THE THOMAS BECKET AFFAIR :

AN EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

by

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DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed J. E. Smith..... (candidate)

Date 28 April 2022.....

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote(s). Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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ABSTRACT

The dispute between Thomas Becket and Henry II in the mid-twelfth century is one of the seminal events in English medieval history. The struggle between the king and the archbishop is well-known, but the reasons and driving forces behind the struggle are less clear. Although widely accepted as a clash of personalities, not much emphasis has been given to the emotions that would have led to the clash. Emotions can be very powerful, and there is little doubt that they can sway the actions of an individual or a group either today or in the past. This study traces the flow of emotions through the contemporary letters to establish what participants were thinking, saying and doing at points throughout the crisis. Attitudes by these people towards each other are revealed, and these demonstrate that the strength of their emotions had an extraordinary effect, especially on the archbishop's side, which altered and probably extended the dispute. The influence of Becket's companions is considered; their reactions to their own experiences coloured their activities which in turn contributed to the unfolding catastrophe. Contrary to what may be popular belief, even after being consecrated archbishop, it appears that Thomas Becket was not at first indisputably the champion of the Church and although later on he adopted this mantle and can be described as dying as metaphorically he wore it, the actions of his companions suggest that they were more influential in Thomas's journey to martyrdom than has previously been remarked upon. Taking the evidence of the letters together with reminiscences from the medieval biographies and allying these to an examination of what was actually happening, the study provides a theory of how the relationship between a king and his chancellor metamorphosed into a fight of dramatic proportions that led to a fatal conclusion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was largely researched and written during a global pandemic when libraries and other document repositories were closed. Thus the sources accessed have been in printed format from my private collection and those readily available on the internet. Sadly I have not therefore been able to enjoy the personal expertise of librarians or archivists.

However, the study would not have come to fruition without the support and help of the staff at the University of Wales, Trinity St David, both on the administrative and the academic sides. They have also played their parts in smoothing my path through the difficulties of distance learning. I have learned a great deal from my association with the University, and I hope I have been able to demonstrate at least some of this in the study.

Janet Elizabeth Smith.

CONTENTS

ABBREVIATED REFERENCES

CTB1	Anne J. Duggan, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket Archbishop of Canterbury 1162-1170*, 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, repr. 2007)
CTB2	Anne J. Duggan, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket Archbishop of Canterbury 1162-1170*, 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, repr. 2007)
EHD	David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway, *English Historical Documents*, Vol. II 1042-1189, 2nd edn (London: Eyre Methuen, 1981)
GFL	Dom Adrian Morey and C.N.L. Brooke, *Gilbert Foliot and his Letters* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965)
LCGF	Z.N. Brooke, completed by Dom Adrian Morey and C.N.L. Brooke, eds, *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot Abbot of Gloucester (1139-48) Bishop of Hereford (1148-63) and London (1163-87)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967)
LJS1	W.J. Millor and H.E. Butler, eds, *The Letters of John of Salisbury: Volume One: The Early Letters (1153-1161)*, revised by C.N.L. Brooke (London: Thomas Nelson, 1955)
LJS2	W.J. Millor, and C.N.L. Brooke, eds, *The Letters of John of Salisbury: Volume Two: The Later Letters (1163-1180)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)
MTB	James Craigie Robertson, ed., *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1875-1885, repr. 2012)
ODNB	*Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

INTRODUCTION

One of the most notable events of the twelfth century was the murder of Thomas Becket in his own cathedral at Canterbury on 29 December 1170. He was not the first archbishop of Canterbury to be dispatched violently while in office and neither would he be the last,[1] but arguably his killing was the most contentious and it is certain that his was the most memorable.[2] This fame was not just because he quickly attained the status of a saint in 1173,[3] nor that his tomb became a famous shrine, pre-eminent in England,[4] and a destination of pilgrimage until its despoliation in 1538,[5] but largely due to the very public and acrimonious nature of the dispute between him and Henry II. It was a dispute believed to be based on several points of issue between them, itemized in the famous Constitutions of Clarendon,[6] but it was exacerbated by an apparent clash of personalities.

Such a conflict as happened between the king and the archbishop inevitably involves the incitement of emotions of various kinds on all sides, and it is these emotions which will be the focus of the following study. Prevalent emotional themes as can be detected from the texts written at the time take the centre of the stage and from them it can be seen how the dispute itself was shaped and driven. Emotions in history need to be taken seriously, as has been pointed out;[7] the emotions themselves gave birth to strong reactions that undoubtedly affected the passage of history. Actions can and do provoke reactions, and sometimes a

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[1] The names St Alphege or Ælfheah (d. 1012) and Simon Sudbury (d. 1381) come to mind: Edward Carpenter, *Cantuar: The Archbishops in their Office* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1988), pp. 37-38, 71-72.

[2] Michael Staunton writes that the 'frequency of references to Thomas in the historical writing of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries suggests [...] that his death was regarded as one of the most significant events of the age, not only in England but well beyond': 'Thomas Becket in the Chronicles' in *The Cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet World, c. 1170-c. 1220*, ed. by Paul Webster and Marie-Pierre Gelin (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2021), pp. 95-111 (p. 110).

[3] Frank Barlow, 'Thomas Becket' in *ODNB* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/27201> [accessed 28 October 2020] (para. 41 of 45). His martyrdom generated much emotion, resulting in a great deal of artefacts commemorating the event: William Urry, *Thomas Becket: His Last Days* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), p. 171.

[4] Simon Coleman and John Elsner, *Pilgrimage Past and Present: Sacred travel and sacred space in the world religions* (London: British Museum Press, 1995), p. 111.

[5] Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England 1400-1580* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 412.

[6] These were 'ancient customs' codified by Henry II which caused dissension between Henry and Becket; they can be seen in Michael Staunton, trans. and annot., *The Lives of Thomas Becket: selected sources translated and annotated by Michael Staunton* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 92-96.

[7] Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 1.

spiralling crisis is instigated by a flurry of emotions. This study suggests that a cause of the Thomas Becket Affair was the strong emotions flooding the participants, and especially the household and wider circle of Archbishop Thomas Becket.

Rosenwein and Cristiani have written that 'the study of emotions should not [...] form a separate strand of history but rather inform every historical inquiry',[8] and this work has taken the advice seriously. By examining these perceived feelings and the actions they engendered, the tragic drama can be seen more clearly for the accident of circumstance it was, rather than a calculated plan either for Henry to subjugate the Church or Thomas Becket to marginalize the king, although both these ultimately became objectives of the differing factions. Therefore a selection of the perceptible emotions shown in the letters and, sometimes, in the recorded actions of the participants will guide the development of this work: resentment and pride, fear, anger and hope. These will be linked to other notable forces that complemented and intensified the political processes which were the substance of the bitter struggle between the king and the Church as represented by Thomas Becket.

The study of emotions in the past is not straightforward. Rosenwein has discussed the different attitudes emotions in history adopted by various scholars,[9] and there can never be a single and undisputed understanding of them. The cultural and social environment in which an individual finds himself will probably influence the emotions felt and, as is pointed out in the ensuing work, increased isolation or excited collaboration may cause unexpected rises in certain types of emotion, especially anger. So the consideration of emotions in history is like seeing flashes of light through a dark window, difficult to catch and even more problematic to use as illumination. Notwithstanding this, with the intense study of personal documents, it is possible to piece together a comprehensible perception of how the writers and recipients of the documents probably felt, incomplete though that picture may ultimately be. Investigating the possible role played by emotions in a person's actions could sway the view taken by a historian of an event perpetrated by a historical character. To take a simple example, if we accept that Henry II was deeply hurt and

[8] Quoted in Barbara H. Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristiani, *What is the History of Emotions?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), p. 106.
[9] Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, pp. 5-20.

resentful at the actions taken by Thomas Becket shortly after his enthronement as archbishop, then we are less likely to consider the Constitutions of Clarendon solely or even chiefly as a planned attack upon the Church in general as Thomas asserted.[10] The king was attempting to deal with a powerful adversary who was causing him emotional pain and he was creating a vehicle that might restrict Thomas's personal power, but not necessarily the overall authority of the Church. Even Anne Duggan, who is generally sympathetic to the archbishop, accepts that Thomas may have driven Henry to extremes, 'into taking more and more authoritarian and tyrannical action'.[11]

Most of the primary sources used for this study come from Archbishop Thomas and his companions. The role played by Thomas's companions is crucial to a discussion of the Thomas Becket Affair. The archbishop's clerks, some of whom were designated *eruditi* by Herbert of Bosham,[12] were learned and illustrious men and they were hardly interested in secular matters, except where these touched on their world and the means whereby they lived. However, they were also subject to the impact of events, and their aspirations and emotions emerged in letters. There are two extremely important collections of letters in translation: the correspondence of Thomas Becket,[13] and that of John of Salisbury.[14] This study will give prominence to these and will trace, largely through them, the evolution of the emotional journey experienced by Thomas Becket and his followers, and how emotions were a factor in the outcome of the dispute.

The letters themselves raise questions, and even complications; were they originally intended for publication, or any kind of public exposure? Anne Duggan has listed those of Thomas Becket she believes were private and goes on to suggest that some were indeed kept from a wide readership when she writes that the collator of the Becket collection,

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[10] 'The liberty of Holy Church is being attacked here in so many ways that we can scarcely bear to see or hear them': *CTB1*, 15 (p. 37).
[11] Anne J. Duggan, *Thomas Becket* (London: Hodder Education, 2004), p. 176.
[12] A list of them can be found in *MTB*, 3, pp. 523-31. Herbert of Bosham is one of them.
[13] Anne J. Duggan, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket Archbishop of Canterbury 1162-1170*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000, repr. 2007).
[14] W. J. Millor and H. E. Butler, eds, *The Letters of John of Salisbury: Volume One: The Early Letters (1153-1161)*, revised by C. N. L. Brooke (London: Thomas Nelson, 1955); W. J. Millor and C. N. L. Brooke, eds, *The Letters of John of Salisbury: Volume Two: The Later Letters (1163-1180)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

Alan of Tewkesbury, had 'access to the most personal and private component of Becket's records', those which were 'the most politically sensitive correspondence'.[15] Clearly the archbishop sometimes wanted the content of his letters not readily traceable to him, as it was not unknown for him to ask the recipients to keep his name out of any discussion of them;[16] another reason for anonymity was the possibility of the ambush of the messenger, resulting in sensitive information falling into the wrong hands.[17] John of Salisbury, too, was conscious of third parties accessing his letters, and he sometimes changed the names of the people mentioned therein.[18] However, these precautions did not extend to all the letters and it is highly likely that many of them were written as a form of propaganda,[19] and so destined for a significant audience.

Other primary sources include biographies of Thomas Becket, fascinating in their exposure of Thomas as a devoted and devout archbishop and, to an extent, as a man. However, they were created with a very different aim in mind: that of supporting the idea of Thomas as a martyr, a worthy candidate to become a saint or alternatively, after the canonization, to justify the sainthood.[20] The biographies have their place within the history, and it is an important one, but with regard to judging the day-to-day words and actions of the men (and the story revolves around men with very few women involved), they are immediately suspect. They were the offspring of the shocked and grieving minds of people who had followed Thomas Becket's journey closely as his adherents or sympathizers. Some of these biographers knew Thomas personally, and they would probably argue they knew him well;[21] others knew him perhaps less well,[22] and some not at all,[23] but cumulatively their contributions to our knowledge of Thomas Becket's life and activities are impressive.

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[15] *CTB1*, pp. lxxxiii-lxxxiv.
[16] *CTB1*, 45 (p. 201).
[17] *CTB2*, 273 (p. 1165, n. 1).
[18] *LJS2*, 202 (p. 301), 283 (p. 623).
[19] This is discussed more fully in chapter four.
[20] Most were written in the early to mid-1170s when Thomas's canonization was being considered or freshly awarded; an exception to this was Herbert of Bosham's biography, which was completed around 1186. A list of Thomas's major medieval biographers is in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 6-11. The putative dates of the various biographies are given there.
[21] For example: John of Salisbury, Herbert of Bosham, William Fitzstephen.
[22] The influential biographer Edward Grim most likely met Thomas only days before the murder: Staunton, *Lives*, p. 5.
[23] Janet Shirley, trans., *Garnier's Becket: translated from the 12th-century 'Vie Saint Thomas le Martyr de Cantorbire' of Garnier of Pont-Sainte-Maxence* (London and Chichester: Phillimore, 1975), and Eiríkr

Several notable scholars have taken advantage of these primary sources, and many excellent modern biographies of Thomas Becket have been published. Arguably the most comprehensive of these remains Frank Barlow's *Thomas Becket*.[24] Barlow is mildly critical of Becket, 'Subtlety [...] was not one of Thomas's qualities',[25] but can be equally as censorious of Henry.[26] His even-handedness is laudable and prevents the book from becoming a panegyric for either of the protagonists. However, ultimately the inference to be taken from the work is that Becket was an actor,[27] a man who revelled in the opportunities life was giving to him, and who was prepared to try his luck to the very end to gain the fame and power that he felt was due to him as archbishop of Canterbury.[28] He is the main player, the energy behind the dispute, one who antagonises Henry knowingly and deliberately. Barlow even suggests that it is likely Thomas dramatized situations and, in preparing for the worst scenario, sometimes brought it about.[29] His companions are present, of course, but they have little more than walk-on roles in the drama that Becket was creating for and about himself. Barlow implies that Thomas Becket was very much in charge of what he did, engineering his career to suit his ambition, and that the end was simply unfortunate. This perception leaves little room for the actions of others, perversely not even of King Henry in any significant way, until the very end.

Although Barlow's book towers above the others in its accessibility and the interest it provokes, Thomas Becket has many other historians who have taken up his story. One of the most erudite is Anne J. Duggan, editor and translator of the superb edition of Becket's letters already mentioned. In addition to that project, Duggan has written a number of books on the issue and an authoritative life of the archbishop.[30] In this last work she makes

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Magnússon, ed., *A Life of Archbishop Thomas Becket in Icelandic*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1875; repr. 2012) were written by people who could not have known him, although the Icelandic author based his work on a lost biography of Thomas Becket's contemporary, Robert of Cricklade: Staunton, *Lives*, p. 11.

[24] Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1986).

[25] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 104.

[26] In Henry, 'Generosity went against the grain': Barlow, *Becket*, p. 272.

[27] John Munns has levelled the same charge at Henry II: *Cross and Culture in Anglo-Norman England: Theology • Imagery • Devotion* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2021), p. 253.

[28] 'Throughout his life, he tried to play to the full the role in which he found himself': Barlow, *Becket*, p. 26.

[29] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 97.

[30] Anne J. Duggan, *Thomas Becket* (London: Hodder Education, 2004). This scholar is also the author of a substantial number of articles and essays on Becket, his companions and the dispute in general; some of these are collected in a single volume: *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cults* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

a commendable attempt to be impartial but there is no doubt that she feels Thomas Becket is 'a man | More sinned against than sinning'.[31] The archbishop is painted as one who reacted against events rather than initiating them and, unlike Barlow's Thomas, was more a victim and not a man in full control of the role he wanted to play. His actions are described as necessary responses to any given situation. His flight from England causes her to ask, 'what alternative did he have, apart from abject submission?',[32] as if further diplomacy or negotiation were entirely out of the question.[33] Again, Thomas is the main mover behind what he did and said, even if he was retaliating rather than being responsibly proactive and planning a route out of the problem.

John Guy's biography is attractive.[34] Well-written and informative, it again concentrates on Thomas as the virtuous protagonist, a man who embraced the Church as an entity in need of rescuing from the callous and nefarious doings of Henry II. The king's efforts at stabilizing the laws in England are never appreciated,[35] and pejorative language is often used in connection with him or his servants.[36] Thomas's companions are once again relegated to the sidelines as onlookers and appear to be there simply as a sympathetic audience whose use is acknowledged and accepted but limited. A more recent biography of Thomas was published in 2020,[37] written by Father Hogan, a man of the Church, and this has what the author believes is a different approach in that Thomas is shown as a man of faith who pursued the line he did because he was a zealous supporter of the Church. This aspect of Thomas's life, Hogan thinks, is one misunderstood by recent biographers.[38] The consistent theme is one of a man being bolstered and stimulated by his principles. Mistakes

[31] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by R.A. Foakes (London: Arden Shakespeare, 3rd series, 1997; repr. 2003), III.2.58-59, p. 267.
[32] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 84.
[33] As observed in chapter six, p. 96, Thomas did have the support of most of the bishops at the start; even if their loyalty had been tested by his vacillations, a wiser man may well have been able to reignite and cultivate that support.
[34] John Guy, *Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel, Victim: A 900-Year-Old Story Retold* (London: Penguin Books, 2013).
[35] Guy refers to the written Constitutions of Clarendon as a 'mischievous document': *Becket*, p. 190.
[36] For example, on one page alone Guy describes Henry's supporter Ranulf de Broc using terms such as 'crony', 'whoremaster', and 'flunkey', along with the more general 'henchmen': Guy, *Becket*, p. 227.
[37] Father John S. Hogan**,** *Thomas Becket: Defender of the Church* (Huntingdon, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 2020).
[38] Hogan, *Becket*, p. 12.

in the text let the work down,[39] but Hogan gives a persuasive point of view, even if he has to admit that his hero and saint does have flaws.[40] His argument is relentlessly based on the fact that Henry wanted a secular state completely subject to his own will, and Thomas was divinely inspired to defend the Church and its influence in England.

Dom David Knowles has written extensively on Becket and the dispute, approaching it from the viewpoint of another man of the Church. His biography of Thomas,[41] although relatively short compared to the Becket biographies of other historians, is informative and surprisingly unbiased, given Knowles's religious background. He also provided succinct but fascinating pen-portraits of the ecclesiastical players in this episode and their activities in a series of lectures later developed into book format,[42] as well as a character study of Archbishop Becket himself.[43] Recently a short book on Thomas Becket has been forthcoming from Cary J. Nederman and Karen Bollermann but although this bears Thomas's name as the title,[44] it is actually concentrating more on John of Salisbury's output and his possible attitude towards Thomas Becket as reflected not only in John's letters but in other works which the authors speculate could have been meant or interpreted as criticism or guidance for Becket.[45]

Other writers and historians have contributed well to the discussion of the perplexing matter of Thomas Becket. Richard Winston's biography,[46] published a few years before the

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[39] In *Thomas Becket*, p. 29, Hogan claims the Empress Matilda was an 'elder half-sister' of the William who died in the White Ship wreck in 1120, when in fact she was William's full sister: Marjorie Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda: Queen Consort, Queen Mother and Lady of the English* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1993), pp. 8-9; and then on pp. 259 and 341 Hogan asserts that a mark was worth two or three pounds instead of thirteen shillings and fourpence: Edward Miller and John Hatcher, *Medieval England – Rural society and economic change 1086-1348* (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. vi.

[40] 'He lacked a humility that would have advised caution and even cunning': Hogan, *Becket*, p. 350.

[41] David Knowles, *Thomas Becket* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1970).

[42] David Knowles, *The Episcopal Colleagues of Archbishop Thomas Becket* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951).

[43] David Knowles, *Archbishop Thomas Becket: A Character Study* (London: From the Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. XXXV, 1949).

[44] Cary J. Nederman with Karen Bollermann, *Thomas Becket: An Intimate Portrait* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2020).

[45] Nederman and Bollermann discuss John's *Policraticus* at some length and suggest that in 'examining all these themes, John stays ever mindful of Becket' and that 'John's *Life* of Anselm may be interpreted as a guidebook for how a truly saintly archbishop of Canterbury conducts himself': *Becket*, pp. 58 and 81 respectively.

[46] Richard Winston, *Thomas Becket* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

eight-hundredth anniversary of the martyrdom, is wide-ranging and full of anecdotes. The historical value is somewhat diminished by the inclusion of quoted conversation which, even if it had been researched and repeated from more contemporary sources, lends the work the air of a novel. Dr William Urry's examination of Becket's final days is equally afflicted. Although precise in descriptions of Canterbury Cathedral and how the ingress of the murderers was effected,[47] Urry infuses his work with prejudicial language which presumably reflected his own opinions, such as describing the archbishop of York as a 'sinister figure',[48] and that Henry 'had taken leave of all reason' by demanding fines from Becket at Northampton.[49] Thomas himself does not escape criticism. Urry claims that his issuing of sentences against the bishops of London and Salisbury and others in 1169 was a 'sheer lack of wisdom [...] hard to comprehend'.[50] In the foreword to the book, Henry Mayr-Harting claims that Becket was a figure 'whom [Urry] heartily disliked',[51] but despite this the archbishop fares well enough in the book. His companions again play small parts but do not emerge much more than two-dimensional characters.

Only a few biographies written about Henry II himself have been useful for the scope of this work,[52] largely because the authors treated the Becket affair as simply a significant event in the king's long reign and no great attention was paid either to the letters Becket wrote (a central feature of this study) or to the writings or actions of the archbishop's companions. As Becket worked for and then against Henry for less than half the king's thirty-five-year reign this is not unexpected, but it does mean that the king's biographers play a rather more subsidiary role than might have been wished.

In none of these has a comprehensive evaluation been made of the influence of Thomas's companions on his actions, even if they have been tangentially considered as players. That

[47] Urry was an archivist at Canterbury Cathedral. However, as noted in the book, later discoveries have rendered some of Urry's descriptions inaccurate: *Last Days*, Editorial comment, p. 78.
[48] Urry, *Last Days*, p. 2.
[49] Urry, *Last Days*, p. 11.
[50] Urry, *Last Days*, p. 23.
[51] Urry, *Last Days*, p. viii.
[52] The most useful biography of Henry was W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973; repr. 1991), in which a long chapter discusses the Thomas Becket dispute (pp. 447-517). Others consulted include John T. Appleby, *Henry II: The Vanquished King* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1962), Richard Barber, *Henry Plantagenet: A Biography* (London: Barrie and Rockliff, 1964), and John D. Hosler, *Henry II: A Medieval Soldier at War, 1147-1189* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007).

Thomas was ripe to be influenced may be inferred from the letter written to him by Richard, the prior of Dover,[53] upon Thomas's accession to the archiepiscopate. Richard urges Thomas not to be 'immoderately intimidated by great things or distracted by flatteries',[54] a strange piece of advice to someone if that person was already known to be single-minded and strong. More than that, not much consideration has been given to the raging emotions that dominated the rival camps, and especially Thomas's, except for the infamous outburst of rage against the archbishop at the king's Christmas court of 1170, though it is highly unlikely that Henry uttered the words for which, almost beyond anything else, he is remembered.[55]

Not enough emphasis appears to have been given to the effect Thomas's companions had on him which changed the tone and the intensity of the affair and finally delivered the outcome.[56] In order to offer some remedy, the focus here will move to the letters of Thomas Becket and John of Salisbury and, using extracts from them, a flow of emotions is traced throughout the dispute, from the bad-tempered two years or so during which Thomas was flexing his new-found muscles as the novice archbishop of Canterbury, through the fraught exile itself and into the frenzied final few weeks following his return to England in November 1170. These are rich sources involving primarily the two collections mentioned above,[57] which seem to have been retained with a view to posterity,[58] and carefully conserved regardless of their content, which did not always reflect well on their purported writers. The attitude and actions not only of Thomas but of his companions will be considered, and it must be borne in mind that no cornucopia of similar material is widely available representing the opposing faction. There are the letters of Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London (d. 1187),[59] but most of these are official letters concerning his daily

[53] Richard succeeded Thomas as archbishop of Canterbury in 1174: Barlow, *Becket*, p. 262.
[54] *CTB1*, 1 (p. 9). It should be noted that they had worked together before and knew each other: *CTB1*, p. 2, n. 1.
[55] 'Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?': Guy, *Becket*, pp. 309-310.
[56] Paradoxically, it is unlikely to have been the outcome the companions actually wanted as it encompassed Becket's death and the loss of their champion; as Anne Duggan puts it, 'When the shepherd is dead, the sheep are done for': 'The Price of Loyalty: the fate of Thomas Becket's learned household' in Duggan, *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cult*, pp. 1-18 (p. 16).
[57] Chapter one, p. 3, nn. 13-14.
[58] Anne J. Duggan, *Thomas Becket: A Textual History of his Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 4-9.
[59] These are collected and published in *LCGF*.

business as bishop, and only relatively few can be related directly to the dispute or to Thomas Becket himself.[60] Arnulf, the bishop of Lisieux (d. 1184),[61] also provides the reader with a window into his own life, and seeing the world through Arnulf's eyes shows us the predicament that must have faced many churchmen during what was, or appeared to be, a political argument over matters that concerned the rights of religious institutions and their agents, bringing with it a dilemma over how to act with regard to the opposing parties. While Arnulf would offer help to Archbishop Thomas,[62] he would also disapprove of Becket's treatment of the king's supporter Gilbert Foliot.[63] Arnulf was, at least outwardly, reluctant to throw his weight fully behind either the king or the archbishop.[64] He could not quantify any difference between the respective powers of the secular state as personified by the king and the religious significance of the Church; he thought they were interdependent.[65]

It is right and proper to give an emphasis to the writings of John of Salisbury, well-known as a man of learning and being at the centre of a circle of like-minded scholars, who were devoted to the Church with some of them holding positions of eminence. They included abbots, archdeacons, bishops and even a pope;[66] he wrote to them all, and his letters are often amusing and gossipy, revealing to us that here was a man who was comfortable in

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[60] Recently published are the collected letters of Henry II although most, like Foliot's, are not relevant to the Becket affair: Nicholas Vincent, ed., *The Letters and Charters of Henry II 1154-1189*, 7 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020-2022).

