compelled his more powerful rivals among the other princes and nobles of the kingdom to pray devoutly, prostrate before his sacred tomb amid tears and lamentations, and to seek pardon for their sins. But, it would have been the greatest folly not to heed so many great and evident mighty deeds of God, to disagree with the unanimous testimony of so many great (miracles), as the voice of the people is the voice of God. And He, in Whose hands lie the hearts of kings, touched more deeply the heart of that illustrious and devout king. To obey the legates of the Church of Rome, who were rashly crossing over England, from Ireland which he subjugated, to Normandy, he first declared in the presence of the legates and his clergy across the sea, himself innocent of the murder by an oath wishing to re-establish his own reputation. Then, openly professing his own guilt in this (deed), (saying) that his anger had given occasion to the crime, so eminent a leader of the empire took upon himself the humblest penance, leaving the great and serious burden of his atonement to the judgment of

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13 Compare Hebrews 5.7
14 Compare Isaias 66.6
15 The king with the legates at Avranches, 1172.
the legates, and promising an immediate correction of all abuses in England. This illustrious defender of the Spouse of Christ conquered completely and, in his death, obtained what he could not obtain when alive, either by admonitions, or threats, or the terrors of ecclesiastical censure. Therefore, the series and variety of the great deeds attributed to his merit will be better disclosed by their records in the writings of those to whom was entrusted the work of examining these miracles and verifying them. For to hand down to us the sanctity of the martyr, the justice of his cause, the truth of his martyrdom, the declaration of his knowledge and memory, was dearer to the heart, that it might be for posterity a means whereby they might know how to avoid investigating the question any further. If there be one who fails to take note of this, let him fear Jesus Christ Our Lord, whom the zeal of His house hath eaten up and to Whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit is honor and power through all ages. Amen

END OF THE SUFFERING OF THE MOST
BLESSED THOMAS, MARTYR,
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister M. Aimee du Sacre-Coeur Toutant, S.H.N. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Classical Languages.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

December 1, 1960
Date

[Signature of Advisor]