[61] Arnulf is generally regarded as an adherent of Henry, but his position in the dispute is more nuanced. A good summary of his life is in Frank Barlow, ed., *The Letters of Arnulf of Lisieux*, (London: The Royal Historical Society, 1939), pp. xi-lx.

[62] Barlow, *Arnulf*, 42 (p. 77).

[63] Barlow, *Arnulf*, 54a (p. 99).

[64] Jörg Peltzer thinks that Arnulf 'may have considered the conflict between king and archbishop as his opportunity to regain the position as principal royal adviser': 'Henry II and the Norman Bishops' in *The English Historical Review*, 119 (November 2004), pp. 1202-1229 (p. 1215) <https://www.jstor.com/stable/3490351> [accessed 11 July 2020]. If that was indeed the case, the ruse did not work.

[65] Barlow, *Arnulf*, p. xlii.

[66] Peter, abbot of Saint-Rémi (d. 1183), who eventually succeeded John of Salisbury as bishop of Chartres; Baldwin, archdeacon of Totnes (d. 1190), who later became archbishop of Canterbury; Bartholomew, bishop of Exeter (d. 1184); and Pope Adrian IV (1154-1159), the only English pope, and one with whom John enjoyed an 'intimacy' at least since 1150/1: Christopher N. L. Brooke, 'Adrian IV and John of Salisbury' in *Adrian IV: The English Pope (1154-1159): Studies and Texts*, ed. by Brenda Bolton and Anne J. Duggan (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), pp. 3-13 (p. 7). John went on in c. 1167 to claim that 'me by a special bond of charity [Pope Adrian] loved more than any of our countrymen': *LJS2*, 235 (p. 435). These few are representative of the kind of men John regarded as friends or close acquaintances.

that company, and who knew the recipients of his letters with that depth of acquaintance we would call friendship.[67] John's own literary prowess was considerable and his reputation grew throughout his life, with even princes asking for scholarly depositions from him in the form of scriptural questions.[68] It would have been hard to ignore John. He was connected to Thomas Becket's household in exile and visited there even if he did not live within its boundaries,[69] and the reading of his letters reveals a steady development of emotions that mirror the fluctuations and escalation of the affair. He is, as it were, the bell-wether of the group. Many of his letters are long and sometimes discursive, touching on several elements, and he clearly aims to put forward his point of view regardless of anything else.

John was not slow in his criticism of current events and, most particularly, of people. He must have known Becket at least since he took up residence in the household of Archbishop Theobald.[70] However, although some form of acquaintance is doubtless in evidence, there is no reason to suppose that at this stage the friendship was very deep. It is to be wondered if it ever became true friendship. It is difficult to reconcile the fact that John lived away from Thomas throughout the exile, when he could have been closer to him, with a strong or in any way affectionate friendship.[71] This suspicion over John's feelings with regard to Thomas should be kept in mind when judging his interference in the archbishop's dispute with Henry. The question must be posed: how far was John supporting Thomas personally, and how far was it a fight for what John believed should be achieved? John is open in admitting that he offered firm advice and was determined to push home his point of view; his remark in a letter to Humphrey Bos that if ever Thomas

[67] The concept of friendship in this context is discussed in chapter two, pp. 25-26.
[68] *LJS2*, 209 (pp. 315-339).
[69] John chose to spend his exile at the abbey of Saint-Rémi where his friend Peter of Celle presided: Clement C. J. Webb, *John of Salisbury* (London: Methuen, 1932), pp.108, 111.
[70] Thomas had joined Archbishop Theobald's household in around 1143 according to Duggan, *Becket*, p. 317 and was 'well established' there by 1146 in Barlow, *Becket*, p. 30; John's arrival is variously suggested as about 1147: Avrom Saltman, *Theobald Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, Athlone Press, 1956), p. 171 and Guy, *Becket*, p. 47; and even as late as 1154 by John's own biographer: Webb, *John of Salisbury*, p. 15.
[71] It was probably more of an 'instrumental friendship' as mentioned in Julian Haseldine, 'Friendship, Intimacy and Corporate Networking in the Twelfth Century: The Politics of Friendship in the Letters of Peter the Venerable', *The English Historical Review*, 126 (April 2011), pp. 251-280 (p.253) <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41238640> [accessed 23 July 2020].

'seemed to steer away from justice or pass due measure, I withstood him to his face',[72] appears to suggest that John had very definite ideas about what the archbishop should do and how he must act.

Another recurrent source is Herbert of Bosham,[73] although here this remarkable man plays a much smaller role in this work as it is upon his life of Thomas that we must rely,[74] and that book was written half a generation after the martyrdom. It also becomes immediately suspect because speeches are put into the mouths of other men, and although at times the gist of what they really said could be contained within the speech (as Herbert remembered it), the actual words must overwhelmingly be Herbert's and thus subject to a potentially faulty memory and, it has to be said, Herbert's own interpretation of what the speaker may have meant in the form of a displaced authorial voice. Nonetheless, Herbert is an important player and his words carry a great deal of weight. He was a constant companion to the archbishop and only failed to witness the murder because he was sent away. References to other sources include George Greenaway's translation of the biography of Thomas written by William Fitzstephen,[75] originally a clerk in Thomas's household, who remained in England during the exile and only rejoined Becket in late 1170. Despite his failure to share the archbishop's exile, Fitzstephen shows himself to be Thomas's supporter.

These men would not have welcomed an archbishop only half-committed to leading the English Church. Henry had already shown himself to be both capable and acquisitive as his determination to succeed to the crown of England and his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine prove. They were aware that Thomas Becket at the time of his election to the archbishopric was a very successful chancellor and in the past had helped the king to achieve his goals. The Church, relieved of some of its wealth almost routinely by the prolonged vacancy of

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[72] *LJS2*, 139 (p. 23).
[73] Herbert of Bosham most likely first met Thomas while in the position of royal clerk in the chancellor's office: Michael Staunton, 'An Introduction to Herbert of Bosham' in *Herbert of Bosham; A Medieval Polymath*, ed. by Michael Staunton (Woodbridge: York University Press, 2019), pp. 1-28 (p. 3).
[74] It is to be found in *MTB*, 3, pp. 155-534.
[75] George Greenaway, trans. and ed., *The Life and Death of Thomas Becket: Chancellor of England and Archbishop of Canterbury based on the account of William fitzStephen his clerk with additions from other contemporary sources* (London: The Folio Society, 1961).

bishoprics from which Thomas himself had benefited,[76] was seen to be vulnerable so it was not difficult to visualize the Church's position declining still further under the stewardship of one such as Thomas if he continued to operate as the chancellor as well. The question remains open as to whether Thomas finally decided on his own or was persuaded by others that the chancellorship had to go.[77] The fact that Thomas presumed to know the king's mind very well is in his letters,[78] so it is surprising that he did not foresee or prepare himself for the king's reaction to his resignation as chancellor. Thomas had started on the long road of gaining the trust of his companions and the short road of losing the king's and as far as the latter was concerned, in spite of any belief Thomas may have had that he was wise to Henry's nature, it is perhaps doubtful that Thomas yet realized the perilous situation that had been created and neither, it would seem, had his companions.

This study includes a great deal of discussion on the various emotions engendered by the dispute and the likely effect these had on the passage of events, and in this regard a number of sources on the topic of the history of emotions have been consulted. The work of Barbara N. Rosenwein and Riccardo Cristiani,[79] were useful in explaining the concept, and royal anger in Anglo-Norman history is discussed in Kate McGrath's book,[80] where she explores the uses to which such anger could be put;[81] and there is also a collection of essays in a separate volume edited by Rosenwein.[82] In this last volume Paul Hyams writes that 'Henry II and his sons ruled the realm quite largely through their passions',[83] so it is no real surprise to deduce that the emotion of anger in particular played a significant part in the development of the crisis surrounding Thomas Becket. However, this work is not

[76] *LJS1*, 128 (p. 223).
[77] Thomas was inconsistent in his attitude towards pluralism, as is pointed out below in chapter six, p. 91, so it cannot have been simply a matter of principle for him.
[78] *CTB1*, 150 (p. 699) and an oblique reference to 'those who know the inner workings of the king's mind' may well suggest that he considered himself one of them: *CTB1*, 125 (p. 597).
[79] Cited above, n. 8.
[80] Kate McGrath, *Royal Rage and the Construction of Anglo-Norman Authority c. 1000-1250* (Palgrave Studies in the History of Emotions, 2019).
[81] McGrath writes, 'The central concern of this book is to analyze episodes showing kings who expressed either righteous and honorable anger or another kind of anger': *Royal Rage*, p. 27.
[82] Barbara N. Rosenwein, ed., *Angers Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998).
[83] Paul Hyams, 'What did Henry III of England Think in Bed and in French about Kingship and Anger?' in *Angers Past*, ed. by Rosenwein, pp. 92-124 (p. 101).

concerned solely with what may have been Henry's anger, but with the anger he caused in others, notably Becket and his companions.

Little need be included here by way of a survey of Becket's life before the affair started, but a brief mention of salient points will create a context. Thomas Becket was not an unknown quantity when he became archbishop of Canterbury in 1162. He had been a valued clerk in the household of the previous archbishop, Theobald of Bec,[84] and upon his transfer to the king's employment in late 1154 or early 1155 when he was appointed royal chancellor shortly after the accession of Henry II,[85] he became a companion of the king himself. His favour with the king is remarked upon by his contemporaries,[86] and it is not hard to come to the conclusion that Thomas's behaviour and his readiness to carry out Henry's wishes were important factors in earning the king's trust.

That Thomas Becket and his king grew close is supported by the fact that in 1160, when the chancellor was recovering from illness, the king made a personal visit to him.[87] It is also well-known that Thomas failed to leave the king and visit his erstwhile master Archbishop Theobald when the latter was near to death, even though the old archbishop had asked him,[88] perhaps because his desire to remain close to the seat of power was greater than his duty to the archbishop. When the opportunity came to replace the archbishop, the king must have had few qualms about selecting Thomas. It was true that Thomas had shown himself to be secular in his love of sports,[89] of keeping a fine table 'resplendent with gold and silver vessels',[90] but it was also true that he had demonstrated

[84] Thomas served Theobald of Bec, archbishop 1138-61, from about 1143 until becoming chancellor, although Father John S. Hogan suggests that it was 1145: *Becket*, p. 73.
[85] The king was crowned on 19 December 1154 following the death of King Stephen in October: Warren, *Henry II*, p. 53.
[86] Greenaway, *Becket:* pp. 40, 45; Ronald E. Pepin, trans., *Anselm & Becket: Two Canterbury Saints' Lives by John of Salisbury* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009), p. 77; Herbert of Bosham's account in Mary Imelda Horback, trans. and annot., 'An Annotated Translation of the Life of St. Thomas Becket by Herbert Bosham (Part One)' (unpublished master's thesis, Loyola University Chicago, 1945), pp. 32, 35, 38 <https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/215> [accessed 28 October 2020].
[87] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 45.
[88] *LJS1*, 129 (p. 224). This letter raises the possibility that the king vetoed Thomas's return, but Theobald's use of the phrase 'the pretext of his necessity' suggests that the old archbishop did not quite believe the excuse.
[89] This pastime led to a mishap: Magnússon, *Life of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, 1, pp. 31-33.
[90] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 42.

singular loyalty towards Henry, even to the detriment of the Church,[91] and the king evidently felt that here he had found a man with whom he could share the burden of his enormous responsibility, someone who had proved himself beyond doubt that he was a king's man. After his elevation to the position of archbishop of Canterbury the troubles began.

The disagreement between the king and the archbishop is largely seen as a power struggle involving the mighty pillars of king and Church in medieval society and, at its simplest, that is exactly what it was. But why did this argument erupt at this time, why did it last so long and why did it end so violently? There had been differences of opinion between kings and archbishops before, most notably between Archbishop Anselm (d. 1109) and the brother kings William II (1087-1100) and Henry I (1100-1135),[92] and in fact Anselm underwent exile not once but twice,[93] and in the context of exile it is interesting to note that apparently Becket had a particular fondness for Anselm.[94] Munns asserts that Anselm 'had explicitly understood his exiles as pilgrimages' and that Becket 'saw his own exile in similar terms'.[95] However, Anselm did not lose his life as a result of the disagreements and the principal characters were able to co-operate with the other afterwards. This manifestly did not happen with Henry and Thomas Becket. Much more was going on, with emotions fuelling the dispute and blurring judgements. What is missing from other interpretations of the events is a realization of the intensity of the emotions and how they would have inflamed situations and sparked furious actions and reactions which, if considered more calmly, may never have been made.

The story of Thomas Becket and Henry is, therefore, a story which spiralled out of the confines of a political or religious disagreement as a result of uncontrolled emotions. The following narrative concentrates on these emotions, observing the incidents which caused

[91] Especially in the case of the taxes raised: Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 59-60.
[92] This is covered in Uta-Renate Blumenthal's *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988 [Eng. trans]; repr. 1995), especially pp. 154-159.
[93] R. W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990; repr. 1995), pp. 278, 296-299.
[94] Jean Truax, *Archbishops Ralph d'Escures, William of Corbeil and Theobald of Bec*: *Heirs of Anselm and Ancestors of Becket* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 181.
[95] Munns, *Cross and Culture in Anglo-Norman England*, p. 226.

them, how they developed and dominated the progress or otherwise of the dispute and, in turn, initiated other events which caused further examples of unrestrained reactions. Resentment and pride are the first to be identified, resentment created in Henry after his cosy picture of the future development of English administration was upset by Thomas's resignation of the chancellorship in mid-1162. Thomas had sent a clear sign to Henry that he wanted to tread his own path from now on, a master and servant of the Church only, a partner of Henry and not his agent. It is unreasonable to reach the conclusion that at this point Thomas was looking for trouble, or that he had orchestrated this in a calculated way to infuriate the king, but it was still a curious action for one who had been so close to Henry and had promoted the royal interests. However, now thrust into the lonely post of leader of the Roman Church in England, we are led to believe that Thomas apparently knew himself well enough to realize early on that his old life and the new one would not mix well, as Herbert of Bosham was to record in his biography.[96] This resentment of the king's is met by pride on the part of Thomas, who lost little time in pursuing his own agenda in attempting to regain lands that had been alienated from the Church in earlier years,[97] issuing demands and penalties without reference to Henry and demonstrating that he felt his authority did not need any royal sanction, not even when the defaulters were tenants-in-chief of the king.[98] The details of these growing disagreements between the king and his archbishop are too familiar to be repeated here,[99] but they provoked angry appeals which were directed to the king and instead of lifting burdens from the king's workload as he had when chancellor, Thomas began to add to them, fuelling further resentment.

Pride gave some place to fear and indecision when Henry reacted badly to the provocation, summoning the court to various meetings and conferences to underline his intention of creating an accepted framework of how the Church and the State could work together,

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[96] Herbert of Bosham writes of Thomas's reaction to the suggestion of becoming archbishop: Horback, 'Life', pp. 39-40. Some modern biographies repeat the report of this reluctance, for example Duggan, *Becket*, pp. 22.

[97] Such as Saltwood Castle in Kent, which was to play a small but material role in the martyrdom eight years later when it became the meeting place for the murderers: Urry, *Last Days*, p. 69.

[98] As, for example, was William of Eynsford, whose story is told briefly in several biographies: Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 60; Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 93-94; Guy, *Becket*, p. 175; Knowles, *Thomas Becket*, p. 78; Winston, *Becket*, pp. 145-146.

[99] Reports can be found in Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 453-459, Winston, *Becket*, pp. 140-54, Knowles, *Becket*, pp. 77-80; 'Roger of Pontigny' and William Fitzstephen in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 75-79.

culminating in the famous Constitutions of Clarendon which Thomas did not accept, and then accepted, and then withdrew his consent during a period of fluctuating emotions. The archbishop was caught between his duty to the king and to the Church. The emotions simmered from late 1163 to the Northampton trial the following year, when the king determined to ruin the archbishop financially. This so shocked and frightened Becket that he ran from it, not only leaving the court but the country too. This will be explored in more detail in chapter three. It was fearfulness that would haunt him sporadically for the rest of his life.

The majority of those who went with or after Thomas, however, remained faithful to him throughout the long years of exile which were before them. Thomas was so clearly out of favour and unlikely to regain any form of real authority in the foreseeable future that his companions must have had purpose in going with him. They had, probably unintentionally, formed an 'emotional community' as described by Rosenwein,[100] with common aims and beliefs and when these were disturbed, their emotions were triggered.[101] John of Salisbury admitted in a letter of c. January 1168 that he had 'made a bond of friendship with the archbishop of Canterbury and his fellow exiles, so that [...] I can help my friends more conveniently – since neither he nor they think fit to hide their secrets from me'.[102] John and the rest of the exiles could not have regarded Thomas as an intolerable or deficient archbishop, and they must have supported his views. This last point is one of the central questions: did they merely support his views, or did they develop them and propel them forward?

Once in exile and temporarily safe from any physical interaction with Henry or his men, Thomas Becket's mood changed again. He had brought with him some of his staunchest supporters, and they left behind lands, property and income. The fact that they had been obliged to forgo these must have been deeply worrying to them, and the cause of some resentment in them too, a resentment that metamorphosed into anger. They had run from

[100] Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, pp. 24-25.
[101] Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities*, p. 14.
[102] *LJS2*, 241 (p. 463).

the king because of their fear,[103] a long and difficult journey for some of them,[104] and it can only be surmised that their expectation was that they would find help on the other side of the water on the continent from those whom Thomas had met not long before at Tours.[105] When they discovered that the initial support from the papal curia was neither unconditional nor immediate, that hope quickly mutated into anger too.[106] The important point is that it was the anger thus generated which maintained the band of expatriates for six long years, during much of which very little actually happened by way of progress. With the time lag of days or even weeks or months between the sending and receipt of messages, there would have been many empty periods when the anger could have diminished or even subsided almost completely; that it festered and grew shows this phenomenon to be a remarkable display of sustained anger.

This emotion more than any other shaped the course of the struggle between Henry and the archbishop. It caused each side to escalate the conflict into a battle as to who could hurt the other side more. Henry and his bishops and magnates and also Thomas and his companions nominally accepted the pope, Alexander III (1159-1181), as the ultimate arbiter of the problem, yet each group made life as difficult as possible for their judge, complicating the issue with claims and counter-claims, and declarations of intent that were incompatible with any form of compromise. For much of the duration of the argument, it was clear that the only decision either set of litigants would accept from the pope was one that gave their side complete victory. It was perhaps fortunate for Henry that during much of the affair the pope was constrained by other matters,[107] but in any case it is not surprising that Alexander was unable to please both sides and so there are indications of anger directed not only by the rivals at each other but at the pope himself.

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[103] Although Thomas insisted they had been ‘cast into exile’, a rather different emphasis: *CTB1*, 115 (p. 557).
[104] The travails of Thomas Becket and some of his companions are recounted in Knowles, *Becket*, pp. 99-100, Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 115-119 and Guy, *Becket*, pp. 212-216.
[105] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 85-86. The primacy of Canterbury and the submission of the bishop of London were discussed there.
[106] Even before Thomas left England, John of Salisbury made the wry observation that the papal curia ‘will dare offend [the king] in nothing’: *LJS2*, 136 (p. 9).
[107] The dispute occurred at the same time as a schism in the Roman Church, as mentioned in Beryl Smalley’s *The Becket Conflict and the Schools: A Study of Intellectuals in Politics* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p. 145.

The hatred each side had for the other erupted into paroxysms of vitriol, part of which can be distilled into what can be seen as a type of propaganda, or 'manifestos' as Staunton has suggested.[108] It is interesting to see how the dissemination of this propaganda was used to further the cause of both sides. With his large network of friends, John of Salisbury is a prime mover in the propaganda, promoting the archbishop's interests at all costs, carrying this torch even beyond the archbishop's death.[109] Small spikes of hope may well have sprung up at various times as the advantages in the argument swung this way and that. Trust was needed, but neither side trusted the other, and this more than anything else prevented any lasting peace being reached. It was not just the trust that did not subsist between Henry's party and those who supported Thomas, it was the trust placed by Thomas's clerks in Thomas himself, and Thomas's own belief in the pope's good offices, that the pontiff would act on behalf of the Church and would protect those who claimed to be fighting valiantly for the Church. At the end of the six-year exile of the archbishop of Canterbury, it seemed that hope had triumphed over adversity when an uneasy peace and compromise was agreed. For Thomas it was this hope that finally killed him, the fatal trust he was obliged to place in Henry's good faith, all the while apparently not believing it if his final words to the archbishop of Paris are genuine and taken at face value: 'I go into England to die'.[110]

So the saga of Thomas Becket and his companions in their fight against Henry can be told with reference to vigorous emotions that often overwhelmed common sense. The vituperation expressed by the king's opponents cannot be disregarded and is at times astonishing. The original cause of the struggle was the acquisition of power and how much influence it could or should exert on society. It is hardly surprising that those at the helm, steering the Church's future, should want to have as much influence as possible.

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[108] Michael Staunton, *Thomas Becket and his Biographers* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), p. 27. D. J. A. Matthew disagrees with the idea of the letters being propaganda issued by his household in 'The Letter-Writing of Archbishop Becket' in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, ed. by Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 287-304 (p. 287), but only in the sense that Becket must have known what was being written in his name even if he did not personally write the letters.

[109] His libel of the archbishop of York is notorious, as will be shown later in chapter two, pp. 24-25.

[110] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 139.

The procurement of power is the engine of most conflicts, and accordingly the dispute took on a life of its own, with the competing parties allowing themselves to be overtaken by strong feelings that overshadowed the practical aspects of the affair. Property, wealth and influence were all vital ingredients in the schedule of demands made by the exiled churchmen, and their emotions increased their indignation, preventing any significant compromise until urged by the pope. The companions, taking Thomas with them, wanted to subjugate the ruling secular power to their own perceived higher power. Thomas's letters made it clear that he expected to wield immense power in England.[111] Having gone through the baptism of pride in his personal achievements, Thomas succumbed to fear generated by the actions of the king over which he had no control and he sought kinder pastures abroad. Then, in the vacuum created by his loss of influence, he was buoyed up by the increasing anger and despair of his companions who visualized themselves in perpetual exile and poverty. The one route out of the impasse created was to trust that the final settlement reached between Henry and the archbishop would hold good.

Unfortunately for all concerned, with the reserves of hope depleted, an almost inevitable conclusion took place: the collapse of trust on both sides, the re-emergence of anger (if it had ever quite gone away), fear, and resentment. These emotions were all in existence at the end and, in the disappearance of hope, they all played their part in the explosion of passion that severely damaged the king and engulfed Thomas entirely.

[111] Thomas did not allow his status as an exiled archbishop to affect his position in that his letters to his bishops in England continued to issue orders as if he were still resident at Canterbury and in effective control as is evidenced by his insistence on being involved in ecclesiastical appointments and resolving disputes: *CTB1*, 44 (p. 181-183), 60 (p. 241), 84 (p. 349), 147 (pp. 683-685), 155 (pp. 725-727); *CTB2*, 225 (p. 977-979).

PRIDE AND RESENTMENT

The spectre of pride must be considered as one of Becket's failings. His skill and competence had taken him to the pinnacle of what he could reasonably achieve and this could only have been a matter of pride to him. Similarly, his ambition apparently knew few bounds. His ultimate premise was that the law of the Church and those who upheld it were supreme under all conditions. This opinion had the obvious result that any secular power was inferior to an ecclesiastical one. In simple terms, as the leader of the Church in England, Becket held a power from the pope and through him from God that would under any circumstances overrule that of any king. He wrote to Henry in 1166 that 'it is certain that kings receive their power from the Church, and the Church receives hers not from them but from Christ',[1] and went on to write in his next letter to the king that 'Christian kings should submit their judgments to ecclesiastical prelates, not set their judgments above them' and 'princes should bow their heads to the bishops, not judge them'.[2] Although these last two comments are quotations adapted from Gratian,[3] there is no doubt that Thomas and his companions had adopted them as their own philosophy which was admirably basic: priests derived their power from God and it was during the ritual of religious ceremonies that the power passed through them to the recipient.

Men and women needed the services of a priest to be baptized, married, absolved and buried. By the same token, the king, whoever he was, needed the offices of a priest to become king and, by definition, was inferior. Becket's belief in this estimation of his ecclesiastical position is consistent with a substantial amount of pride based on ambition, and his initial actions as a new archbishop would seem to bear this out.[4] There was never any real possibility that Henry II would ever agree with him. Henry, too, believed that he had received power from God by virtue of his coronation and consecration as king,

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[1] *CTB1*, 74 (p. 297).
[2] *CTB1*, 82 (p. 337).
[3] *CTB1*, p. 337 nn. 24 and 25.
[4] Although Duggan considers this interpretation of Becket's actions 'unlikely', *Becket*, p. 33, this would perhaps place too much faith in a change of Becket's attitude and even, it could be argued, his personality. His love of fine things and especially the dictatorial manner with which he conducted his relationship with his bishops and, ultimately, with the king strongly suggest that, rightly or wrongly, he had an elevated opinion of his position that could only be described as pride.

claiming a 'sacrality of kingship' passed to him from his predecessors.[5] It was a question of which power could claim precedence over the other.

As chancellor, Thomas was often in the king's company. William Fitzstephen went further, claiming that the two were close friends,[6] and it is safe to assume that some kind of rapport had been established though genuine friendship may not be exactly what existed between the men, at least on the king's side. Thomas was entrusted with important matters of state, for example the wedding arrangements of the king's eldest surviving son to the daughter of the king of the French, Louis VII. The expedition which secured this is lovingly described in Fitzstephen's biography,[7] and was evidently memorable. Thomas travelled with an enormous retinue, the procession carefully planned and designed to impress onlookers and even those who only heard reports of it. This was a complete change from the single attendant, Baillehache, with whom Thomas had arrived at Theobald's door when he had taken up his position in the archbishop's household approximately fifteen years before. In some way, therefore, Thomas was making up for the privations of his earlier life that may have caused him embarrassment,[8] which is another pointer to the pride that was so much a part of him.

In accordance with his rank, Thomas enjoyed the lifestyle of a man of property and responsibility, and now his horizons had widened. His lavish household was expanded by the sons of nobility sent by their families to earn his favour,[9] and even his business activities stimulated ostentation in that it seems he kept many more clerks than did the king.[10] When on campaign, Thomas led 700 knights from his own household.[11] He was certainly fulfilling his role as chief official in the king's household with style and

[5] Gesine Oppitz-Trotman, 'The Emperor's Robe: Thomas Becket and Angevin Political Culture' in *Anglo-Norman Studies XXXVII: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 2014*, ed. by Elisabeth van Houts (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2015), pp. 205-219 (p. 210).
[6] 'Never in the whole Christian era were two men more of one mind or better friends': Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 45.
[7] Greenaway, *Becket*, pp. 46-47.
[8] Winston, *Becket*, p. 43.
[9] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 43; Horback, 'Life', p. 34.
[10] Becket's fifty-two clerks claimed by Fitzstephen in Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 45, dwarfs the king's fifteen mentioned in *GFL*, p. 212. However, this could well have been because Henry offloaded much of the country's administration onto his chancellor.
[11] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 47.

enthusiasm. Those who wished to acquire the approval of the king would seek his attention, sometimes approaching him through the intervention of others which is what John of Salisbury did.[12] On his side, there is little evidence that Thomas did anything that would injure his high standing in the king's eyes. He was the king's facilitator, accompanying him whither he was required, finding money through taxes when the king needed it,[13] and was trusted enough by the king to take the guardianship of the heir to the throne.[14] Thomas would even involve himself in military campaigns on the king's behalf.[15] If there were any disagreements of policy between them, they were kept short and perhaps even completely silent. A significant exception reported was at the siege of Toulouse where Thomas urged an attack on the city and the king preferred to defer to the code of conduct between a man and his lord whereby a vassal is expected, even required, not to attack his lord.[16] Although this was described by Fitzstephen as 'foolish scruples',[17] it stressed the differences between Thomas and his king and it should have warned Henry that Thomas was no respecter of persons when he was fighting an enemy. Equally, Thomas should have realized that Henry expected a certain level of behaviour from those who formed part of his acquaintance. Instead, Thomas chose to absorb the lesson that Henry would back down when faced with a harsh opponent or a difficult situation, as he repeatedly advised the pope in his letters when pleading for help ten years later, urging the pope to compel the king 'to seek absolution by the severity of justice',[18] advising the pope to dispense 'equity and justice as much to the king as to the ordinary man',[19] and reminding him that 'we have often [...] assaulted your serenity's ears to exercise the authority of St Peter to put a fitting end to such wicked and extreme persecution by a severe judgement'.[20]

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[12] *LJS1*, 27 (p. 44).
[13] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 59-60.
[14] Horback, 'Life', p. 35.
[15] For a discussion of these, and the difficulties establishing the extent of Becket's military career, see John D. Hosler, 'The Brief Military Career of Thomas Becket' in *The Haskins Society Journal*, 15 (2004), pp. 88-100 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7722/j.ctt7zssjh.09 > [accessed 21 February 2022].
[16] The incident is explained in Winston, *Becket*, pp. 80-81; Barlow, *Becket*, p. 57; Knowles, *Becket*, pp. 37-38; Guy, *Becket*, pp. 109-112. Henry II, although an equal in terms of the rank of king, held Normandy as a vassal of King Louis VII and so technically and actually was obliged to regard King Louis as his lord on the continent.
[17] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 48.
[18] *CTB1*, 115 (p. 561).
[19] *CTB1*, 124 (p. 595).
[20] *CTB2*, 270 (pp. 1151-1153).

The troubles that beset Thomas Becket did not start with his elevation to the archbishopric of Canterbury and his subsequent quarrel with the king; it is possible that they began with his sense of personal self-worth and perhaps a tendency to exhibit it in the form of pride. Although evidently a charming man, 'handsome and pleasing of countenance, [...] gifted with eloquence of speech and an acute intelligence',[21] he was also remembered as 'slightly stuttering in his talk',[22] and early on paradoxically he developed an unenviable tendency to alienate people. This study does not intend to report again all the known details of his childhood and young manhood,[23] but it must be remembered in the light of what follows that Thomas managed to make enemies even before he scaled the heights of the chancellorship in his mid-thirties. He was expelled twice from his position in Archbishop Theobald's household for unknown offences. Theobald himself evidently forgave him the offences, if they ever existed, as Becket was restored twice as well,[24] but in the process it became clear that at least one of Thomas's fellow clerks, Roger de Pont l'Évêque, was an adversary,[25] in spite of stories that a trio of friendship was agreed between Thomas, Roger and John of Canterbury.[26] In itself, the dislike of an adversary may not be an insuperable problem, especially when Thomas went on to be appointed successively to two of the highest posts in the realm of England, but this adversary also continued to a prominent position. Even before Thomas's rise to his archbishopric, Roger was elected archbishop of York, the second highest place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy in England.[27] Later on John of Salisbury alleged that Thomas may have been instrumental in covering up nefarious deeds perpetrated by Roger, perhaps in some vain attempt to gain his favour or his good will.[28] This is, however, likely to have been an extension of the propaganda John of

[21] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 37.
[22] Magnússon, *Life of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, 1, p. 29.
[23] For this it is recommended to refer to Greenaway, *Becket*, pp. 35-38; Magnússon, *Life of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, 1, pp. 13-35; Winston, *Becket*, pp. 31-42; Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 16-23; or more briefly Knowles, *Becket*, pp. 6-9.
[24] Knowles, *Becket*, p. 24.
[25] Guy suggests Roger was 'jealous' in *Becket*, pp. 49-50.
[26] Magnússon, *Life of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, 1, pp. 39-41, mentioned by Barlow, *Becket*, p. 34.
[27] This happened in 1154: Frank Barlow, 'Roger de Pont l'Évêque', *ODNB* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/23961> [accessed 13 October 2020] (para. 6 of 11). Thomas did not become archbishop of Canterbury until 1162.
[28] R.L. Poole writes that 'no hint of the charge against Archbishop Roger is contained in any of the chronicles and correspondence of the time' in 'Two Documents Concerning Archbishop Roger of York' in *Speculum*, 3.1 (January 1928), pp. 81-84 (p. 84) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2848122> [accessed 23 July 2020].

Salisbury perpetuated,[29] as there is no sign of Roger's gratitude towards Thomas and he remained defiantly hostile towards Becket, culminating in his willingness to crown Henry's eldest son in June 1170 against Thomas's command. So clearly Thomas had the ability to upset others and there is no obvious explanation in anything Thomas is reported to have done or said. That is, except for the possibility that Thomas was possessed of an overweening pride and ambition. There is more than a hint of this in Thomas's behaviour as chancellor, given his love of splendour as an example, and it blossomed once he became archbishop of Canterbury.

Thomas's experiences as chancellor did little to diminish his sense of importance. As a man in that station in life, he would certainly have been surrounded by sycophants of every description, men whose only purpose was to prompt Thomas's good opinion and thereby climb the ladder of success just as Thomas Becket himself had. John of Salisbury was one of those who sought to attract Thomas's attention and even by the time of Becket's rise to the chancellorship, had already established some kind of acquaintance with him. As mentioned above,[30] there seems to be little evidence that John of Salisbury ever regarded Thomas Becket as a close friend. Cary J. Nederman has discussed John's views on friendship elsewhere,[31] essentially that there must be truth and justice among friends.[32] Nederman writes that 'In accordance with the expectation that friends speak the truth to one another, [...] John does not refrain from stating his views with frank honesty [...] to those to whom he is most loyal'.[33] Here perhaps friendship and loyalty are to be considered interchangeable, but in fact they are quite different; perhaps one is expected to be loyal to a friend but loyalty can be extended to those not known personally, such as leader or someone admired. John was described as 'our mutual friend' by John of Poitiers in a letter

[29] *LJS2*, 307 (pp. 747-749). It is interesting that John does not condemn Thomas Becket for helping to cover up the crime; instead he describes Thomas's action as 'a brother's charity' (p. 749), which immediately stains the Church and Becket himself (presumably unintentionally on John's part) with hypocrisy and corruption.
[30] Chapter one, p. 11.
[31] Cary J. Nederman, 'Textual Communities of Learning and Friendship Circles in the Twelfth Century: An Examination of John of Salisbury's Correspondence' in *Communities of Learning: Networks and the Shaping of Intellectual Identity in Europe, 1100-1500*, ed. by Constance J. Mews and John N. Crossley (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2011), pp. 73-83.
[32] Nederman, 'Textual Communities', pp. 75-76.
[33] Nederman, 'Textual Communities', p. 81.

to the archbishop,[34] but his actions with regard to the archbishop and his words when speaking of his personal relationship tell a different story to modern eyes. In fact, it seems that Thomas had very few real friends although, as Bishop Arnulf of Lisieux observes,[35] friendship between those who served the king was not necessarily common. It has been noted that 'there is a singular absence of the note of affection in all the many references to [Becket] by contemporaries'.[36] In any case, no intimate friends can be named with certainty now, centuries after his death,[37] unless Herbert of Bosham could be regarded as one. John of Salisbury was at best a devoted follower and adviser. His acquaintance with Becket may have started in the 1140s but it was by no means continuous in terms of geographical proximity. There were separations during Becket's tenure as chancellor and the exile.

Thomas was not the only one beset by pride: John of Salisbury's wounded pride motivated him to seek Becket's attention and help. John dedicated books to Thomas while the latter was chancellor. This does not automatically mean that there was any kind of warmth between them;[38] sometimes such acts are part of an attempt to acknowledge a debt or a patronage, or simply to ingratiate oneself with the individual concerned, which is probably what was happening here.[39] The books were finished after John had suffered the first known setback in his career, his estrangement from Henry II, and the cause of the wounded pride. The scope of this work does not extend to cover a discussion of John's tribulations during this period of his life,[40] but it is necessary to mark some of the problems he had as these affected his behaviour, creating resentment against the king and as a result of that

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[34] *CTB1*, 31 (p. 109).
[35] Arnulf's comment is quoted in Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p.33.
[36] David Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, p. 43. This is echoed by Barlow in *Becket*, p. 25.
[37] Julian Haseldine contends that Becket 'shed friends easily as he progressed in his career': 'Thomas Becket: Martyr, Saint – and Friend?' in *Belief and Culture*, ed. by Gameson and Leyser, pp. 305-317 (p. 307).
[38] Jane Austen (1775-1817) dedicated her book *Emma* to the then Prince Regent, who later became King George IV (1820-30): Ian Ousby, *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993; repr. 1998), p. 45. There can be no doubt that they were not friends as the term is generally understood.
[39] Nederman and Bollermann suggest that sometimes dedications may have been a criticism or a rebuke: *Becket*, p. 54.
[40] Further details can be found in Webb, *John of Salisbury*, pp. 17-19 and in Giles Constable, 'The Alleged Disgrace of John of Salisbury in 1159' in *The English Historical Review*, 69 (January 1954), pp. 67-76 <https://jstor.org/stable/556294> [accessed 17 March 2020]. Notwithstanding its title, this article dates the disgrace as occurring in 1156, p. 67.

colouring the nature of the advice he was to give Thomas during the dispute. It is not known for sure why John fell into disgrace in about 1156,[41] but John felt its effect keenly. His fear of the king during this time is shown in his letters of 1156 when he sounds almost paranoic. He wrote to his friend Pope Adrian IV that it was neither safe for him to stay in England nor possible for him to leave it,[42] and his sense of urgency is aimed at Thomas Becket when he tells the then chancellor that he is blamed for everything.[43] He is aware that he has caused the king indignation and that somehow he has diminished the royal dignity,[44] but claims his innocence.[45] Although he was to recover some amount of the king's forgiveness subsequently,[46] his rehabilitation as far as Henry was concerned was never total. This episode should be remembered when considering John's later reports on the Thomas Becket Affair and the open hostility he showed towards the king's party and, to a great extent, towards the king himself.[47] It should also be remembered that John's political treatise *Policraticus*, although a philosophical dissertation, may have other connotations. The diatribe against tyrants could be aimed in part at Henry, perhaps in the hope that the king would learn something from it.[48] As Nederman has pointed out, John suggests that when a tyrant's behaviour 'imperils the ability of his subjects to live according to virtue and religion',[49] 'it is not only permitted, but it is also equitable and just to slay tyrants'.[50] This is not a point of view that would delight any crowned king, and most definitely not Henry II.

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[41] Constable puts forward the convincing argument that while attempting to acquire Pope Adrian IV's blessing on Henry II's proposed invasion of Ireland, John's statement that all islands belong to the Church of Rome infuriated the king, because it could be taken that 'Henry's own realm of England' would conceivably be subject 'to papal overlordship': 'The Alleged Disgrace of John of Salisbury in 1159', p. 75.
[42] *LJS1*, 18 (p. 30).
[43] *LJS1*, 28 (p. 45).
[44] *LJS1*, 19 (pp. 31-32).
[45] *LJS1*, 28 (p. 45), 30 (p. 48).
[46] John was back in some sort of favour by the spring or summer of 1157: Cary J. Nederman, *John of Salisbury* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), p. 22.
[47] John accuses Henry of 'acts of craft and violence' in *LJS2*, 174 (p. 139); of 'raving frenzy' in *LJS2*, 175 (p. 159); and of 'many flagrant acts of injustice and theft' in *LJS2*, 184 (p. 219).
[48] This is what Richard H. Rouse and Mary A. Rouse suggest in 'John of Salisbury and the Doctrine of Tyrannicide' in *Speculum* 42.4 (October 1967), pp. 693-709 (p. 704) <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2851099> [accessed 23 July 2020].
[49] Cary J. Nederman, 'A Duty to Kill: John of Salisbury's Theory of Tyrannicide' in *The Review of Politics*, 50.3 (Summer 1988), pp. 365-389 (p. 379) <http://www.jstor.com/stable/1407905> [accessed 11 July 2020].
[50] John of Salisbury, *Policraticus: Of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers*, ed. and trans. by Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 25.

The fact that John did not share Thomas's space in exile raises questions which are not easy to answer. There is no evidence whatsoever that Thomas denied John a place in his household in exile, whereas there is evidence that John deliberately made the decision to withhold his company from Thomas. As early as 1164/5 he was writing that although he would never betray the archbishop, he had left Thomas's household, declaring that 'I owe him nothing save the obedience which is owed to every bishop by his inferiors'.[51] He returned to Canterbury in 1170, but as the time between then and Thomas's murder a month later was so short we cannot possibly know whether John intended to stay with Thomas. As suggested by his title, John had links to Salisbury but he was also connected to Exeter, where his aged mother still lived,[52] and these attractions, along with the bonds he had created with other churchmen within England, may well have proved too strong for John to remain at Canterbury had Thomas lived longer. John was particularly friendly with Bartholomew, the bishop of Exeter, and undoubtedly he could have been given a post within that household, which would have had the added advantage of being near his mother.[53] It is therefore not safe to assume that John of Salisbury was a good friend of Thomas. John, an industrious and inventive man, could have had other ideas for continuing an acquaintance with the archbishop.

John wrote his letters with confidence and offered advice without hesitation. He appeared to revel in his fame in the occasional instance where he allowed his pride to peep through the artificial layers of modesty with which he often attempted to cloak himself.[54] When he plunged from having a promising career, for which he needed the patronage of Henry or his advisers, to desolate disgrace, not only was his pride damaged but other problems arose. In the early months of 1157 we can see panic rising in John's letter to Thomas when chancellor as he describes his situation.[55] He is still a clerk of the archbishop of Canterbury, but even the power of his master cannot protect him. The dark and difficult days through which he passed during this time must have affected him deeply, and his

[51] *LJS2*, 139 (p. 23).
[52] Upon returning to England in 1170 on the archbishop's behalf, John visited his mother: *LJS2*, 304 (p. 717).
[53] John did in fact do work for the bishop of Exeter after Becket's death and before his own preferment to the see of Chartres, though it is unclear if he relocated to Exeter: Webb, *John of Salisbury*, pp. 121-122.
[54] *LJS2*, 136 (p. 13), where he describes himself as 'enjoying a certain celebrity'.
[55] John writes 'Not an evil is to be found in our country of which I am not the author': *LJS1*, 28 (pp. 45-46).

internal reaction to them can only be guessed at; however, his actions were there for all to see, and they will be discussed further. The experience left an indelible mark against Henry in John's mind and the fractured pride leaked resentment which, gradually over the years, increased from a trickle into a flood.

In the meantime the position as chancellor had taken Thomas away from Archbishop Theobald's household and so from John of Salisbury, who remained Theobald's secretary until the latter's death. John would have watched from afar as Thomas's success built, and he would have suspected that one day Thomas may follow Theobald as archbishop of Canterbury, as was widely anticipated.[56] Some modern biographers declare that Theobald himself recommended Thomas as his successor,[57] but this is not so clear from Theobald's own letters to Thomas, which sometimes included bitter reproof.[58] Whatever may have occurred, John of Salisbury would have wanted to prod Thomas Becket's memory of their past experience of working together in Theobald's household. If Thomas did succeed Theobald, then John wanted to retain or better his place; and if Thomas remained only chancellor and someone else became archbishop, then for John it was useful to have the chance of another position if the new archbishop did not keep all Theobald's clerks and John lost his job. The fact that John had to apply through a third party to reach the chancellor when he was petitioning for Thomas to intercede for him with the king is surely significant.[59] This route to Thomas would not have been necessary had John enjoyed the kind of relationship with the chancellor at that time as he had enjoyed with Pope Adrian IV, during which he asked the pope for favours,[60] or offered advice.[61]

It is likely that John's discomfiture was neither noticed nor worried about by the king. Henry would hardly have cared about the finer feelings of a clerk in his archbishop's household, however important the clerk may have thought himself. What the king did not

[56] Winston, *Becket*, pp. 107-108.
[57] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 65; Knowles, *Becket*, p. 50; although John Guy points out that Thomas was not mentioned in Theobald's will and whereas the old archbishop wrote a final letter to Henry, there is no surviving last letter to Thomas containing a final blessing, 'So absolute was the rift between Theobald and his former favourite': *Becket*, p. 138.
[58] *LJS1*, 129 (pp. 224-225).
[59] *LJS1*, 27 (p. 44).
[60] For example *LJS1*, 18 (p. 30), 30 (p. 48), 51 (p. 89), 52 (p. 90).
[61] *LJS1*, 46 (pp. 82-83).

know was the depth of the blow with which he had struck John of Salisbury, and how it would rebound against him and ultimately his hold on his kingdom. John's pride and the resentment that emerged from its injury propelled John along a path that would never converge with the king's. Henry had upset someone who could be a dangerous enemy, if only with the pen, and through John's written loquacity many others could be swayed out of any kind of sympathy or support for the king during the troubles that were bubbling around them. This antipathy of John towards Henry has not been a general focal point hitherto. It is largely accepted as a natural development of suffering exile if it is mentioned at all but, given John's persuasive abilities and long-ranging influence, his enmity should not be underestimated. He had the ear of the archbishop of Canterbury and he was 'not an objective or always accurate witness';[62] his passion, when aroused, was sometimes likely to influence his actions.[63] So the way he advised Thomas was very important. If poison is dripped then some of it will probably have an effect.

John maintained lines of communication to Thomas throughout the exile. He performed tasks for him, sometimes involving travelling, and early on he complained about the expenses of such actions.[64] He also visited the archbishop when it can be speculated that he was briefed on the latest happenings and was able to dispense his advice verbally instead of in written form. It seems obvious that John was eager not to lose his influence with Thomas and it is clear that he was successful in maintaining an ability to persuade the archbishop. At one of the peaks of the dispute, when papal envoys were being selected and Thomas Becket violently disagreed with the choice, John was able to dissuade the archbishop from sending letters that were caustic in their condemnation of the pope's decision,[65] and to compose an alternative himself. John, mindful of the fact that any progress for the Church within England needed the full support of the pope, knew that Thomas could not afford to alienate the papal curia as he had alienated the king and many of the king's bishops who remained in England.

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[62] Christopher Brooke, 'John of Salisbury and his World' in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. by Michael Wilks (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 1-20 (p. 13).
[63] 'John was undoubtedly [...] an adept diplomat except on the relatively few occasions when his zeal completely overran his discretion': Brooke in 'John of Salisbury and his World', pp. 7-8.
[64] *LJS2*, 136 (p. 13).
[65] *LJS2*, 227 (p. 399).

These bishops, and one archbishop, made up the ecclesiastical officers who were running the Church in England during Thomas's absence. They seem to have been, in the main, men who were anxious to avoid an open rift with the king, regardless of how the Church was being treated. Again, it is useful to remember that when the dissension arose between Thomas and Henry, the civil war was still only a decade or so in the past and peace was fragile. There was no appetite for more conflict, and yet Thomas and his companions ploughed on with little regard for diplomacy or self-restraint, and these activities came on top of the fact that already the new archbishop was not universally welcomed.

The king's bishops displayed their own brand of resentment and frustration. As chancellor, Thomas had been responsible for some severe taxation of the Church in England, enough for Archbishop Theobald to write to Thomas in complaint,[66] and this would certainly not have endeared Thomas to the existing officials of the Church. His elevation has to be seen as an insult. Here was a member of the king's household, a man used to the secular life and who had borne arms, coming into the sacred office of archbishop of Canterbury to enjoy the privileges it brought and to exercise control over the rest of the English Church. Thomas clearly wanted to enjoy full control and it was not long before he tried to obtain the pope's mandate to gain official primacy over the York province as subject to Canterbury,[67] even though his predecessor Archbishop Theobald had not required a written profession from Roger at the latter's appointment.[68] This did not in any way ameliorate the enmity of Roger de Pont l'Évêque. Perhaps the most irritating action Roger could make, and this was certainly something he must have known and played on, was what he believed was his right to bear a cross before him as he progressed through the Canterbury province. Even at Northampton, a seminal moment in Thomas Becket's career when he was being arraigned and judged on the issues of contention between him and the king, Roger managed to inflame things further by bringing his cross into the presence of the archbishop of Canterbury himself, a deliberate flouting of convention and a spark aggravating Thomas's own resentment.[69]

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[66] *LJS1*, 22 (p. 36).
[67] *CTB1*, 17 (p. 41).
[68] Frank Barlow, 'Theobald' in *ODNB* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/27168> [accessed 13 October 2020] (para. 14 of 22).
[69] *CTB1*, 17 (pp. 41-43); Thomas continued to complain about this: *CTB1*, 62 (p. 245).

Thomas did not stop at aiming for supremacy over York. Although he was apparently comfortable with and even encouraging of Gilbert Foliot's translation from bishop of Hereford to bishop of London,[70] he requested that the new bishop of London profess obedience to Canterbury, and to him as archbishop. This was not unusual when a bishop was created,[71] but the situation here was not straightforward. When becoming bishop of Hereford in 1148, Gilbert Foliot had professed obedience to Canterbury while Theobald of Bec was archbishop and because of this the bishop felt there was no need to repeat it. This excuse may appear legitimate, and in fact the pope accepted it which obviously annoyed Thomas and his companions,[72] but Gilbert was being disingenuous. He had forged his link of obedience with the archbishop of Canterbury in the person of Theobald, to whom he had in the past offered sanctuary and with whom he had engaged in Church affairs;[73] it could be argued that with Theobald's death that link with the position of archbishop was broken and a new one should be made with the new incumbent. This was a disagreement sure to raise resentment on both sides.

Gilbert's excuse regarding the bishopric of London was even more tenuous. London, although an important see, was still within the ecclesiastical province of Canterbury. Its status was, at the time, certainly inferior to that of Canterbury. Whatever Gilbert may have thought of his own relationship to the archbishop himself, there is little to support a failure to renew the bishopric of London's status in relation to Canterbury had Gilbert not cherished other plans. Gilbert had ambitions for London that became more obvious as the dispute progressed. He wanted London to be a separate ecclesiastical region with its own metropolitan:[74] Gilbert, like Archbishop Roger of York, wished to shake off the shackles he saw in aligning himself with Thomas.

[70] Thomas supported Foliot's promotion from his position as bishop of Hereford to the major bishopric of London: *CTB1*, 7 (p. 21) and 8 (pp. 23-25).
[71] The history of this stretched back to the Anglo-Saxon period; Nicholas Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Cambridge: Leicester University Press, 1984), pp. 164-167.
[72] *CTB1*, 11 (pp. 29-31).
[73] *LCGF*, 79 (pp. 115-116).
[74] Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, pp. 160-162, and also picked up by Frank Barlow in *The English Church 1066-1154* (London and New York: Longman, 1979), pp. 35-36.

Both modern biographers and Thomas's contemporaries reported that Gilbert was envious of Thomas, that he believed he himself should have been chosen for the post of archbishop of Canterbury. His behaviour is largely described as envy and jealousy by biographers medieval and modern,[75] but given the bishop's otherwise impressive record of service, his motives cannot be so peremptorily judged contemptible, and moreover he is described by Walter Map as 'a treasure-house of goodness and wisdom'.[76] Gilbert's hand wrote the famous letter *Multiplicem Nobis*,[77] and although its authenticity is sometimes questioned,[78] the fact that it remained in the collection of Thomas's letters would surely indicate that it is real, contemporary with the affair, and had some considerable effect. Whether envy played a part or not, the translation of bishops in England to the see of Canterbury was not common, at least since 1066,[79] and, apart from later allegations and insinuations raised by John of Salisbury and Thomas Becket, there is no reason to suppose that Gilbert cherished these hopes.[80] At Northampton he spoke out in support of Thomas's position, urging his brother bishops to use 'ecclesiastical censure' on any who would 'lay violent hands' on the archbishop,[81] and he agreed with Thomas about the carrying of the cross.[82] He had also, in the recent past, been a supporter of Canterbury's primacy over York,[83] a subject close to Thomas's heart as has been noted. He did, however, regard Thomas as a man unsatisfactory for the archbishopric.[84]

Thomas was not even a priest or a monk when he was 'elected' archbishop by order of the king.[85] Henry had sent Thomas to England with his justiciar Richard de Lucy who was

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[75] 'Disappointed ambition' as Knowles calls it in *Episcopal Colleagues*, p. 49; jealousy according to Guy, *Becket*, pp. 145, 156; and envy in Winston, *Becket*, p. 119; Hogan describes Foliot as 'intensely jealous': *Becket*, p. 156; Becket's contemporaries were equally damning: *CTB1*, 96 (p. 435); *LJS2*, 175 (p. 157).
[76] *GFL*, p. 103.
[77] *CTB1*, 109 (pp. 499-537).
[78] The letter's authenticity is discussed in Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, pp. 171-180.
[79] An exception was Ralph d'Escures, bishop of Rochester (1108-1114), and subsequently archbishop of Canterbury: Carpenter, *Cantuar*, p. 45.
[80] Hopes that Gilbert strongly denied in *CTB1*, 109 (pp. 499-501).
[81] M. Ann Kathleen Fisher, trans and annot., 'An Annotated Translation of the Life of St. Thomas Becket by Herbert Bosham (Part Two)' (unpublished master's thesis, Loyola University Chicago, 1947), p. 104 <https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/171> [accessed 2 September 2020].
[82] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 95.
[83] *LCGF*, 146 (pp. 191-192).
[84] Gilbert was the one bishop raising objections to Thomas's election: Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 54.
[85] Herbert of Bosham reports that Thomas was ordained as a priest after he was elected archbishop: Horback, 'Life', pp. 50-51. This was on 2 June 1162, the night before his consecration: Duggan, *Becket*, p. 25.

tasked with facilitating the election.[86] The absence of this type of qualification was enough to make Thomas undesirable in the eyes of a monk like Gilbert.[87] Then there was Thomas's record in persecuting the Church for some of its wealth on behalf of the king, as in the aforementioned vacant bishoprics and the levying of the taxation, which is likely to have antagonized Gilbert.[88] Thomas's behaviour towards Archbishop Theobald in not answering the old archbishop's summons indicates a tendency towards a lack of appreciation for favours done to him that manifested itself later in his dealings with the king and Thomas laid himself open to charges of ingratitude from various sources, including Bishop Gilbert of London,[89] Empress Matilda,[90] and Henry himself.[91] However, one of the most serious hurdles for Thomas to overcome with others could have been his birth. He was evidently conscious enough of this to defend it in a letter to Gilbert Foliot.[92] He was being placed in authority over a group of men who were distinguished in learning or birth or both. Thomas's own unremarkable birth is clearly something that singles him out as actually remarkable, and it had not prevented Becket from rising to the top in secular administration. It is beyond doubt that the king had not considered it a bar to attaining the highest English episcopal position either, but it was one of Thomas's attributes that could have helped to contribute to a swirl of resentment in his ecclesiastical colleagues. Some of them were relatives of kings like Henry, bishop of Winchester,[93] and Roger, bishop of Worcester,[94] and to give precedence to a man of Thomas's background was likely to engender a resentment that had prevented well-born bishops from giving him complete loyalty. Bishop Hilary of Chichester was perhaps the weakest supporter, being a natural royalist; according to Fitzstephen, at Northampton Hilary is supposed to have wished that Becket 'could cease to be archbishop, and become plain Thomas'.[95]

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[86] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 23.
[87] He was 'an ascetic monk' according to Adrian Morey and C. N. L. Brooke in *GFL*, p. 1.
[88] A point made by Thomas K. Compton in 'The Murderers of Thomas Becket' in *The Historian*, 35.2 (February 1973), pp. 238-255 (p. 246) <http://www.jstor.com/stable/24443257> [accessed 24 July 2020].
[89] *CTB1*, 93 (p. 377). This letter was written on behalf of 'The English Clergy' but drafted by Gilbert Foliot, p. 373, n. 1.
[90] *CTB1*, 49 (p. 211).
[91] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 64; the narrative of 'Roger of Pontigny' in *EHD*, p. 764.
[92] *CTB1*, 96 (pp. 431-433).
[93] Bishop Henry was the brother of the late King Stephen. Paradoxically, he was one of the bishops who did not join the chorus of disapproval against Thomas, probably due to having consecrated Thomas himself: Knowles, *Becket*, p. 52.
[94] Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, p. 22.
[95] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 80.

The mere fact of the lowly birth left Thomas Becket susceptible to criticism in that his background and past experience did not fit him for a high ecclesiastical office such as the archbishopric of Canterbury. In a world of non-existent universal education, and patchy opportunities for learning even for those with the means to purchase it, Thomas had been fortunate in acquiring a respectable education,[96] but nonetheless when he became archbishop he undertook a planned schedule of study aimed at filling in some of the gaps in his knowledge and understanding by appointing Herbert of Bosham as an instructor.[97] Becket was still conscious of his modest birth and the questions over his suitability for this type of high office. It can hardly be accepted without question that the bishops of the English Church would have welcomed a leader whose grasp of canon law and even of the scriptures was mediocre at best.[98] Thomas's efforts at improving himself are praiseworthy, but did not seem to be accompanied by a necessary humility which may otherwise have disarmed some of his opponents.

Archbishop Roger's insistence on bearing his cross was a continuing source of irritation to Thomas. At Northampton it helped to provoke the famous retaliatory gesture from him, when he took hold of his own cross in his own hands, carrying it himself against the advice of his fellow bishops. The bishop of London's much-reported comment 'he was always a fool and always will be' on the archbishop's action encapsulates the differences between the factions in the bishops' group.[99] Those who opposed Becket not only thought he was wrong, they despised him and were unafraid to voice their contempt for him. Their pride in their birth, their resentment at the swift rise of a nobody to the highest point in their local Church establishment, came to the fore and manifested itself in that single remark. From then on, any chance Thomas Becket had of bringing together all of the Church in England by persuasion had receded to the point of invisibility. It was to alter his attitude towards them and his own treatment of them.

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[96] Duggan, *Becke*t, pp. 9-12; Guy, *Becket*, pp. 11-17, 33-39; Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 17-22.
[97] Horback, 'Life', pp. 76-77; Staunton, *Thomas Becket and his Biographers*, p. 91; Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 56.
[98] Barlow refers to him as 'inferior in learning to the other clerks' in Archbishop Theobald's household: *The English Church 1066-1154*, p. 256.
[99] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 82; it is also recorded in Shirley, *Garnier's Becket*, p. 45; Fisher, 'Life', p. 108; *MTB*, 2, p. 330 (Alan of Tewkesbury) and dutifully repeated in modern ones: Barlow, *Becket*, p. 113; Knowles, *Becket*, p. 97; Winston, *Becket*, p. 184; Guy, *Becket*, p. 207.

At this point we can consider the king, whose part in the drama had been more reactive to events rather than instigating them. It is not hard to imagine how the king probably felt when he received Thomas's resignation from the chancellorship in 1162, after Thomas had been installed as archbishop. We can safely assume that the king would have been affronted, or even 'mortified', as Warren puts it.[100] Thomas had not even made the journey to tell him face to face but sent his chancellor, Master Ernulf.[101] The discarding of the position had been relegated to a mere message, as if the imparting of the news had been an afterthought, and the act merely the jettisoning of an unwanted burden. Thomas had effectively removed a central plank in the nascent structure of Henry's vision for his governance of England. He had thrown up a barrier between them. He had demonstrated that he himself planned to concentrate on the Church, and not on the king's affairs. It was a warning sign that business in the future would not be conducted as it had been in the past. This would not have been welcome to Henry who had clearly based his actions on what had happened between them when Thomas had been attached to the royal household. Thomas was now a man allied to churchmen who were part of a rival household and owing allegiance to a wider organization.

This brings the focus back to Thomas's companions. Many of his biographers were there at Northampton with him, and they saw what was happening. John of Salisbury had already left for the continent, and for what reason we can only speculate. Fitzstephen states clearly that he was banished and John's biographer is convinced of this,[102] but John himself reveals that he applied to the queen for permission to leave, which would imply that it could have been his choice (or that of Thomas).[103] There is certainly room for doubt, especially as John relates how the archbishop advised him not to go to the papal curia but to Paris as a scholar 'to avoid rousing suspicions'.[104] It is difficult to believe that there would be need of such subterfuge had John been banished; a trip to the curia in those circumstances would be understandable. The biographers record the stark happenings of those few days at Northampton, and their narratives capture how the proceedings and their

[100] W. L. Warren, *Henry II*, p. 456.
[101] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 27.
[102] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 67 and Webb, *John of Salisbury*, pp. 105-106.
[103] *LJS2*, 136 (p. 7).
[104] *LJS2*, 136 (p. 13).

likely outcome seriously affected Thomas. For example, Fitzstephen describes how 'grief and groaning and contrition of heart beset the archbishop',[105] and Herbert of Bosham discloses that Thomas was 'troubled at this sudden and unexpected demand for an accounting; he reeled like a drunken man, and all his wisdom was swallowed up'.[106] It is here that the fear begins to take over from the resentment and the two sides begin a new era of opposition.

[105] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 83.
[106] Fisher, 'Life', p. 99.

FEAR AND INDECISION

At the start of his term as archbishop Thomas displayed a fine confidence. The king did not return to England until the start of 1163,[1] and, given his hitherto close relationship with the king, there was no reason for Becket to suppose that his new position had any limitations attached to it. Henry had demonstrated that he had faith in his chancellor's capabilities, and Thomas may not have had any doubts about exploiting this. His early acts are documented in the biographies, and the modern biographies offer explanations in some detail.[2] Perhaps this behaviour was encouraged by his immediate supporters, those *eruditi* who were offering him the benefit of their learning and their experience. Perhaps also Thomas wanted to demonstrate to his detractors, chief of whom must be numbered the archbishop of York and the bishops of London and Salisbury, that he was not a king's man any more. However it may have been, his actions certainly signalled to the king that Thomas Becket was no longer a royal cipher. He was very firmly setting his considerable weight behind the Church. Some of these acts may have been understandable, such as the attempt to reclaim what he believed was land belonging to the Church that had been alienated at some point in the past,[3] but the manner in which the actions were carried out raised consternation and complaints to the king.[4]

During the time of Thomas's chancellorship, Henry would have shared not only a table, a hunting-party and a council chamber with his chief minister but also his hopes for the future and his plans for restructuring his kingdom out of what was left from the long civil war. Henry had seen at close hand what chaos could be caused from powerful opposition and it is therefore puzzling that Becket appeared not to understand or fully appreciate the king's point of view. This baffling piece of naivety is at the heart of the problem. After the king came back and was personally present in England, Thomas displayed both a disregard

[1] Henry remained absent from England from August 1158 to January 1163: Rev. R. W. Eyton, *Court, Household, and Itinerary of Henry II* (London: Taylor and co., 1878), pp. 40-58.
[2] For a generally positive interpretation: Duggan, *Becket*, pp. 33-60; Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 74-108 gives a less sympathetic view.
[3] Barlow writes that Thomas obtained a royal writ authorizing him to do this: *Becket*, p. 83. In any case, Becket was following a path trodden by other archbishops of Canterbury, a notable example being Archbishop Lanfranc, who pursued this policy even against King William I's half-brother Bishop Odo of Bayeux: David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror: The Norman Impact upon England* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1964, repr. 1984), p. 307.
[4] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 84.

for the king's wishes,[5] as well as a contrary, and woeful, tendency to back down when challenged by the king.[6] Thomas was swaying unsteadily depending on the situation.[7] Either the early confidence was not genuine or, if he was acting on the advice of his companions, he was occasionally doubting the wisdom of that advice. The result was chaotic. Thomas set the conditions for a confrontation and then failed to see it through completely. Here was a chance for Thomas to stand up for what he believed in and to show the king that even in small matters such as these the Church would not be denied. Instead of standing firm he gave in. This erratic behaviour cannot have enhanced Thomas's reputation and would certainly have irritated the king because Thomas had not only ceased to be reliable: he had become unpredictable. When the criminality of priests was brought to his attention, instead of clutching steadfastly to the belief that clerics should not be subject to the rigour of the law but were protected by the Church, Thomas was inconsistent in his attitude when Henry issued objections.[8] His contemporary Ralph of Diss, who was archdeacon of Middlesex,[9] recorded several such incidents as being material in the breakdown of the relationship between the king and the new archbishop of Canterbury.[10] Thomas's predecessor Archbishop Theobald had been able to maintain a difficult but working relationship with Henry's predecessor King Stephen.[11] Had Thomas shown himself more flexible from the start of his tenure of office, then co-operation would have been possible and the prospect of codifying the 'ancient customs' into written law would probably have been delayed, the trial at Northampton would never have happened, and Thomas would not have run from the king.[12] It ought to be noted, however, that there was a 'prevailing trend' to stabilize such laws,[13] and the issue would have arisen at some point, although not necessarily within Thomas's lifetime.

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[5] As in the matter of the sheriffs' dues; the story is found in Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 88-89.
[6] The branding of the priest who stole from a church is an example: Barlow, *Becket*, p. 92; Duggan, *Becket*, p. 38.
[7] Knowles writes that Thomas 'changed direction suddenly without warning or seeking to persuade his colleagues': *Becket*, p. 87.
[8] These priests' stories are mentioned by Fitzstephen in Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 61 and repeated in modern biographies of Thomas, incl. Winston, *Becket*, pp. 146-147, Guy, *Becket*, pp. 159-160, Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 92-93.
[9] Ralph became dean of St Paul's in 1180: Barlow, *Becket*, p. 8.
[10] Smalley, *Becket Conflict*, p. 233.
[11] A good summary of Archbishop Theobald's life is found in Frank Barlow, 'Theobald', in *ODNB*.
[12] The king's mother, the formidable Empress Matilda through whom Henry claimed the crown of England, disapproved of the setting down of the customs into writing: *CTB1*, 41 (p. 167).
[13] Staunton, Introduction, *Lives*, p. 19.

As D. J. A. Matthew has pointed out, the secular 'customs' were vulnerable to clerical 'reform',[14] and thus liable to be transformed beyond recognition or disappear altogether. Margaret Howell suggests that with the Constitutions of Clarendon, Henry came forward with the obvious means of avoiding this danger.[15] It is also probable, as John Hudson argues, that the Constitutions were part of a larger process, its purpose being to recover royal control and promote peace under the law after the chaos into which England had fallen during the reign of King Stephen and the war.[16] This project should be seen as part of a deliberate effort to establish a recognizable English common law, generally accepted as beginning in the reign of Henry II.[17] Put simplistically, these measures reflect 'Henry's desire to preserve his coronation promise to maintain the peace'.[18] Unwritten laws would not be enough; Thomas's grudging compliance in absolving William of Eynsford, who had been involved in an argument with the archbishop over a church living,[19] or any other issue could be reversed at any time,[20] so he could not be considered as reliable. The king was determined to have the archbishop unable to deny what he had promised verbally by the process of committing the customs to writing and having them formally recognized.

Perhaps Thomas's vacillation over the 'ancient customs' prior to the meeting at Clarendon actually settled the king's mind for him and, moreover, that the vacillation was a product of Thomas's fear of reprisal from the king. His past close association with and personal knowledge of Henry over several years would have raised that suspicion.Thomas wrote to Bishop Hubald of Ostia that 'the arrogance of wrongful demands is growing stronger against us day by day',[21] and to Bishop Bernard of Porto he claimed that he had been

[14] Matthew, 'The Letter-Writing of Archbishop Becket' in *Belief and Culture*, ed. by Gameson and Leyser, p. 298.
[15] Margaret Howell in *Regalian Right in Medieval England* (London: The Athlone Press, 1962) writes that the Church's application of its law challenged the law of the state and Henry may well have eventually decided that 'law had to be met by law', p. 33.
[16] John Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law: Law and Society in England from the Norman Conquest to Magna Carta* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), p. 122.
[17] Paul Brand, 'Henry II and the Creation of the English Common Law' in *Henry II: New Interpretations* , ed. by Christopher Harper-Bill and Nicholas Vincent (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2007), pp. 215-241 (p. 215).
[18] Hudson, *The Formation of the English Common Law*, p. 131.
[19] Guy, *Becket*, p. 175.
[20] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 93-94.
[21] *CTB1*, 13 (p. 35).

placed 'in an impossible situation',[22] and because he does not seem to be accepting any responsibility for the quandary in which he found himself, it could reasonably be argued that he had been persuaded to take these stands by his companions.At times he did try to withstand the pressure from the king, and that can only be due to the company he was now keeping. There is no sign in his former life as chancellor, or as the clerk of Archbishop Theobald, that he was in any way an opponent of the king or the king's practices and policies. Quite the contrary: Thomas had done his best to fulfil whatever the king demanded of him. What changed his mind?

The obvious answer, and the one that is pursued by the medieval biographers and many of the modern ones, is that Thomas underwent some kind of conversion or at least a renewal of his beliefs after his consecration as archbishop.[23] This process is described in the contemporary biographies,[24] and some modern biographies tend to follow these,[25] but had Thomas been stiffened in purpose by a new-found belief in the Church's supremacy, then it is unlikely he would have wavered despite the king's anger. His religious zeal would have kept him honest. The fact that Thomas did back down, he did question his own actions, he did hesitate, means that a stronger force was working on him at the time. Was it fear? Yet we know he did not lack physical courage as his final stand in front of his murderers amply demonstrates, so whose fear induced him to flee? If, as Barlow suggests, he was more of an actor playing a part, then he would either have taken the trouble to use his charm to blunt the king's anger or, having met fierce opposition from Henry, he would ultimately have abandoned his new role as being untenable and unworkable. He did neither of these things. He behaved as a man would who was not sure of the rightness of what he was doing, but who did not know what else to do and succumbed to panic. He behaved according to what were evidently new principles adopted but which were, at least for the time being, quite alien to him and he was unable to live up to them completely. It is here that the intervention of emotions disturbs what should surely have been, for a man driven

[22] *CTB1*, 14 (p. 37). Letters 13 and 14 are short, which could indicate that these were written suddenly and almost without premeditation in the heat of panic or agitation and that they are Thomas's alone.
[23] The 'conversion' is discussed in some detail in Staunton, *Thomas Becket and his Biographers*, pp. 75-96.
[24] Fitzstephen in Greenaway, *Becket*, pp. 55-58; John of Salisbury in Pepin, *Anselm & Becket*, pp. 79-81; William of Canterbury's version quoted in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 66-67.
[25] Winston, *Becket*, pp. 128-30; Knowles, *Becket*, pp. 53-57.

by religious fervour, a straightforward reaction to what was regarded by the Church as secular interference in the form of some of the Constitutions of Clarendon. So the 'conversion' consequent in the 'putting off of the old man and putting on of the new' had evidently not yet taken root.[26] Emotions, rather than religious passion, were to dominate Becket's actions. Fear overcame him despite the eagerness with which he had embraced his new life. It had all the marks of a shared fear, a contagion caught from those who surrounded him. It has already been seen how the loss of the king's favour blighted John of Salisbury's life and how it occupied his mind with dread; the situation of Becket and his companions was much more awkward than John's had been. It touched them all, and none of them would have been immune to its consequences.

Although the abiding concern of Thomas Becket and his companions was, according to their letters and protestations, that the honour of God and the liberty and honour of the Roman Church should be upheld,[27] at pivotal times one anxiety overcame all others, including the central one of Church supremacy. The success of the Church depended upon the actions and continued existence of its supporters. If Henry managed to dismantle the human infrastructure of the Church and submit it to his own will, although there is no extant evidence that he ever even contemplated it much less attempted it,[28] then any influence or power the Church may potentially have wielded would have been severely weakened or negated altogether. So the natural conclusion Thomas and his people arrived at was that they needed to remain alive. More than this, they needed to remain in positions of influence so they could take the battle to their enemy. This is in sharp contrast to the aims they propagated during their exile where protestation was made of preferring death to loss of honour or in the defence of justice.[29] With this in mind it is understandable that they regarded threats and warnings seriously, as these escalated quickly from the king's

[26] Staunton, *Thomas Becket and his Biographers*, p. 92.
[27] This was a repetitive theme in their letters, for example: *CTB1*, 90 (p. 365); *CTB2*, 236 (pp. 1019-1021), 282 (p. 1209), 302 (p. 1285); *LJS2*, 171 (pp. 125-127), 187 (p. 237), 213 (p. 349), 284 (p. 625).
[28] Matthew, 'The Letter-Writing of Archbishop Becket' in *Belief and Culture*, ed. by Gameson and Leyser, p. 295.
[29] John of Salisbury's letters contained declarations that Thomas would give his life for the Church and 'justice': *LJS2*, 168 (p. 107); 231 (p. 423) for example. Thomas himself also made that claim: *CTB1*, 161 (p. 753).

reported statement that he had no more love for Thomas,[30] to fears of imprisonment or even worse, as Herbert of Bosham was to relate.[31]

After months of king and archbishop chafing against each other, in October 1164 the tensions reached their apex at Northampton, where the king brought Thomas Becket to trial using the stalking-horse of John the Marshal's grievance to compel Thomas to attend.[32] Once there, Marshal's case was set aside and more serious charges of misappropriation of funds during his period as chancellor were levelled at the archbishop. It was an easy charge to make: as a trusted counsellor and friend, Thomas had been granted much licence in the dispensing of the king's properties and income, and unfortunately had failed to keep a satisfactory record to hand monitoring the incoming tax and outgoing expenses.[33] The omissions were enough to enable the king to claim wrongdoing on his archbishop's part. It was perceived by the king as a form of embezzlement, and he used it as a weapon to degrade and damage his erstwhile friend. This type of treatment was doubtless intended to inspire fear in the bishops, and especially in the archbishop himself. Becket was to be reduced to poverty by the fines imposed as punishment, and there materialized the possibility that even greater penalties may be sought by the king. Those in the royal court, supporters of Henry, were encouraged by their king's fury to approach the archbishop to threaten and menace the prelate's freedom and obliquely threaten physical violence.[34] Herbert of Bosham in his biography makes it clear that Thomas suspected physical foul play,[35] and that Thomas was frightened for his life. This fear compelled Thomas to accept his guilt in the charges brought against him, and moreover caused him to fall ill during the

[30] Henry Mayr-Harting, 'Hilary, Bishop of Chichester (1147-1169) and Henry II', *The English Historical Review*, 78 (April 1963), pp. 209-224 (p. 221) <http://www.jstor.com/stable/560029> [accessed 23 July 2020]; also Guy, *Becket*, p. 175.
[31] Fisher, 'Life', p. 101.
[32] Marshal's story is widely reported in modern biographies: Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 108-110; Duggan, *Becket*, p. 61 among others, as well as being the subject of Elizabeth C. Teviotdale's 'The Affair of John Marshal' in *Revista de Musicología*, 16.2 (1993), pp. 848-855 <http://jstor.com/stable/20795940> [accessed 24 July 2020] where it is argued that Marshal was in league with Henry and claimed the land in question at the king's behest (p. 854).
[33] Accounts of these charges can be found in Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 110-111, Duggan, *Becket*, pp. 65-66 and Guy, *Becket*, pp. 201-203.
[34] William Fitzstephen in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 112.
[35] Fisher, 'Life', p. 104.

proceedings.[36] He was opposing arguably the most powerful secular ruler in western Europe.

How far should these threats by the king be taken at face value? With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that eventually Thomas and his friends were more right than wrong to suspect that the king's party would not necessarily spare the person of any man of the cloth. In the febrile atmosphere of the Northampton show trial, those who clustered about their archbishop could not have been certain that their safety was assured. It is of little comfort to those facing imminent danger that any injury, fatal or otherwise, sustained by them would evoke a penalty from the Church on those who had committed it. Armed knights could inflict serious and life-altering or life-ending injuries. The clerics may well have believed that such martyrdom would ensure a glorious afterlife, but it would also mean that the Church itself was weakened because of the removal of some regarded as its defenders.

The clerks were justified to fear what might happen to them from the fact that Henry seemed determined to penalise clerics in exactly the same way as their secular counterparts, albeit after an agreed protocol. Clause 3 of the Constitutions of Clarendon states quite clearly that offenders who were officials of the Church should be arraigned in the king's court first, then face judgement in an ecclesiastical court and then, after being defrocked, should be brought back to undergo whatever condign punishment the secular court imposed.[37] Frightened clerics, including the archbishop himself, would certainly imagine that their vows would be no practical shield to ward off the king's vengeance.

It was fear, therefore, that drove Thomas Becket to flee Northampton and the country late in 1164. Without waiting for permission to leave,[38] the archbishop fled not only Northampton but the kingdom too. He took very little with him except a few of those

[36] Modern biographers are inclined to assign Thomas's brief illness at Northampton to a recurrence of his old condition of colitis, 'an old renal complaint' according to Knowles, *Becket*, p. 96, and discussed further in Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, pp. 167-168; Winston, *Becket*, p. 181; Guy, *Becket*, pp. 204-205.
[37] Clause 3 can be found in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 93.
[38] Thomas requested the permission and treated the king's non-committal immediate response as unpromising: Duggan, *Becket*, p. 82; Hogan claims it was a refusal: *Becket*, pp. 267-268.

companions, and he left behind an abandoned cathedral, ecclesiastical office, and most of his possessions. He was not pursued by anyone,[39] and thereafter he and his companions spent a good deal of energy explaining why they left. Their object was to present as an act of malice by the king that Thomas had been forced to abandon his post. Thomas Becket regarded his flight as expulsion,[40] and also repeatedly described himself as an exile with all the imagined victimhood that could be attached to this label.[41] In spite of the gloss the exiles painted on the flight, it was nonetheless an episode of shame and not of glory, and it is tempting to believe that Thomas formed this interpretation also, making it probably the chief and perhaps the only reason he refused to run at the very end of his life. As his biographers point out, on 29 December 1170 the embattled archbishop had opportunities to slip away from those who would become his murderers.[42]

The king did not appear greatly concerned at the flight, at least publicly. Duggan answers her own question when she wonders why the king's embassy, dispatched after Thomas's departure, was so slow: the king did not want to have Thomas caught.[43] This suggests strongly that Henry was unperturbed at the prospect of losing his archbishop to an overseas destination. It could be convenient that Thomas actively eschewed his duties as archbishop in that it may help to prove that he was unfit for such high office and be removed by the pope; but then it also demonstrated that the king was concerned about what might happen if his archbishop came to grief whilst opposing him. If Thomas was in an awkward position then so was the king: they were stuck with each other. Becket's precipitate action may well have come as a relief to Henry. The Church in England without Becket should become, as indeed it did to a large extent, quieter without him.

[39] It is reported that the king gave specific orders that Thomas was not to be molested: Duggan, *Becket*, p. 82; Winston, *Becket*, p. 192.
[40] *CTB1*, 37 (p. 145).
[41] *CTB1*, 115 (p. 557), 158 (p. 735), 163 (p. 759); *CTB2*, 184 (p. 823), 256 (p. 1101), 273 (p. 1163).
[42] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 155; Urry, *Last Days*, pp. 123-124.
[43] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 87.

Nevertheless, Thomas feared interception by the king's men and so took a circuitous route to get to the coastal port from which he embarked,[44] taking care to disguise himself to avoid arrest.[45] The hazards of a sea crossing at that time of the year were evidently preferable to what they imagined might face them in England.[46] Their destination and intent were at the same time obvious and uncertain. Clearly they needed to attract the protection of the pope but also they required sustenance and accommodation. John of Salisbury, having been on the continent for several months,[47] had secured a nominal endorsement from King Louis VII of France,[48] but at this stage Becket could not have been utterly confident that this assistance was either real or long-lasting; as early as 1165 John of Salisbury was to comment that King Louis 'seemed to speak of your cause with less warmth than he used to'.[49] So even if the fear felt by Thomas and his companions may have been partially allayed by his escape from England it could not have disappeared completely. There was much work to be done to blacken the king's name and render him a pariah in the eyes of rulers, both ecclesiastical and temporal, in western Europe and the wider Christendom. Thomas had deserted the English Church: there was at least the chance that the Church in Rome would desert him and charge him with neglect of his duties. This was going to be a difficult situation from which to extricate himself. He needed support from his companions, and it was fortunate for him that their corporate fear evolved the archbishop's community into a strident and vociferous force for the rehabilitation of their leader.

William of Canterbury's biography tries to justify the flight, comparing it with that of St Paul and other biblical figures,[50] but Thomas was the elected and consecrated leader of the Church in England. He had been approved by the pope and was in a strong position, even

[44] Instead of travelling directly south, Thomas and his companions rode east and then south, eventually setting sail from the south-east port of Sandwich; Herbert of Bosham's version of this is included in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 120-121.
[45] He also started calling himself by alternative names: Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 95 and Barlow, *Becket*, p. 116.
[46] Disasters at sea were not uncommon; the White Ship tragedy of 1120 is a case in point, and Henry II himself suffered losses, for example in February 1187: Richard Barber, *Henry Plantagenet*, p. 221.
[47] John made his way to Paris: Webb, *John of Salisbury*, p. 107.
[48] *LJS2*, 136 (p. 7); later on in this letter John seems to suggest that King Louis's help may not be useful when he writes 'the French king is a staff of broken reed' (p. 15).
[49] *CTB1*, 42 (p. 171).
[50] William of Canterbury in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 118-119.

if it was not entirely impregnable. Ideas of flight had clearly been mooted before,[51] and martyrdom, at least as an abstract notion, began to be considered. It was the sort of philosophical idea that John of Salisbury appeared to find attractive, writing in about March 1167 to Reginald, the archdeacon of Salisbury, that 'one should obey [...] even to the point of death',[52] and eventually telling Robert, the sacrist of Christ Church, Canterbury, in the spring of 1170 that some had 'decided to give their lives, if need be, for justice',[53] yet when the prospect became real his attitude changed, as will be noted later.[54]

John apparently did not want to be identified too closely with Thomas. He knew that his archbishop would have severely discountenanced the king by the flight, and the fear that some of the blame would attach to him will have coloured his actions. His earlier experience of being in disgrace now made him desperate not to make a bad situation worse. He had found out at first-hand how debilitating this could be. He was, perhaps, the one most likely to fear vigorous penalties from the king, and it is easy to understand why John was anxious not to worsen his standing with the king more than was absolutely necessary. His fear of doing this must have been one of the reasons why he detached himself from the exiled household of the archbishop. His physical distance from Thomas Becket seemed to pose few problems for him, as the archbishop sent him copies of letters for his opinion.[55]

A major event in the dispute was the physical attempt made by John of Salisbury and Herbert of Bosham to resolve their differences with the king,[56] which must have been undertaken with the archbishop's blessing, in itself rather strange. Thomas was an exiled archbishop in the middle of a struggle with the very man whom two of his best counsellors were trying to impress enough for them to acquire forgiveness from him. With the departure of John and Herbert, Thomas would lose significant help; as the archbishop was quick to show bitterness towards those he felt had betrayed him, such as the English

[51] *LJS2*, 136 (p. 5).
[52] *LJS2*, 217 (p. 367).
[53] *LJS2*, 299 (p. 699).
[54] Chapter six, p. 95.
[55] *LJS2*, 176 (pp. 165-167).
[56] Apart from John referring to the visit in a few letters noted in Barlow, *Becket*, p. 305, n. 45, details can be found in William Fitzstephen's biography in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 142-144.

bishops who remained in England, and those he felt may well betray him, as a later draft of a letter of 1167 to William of Pavia demonstrates,[57] it is curious that when John and Herbert failed in their task they returned to Thomas with no obvious recriminations from the archbishop. John related that their failure was due to the fact that they refused to take the oath without adding the exception clause so hated by Henry,[58] but it is also possible that Henry included the oath in its unacceptable form because he saw through their pretence. He knew that these supplicants would never desert Thomas completely. The king appeared to be offered a chance to break the fragile circle surrounding Thomas and he ignored it, knowing that it was an illusion.

Perhaps Henry was wise enough and experienced enough to recognize infiltration when it appeared before him. Haseldine suggests that John's decision to absent himself from the archbishop's household and stay at Saint-Rémi was made with the purpose of 'placing himself at the centre of an established network which he knew could be relied upon for more than passing support'.[59] Perhaps John of Salisbury and Herbert of Bosham decided to go still further and return to the royal court in order to give Thomas extra information. The interviews with the king are very well reported elsewhere,[60] but the fact of the interviews is an odd development, and difficult to integrate with the matter as it then stood. John was an overt supporter of Thomas Becket, so any agreement with the king would by itself be a betrayal of the archbishop's stance. There is no suggestion that the approach was Thomas's idea, but also no indication that Thomas disapproved of it. It is, therefore, an anomaly that remains puzzling. It is significant that at the same time Henry refused John and Herbert's reconciliation, he did allow back another petitioner, Philip of Calne, a fellow member of the *eruditi*, without insisting on the oath.[61] Beyond reporting this incongruous incident, no other speculation appears to have been made about this particular inconsistency.

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[57] *CTB1*, 133 (p. 625), an acerbic short letter.
[58] John was clear that he would only take an oath where he could add a clause 'saving God or the law or one's order': *LJS2*, 167 (p. 97).
[59] Julian Haseldine, 'Thomas Becket: Martyr, Saint – and Friend?' in *Belief and Culture*, ed. by Gameson and Leyser, p. 316.
[60] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 140-142; Guy, *Becket*, pp. 234-235.
[61] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 141-142. Clearly Henry regarded John and Herbert as far more dangerous enemies and ones capable of what he saw as treason within his realm.

Whether or not their attempt at a reconciliation was simply a cover in order to ingratiate themselves with the king and work for Thomas from the inside, so to speak, by going to Henry they had shown all those who watched that the archbishop's followers were apparently susceptible to doubts about how the affair would ultimately end. No one could be certain they would not desert Thomas Becket, and their very presence at Henry's court suggested to the interested outsider that the wall of support protecting the archbishop may not be quite as secure as it seemed before. It is easy to imagine that Henry, while discontented that neither John nor Herbert would easily switch sides, must have realized that the perception was that cracks were appearing in the edifice. He could exploit this illusion. In any case, the application of pressure was working. It had created an atmosphere of fear and tension in the archbishop's circle typified by some of the comments John of Salisbury was making in his letters at the time, like his repetition of the rumour that 'the bishop of London and [...] the bishop of Chichester [...] thirst for the blood of the archbishop of Canterbury' in a letter to his brother,[62] with a letter from Thomas later the same year making a similar claim against Henry.[63]

The king was renowned for his explosive and intimidating temper,[64] which he used as a method of engendering fear in those around him. Such demonstrations of anger were expected of a medieval king.[65] McGrath describes this as a 'need to show anger',[66] and it was inextricably linked with kingship itself.[67] The king was also very restless, his sudden removals from one place to another keeping his friends and enemies guessing.[68] Yet Henry was also conscious of his position, and especially of the fact that he was newly upon the throne. In the mid-1160s he had been a king for only a dozen years. He had climbed to the throne from the shoulders of his mother's cousin King Stephen in the wake of a bitter and

[62] *LJS2*, 172 (p. 133).
[63] *CTB1*, 115 (p. 557).
[64] *CTB1*, 112 (p. 543), 148 (p. 685); *CTB2*, 205 (p. 893), 227 (p. 985). *CTB1*, 112 (p. 543) makes mention of the king 'aflame with his usual rage', hurling his cloak and clothes away from him and eating 'the straw on the floor'.
[65] Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy, *Medieval Sensibilities: A History of Emotions in the Middle Ages*, trans. by Robert Shaw (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018, English edn), pp. 171-172.
[66] McGrath, *Royal Rage*, p. 131.
[67] 'Finally, monastic chroniclers associated displays of royal anger with the very exercise of kingship': McGrath, *Royal Rage*, p. 133.
[68] This trait is reported by his one-time secretary Peter of Blois and is repeated in W. L. Warren, *King John*, 2nd edn (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978), pp. 23-24.

lengthy conflict. From this distance we know that he was secure and that his descendants would rule England for hundreds of years more. At the time, however, Henry had no such knowledge. Disaster could come upon him at any time. He himself had managed to take the crown from the grasp of King Stephen's family after Stephen had been the king for nearly twenty years, so how much easier would it be for someone else to do the same to him if he committed some foul act of unbelievable reprehension, such as the murder or crippling of an archbishop? He might face an insurgency intent on toppling him from the crown. Fifty years later Henry's son King John faced an attempted coup from the grandson of King Louis VII, another Louis, who actually invaded England.[69]

Henry had to navigate a careful course through the minefield of contemporary politics. He needed to keep his opponents guessing as to what he might do next, and to wonder what reprisals he could effect to damage them. Simultaneously, he had to appear a reasonable man, strong and ruthless but virtuous in the eyes of Christendom. John and Herbert were certainly trying to avoid attracting the king's anger, and Henry's awareness of that may just have strengthened his resolve to maintain the attack against Thomas Becket. The situation was favourable to the king. Thomas was losing his grip on his friends if John and Herbert were really trying to make peace; the fact that the king chose to make such a reconciliation so difficult suggests that he doubted their sincerity. In either case it seemed the king did not care. He knew how to discomfit them further by keeping the archbishop's entourage in a quandary as to whether a settlement would ever be reached.

The fear of everlasting exile and poverty was real for them. It was after the interviews took place that the king engineered the archbishop's removal from Pontigny, whither Thomas had been instructed to go by the pope.[70] The conditions at Pontigny had been difficult,[71] so

[69] This Louis (d. 1226) was the son and heir of King Philip II of France (1180-1223): Warren, *King John*, p. 55; in 1200 he was married to a granddaughter of Henry II: Marc Morris, *King John: Treachery, Tyranny and the Road to Magna Carta* (London: Hutchinson, 2015), p. 116; and on the death of his father in 1223 he became King Louis VIII of France: D. A. Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London: Methuen, 1990), p. 309. The invasion began in the late spring of 1216: Warren, *King John*, pp. 251-252.

[70] Although Pontigny was not within Henry's domain, he was swift to threaten reprisals on Cistercian houses in England if Thomas Becket continued to enjoy their hospitality: Knowles, *Becket*, p. 117; Winston, *Becket*, pp. 261-263. Thomas was still complaining about it a year after the event: *CTB1*, 150 (p. 697). The king's own grandsons Henry III (1216-1272) and his brother Richard were to go the abbey separately in the next century to visit the shrine of St Edmund: Janet Burton and Julie Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle*

perhaps it was a blessing in disguise for the exiles. It was a Cistercian house in the diocese of Auxerre,[72] where the regimen of the day was very different from that hitherto experienced by this archbishop of Canterbury's household. However, Henry's underlying motive in doing this must have been to upset Thomas's way of life, to propel him into an uncomfortable situation where he was forced to find other accommodation from other obliging helpers. For Henry, it served three main purposes, among others: it made Thomas and his companions endure a difficult period during which they must move themselves and become accustomed to another environment; it was a 'flushing out' procedure so that any who offered Thomas succour would necessarily be exposed as opponents of the king; and, most importantly, it showed in a very real way the extent of Henry's power. The archbishop was unable to remain at Pontigny and he settled down in Ste-Colombe, Sens, his base for the remainder of his exile.[73]

The presence of fear in Thomas and his household had proved a useful addition to Henry's arsenal. The king had been prepared to let Thomas leave England, apply to the pope for help, and accept the support of King Louis. He was countering Thomas's appeals with some of his own.[74] The secular royal court operated and perambulated as usual, with the king's barons and knights continuing their lives largely uninterrupted by the storm that was brewing, but the churchmen left behind in England were faced with a rising fear of their own. Their opposition to the king's notion of his 'ancient customs' as written down in the Constitutions had raised a difficulty in their relationship with Henry, and Becket's actions had left them in an unbearable situation, as they had pointed out to the archbishop himself at Northampton.[75] Moreover, Becket's flight had left them completely exposed to any retribution the king may have wished to take. The months after the conference at Northampton would have been fraught with confusion. Thomas was seen to be serially

Ages (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2016), p. 137; Darren Baker, *Henry III: The Great King England Never Knew It Had* (Stroud: The History Press, 2017), pp. 182 and 223.

[71] During Thomas's time at Pontigny he suffered a collapse of health as a result of a poor diet: Winston, *Becket*, pp. 216-217.

[72] Founded in 1114, it was the second daughter house of Cîteaux: Burton and Kerr, *The Cistercians in the Middle Ages*, p. 23.

[73] *CTB1*, 115 (pp. 557-559).

[74] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 91.

[75] William Fitzstephen in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 113.

inconstant,[76] a flaw at which John hints in a letter to his brother when he fears that Thomas's 'innocence may be in danger from false brethren',[77] and as the architect of the wrangle with the king; he had abandoned the bishops, leaving them to their own devices and the fury of their royal master. The easiest and safest method by which to disentangle themselves from the crisis was to make peace with the king. It has to be remembered that whereas Thomas Becket might have powerful friends to house and feed him and his followers, not every churchman or even English bishop may have been able to find such succour. The Church's property gave them their living and without their benefices they could be, generally speaking, penniless and in fact owing money.[78] This applied to their clerks as much as to them.[79] They had not the infrastructure present to support themselves if they left England, and the prospect of poverty abroad would have been daunting. They could not be certain of a warm welcome from King Louis if a sudden avalanche of homeless bishops and their households descended upon him.

The activity of compromising with Henry began immediately. With a king as unpredictable as Henry, no time could be lost. Barely two months had passed before the family and dependants of the self-exiled archbishop were forcibly ejected from their homes and ordered to make their way to Thomas for him to provide for them. It was probable that sympathetic bishops and other officers of the Church might suffer similarly, and so the bishops exercised their initiative. Even though the king had demanded of them that they pass sentence on their archbishop at Northampton,[80] they had managed to avoid this via the clever suggestion that they honour their allegiance to Thomas by abstaining from judging him and at the same time honour their allegiance to the king by taking the matter to the pope for him to decide.[81] It was a form of 'double-think' that clearly appealed to the king because he agreed. As it turned out, this agreement was beneficial to all because it allowed Henry to appear generous and the bishops to satisfy their consciences and their concern for

[76] Gilbert Foliot was in no doubt of that, as he noted in the famous 1166 *Multiplicem Nobis* letter, particularly the passage in *CTB1*, 109, pp. 507-513.
[77] *LJS2*, 172 (p. 131). That Thomas is easily persuaded may be implied here.
[78] Even without losing his bishopric, Bishop Arnulf of Lisieux spent most of his life in debt: Barlow, *Arnulf*, p. xx.
[79] John of Salisbury often mentioned his own poverty: *LJS2*, 136 (p. 13), 167 (p. 99), 237 (p. 449), 300 (p. 703) for example, as well as an oblique reference in *LJS2*, 292 (p. 671).
[80] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 87.
[81] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 113.

their safety. It continued to hold even after Thomas fled because some of the bishops immediately launched into a defence of the king, being part of a legation sent to the papal curia to argue the king's case, leaving England at the same time as Becket,[82] and reaching the papal curia at Sens about 24 November.[83]

Thomas Becket did have a distinct advantage over his fellow bishops even during his exile. As the holder of a senior post in the English Church, he had the authority to control his peers and to inflict penalties on them if he wished. When Thomas was awarded the legateship from the pope in May 1166,[84] although it excluded the diocese of York, it gave Thomas explicitly the added authority of the pope. He used these powers to the full. It was the wielding of these powers that caused fear in his brother bishops as it was intended to do. Gilbert Foliot, the bishop of London, became the mouthpiece of the episcopal faction still in England, and engineered the appeals that so frustrated Thomas Becket, who described them as 'evasions' with its connotations of trickery,[85] some of them pre-emptive,[86] and in 1170 Gilbert asked for protection against Thomas's power.[87] The efficacy of Thomas's sentences was real for the bishops and the prospect of their enemy archbishop being able to secure everlasting damnation for them created a fear that was tangible and clearly deepened their contempt for the exiled archbishop. Thus their small victories over Thomas were applauded by them, as in John of Oxford's apparently successful visit to the papal curia in the latter part of 1166 when he managed to secure a meeting with the pope and overturn Thomas's own censures.[88] John of Salisbury complained about this to the pope himself,[89] and subsequently alleged that the pope's actions had damaged Becket's credibility.[90]

All this was done by the application of fear in another direction, and this involved the pope himself. Following the death of Pope Adrian IV in 1159 there had been a split in the

[82] Duggan, *Becke*t, p. 85.
[83] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 87.
[84] *CTB1*, 71 (pp. 279-281).
[85] *CTB2*, 199 (p. 865).
[86] Such as the one of which Thomas was informed in Gilbert's letter to him of 1169: *CTB2*, 193 (p. 847).
[87] *LCGF*, 216 (p. 288).
[88] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 125.
[89] *LJS2*, 213 (pp. 349-351).
[90] *LJS2*, 219 (pp. 373-375).

Roman Church resulting in two popes being elected independently of each other with both claiming sovereignty.[91] As the stability and influence of the pope relied extensively on the co-operation and recognition of the secular powers of the time, this created an awkward environment for the new popes. Clearly both wanted undisputed hegemony, and only one could have it. This in itself opened up the chance of political leverage, of the giving and taking of favours between the pope and his would-be adherents, in this case the kings of the various nation states over which the pope wished to extend his episcopal rule. So the pope in western Europe, Alexander III, was forced to tread a narrow and dangerous path through the warring factions.

This was good news for Henry, and rather less good news for Thomas. The new pope's reliance on the support of secular rulers, particularly those in western Europe, forced him to compromise on some issues he may well not have wished to. He says as much to Thomas in a letter of May 1168 when he admits his fear that Henry might renounce his allegiance.[92] As a result of this his work for the exiled archbishop was restricted and, at times, his attitude ambivalent. Thomas felt compelled to write that the papal curia and the pope himself had been blinded into being patient by Henry's blandishments,[93] tricked by false promises,[94] and cowed by threats.[95] It is to be supposed that they appreciated the stressful and complex dilemma in which Pope Alexander was placed, with the conflicting claims of ecclesiastical loyalty balanced against the need for secular props to maintain his papacy, but the tone of Becket's letters to the pope was increasingly frustrated. At times the inference to be drawn is that Thomas believed himself to be the only upholder of the Church's rights as he lectures cardinals on the liberty of the Church.[96]

[91] The schism is briefly described in Malcolm Barber, *The Two Cities: Medieval Europe 1050-1320*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 99, and discussed more fully in Jochen Johrendt, 'The Empire and the Schism' in *Pope Alexander III (1159-81): The Art of Survival*, ed. by Peter D. Clarke and Anne J. Duggan (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 99-126.
[92] *CTB1*, 166 (pp. 765-767).
[93] 'The Church's persecutor and ours is taking advantage of your patience': *CTB1*, 169 (p. 771).
[94] In March 1170 Thomas wrote 'we wish that he had not misled your serenity this time with his smooth and empty promises': *CTB2*, 270 (p. 1151).
[95] Henry 'terrifies and coerces the majesty of the Apostolic See by various threats': *CTB1*, 170 (p. 777).
[96] *CTB1*, 125 (pp. 599-603).

The mood now was quite different from the one exhibited by the archbishop at Clarendon in his half-acceptance of the 'ancient customs' or indeed even at Northampton, where he had been conciliatory to the king in so far as accepting the fine for his alleged mishandling of funds. The hardened stance comes after several years of exile, and several years of being exposed to the consistent advice of his companions. By this time John of Salisbury was referring to the king in what can only be described as malicious terms leading to the assumption that Thomas was subject to a barrage of manipulative advice from the trusted clerks he had about him, and little or none of it was designed to bring Henry and Thomas closer together politically. John of Salisbury has been proposed as a witness of moderate views,[97] but his letters tell a somewhat different story. He urged Thomas to be mild towards the pope's envoy,[98] and yet he was thundering against Henry as a 'tyrant',[99] accusing him of 'malice'.[100] This was a man of whom to be wary. He was clearly an accomplished diplomat as he had many friends, but he was someone of whom it was folly to make an enemy, as Bishop Arnulf of Lisieux was to find out.[101] John even found time to attack Bishop Roger of Worcester, one of the English bishops who was on the whole sympathetic to Thomas.[102] In this process we have seen fear from Thomas, his companions, the English bishops and the pope, and these emotions had a significant effect on the unfolding of the drama. They were, however, not the only participants who experienced fear. It has to be recognized that King Henry acted upon its effects.

When the papal schism was resolved upon the general acceptance of Pope Alexander III as leader of the western Church, life became considerably more challenging for Henry. He had openly been exploiting the pope's weakness of position during the dispute so far. Even the pope had recognized it, and now Alexander changed his treatment of him. There had always been strong weapons at the disposal of the Church, weapons that could be used against individuals in particular and against territories in general. Personal

[97] Webb, *John of Salisbury*, p. 142.
[98] *LJS2*, 227 (pp. 397-399).
[99] *LJS2*, 275 (p. 581).
[100] *LJS2*, 175 (p. 155); 184 (p. 219).
[101] John blamed Arnulf for creating or perhaps worsening his first rift with Henry: an example of his waspishness can be read in *LJS2*, 136 (p. 11).
[102] John accuses Roger of acting 'without shame or wisdom in the cause of the archbishop': *LJS2*, 238 (p. 451) and also of behaving in a manner 'more than is seemly': *LJS2*, 241 (p. 465).

excommunication was directed at unrepentant offenders who repeatedly defied the Church, but the imposition of an interdict had an effect on a great number of people, many of whom would be innocent of any offence and who may well be outraged that they should be thus unfairly punished. To Henry the prospect of an interdict on some or all of his domains was definitely shocking to contemplate. His empire, famously described as stretching from the North Sea to the Pyrenees,[103] was turbulent enough to manage without more possibilities of insurrection from disaffected people who feared for their souls and blamed the king for it. This sort of penalty could finish him as a ruler and, worse, hand his lands over to someone else. Henry's overlord and perennial *bête noire*, King Louis, was always standing by.

Throughout the dispute Thomas Becket and his companions presented harshness towards the king but fear of losing Henry's support had checked the pope's actions until the shackles of fear had been removed, and when they were Pope Alexander acted quickly. The threat of excommunication and interdict brought the reluctant king back to the negotiating table.[104] It was a victory for Thomas, but it came with a price that few would have wanted to pay.

[103] Horback, 'Life', pp. 27-28.
[104] The possibility of an interdict being laid on at least some of Henry's lands rose significantly following the coronation of Henry's eldest son Henry (the young king) in June 1170. This and other consequences of the coronation are discussed in Duggan, *Becket*, pp. 182-183.

ANGER AND PROPAGANDA

It was inevitable that a dispute which lasted for more than eight years, and involved the exile of one of the parties for six of those years, should generate a great deal of anger which in turn would manifest itself in several ways. To begin with, the anger was mostly on the king's side and arising out of wrongs, real or imagined, that Henry believed done to him over the failure of the bishops' agreement to the written Constitutions of Clarendon. It must have been augmented by the sense of resentment and betrayal the king will undoubtedly have experienced earlier by Becket's resignation as chancellor and his subsequent activities during the first two years of his episcopacy, probably regarded as 'a shocking demonstration of arrogance and ingratitude', according to Anne Duggan.[1] However, although Duggan accepts this reaction of court and king as likely, she goes on to diminish its significance by excusing Becket from continuing in both roles because of a conflict of interests. In fact, quite cleverly she diverts the blame for this action from Becket to the king with an implied allegation that Henry would have resented a chancellor who did not support his policies.[2] Whereas this suggestion may well be true, at the critical moment in mid-1162 it was not possible that either party would have known whether future policies would have been acceptable to the new archbishop. These were bridges yet to be reached, and decisions yet to be made. Becket's action in resigning had but one real effect: it underlined a division between him and the king and could not help but disturb the cordiality of their relationship. It was an act that would inevitably provoke anger.

In addition to this, Thomas's two attempts to leave the country, made during the summer of 1164, were contrary to the customs to which Thomas had attached his verbal consent privately at Woodstock.[3] Thomas's behaviour signalled that whether or not there could be any unwritten agreement over the customs, he had no intention of keeping to the spirit of them. It could be taken as a vindication of the king's determination to have them set down and fully understood so that compliance was expected with no room for misapprehension.

[1] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 30.
[2] 'Was it conceivable that Henry would have tolerated a chancellor-archbishop who did not support his policies?': Duggan, *Becket*, p. 31.
[3] Shirley, *Garnier's Becket*, pp. 25-26.

When Thomas finally did flee, the action was nothing short of an insult to the king, a violation of the terms of the Constitutions of Clarendon,[4] and an open and vivid if unspoken accusation of violence levelled against the king even though, so far, there had been no suggestion of actual physical harm being done to the archbishop. As Bishop Foliot wrote, 'you very carefully avoided the death which no one thought fit to inflict'.[5] Thomas had been ruined financially by the application of the king's fines, but even these measures had not yet been put into action and there was still the chance that Henry was intending to use the threat of impending penury to force Thomas into some form of acquiescence to the customs. It was the type of bribery that he had every reason to suppose might succeed. The withdrawal of the finer aspects of Thomas's life might give him pause for thought.

The flight by Becket's party seemed designed to provoke the king into even more extreme measures. Talk of absconding from England was not new to Thomas and his friends; John of Canterbury, the bishop of Poitiers, was anticipating it in his letter to Thomas as early as mid-October 1163,[6] and the fact that John of Salisbury had left England almost a year before Thomas did proves that Becket was viewing exile as a possible or even probable means of escape.[7] The question was not whether the flight had been planned, as it would appear that it had certainly been discussed, but whose idea it was. Later on in the dispute, John of Salisbury was to write that 'the exile has undoubtedly been profitable to the archbishop of Canterbury both for his learning and his character',[8] so there is little doubt that he felt it was worthwhile and could well have suggested it, especially as he was the first to go.

Henry's banishment from England of Thomas's dependents in 1164/5 remains an action that could be considered more spiteful towards Thomas than useful to the king, yet there was method here too. It was certain that Becket's departure cast a cloud over the king's

[4] Clause 4 of the Constitutions, which forbade beneficed clergy to leave England without the king's licence: Staunton, *Lives*, p. 93.
[5] *CTB1*, 109 (p. 527).
[6] *CTB1*, 18 (p. 47).
[7] Exile was not unknown when disputes flared up between clerics and kings**.** Even Thomas Becket's immediate predecessor as archbishop of Canterbury, Theobald of Bec, had undergone an exile: Truax, p. 170.
[8] *LJS2*, 150 (p. 49).

reputation and the loss of his archbishop of Canterbury was something of a matter of regret in that it inevitably represented a loss of regal control. However relieved Henry may have been not to have to face Becket, a maverick archbishop was sure to cause trouble if he could. Henry cannot have been pleased to hear how his archbishop was complaining to the pope. By mid-1166 Thomas was declaring the king's 'impiety', that he was becoming 'worse and worse' and threatened 'divine harshness and vengeance'.[9] Very strong words for an archbishop to use against his king. This reflected the level of anger that had been growing among those still in exile.

If the king had wanted to produce incentives to persuade Thomas Becket to return to England in some form of damage limitation, the most prominent of these would have been acquiescence to the demands of the archbishop for the English Church to be exempted from observance of the Constitutions of Clarendon,[10] variously described as 'abominable customs', 'evil customs' and the 'depravities' of the king's grandfather Henry I among other descriptions.[11] As this concession was evidently not on the king's list of possible offers due to the fact that the Constitutions of Clarendon were central to Henry's grip on the protocols of law, other motives for return needed to be found. The expulsion of Becket's relatives and close friends was perfect. The order that they should present themselves to Becket himself meant that they would be a burden on the exiled archbishop,[12] which must have brought him both distress and anger and may even have caused a temporary breakdown; Urry claims that Thomas said 'he did not care if his servants were cut to pieces and his kinsfolk, including his sisters and nephews, flayed',[13] a harsh remark which may indicate a momentary loss of rationality. At the same time, Henry implied that he regarded Thomas as having deposed himself,[14] which could be viewed as

[9] *CTB1*, 79 (p. 317).
[10] The offending parts are quoted with admirable consistency in *CTB1*, 78 (p. 311), 79 (p. 319), 80 (p. 323) and 144 (p. 669).
[11] Examples of these can be found as follows: 'abominable customs', *CTB1*, 144 (p. 671); 'evil customs', *LJS2*, 202 (p. 297), 250 (p. 507); 'depravities', *LJS2*, 175 (p. 159). Other descriptions include 'perversities', *CTB1*, 78 (p. 311) and 79, (p. 319); 'perversions', 151 (p. 713); 'abominations', 153 (p. 719); 'infamous constitutions', *CTB2*, 187 (p. 831); 'wicked customs', *LJS2* 225 (pp. 391 and 393). John of Salisbury goes so far as to condemn those who accepted the Constitutions as ones who 'grovel in the filth': *LJS2*, 187 (p. 237).
[12] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 102.
[13] Urry, *Last Days*, p. 17.
[14] Letter of Henry II to Louis VII, king of France (October 1164) in *EHD*, pp. 783-784.

an attempt to panic the archbishop into coming back so that he did not lose his position and possessions. It was certainly a demonstration that any attempt to flout the king's will would attract terrible penalties.

The ire of the king had certainly been kindled. The dialogue between them had completely broken down as early as when Thomas was summoned to Northampton because even when they were present in the same building, the king occupied an upper floor of the building much of the time while Thomas remained downstairs.[15] The fact that the king appeared to be unwilling to negotiate personally with Thomas is a sign that Henry could not trust himself to remain civil. The resentment stirred up by Thomas's resignation had been the foundations of a wall that was rising steadily along the very fissure of established society that the king had been wanting to close and repair seamlessly by Becket's appointment. However, Becket and his companions were not themselves calm or even organized. The archbishop's party split when Thomas left England. We have already seen that John of Salisbury chose to stay with his friend Peter of Celle rather than at Pontigny with the archbishop, and the decision of William Fitzstephen to remain in England is also strange. He wanted to try his luck in achieving the king's good will which demonstrates that he did not fear Henry enough to leave England with Thomas in 1164. Unlike John of Salisbury, Fitzstephen had not been in any disgrace before. He made peace with the king and only rejoined Thomas when the latter returned to England.[16] This in itself seems to suggest that he felt able to maintain good relations with both king and archbishop. Bearing in mind the hagiographical nature of Fitzstephen's biography, it is clear that he never ceased to regard Thomas in the kindest of lights, and his success in acquiring the king's patronage during Becket's exile is a tribute either to Fitzstephen's personal charm and diligence, or to Henry's grace and forbearance, and perhaps to a mixture of these. There is no evidence remaining that Fitzstephen undertook any task on the archbishop's behalf during these years and yet he was welcomed back into the household at Canterbury immediately upon Thomas's return.

[15] Knowles, *Becket*, p. 97.
[16] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 126; Guy, *Becket*, p. 228.

The failure of both John and Herbert to persuade the king to forgiveness in their visit to him at Easter 1166 could only have inflamed their anger. Before John suffered his period of disgrace in 1156, he had good things to say about the king, convinced that Henry 'will zealously watch over the honour and the interests of the Church with the utmost care',[17] but afterwards that opinion deteriorated rapidly, notably after John had suffered his disgrace. The activities of John and Herbert in no way displayed any kind of loyalty to Henry; they are in fact evidence that the king had only fuelled their anger which, lamentably for the king, John in particular was able to propagate through his letters and Herbert in his advice to Thomas. Duggan states confidently that 'at least some of the letters issued in Becket's name' were written by John of Salisbury.[18] The ideas within Thomas's letters would have been generally common to the community of which he was a part. Jolliffe has pointed out that Thomas and John both used the nickname of 'Proteus' for Henry.[19] It remains a matter of conjecture who thought of it first but in a sense this does not matter. The shared use of specific terminology like this implies close association and a tendency for these men and their companions to pool their literary and verbal resources to reflect their common feelings through similar approaches and attacks.[20]

It is significant that the change of tone in these letters comes after the abortive attempt to secure Henry's favour and, as can be noticed with interest, after a letter of early 1166 from John of Poitiers in which he offers advice which Thomas has requested. After criticizing the pope for his inaction against Henry, and remarking that 'everything [the king] does and says is deceitful', John of Poitiers's advice is practical and to the point, aimed at generating sympathy for the archbishop, raising his profile and spreading propaganda of the visual kind: Thomas should present himself as an impoverished exile to excite compassion. He should dress modestly and take as few attendants as he absolutely needed.[21] This advice implies that normally Thomas preferred to live in what some would call luxury; however,

17 *LJS1*, 13 (p. 21).
18 Duggan, *Thomas Becket: A Textual History*, p. 97.
19 J. E. A. Jolliffe, *Angevin Kingship*, 2nd edn (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1963; repr. 1970), p. 20.
20 Comparison of the English bishops with 'Balaamite bishops' in *CTB1*, 134 (p. 629) occurs in John's letters also, for example *LJS2*, 242 (p. 477), at about the same time as each other.
21 *CTB1*, 66 (p. 257); this was advice to Becket that was to resurface in *LJS2*, 179 (p. 191).

by reducing his entourage, the archbishop would provide a contrast to the king and spotlight the extremities to which his dispute with Henry had brought him.

The advice given above by the bishop of Poitiers was with reference to a proposed visit in 1166 to the mother of Henry, Empress Matilda, and it was perhaps even more essential that Thomas should appear to be chastened and diminished by his exile in her eyes, as she had already written to Thomas that he had severely upset the king, telling him that 'they allege that you have turned the whole realm against him as much as you could, and that you did not stop at striving to disinherit him with all your power' and consequently Thomas would have to work hard to recover any ground lost.[22] In the interests of peace and harmony (and doubtless for the sake of her son's safety on the throne) she would offer Thomas Becket any help she could provide in interceding for him with the king, but her attitude towards Thomas was neither warm nor encouraging.

The time for Thomas's efforts in placating the king was over by the middle of 1166, and Thomas and his companions embarked on a campaign of attacking those officials and friends and supporters of Henry who were important to him. The fact that these were the same people who were unsympathetic towards Thomas himself was a bonus. The venom emerging from the archbishop's household cannot be attached to Thomas alone, although obviously he must have felt frustrated by his quandary and the letters that were issued from his clerks' hands would have been in accordance with his wishes or intent. But his moods were probably deepened by his companions' ceaseless diatribe against the king's party which he allowed – or they insisted – to be inserted into his letters. Examples of this anger are manifold, and they begin in earnest in 1166. Thomas exploded into wrath against the king by a display of self-righteous indignation in a letter claiming authority over him and exclusively over the Church, telling him 'you do not have the power to command bishops to absolve or excommunicate anyone, to draw clergy to secular judgments [...] and many other things of this kind',[23] surely an unwise development in the prevailing circumstances.

[22] *CTB1*, 49 (p. 211). These are telling words from the empress; the tone of the letter suggests that she feels Thomas has been ungrateful as he has been 'loved and honoured' by the king, who 'made you lord of his entire realm and of all his lands, and elevated you to the highest position that he had in all his territories'.
[23] *CTB1*, 74 (p. 297).

Then he goes on to complain to the pope that he has endured 'enough and more than enough'.[24] It is at this time that Thomas asks a recipient of one of his letters, Brother Nicholas of Mont-Rouen, to warn Henry's mother Empress Matilda that he is about to 'unsheath [sic] the sword of the Holy Spirit' against Henry.[25] By informing the lady of this, Thomas could be sure that the threat would find its way to the king, even if royal agents did not carry it first. The volatility of his emotions is shown in 1167 where it appears that Thomas is not fully in control of them, writing that 'The bitterness of my spirit torments me',[26] and 'There is no suffering like mine'.[27] The letter is riven with outbursts bewailing his situation such as 'But I, unhappy man, where have I done wrong? What evil have I deserved?',[28] with no sense of personal responsibility.

It would be unfair to claim that the community which surrounded and supported Thomas had not been provoked and that the archbishop's wrath was unjustified. On or about 25 December 1164,[29] the properties and income of the archbishop himself and his companions were confiscated.[30] The disposition of the lands was to be directed by the king's ministers, one of whom was Ranulf de Broc, a name that was to haunt the archbishop for the rest of his life, and one recipient of the many excommunications that the archbishop issued, some of which are now, and were then, regarded as 'canonically questionable'.[31] The king had also sent embassies to the pope to put forward his point of view and to try to secure Becket's deposition. For Thomas this time would have been dangerous and worrying. For all his pride and vanity,[32] Becket was in a vulnerable position now. If a man as powerful as the king was set against him, and if the pope could be persuaded that Henry had a good case, then even the patronage of the French king might not be enough.

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[24] *CTB1*, 79 (p. 317).
[25] *CTB1*, 83 (p. 347).
[26] *CTB1*, 126 (p. 607).
[27] *CTB1*, 126 (p. 611).
[28] *CTB1*, 126 (p. 609).
[29] Guy, *Becket*, p. 227.
[30] Duggan, *Becket*, pp. 96-97.
[31] Richard H. Helmholz, 'Excommunication in Twelfth Century England' in *Journal of Law and Religion*, 11.1 (1994-1995), pp. 235-253 (p. 240) <http://www.jstor.com/stable/1051632> [accessed 11 July 2020]. Urry maintained that Becket had debased the currency of excommunication: *Last Days*, p. 68.
[32] John of Salisbury was aware of these traits as being part of the archbishop's shortcomings: Pepin, p. 75.

The best method of defence was attack by putting himself forward as the champion of the Church and a sufferer in its cause and this is what Thomas did. Not only Thomas, through his letters, but John of Salisbury embarked on an offensive campaign as well, and his target was the bishops in England. Anger was mounting because these men were offering very little in the way of encouragement for the exiles. Property was a main source of income for Thomas and his companions and they had ceased to have any means of obtaining such income. In spite of this, however, when asking for a copy of a work to be sent to him, John of Salisbury wrote that he wanted 'no cost spared here on any account, I beg',[33] which, if not an ironic comment, is an example of John's double standards or even his economy with the truth when discussing his finances. He cloaks his poverty in words which imply that he is happy with his lot.[34] However, in 1167 or 1168 John asked for 'aid' and named the archbishop as the needy recipient.[35] He was not above including a veiled threat if aid was not forthcoming.[36] John's anger at the apparent lack of help offered erupted later on in his missive to the community of Christ Church, Canterbury; in late 1169 he accused them of turning 'so swiftly from God's path to another Gospel, which destroys the authority of the Catholic Church' and of 'faint-heartedness' and then went on to try to persuade them to supply Thomas's want out of their 'abundance'.[37]

This was also the time when the exiles enhanced their strategy of disseminating their propaganda against the king. They had already been working at a more restricted form of the practice since leaving England by their relentless claims that their exile was for the liberty of the Church, and in order to safeguard religion in England.[38] By the middle of 1166 Thomas's patience had become exhausted, and his companions had finally realized that they could not make peace with the king. They had come to the conclusion that neither the pope nor Louis could make any headway either. It can hardly be a coincidence that the temperature of the dispute rose sharply after the failure of John of Salisbury and Herbert of Bosham to settle their future with the king at Angers. There was a sense of rejection and

[33] *LJS2*, 201 (p. 295).
[34] *LJS2*, 252 (p. 509).
[35] *LJS2*, 257-264 (pp. 519-537).
[36] *LJS2*, 258 (pp. 527-529).
[37] *LJS2*, 292 (pp. 667-671).
[38] *LJS2*, 171 (p. 127), 187 (p. 251), 234 (p. 429).

frustration, which John did not trouble to conceal as he laments the loss of thirteen pounds and two horses, 'to say nothing of toil and trouble and the tiresomeness of courts – and [...] it all went for nothing. My exertions and my money were wasted'.[39] However, the king was distracted by a rebellion involving Ralph de Fougères,[40] added to which he fell seriously ill,[41] and the pent-up anger could be released in a situation that was ripe for exploitation.

The king was a target for a number of verbal attacks, increasing in intensity and widening in scope as the months wore on. In mid-1166 John of Salisbury was writing to Thomas describing Henry as one 'whom no-one doubts to be the most impatient of men' and accusing him of having 'aroused and strengthened the fury of schism',[42] and by early 1168 he is actively inciting others in England to resist the king where necessary,[43] just the form of treachery that had tumbled Thomas Becket from his eminent position. However, the exiles maintained the pretext that it was not Henry himself who was to blame entirely. Much of the opprobrium was heaped upon the bishops in England, those men who had stood firm behind Thomas Becket at Westminster,[44] then again at Clarendon,[45] and, with the exception of the bishop of London, offered surety for Thomas's fines at Northampton,[46] then were probably dismayed when they rose on the morning of Wednesday 15 October 1164 to find that Thomas had left Northampton without a word to them. These men, important Church officials themselves, had effectively been abandoned to face the aftermath of something that had been Thomas's doing. Given the courage that we know Thomas to have possessed,[47] it is hard to imagine that he would have been the sole instigator of this extraordinary episode. The popular view of historians is that the stress of the situation had brought illness on the archbishop as mentioned above,[48] but he

[39] *LJS2*, 167 (p. 99).
[40] Warren, *Henry II*, p. 101.
[41] Hosler, *Henry II: A Medieval Soldier at War*, p. 189.
[42] *LJS2*, 175 (pp. 157-159).
[43] *LJS2*, 241 (p. 469).
[44] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 95.
[45] Knowles, *Becket*, pp. 87-88.
[46] Winston, *Becket*, pp. 177-78.
[47] Thomas had led men into battle: Guy, *Becket*, p. 113; Winston, *Becket*, pp. 82-83; and Thomas's valour on 29 December 1170 is beyond dispute.
[48] Chapter three, pp. 43-44.

recovered well enough to attend the court the next day. The question of whether his companions had done likewise (in terms of their nervousness) is another matter entirely.

Although John of Salisbury was not present at Northampton, many others of Thomas's household were, including Herbert of Bosham. Herbert was an awkward man whom Staunton describes as 'an odd-man-out',[49] and his name was never high on the list of witnesses to Thomas's documents,[50] but he was undoubtedly of great influence. He also was one of those who wrote Thomas's letters, although his 'florid and reference-laden prose' is strange to the modern eye,[51] and difficult to digest. Perhaps it was also unsuitable to the medieval eye as Barrau concludes that 'most of the Becket letters' in Herbert's collection 'are probably unsent drafts'.[52] Staunton has remarked that Herbert's letters reveal 'his rage at those [...] who stood in the way of Thomas's cause'.[53] As will be reported below,[54] his intervention in at least one event yet to come was to be memorable and decisive. It is unlikely that Herbert refrained from offering advice at this perilous time, and it is also unlikely that the advice would have been aimed at reducing the temperature of the discord.[55] With John of Salisbury then currently absent, Herbert could well have been instrumental in convincing Thomas that flight was essential so that the fight against Henry could be continued. It was certainly defended vigorously by John of Salisbury, who wrote of it as rejecting the 'judgement seat' and by carrying his case to the pope Thomas was countering 'the persecutor's malice and the judges' weakness'.[56] It came to be used as an item of propaganda, a light on the perceived cruelty of Henry II.

It could be argued that the events at Northampton had been orchestrated by the king and his party to compel Thomas to flee. If Thomas and his companions were well aware of the

[49] Michael Staunton, 'Editorial Preface' in *Herbert of Bosham*, ed. by Staunton, p. x.
[50] Staunton, 'An Introduction to Herbert of Bosham' in *Herbert of Bosham*, ed. by Staunton, p. 4.
[51] Julie Barrau, 'Scholarship as a Weapon: Herbert's Letter Collection' in *Herbert of Bosham*, ed. by Staunton, pp. 87-103 (p. 88).
[52] Barrau, 'Scholarship as a Weapon', p. 91.
[53] Staunton, 'An Introduction to Herbert of Bosham' in *Herbert of Bosham*, ed. by Staunton, p. 22.
[54] Chapter four, p. 75.
[55] Herbert 'always dissuaded the archbishop from compromise' according to Barlow: 'Herbert of Bosham', *ODNB* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/13014> [accessed 23 July 2020] (para. 5 of 12).
[56] *LJS2*, 187 (p. 243).

exiles undergone by the illustrious Anselm, a previous archbishop of Canterbury,[57] it is sure that Henry knew about them too. After Thomas had gone, the king gathered together an assembly of agents to put forward his case to Rome. He had a treaty with King Louis which 'envisaged' each party would not harbour the other's enemies,[58] and he proceeded to pursue his own agenda. It is clear that the removal of Thomas from England and from interfering in his business was of primary importance to the king,[59] and when it emerged that this policy was not going to succeed easily, or perhaps not at all, Henry's dalliance with the schismatic pope occurred. The Becket Affair raised the stakes higher as it became apparent to the king that his appeals to Rome were not being given greater prominence than those of Becket, and in May 1165 he sent an embassy, including John of Oxford,[60] to Germany.[61] At no point was Henry officially to endorse the anti-pope,[62] but the possibility that he might rumbled on and materially affected the way the pope himself behaved.

Almost throughout the Thomas Becket Affair Pope Alexander III was in a difficult predicament and its effect on Becket was profound. As Becket had received his pallium from Pope Alexander,[63] he had a duty of loyalty towards him as his own power and dignity derived ultimately from him. Therefore Thomas's only influence with Pope Alexander was the declaration of his unwavering allegiance to Alexander himself whom he regarded as the sole authority who could resolve the dispute, the only one with the ability to make a decision that Thomas would obey.[64] To this Thomas and his companions added the dimension of persecution, a persecution on behalf of the Church itself, to which he refers in his letters.[65] However, these tricks were not enough to pull Alexander over to support

[57] Brief details of these can be found in Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy*, pp. 156-159.
[58] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 121.
[59] John of Salisbury reports in *LJS2*, 174 (pp. 147-149), that the marquis of Montferrat was promising Becket's deposition in return for a match between his son and one of Henry's daughters. In *LJS2* 238 (p. 453), John tells Baldwin of Totnes that Thomas is refusing to leave the Canterbury see.
[60] John of Oxford received the deanery of Salisbury early in 1165: Christopher Harper-Bill in 'John of Oxford', *ODNB* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/21058> [accessed 20 November 2020] (para. 1 of 7).
[61] Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, p. 111.
[62] John of Salisbury, however, was adamant that John of Oxford had taken an oath to recognize Emperor Frederick's pope and insisted on spreading the rumour: *LJS2*, 177 (pp. 183-185).
[63] The importance and significance of the pallium is well described in Duggan, *Becket*, p. 26 and Hogan, *Becket*, p. 434, n. 3.
[64] *CTB1*, 116 (p. 565) and 118 (p. 571).
[65] *CTB1*, 169 (p. 771), 170 (p. 777).

him completely, and the pope continually tried to urge Thomas to be patient, lenient and not repeatedly issue sanctions against his enemies.[66] There was little or no chance that Thomas would abdicate his responsibility towards Alexander but the king of England's support for the pope was not so sure, and that realization drove the exiles into new heights of anger, not only against Henry but also towards the pope. Whereas there was never a complete breakdown in communication between the exiles and the pope, the cooling of relations was noticeable when at one point the archbishop allowed the accusation of 'dangerous dissimulation' to be levelled at the pope,[67] with the exiles' anger tinged with utter despair, especially when Alexander went on in December 1166 to forbid Thomas from issuing any more penalties against the king or 'anyone in his kingdom'.[68]

Accusations of bribery are in the letters of both John of Salisbury and Thomas himself, bribery of the pope and other members of the papal curia by Henry,[69] this being all the more infuriating to Thomas and his companions because they believed the funds for such bribes came from their own confiscated resources.[70] However, Thomas knew that the persuasion of gifts and money could be efficacious and considered offering them himself, and it was perhaps only Thomas's lack of ready funds that stopped him from joining his king in plying the papal curia with persuasive donations. In his letter of 1164, John of Salisbury commented that the '200 marks' Thomas had earmarked for the pope was not going to be enough,[71] thereby acknowledging that the papal curia was in no sense unwilling to succumb to corruption. The Church relied heavily on the contributions from the constituent countries of its overall domain, and so there was already a flow of money from England to the papal curia. 'Peter's Pence' inevitably became an unspoken ingredient of the bargaining that went on between Henry's group of negotiators and the pope. This reliance increased during the schism when Pope Alexander was obliged to remove his court from Rome and apply for accommodation in the lands of one of his most steadfast supporters, King Louis. In 1165 we find Gilbert Foliot, then bishop of London, tasked with

[66] *CTB1*, 54 (p. 225), 72 (p. 281), 119 (p. 573); *CTB2*, 205 (p. 893), 208 (pp. 909-911).
[67] *CTB1*, 124 (p. 593).
[68] *CTB1*, 119 (p. 573).
[69] *LJS2*, 296 (p. 685); *CTB1*, 174 (p. 797), *CTB2*, 263 (p. 1135).
[70] *CTB1*, 174 (p. 799).
[71] *LJS2*, 136 (p. 11).

collecting the payment,[72] and then confirming that it is proceeding.[73] The wheels of power can be oiled by the giving of presents, and the people of the twelfth century were just as aware of this as anyone in other ages. Arnulf, bishop of Lisieux, wrote of receiving 'presents' from the then bishop of Winchester in 1179,[74] and in one letter we learn that the pope asked for a carpet from Gilbert Foliot,[75] an expensive present then as now, and doubtless there would have been others.

It was also essential for Thomas's success that at least the majority of the pope's cardinals should be sympathetic towards him. As in the case of the king and his court, rarely would any decision be made at the papal curia without reference to a council of advisers whatever Thomas Becket and his supporters urged. So here we have another source of anger directed squarely at the pope's counsellors. The displeasure the exiles felt with the curia was amply displayed in the letters of both John and Thomas himself. One particularly angry letter was sent to the pope suggesting that the pontiff had been duped by the king's agents and poorly served by the weakness of the 'brethren' in the papal curia.[76] For the pope, 'Henry's support was of paramount importance' Barlow has written,[77] and it was undoubtedly true that the pope was making an immense effort to keep Henry from descending into open hostility towards him;[78] there would be no benefit for him if one of his most powerful subject domains transferred religious allegiance to the anti-pope.

The king's ecclesiastical advisers were a suitable quarry for the exiles. Most of them had stayed loyal to the king,[79] even though they clearly believed Thomas expected them to follow him.[80] Here is where Thomas and his friends and supporters misjudged the situation entirely. Thomas's precipitate departure was seen as a betrayal by at least some of his

[72] *LCGF*, 155 (p. 206).
[73] *LCGF*, 156 (p. 207).
[74] Barlow, *Arnulf*, 129 (p. 196).
[75] *LCGF*, 247 (p. 319).
[76] *CTB1*, 169 (p. 773).
[77] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 168.
[78] Pope Alexander's primary concern was to keep Henry in allegiance to Rome 'and was at pains to reiterate his gratitude to Henry II' as the king had played a crucial part in recognizing Alexander as pope in 1160: Nicholas Vincent, 'Beyond Becket: Henry II and the Papacy (1154-1189)' in *Pope Alexander III (1159-81): The Art of Survival*, ed. by Clarke and Duggan, p. 271.
[79] *LJS2*, 176 (p. 175).
[80] *CTB1*, 109 (p. 527).

fellow English bishops. His insistence on attempting to run the English Church whilst abroad can only have been seen as interference by someone who had, essentially, forsaken his post and responsibility. This is how it was posited in *Multiplicem Nobis*, nominally from the corporate body of bishops in 1166 but generally regarded as arising out of the indignation of Gilbert Foliot. This letter was a response to the recriminations levelled at the bishops in Thomas's letters of early July 1166 to the English clergy and Gilbert Foliot.[81] Thomas had written in reproach to his brother bishops, much of the text in the first person instead of the more usual plural, which could indicate that Thomas was feeling any criticism personally, justifying his condemnation of them in their absence and accusing Gilbert of 'negligence'.[82] Against Gilbert he raised the charge that the bishop did not 'blush to stand with my persecutors against me, against God and his Church'.[83] Thomas was evidently suffering an acute sense of injustice and, with the help of his clerks, he distilled this into a letter that was full of violent emotion. The angry tone was doubtless meant to intimidate them and shake them out of what the exiles considered their outrageous support of Henry and his policies. It was partly an outburst of anger against them, an anger that had been brewing for eighteen months and more, and partly a piece of propaganda, designed to overawe the bishops into a sense of guilt and detachment from the Roman Church.

If indeed this was the intention of Thomas and his companions, it backfired dramatically. The bishop of London took exception to his archbishop's attitude and, for once, appeared to forget the propriety with which he had acted hitherto. Foliot was an interesting individual. Originally a Cluniac monk, he had held a number of distinguished ecclesiastical posts before being translated to the bishopric of London.[84] It has already been noted that he refused to profess obedience to Thomas either on his own behalf or that of London, and had obtained the pope's backing for that. In the summer of 1165, well after Thomas's flight from England, John of Salisbury appeared to expect Gilbert's assistance, writing 'I am confident that the bishop of London [...] will sue for my peace',[85] but all this changed

[81] *CTB1*, 95 and 96 (pp. 389-441).
[82] *CTB1*, 95 (p. 413).
[83] *CTB1*, 96 (pp. 435-437).
[84] *GFL*, pp. 2-3 for a list of them.
[85] *LJS2*, 151 (p. 51); he had petitioned Gilbert Foliot for assistance, *LJS2*, 150 (p. 49).

in 1166. During Thomas's absence Gilbert had been taking over part of the duties of the absent archbishop of Canterbury in addition to his own substantial work as bishop of London.[86] This could have caused Gilbert both stress and resentment. In the past he had been known to avoid extra responsibility of this kind,[87] and the heavy workload of the archbishop of Canterbury was daunting. To find Thomas asserting his authority even when absent, claiming 'though absent in body, we are nevertheless present in authority',[88] failing to offer comfort and consolation for his absence,[89] and then to exhort them to find more courage and to serve the Church better must have been galling to Gilbert, who had been battling to keep the Church afloat in England notwithstanding the king's displeasure with the Church in general and Thomas in particular.

The result was *Multiplicem Nobis*, a letter explicitly addressed to and directed at Archbishop Thomas. It was, as would be suggested today, a letter full of 'home truths', at least truths as far as Gilbert saw them. It reads as though the bishop of London had reached the end of his considerable patience, and that Thomas's previous letter to him and his fellow bishops had finally broken through the resented but resilient layer of decorum and respect that had kept the English bishops from disowning their archbishop completely. There had been remarkably little dissent from the bishops during the eighteen months or so since Becket's flight. Although they had not followed their leader into exile, some condemning Thomas's flight and accusing the archbishop of 'beginning a flight at Northampton, changing your dress to skulk for a while, and secretly slinking out of the confines of the kingdom', [90] the remaining bishops had by and large remained silently observant of Thomas's seniority and his commands, which were certainly received and acknowledged, even if they were regarded as needing too many messengers to enact.[91]

[86] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 125.
[87] *LCGF*, 139 (p. 182).
[88] *CTB1*, 95 (p. 413).
[89] Matthew, 'The Letter-Writing of Archbishop Becket' in *Belief and Culture*, ed. by Gameson and Leyser, p. 287.
[90] *CTB1*, 109 (p. 527).
[91] *CTB1*, 149 (p. 691).

The bishop of London's life story need not trouble these pages,[92] but it is perhaps important to note that he was a dedicated churchman, sometimes using his influence in the furtherance of his family by asking favours for them,[93] as well as being 'a trained lawyer and theologian';[94] Beryl Smalley praises him for 'the courage of his convictions' when he opposed Becket's nomination as archbishop, recognizing that Foliot 'had really stuck his neck out in defence of the Church'.[95] His opposition to Becket has attracted adverse comment in the past and, as has been mentioned, his actions have often been imputed to jealousy of his metropolitan, but his overall behaviour during the Becket Affair was no worse than many of the other bishops in England. He was thrust to the fore of the conflict because his see happened to be London, the third most important in the country, and as noted already he was required to perform some of the duties of the absent archbishop. He was also one of Henry's chaplains by special request of the king and by the pope's mandate.[96] There is a curious blend of outrage and obedience in Gilbert, where Becket's actions in suspending or excommunicating him were both reviled and mocked and yet generally accepted as valid as he sought absolution;[97] even the king regarded these measures as having substance despite their peremptory nature.[98]

Thus Gilbert Foliot must have seemed to the exiles to be the embodiment of resistance to them. Certainly John of Salisbury, disappointed that his contacts in England were failing to write to him,[99] and further upset that the king would not grant him a painless pardon at their meeting in Angers, made a conscious decision to target Gilbert Foliot with his satire and venom. He singled Foliot out to be the architect of their troubles, claiming that he was

[92] His entry 'Gilbert Foliot' by C. N. L. Brooke in the *ODNB* is useful, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/9792> [accessed 18 November 2019], and an excellent narrative can be found in *GFL*.
[93] For example: *LCGF*, 4 (pp. 38-39), 30 (p. 70), 173 (pp. 245-246), 188 (pp. 260-262), 258 (pp. 326-327). He was described euphemistically as 'a good family man' in *GFL*, p. 47.
[94] *GFL*, p. 246.
[95] Smalley, *Becket Conflict*, p. 178.
[96] Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, p. 46.
[97] Gilbert Foliot would take notice of Thomas's mandates: Elisabeth Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1986), p. 53.
[98] Henry prevented Templars from embracing Richard of Ilchester when he was under the stain of excommunication: John Hudson, 'Richard of Ilchester' in *ODNB* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/23515> [accessed 19 September 2020] (para. 3 of 7).
[99] *LJS2*, 159 (p. 75).

'the first inspiration and inciter of the whole dispute' because of 'shameless ambition'.[100] His favourite labels for Gilbert are 'Achitophel' and 'the ruler of the synagogue'.[101] The other bishops and churchmen unsympathetic to Becket also suffered some similar abuse.[102]

The exchange of letters in 1166 between the exiles and the bishops of England, and from Thomas to Henry, can be seen as the start of what turned out to be a sustained campaign of propaganda, fuelled by the exiles' sheer frustration at being unable to attain their objectives. So far they had cultivated the support of King Louis but in spite of confirming the acceptance of help from the French king,[103] John noted that this channel of assistance was essentially unreliable.[104] They had also failed to secure the overt and unqualified endorsement of the all-important pope. In spite of the bestowal of the primacy of England on Thomas by Pope Alexander,[105] and letters ratifying Becket's various sentences,[106] the pope was still very cautious about approving censures on the king personally,[107] which is the action that the archbishop wanted.[108] Another requirement of Thomas and his companions was the silencing of the three troublesome bishops in the form of a cessation of their appeals against his sentences, described by Thomas as 'vexatious trials', and he requested that the pope 'put an end to this wickedness, so that we are not summoned further'.[109]

While King Louis's help was invaluable in many ways, not least in providing the essential shelter Thomas and his companions needed, it was a fact that despite being Henry's titular overlord, Louis had very little practical influence over Henry in matters such as these.[110] Henry was the sovereign king of England, and the Thomas Becket Affair was entirely

[100] *LJS2*, 175 (p. 157).
[101] For example: *LJS2*, 175 (p. 153), 187 (pp. 231-233).
[102] 'For they are adherents of Jezebel': *LJS2*, 176 (p. 173).
[103] *LJS2*, 168 (p. 117).
[104] In the same sentence he doubts much help would come from the bishops of Hereford and Worcester either or that he has 'much confidence in the Roman church': *LJS2*, 175 (pp. 163-165).
[105] *CTB1*, 70 (pp. 273-279).
[106] For example: *CTB1*, 72 (p. 281), 104 (p. 489), 129 (pp. 617-619).
[107] *CTB1*, 69 (p. 273), 119 (p. 573).
[108] *CTB1*, 80 (p. 325).
[109] *CTB1*, 157 (p. 733).
[110] In Jolliffe's opinion, 'Louis VII [...] did no more than use Becket to embarrass Henry': *Angevin Kingship*, p. 307.

attached to England and thus solely within Henry's domain, so unanswerable to Louis or any other territorial king. The pope, with his acknowledged religious supremacy throughout this part of Christendom, would be the only individual with any chance of affecting what Henry did or thought. So with Pope Alexander unwilling or unable to demonstrate unconditional solidarity with Thomas, the only other outlet for the exiles' wrath was the group of opponents in England. Henry was less attractive for their abuse, given that eventually they would all probably have to make peace with him; the bishops in England, and their deans and clerks, however, were all within the compass of the archbishop of Canterbury's power. It was reasonable for Thomas and his companions to think that they could therefore be cowed into obedience and through that reduce the control Henry had on the situation in general.

After 1166, conditions gradually improved for the exiles. The pope's fear of Henry's recriminations receded as the power of the rival pope and his backers diminished, and the Becket party's constant support for Pope Alexander started to pay off. The pope had always been relatively warm in his communications with Thomas, even if sometimes he had gently criticized him,[111] and Thomas, in his turn, chided the pope as well.[112] Right until the end of the dispute, it is evident that Pope Alexander did not fully trust Thomas to behave responsibly by his consistent denial of Thomas's authority to impose sanctions on the king and his family, despite referring to the archbishop as 'the perfection of virtue'.[113]

The new circumstance of the pope's ascendancy over his challenger did not bring any immediate benefits to Thomas's faction and this seems to have dispirited Thomas, whose letter to the pope in July 1168 shows some signs of fatigue and desperation, describing himself as 'more wretched than usual' in a salutation that at another time could even be amusing, and forlornly begging the pope to consider the state of the Church in England.[114] His terrier John of Salisbury, however, became reinvigorated and took the fight to his enemies. A stream of letters during the years 1167-1169 displays John at his most

[111] *CTB1*, 19 (p. 49), 28 (p. 87); *CTB2*, 208 (p. 909).
[112] *CTB2*, 277 (p. 1181).
[113] *CTB2*, 315 (p. 1315). This is surely irony.
[114] *CTB2*, 178 (p. 807).

aggressive. The language he uses about those he and Thomas opposed grows steadily wilder and more unpleasant, and he does not eschew the practice of accusing Henry of crimes such as persecuting and torturing innocent men without a cause.[115] At this point in the drawn-out affair it is obvious that the clerk openly takes over the attacks and it is probable that he had been behind them all along, lending his expertise to the wording of the archbishop's letters and, more than this, providing his master with advice as to how to approach the conflict. He may even have considered himself the leader of the emotional community; in one letter he declares that it 'is a delight and a joy to us – I use the plural to include the wishes of my fellow-exiles – to see the church's pillars secure', apparently confident to express the feelings of his companions as being in harmony with his own.[116] There does not seem to be much to contradict the assumption that he had been doing this corporate commenting for a significant period. In the later days of Archbishop Theobald, John's biographer tells us, 'John was believed, not without reason, to be the power behind the archiepiscopal throne'.[117] Once having attained this eminence, it seems logical to suppose that he may have occupied a similar place in Thomas's time.

If John of Salisbury was not always with Thomas physically and whispering in his ear, then certainly Herbert of Bosham was. It was Herbert who urged Thomas to ignore the pleadings of King Louis and various others in the meeting at Montmirail in January 1169 which successfully destroyed any chance of a deal being made there.[118] For a while Thomas's perceived intransigence cast him out of the good opinion of the French king;[119] only Henry's inevitable bad faith with Louis restored good relations between Becket and his French sponsor.[120] Herbert's intervention yet again showed Thomas to be malleable, but the reconciliation with King Louis stiffened Becket's resolve. From this point forward Thomas presented a new face. His great supporter King Louis had come back to him, Pope Alexander was showering powers upon him, Henry was revealing his many faults. Thomas

[115] *LJS2*, 287 (p. 633).
[116] *LJS2*, 296 (p. 683).
[117] Webb, *John of Salisbury*, p. 103.
[118] Herbert of Bosham in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 157.
[119] Knowles, *Becket*, p. 121.
[120] Guy, *Becket*, p. 256; Barlow, *Becket*, p. 182.

must have felt that he could actually win; he certainly regarded the affair as one that he must win.[121]

It was time for hope again.

[121] The attitude in his letters is one of wanting to 'win' against the king: 'How will they win, if they always lie down?', *CTB1*, 37 (p. 147); and in 144 (pp. 669-671) Thomas objects to remaining silent on the subject of the Constitutions because his silence would imply consent and make it 'instantly appear to the king and to other folk that he had won his case'.

HOPE, TRUST AND DESPERATION

As Anne Duggan has observed, by the end of 1168 it seemed that Pope Alexander 'had skilfully shifted the ground' of the dispute, and this was to Thomas Becket's advantage.[1] The king had ridden his luck through four years of argument and repudiation, successfully denying to Thomas and his friends any semblance of victory. There had been some hope of that a little earlier, particularly in 1167/8 when John of Salisbury had written that he expected a good outcome for the archbishop's plight,[2] but the ups and downs of political events had thwarted his ambition to return to England and see Thomas reinstalled as leader of the Church there.

Pressure was being applied to Henry for his co-operation, conspicuously with the bestowal of the papal legateship on Thomas for England in May 1166, which emboldened the archbishop to act so vigorously at Vézelay,[3] and then with the pope's assurance to Becket that sufficient power unto his needs would be restored to him. This assurance was given at first with a request for secrecy,[4] and then later with no such request.[5] However, there was no less pressure on Thomas himself. He had been battling strongly for so many years, aware that he could be causing the pontiff irritation.[6] He had been relying on external help for his very subsistence and had amassed many debts.[7] Not least in all this, his companions were anxious to return to England. John of Salisbury had been most explicit in his desire to get home, counting the years of his and the archbishop's exile as he wrote his letters,[8] and all of them must have relished the resumption of an assured income from the properties which they hoped they would regain. Thomas was led by the advice of these his closest advisers; in a letter of 1166, Nicholas of Mont-Rouen makes plain his understanding that the archbishop relied on others with him to provide counsel even as he himself gives

[1] Duggan, *Becket*, p. 149.
[2] *LJS2*, 249 (p. 503), 250 (p. 505).
[3] Several excommunications were issued at Vézelay. Duggan reports on this in some detail: *Becket*, pp. 101-123.
[4] *CTB1*, 119 (p. 573).
[5] *CTB2*, 312-313 (pp. 1309-1313), which were also addressed to the English bishops.
[6] *CTB1*, 139 (p. 645).
[7] Part of the terms of settlement included the king being obliged to settle his debts: Greenaway, *Becket*, pp. 140-141; Barlow, *Becket*, p. 214; Duggan, *Becket*, p. 195.
[8] *LJS2*, 252 (p. 509); 282 (p. 621); 284 (p. 625); 295 (p. 679).

guidance.[9] This explicitly indicates that the writer felt or knew that Thomas rarely acted without the approval of his advisers.

With the defeat of the anti-pope and his backers, Pope Alexander was free to concentrate more on the dispute that had been raging between Henry and Archbishop Thomas for so long. He began routinely ratifying Thomas's sentences and withholding from Thomas only the power to deal with the king himself.[10] Until now the pope had been sparing in any offers of hope to Thomas, steering his agents carefully through a succession of pitfalls. Michael Staunton has written that Pope Alexander is the only participant in this drama who emerges 'with any credit'.[11] Yet the pope was quickly identified as an appeaser of all factions,[12] and this surely extended the dispute and caused frustration at least on Becket's part, who wrote to the pope that those loyal to him 'are afraid that while you are waiting for better times to exercise justice, the best time was slipping away'.[13] It seems unlikely that there was any real hope of a reconciliation between king and archbishop, as Warren asserts.[14] The king's antipathy towards the archbishop throughout the affair had been absolute to the point of not wanting the archbishop's name mentioned in his presence.[15] Although the king continually received embassies from the pope with a view to engineering some form of settlement, these were repeatedly failures.[16] This consistent willingness to talk shows an impressive degree of diplomacy on the king's part when a man so famous for his impatience might be expected to grow bored after one or two abortive attempts.

The conference held in January 1169 at Montmirail between Henry and Louis included an attempt to settle the dispute. Pressure was brought upon Becket to agree to the terms

[9] Nicholas qualifies his offer of instruction with the respectful 'if it seems appropriate to you and to those who are with you': *CTB1*, 94 (p. 385).
[10] *CTB2*, 315 (p. 1317).
[11] Staunton, *Lives*, p. 22.
[12] John of Salisbury was quick to disabuse Thomas of any hope of unqualified support from the pope: *LJS2*, 136 (p. 9).
[13] *CTB1*, 169 (p. 775).
[14] Warren, *Henry II*, p. 517.
[15] *CTB1*, 132 (p. 623).
[16] Chapters 6, 7 and 8 in Duggan's *Becket* are an excellent guide to the various reconciliation missions, pp. 124-178.

offered by Henry,[17] and Thomas's failure to comply caused consternation, not least in King Louis.[18] The prospect of the coronation may have given Thomas a reason to hold out for more, as it was generally accepted in England that the archbishop of Canterbury should crown a king. With Henry wanting this ritual to take place soon for the security of the succession to the crown, it is natural to suppose that Thomas might want to utilise this weapon against him. Thomas wrote to his clerks at the papal curia that he knew Henry had sent petitions to the pope asking him to permit other bishops to crown his son and consecrate new bishops; he urged his agents to 'stand up manfully [...] and actively strain every nerve' so that the king is disappointed in his request.[19] There followed further negotiations that year, and at Montmartre in November 1169 yet again there was hope of a reconciliation which would facilitate the coronations; these collapsed once more as Henry would not offer Thomas the 'kiss of peace'.[20] Guy calls it 'an underlying lack of trust between the parties' and suggests that 'Becket [...] could not agree to return to Canterbury without a guarantee of his security before witnesses as symbolized by the kiss'.[21]

After this latest failure, it seems Henry made up his mind to cut Thomas Becket out of the process entirely. It was perhaps not such a difficult decision to make, given the hostility that existed between the two men, as it might have been attractive to the king not to have his son crowned by Becket, thus avoiding all the implied obligations and acceptances that might be carried with such an act.[22] Thomas Becket was showing himself adamant that, despite his own absence from England, no part of that duty should be allowed to fall into the domain of anyone else, especially as it could to be used to get a settlement to his own advantage. In the event, Henry's disregard of this apparent privilege led directly to the resolution of the dispute. On 14 June 1170 Henry had his eldest surviving son crowned king by the archbishop of York in a ceremony at Westminster. This was in contravention

[17] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 180; Guy, *Becket*, p. 252.
[18] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 181; Duggan, *Becket*, pp. 151-152.
[19] *CTB2*, 230 (pp. 993-995).
[20] This problem was to resurface later and is discussed below on pp. 81-83.
[21] Guy, *Becket*, p. 280. Barlow is also of this opinion: *Becket*, p. 194.
[22] An admission of defeat and a condonation of papal interference, according to Matthew Strickland, *Henry the Young King 1155-1183* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), p. 80, with a consequent tarnishing of 'the sacrality of the new king'.

of the pope's mandate,[23] and contrary to all the warnings sent to the English clergy from the exiled archbishop.[24] It was nothing short of a risk taken by the king to ensure that his son was given the status of a crowned king,[25] and that it could be achieved without the interference of Thomas Becket who, had he been received back beforehand, may well have dictated terms for such a ritual. The king trusted Thomas even less than Thomas trusted the king.

However much Thomas Becket and his friends and companions deplored the coronation,[26] ultimately it was an action that brought them the best hope of peace they could have experienced in many years. The episode put Thomas and his followers in an enviable position as, with the pope's support, they now had the tools to bring the Thomas Becket Affair to a close. The ecclesiastical weapons of interdict and excommunication, not particularly effective so far due to the absolutions and postponements issued, could now be wielded with the full sanction of the pope if Henry would not negotiate in good faith with offers of numerous concessions. With Pope Alexander at his strongest for many years, it was understandable that the pontiff should share Becket's rage at the violation of the Canterbury primacy in opposition to the pope's own orders. At last the reins of restraint were relaxed and the archbishop was permitted to issue his own penalties for those who took part in the coronation with no hindrance of an appeal.[27] The prospect of a full-scale battle with the papal curia itself was becoming very real and it was a war that Henry was wise enough politically to know would be difficult, if not impossible, to win.

Henry quickly realized that he had prejudiced his position substantially with his insistence that his son be crowned in defiance of the pope's edict. The single path to redemption for him lay in publicly making an agreement with Thomas. His hope must have been limited as to whether Thomas would keep to the spirit of any treaty made. The one flicker of optimism he may have entertained as to his archbishop's behaviour was probably that the

[23] As set out in Pope Alexander's letter to Thomas and the English bishops, requesting an oath: *CTB2*, 266 (p. 1143).
[24] *CTB2*, 284-286 (pp. 1215-1225).
[25] Strickland stresses the important political and dynastic reasons for the young Henry to be crowned: *Henry the Young King*, pp. 44-45.
[26] Knowles called the coronation 'a singularly unwise move': *Becket*, p.127.
[27] *CTB2*, 315 (p. 1317).

spell in exile would also have taught Becket a lesson. It would be a foolish man indeed to stir up contentious issues that had only just been settled. Notwithstanding this, the king knew the archbishop of Canterbury well enough to think Becket would be more severe than he ought to be, and told him so.[28] Therefore it is unlikely that Henry or his associates held out much hope that Thomas would take things carefully, edging himself gently back into the flow of affairs in England. The rift between Thomas and the rest of the Church in England had been deep and long-lasting and it would have been remarkable had the archbishop been integrated back into the political and religious societies without active and prolonged reconciliation processes.

On the other hand, Thomas had to take a leap of faith, hope and trust in his decision to return to England. There was desperation here, too; desperation created by the belief that his associates and sponsors were forever increasing in the weariness that he himself experienced,[29] something that had worried Thomas at least since 1167 when he described his suffering as 'wearisome in its hopelessness',[30] and that his cause was gradually slipping into an unwelcome fact of life with no resolution possible and eventually would become a tolerated inconvenience instead of a burning issue. Hope and trust, therefore, were almost entirely the province of Thomas. He had to place trust in the veracity of the king's word and hope that Henry would keep faith with it. Bearing this in mind, it seems a shocking omission for Thomas to forgo the 'kiss of peace', which he regarded as 'a solemn ritual'.[31] It had a significance of its own,[32] and was not just a token. It would have represented the closure of a series of acrimonious quarrels, of charge and counter-charge, of a major argument that had occupied the minds of many illustrious men for several years. Such an altercation was never going to be settled easily, and the fact that Henry steadfastly refused to offer this peacemaking gesture is surely telling, despite the excuse he made for its omission.[33] Thomas had been insistent that the formal ritual of a 'kiss of peace' be offered

[28] *CTB2*, 300 (p. 1271).
[29] 'The longer the dispute went on, the greater the risk of the tedium': Duggan, *Becket*, p. 101.
[30] *CTB1*, 124 (p. 593).
[31] *CTB2*, 274 (p. 1167).
[32] Barlow explains this very well: *Becket*, pp. 188-189.
[33] Guy, *Becket*, p. 279; Barlow, *Becket*, p. 209.

to him to seal any deal between them,[34] and King Louis had advised Thomas not to proceed without it,[35] but that guarantee of Thomas's security was evaded by the king.[36] It is evident that the danger of this omission did not entirely escape Thomas as his observation to the king that they would not meet again suggests.[37] Thomas suspected that the king may play false and that, in doing so, would jeopardize lives, especially his. Yet Thomas still went back to England. The thoughts going through the minds of those returning may well have been diverging. The companions who had for so long supported him saw this agreement as an olive branch offered by Henry, poor though it was, and a way to go back to England and reclaim their possessions. For Thomas it was another step, known or unknown to him, on the road to martyrdom, something at which he hinted in a letter of October 1170.[38]

Throughout the angry exchange of letters during the exile, the king had been accused of abusing the Church, its officials and Thomas himself,[39] and Thomas was not prepared to consider any form of treaty with him until 'he comes to his senses'. Thomas uses this latter phrase more than once,[40] and it is repeated by John of Salisbury in his letter to Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter containing a report of Thomas's actions at Vézelay,[41] another example of the same or similar phrases being echoed or shared within the emotional community surrounding the archbishop.[42] With the seemingly irresolvable differences between them so recent and so raw, why then did Thomas decide that it was safe to place any trust in Henry? He showed himself anxious to believe in the king's reformation by the description of his meeting with the king in his letter to the pope of July 1170.[43] This letter, a mixture of relief at the king's apparent reformation and a persistent undercurrent of

[34] *CTB2*, 274 (pp. 1167-1169).
[35] *CTB2*, 243 (p. 1051).
[36] *CTB2*, 300 (p. 1263).
[37] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 140.
[38] *CTB2*, 320 (p. 1335).
[39] *CTB1*, 68 (p. 269), 83 (p. 345), 115 (p. 557); *CTB2*, 177 (pp. 805-807), 216 (pp. 941-943), 234 (p. 1007). These are representative of the archbishop's output to which John of Salisbury also contributed under his own name: *LJS2*, 175 (p. 159), 287 (p. 633).
[40] *CTB1*, 78 (p. 315) and 79 (p. 321); *CTB2* 300 (p. 1263).
[41] *LJS2*, 168 (pp. 113-115).
[42] The use of the derogatory term 'oath-taker' in *CTB1*, 122 (p. 583) can be compared with John of Salisbury's 'oath-swearing dean' in *LJS2*, 234 (p. 433), both of these aimed at John of Oxford.
[43] *CTB2*, 300 (p. 1263).

wariness due to his own knowledge of Henry's duplicity, is a testament either to his gullibility or an amazing capacity for belief in changes of heart. The crumbling of his resolve to insist on a 'kiss of peace' could not only be due to the agreement reached between the two men. It is a symptom of desperation. The offer made was imperfect and flawed, and Henry was grudging in his concessions, not a sign that he was prepared to embark on any journey to a lasting reconciliation. Mutual hope and trust were conspicuous by their absence.

However that may be, not content with stirring the already considerable doubts that swilled about the royal court, Thomas made sure that his arrival was as contentious as his departure six years before. As a part of this plan, even before his embarkation for Kent, the archbishop issued yet more condemnations against some of his fellow bishops.[44] This can be seen as a remarkable act of defiance, bearing in mind the king's cautionary words to him regarding his likely severity. Thomas issued suspensions for those involved in the coronation of the young king: Roger, the archbishop of York, and the bishops of London and Salisbury were penalised yet again, and yet again it was without their being given a chance to speak for themselves.[45] Thomas was returning to an England which had changed since he left it, and he no longer knew it as well as he used to. He was to embark on resuming a relationship with fellow ecclesiastics with whom he had disagreed and had tried to harm. He could have had only a limited idea of what his reception would be. He had sent some of his companions to England to establish what was happening there prior to his return,[46] and the news sent back was not encouraging. In fact, he was advised not to leave for his homeland yet.[47] It is understandable that the information about the damage to the Church's lands may well have spurred Thomas towards wishing to return as soon as possible to halt such depredations about which he had complained to the king,[48] but in the circumstances it was also a sign that his appearance would not be welcomed by everyone

[44] *CTB2*, 326 (p. 1349). Thomas was carrying papal mandates.
[45] Thomas's tendency to do this is mentioned in Helmholz, 'Excommunication in Twelfth Century England', pp. 240 and 242. It was also pointed out to Becket by the bishops of Salisbury and London: *CTB1*, 91 (p. 367) and *CTB2*, 193 (p. 847) respectively. Frank Barlow went as far as suggesting that Thomas was pursuing a personal vendetta against Bishop Jocelin of Salisbury: Barlow, *Becket*, p. 149.
[46] Among whom were John of Salisbury and Herbert of Bosham: Guy, *Becket*, p. 299.
[47] *CTB2*, 311 (p. 1309).
[48] *CTB2*, 320 (p. 1333).

and, without the king's personal security wrapped around him, the environment into which he was going could be extremely dangerous. His companions had now relinquished any hope that Thomas would recover his position quickly and sought to influence their master as they had in the past. Even on the shores just before his embarkation for England, Thomas was warned about what might face him if he went to England, another warning he dismissed.[49]

So this latest attempt of the companions to persuade Thomas not to travel to England did not succeed. Instead of listening to the very men he had sent to England to give him advice on the situation there, Thomas chose to ignore them and to follow his own will.[50] He was basing his strength upon the support of the pope, and this new-found freedom seemed to give him the courage to place reliance on himself whereas before he had clearly listened to advice. The action of sending the letters of suspension and anathema across the channel to his enemies the archbishop of York and the bishops of London and Salisbury was hardly likely to endear Thomas either to the king or to the very men whose trust and endorsement he needed to acquire in order to re-establish his authority.[51] It can only be regarded as misguided to the point of recklessness, as if the archbishop was confident that the pope's backing would propel him into a position of unassailability.[52] This latest development may have been in accordance with what Thomas believed was right, but it was a calamitous event for the pursuit of harmony.[53] Thomas had fulfilled the king's fear that he was going back to wreak revenge, and not as a man willing to compromise and to listen. In short, it was a sign that the archbishop of Canterbury believed that once he was back in his see, it was business as usual. As this had not worked in 1162-1164, it is baffling that Thomas believed it would work in 1170 after such a lengthy breakdown in communications. He

[49] William of Canterbury in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 182.
[50] Herbert of Bosham claimed in his biography that he had encouraged Thomas to return: Barlow, 'Herbert of Bosham', para. 8. If this is true, then Herbert was the only one the archbishop was listening to at that time. However, in late December 1170 Thomas sent Herbert abroad against the latter's strong wishes and pleadings, so it is doubtful how receptive Thomas was to an idea that was contrary to his own desire: Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 193-194.
[51] *CTB2*, 326 (p. 1349).
[52] To William Urry the archbishop's action 'seems almost inexplicable', *Last Days*, p. 34.
[53] David Knowles attempts to justify the action by pointing out that the prelates in question were in the process of going to Henry's court 'for the express purpose of taking part in an election to the vacant English sees and abbacies' which was 'a direct and grave insult to the archbishop': *Archbishop Thomas Becket: A Character Study*, p. 19.

was apparently unaware or uncaring of the deep resentments stirred up over the years, and he rejected the warnings his own people had sent him. As anticipated by the king, Thomas was returning to pursue a feud against the men who, he seemed to believe, had helped to keep him abroad all these years, and he was not afraid to proclaim it loudly through the sentences he was publishing against those men. The hope was giving way to an angry revenge.

Almost immediately upon arrival in England, Thomas made an attempt to visit his erstwhile ward, the newly-crowned young king, and was only prevented from doing so by a direct order from the young king to return to Canterbury and stay there,[54] and even then Thomas did not obey this at once but continued to Harrow where he stayed for a few days.[55] This was not submissive compliance: this was a statement of independence. He was pursuing a strategy of parading his autonomy, a clear signal that he would not bend to every whim of the king, either the older king or the young one. Unsurprisingly, the result was garbled reports reaching the king abroad that Thomas was riding about the country with a band of armed knights.[56] This report was patently untrue but it is an outcome that should have been easily foreseen by a wiser man with more focus on the perception of events and an appreciation of the dangerous times. Although Thomas had returned to his cathedral by 19 December,[57] he continued to stir up more anger by announcing additional censures on Christmas day,[58] and sanctions against those who had occupied or distributed his property during his absence.[59] This can only have widened the chasm between himself and those adherents of the king.

John of Salisbury had been fully supportive of sterner action being taken against adversaries but now Becket, who had been open to advice from him hitherto, had finally quashed the fragile hope of peace and was moving once again to a clash between the

[54] Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 145.
[55] Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 229-231; this non-compliance may have added fuel to the fire of the suspicion that Thomas intended to depose the young Henry: Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 149.
[56] Shirley, *Garnier's Becket*, p. 135.
[57] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 231; Guy, *Becket*, p. 306; Duggan, *Becket*, p. 206.
[58] Herbert of Bosham in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 193; Duggan, *Becket*, p. 205; Urry describes them as an 'orgy of anathemas', *Last Days*, p. 84.
[59] Urry, *Last Days*, pp. 82-83.

Church in England and the king's men. Thomas wrote to the pope to set out his misgivings, declaring that 'York and the two bishops quickly crossed the Channel, so that [...] they may deceive the lord king and rouse his anger against the Church'.[60] The aim of this letter that Urry describes 'wild in language [...] and at times almost incoherent',[61] was possibly to acquire further papal reinforcements. However, the archbishop was now entering unknown territory and shifting away from his advisers, leaving them stranded, and there is no indication that he wished to be conciliatory. In Thomas's defence it should be mentioned that the behaviour of those punished had been appalling, especially after the peace had been agreed,[62] a result of the anger they still felt. However, in the then current circumstances, it would have been politic and sensible to rise above immediate retaliation and to apply to Henry for redress as the king had shown himself sensible to the basic requirements and duties of the holder of the archbishopric.[63] The fact that Thomas did not do this is testimony that his hope for a genuine reconciliation with the king was low if not completely gone, and points to a determination within him to act as if his power was, or should be, greater than that of the king.

No contemporary letters survive detailing what John or Herbert or any of the companions may have thought of Thomas's actions during this short period between the archbishop's return and his murder. The content of any discussions between them, or any advice they may have given Thomas, must be left to the imagination. The only window that opens on these fraught days exists in the biographies which, inevitably, must be treated with some care. It would have been unthinkable for a biographer such as John of Salisbury to declare that he had tried to dissuade his master from taking these final steps towards martyrdom, given that the archbishop's claim to sainthood rested on his being led by divine providence. Consequently we do not hear from John that he reproved Thomas's

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[60] *CTB2*, 326 (p. 1355). These men were the archbishop of York and the bishops of London and Salisbury.
[61] Urry, *Last Days*, p. 51.
[62] For example, when Ranulf de Broc realised that Archbishop Thomas was coming back, he organized what we would now call an 'asset-stripping' exercise so that the lands and property would be given back diminished in value: Guy, *Becket*, p. 299. Thomas himself wrote to the king in protest, alleging that Ranulf 'is rampaging through the Church's property and [...] gathers our provisions into Saltwood Castle': *CTB2*, 320 (p. 1333). John of Salisbury provides a brief but vivid description of the result when on his own return he found 'nothing or almost nothing save empty houses largely in ruins, barns destroyed, threshing floors bare': *LJS2*, 304 (p. 715).
[63] For example, the king had continued to ensure that a tithe of the archbishop's income was distributed to charities: Barlow, *Becket*, p. 80.

provocation of the knights and his reckless drive towards death within an hour or so before the assassination took place: this information comes from other sources.[64] There is also some slight evidence that the hitherto united front of the archbishop's companions had begun to fragment as Herbert of Bosham vouchsafes to us that upon Thomas's return to Canterbury, Herbert told him that 'it matters not to us now when you depart out of this world' as they had won their fight.[65] This could be construed as Herbert's blessing on the martyrdom to come, although this was of course written in retrospect in Herbert's biography of the saint.

At the end, the hope Thomas nurtured was based on his utterly unshakeable belief that he was right, especially with regard to how the king should have been treated,[66] that he was defending the liberty of the Church in England, and that nothing else mattered. He had abandoned any hope in the faith of the king, or indeed of anyone else, and was now working alone.

[64] John of Salisbury's reproof is reported in Shirley, *Garnier's Becket*, p. 142. The modern biographers mention it: Knowles, *Becket*, pp. 143-144, also in his *Archbishop Thomas Becket: A Character Study*, p. 22; and Webb, *John of Salisbury*, pp. 116-117.
[65] *EHD*, p. 809.
[66] *CTB2*, 301 (p. 1281): 'the Lord Pope refused to believe me, who had experience of this, on how he and God's Church should have dealt with the lord king of England'.

CONCLUSION

'Saints make mistakes, too', writes Hogan in his biography of Thomas Becket.[1] Although on this occasion he was referring to a different saint, St Bernard of Clairvaux, he admitted that Thomas was also prone to this failing.[2] Many mistakes were made throughout the tempestuous eight and a half years that Becket was archbishop of Canterbury. Not all of them were Becket's or even from those who supported him, but it is perhaps unfortunate for him that his are the best-documented. We have a good idea of what he was doing and saying from the letters left behind and the biographies subsequently produced. These can encourage a greater sympathy for him, but the copious material can also starkly reveal his animosity, desire for revenge and unwillingness to compromise.

In the past, there have been few if any arguments posed that the opinions of Thomas's companions had a significant and enduring effect on the archbishop's decisions. Thomas Becket is seen essentially as a strong figure, a leader who opposed a tyrannical monarch. Yet here, surely, we are missing the point. Prior to becoming archbishop, Thomas's experience had been as an administrator and not as a religious leader. He may have been pious, but he was also not shy of taking part in battles. He may have observed religious customs, but he was also fond of wearing fine clothes. He only became a priest the day before his enthronement as archbishop. He had moved into a totally different world when he became archbishop, and one already populated by men who knew more about his new tasks than he did himself. It was absolutely natural that he would want advice and it was inevitable that, at first, he would probably take it. He was the novice, he was the one learning. We can guess from Prior Richard of Dover's letter previously quoted that he was not immune to influence.[3] He was influenced by those who had a more ambitious agenda, and who strove to bend him for their own purposes to their own objectives. It was many years before he outgrew his tutors and took hold of his own destiny. By then, unfortunately for him, it was too late and matters had progressed too far, spinning out of his or anyone else's control. His companions had made him what he had now become, and he did not back away from what he thought was demanded of him.

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[1] Hogan, *Becket*, p. 83.
[2] Hogan, *Becket*, p. 415.
[3] Chapter one, p. 9, n. 54: *CTB1*, 1 (p. 9).

The pride as archbishop shown by Thomas, and discussed in chapter two of this work, is a natural progression from the pride he had as chancellor and it must have been heightened by the promotion he had accepted.[4] It instigated reactions such as resentment in his brother bishops and, of course, in the king himself. When meeting resistance from Henry, this study speculates in chapter three that Thomas faltered as the newness of his position introduced the element of indecision, where Thomas questioned his own judgements in the face of a growing fear that Henry may well retaliate against the moves the new archbishop was making to improve the conditions of the English Church. After Becket's departure from England, we see him run through a variety of emotions, including despondency, but his exile was mainly dominated by anger at his treatment. With his companions suffering the privations of poverty, of not having a reliable source of income under their own control, the campaign of propaganda in support of their case against the king was mounted and prosecuted diligently. Finally, when weariness began to sap the energy particularly of Thomas himself, the rise of hope, described in chapter five, but also of desperation, is noticeable. It had to be a desperate man to take the risk Thomas did of returning home, when all the signs of continued hostility were still evident.[5] Coming home was another mistake, marking either his extraordinary faith or his failure to recognize acute danger.

John of Salisbury was one of those to whom Thomas's failings were not obscured. He remarked quite candidly that the archbishop whom he followed and would not betray (at least in terms of vocal support) was not an equal of his predecessors.[6] This remarkable admission seems to have been omitted or sidelined by many modern biographers. Becket's actions were not underpinned solely by the desire to further the cause of the Church but partly to further his own political influence and the aggrandizement of his position. On the one hand, he would declare in public that 'he would show all humility, [...] honour and reverence to his lord the king' if it were demanded of him, but then he would qualify it with 'as was consistent [...] with his own and his office's good name'.[7] Furthermore, he

[4] In the words of John Guy, becoming the archbishop meant that Thomas was 'experiencing his first taste of power with no one immediately above him except Pope Alexander': Guy, *Becket*, p. 149.
[5] As mentioned in chapter five, pp. 83-84, Thomas was repeatedly advised to stay out of England for the time being.
[6] *LJS2,* 205 (p. 305); this statement was made before the martyrdom.
[7] *CTB1*, 144 (p. 667).

would state that his office placed him in the position of a father-figure to the king and he was therefore obliged to rebuke the king for wrongdoing, an attitude that undoubtedly infuriated Henry, who had raised Thomas 'from obscurity to a pinnacle of power and riches',[8] and had reminded him of that.[9] It could be assumed that if an adviser were allowed the freedom to dictate policy to a ruler, with little or no room for discussion, then the probability of that adviser remaining willing to defer publicly to the king was not only doubtful but also highly improbable. More to the point, Henry's desire that 'criminous clerks' and other aspects of the Constitutions of Clarendon should be properly dealt with would be lost. It was not beyond belief that eventually the country could be run locally by priests who had no respect for the common law of England because they were protected by a more powerful, and less domestically accountable, law of the Church.

The archbishop's two attempts to leave the country without permission before Northampton gave rise to a query from the king to Becket, asking if the archbishop thought the kingdom was not big enough for both of them.[10] In the light of subsequent events this comment now seems more prescient than jocular. The fact is that the king was perceptive in this remark. It seemed that Thomas Becket was used to the considerable power he had wielded as chancellor and that he wanted to augment that power as archbishop, bolstered by the support of his clerks, providing an ecclesiastical counterweight to the secular dominance of the king. In all things the Church in England was to be at the apex of a triangle of power, with him representing the Church personally and the two feet of the triangle being his brother bishops and the king.

This ambition, in itself, was not a particularly heinous crime, and it is feasible that most archbishops and senior ecclesiastics of the time entertained similar wishes and secret aspirations. The skill lay in making them as real as possible without a major disturbance to the temporal and spiritual health of the country at large. In order to do this, it would always be essential to educate the king not only by bringing forward the teaching and laws of the

[8] Ralph V. Turner, *Men Raised from the Dust: Administrative Service and Upward Mobility in Angevin England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), p. 143.
[9] 'Roger of Pontigny' in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 83.
[10] Fisher, 'Life', p. 89; Barlow, *Becket*, p. 108; Guy, *Becket*, p. 197; Knowles, *Becket*, p. 93; Winston, *Becket*, p. 172.

Church, but by personal example. Whereas the biographies tell us that Thomas became even more devout and pious after his elevation to the archbishopric, John of Salisbury's work slips in the comment that Thomas 'adapted himself to those whom he lived with' and that 'he became all things to all men so that he might win over all',[11] which sounds suspiciously like Barlow's judgement, mentioned in chapter one, that Thomas was an actor.[12] It is also known that the new archbishop failed to relinquish his beloved post of archdeacon of Canterbury voluntarily.[13] This was a mistake, and Henry very quickly pointed this out by replacing Thomas as archdeacon with one of his own following, Geoffrey Ridel, whom Thomas never forgave for supplanting him and who was the target for opprobrium in Thomas's letters.[14] Ridel understandably returned the hostility, although it should be noted that he stood surety at Northampton for £100 of Becket's fines.[15]

In resigning his role as chancellor, Becket successfully cut himself off from any real influence in secular affairs or in increasing the collateral importance of the archbishopric,[16] and he managed to upset the king all in one action. We cannot know now how much Thomas thought about or perhaps agonized over this decision, but it was nonetheless an unfortunate decision. The prospect of continuing with the administration of the chancellor's office and the leading of the Church was undoubtedly a huge challenge, but Becket had risen to challenges before. Moreover, he could have delegated a great deal of the routine work to others, thus providing opportunities for talented clerks to move into positions of greater responsibility. He chose not to, and therein lay the puzzle that has confused succeeding generations of those who study his life. The most popular explanation for the decision is that he somehow 'found' God properly, realizing that his duty lay to the Church and no other. This is what some medieval biographies would have us believe, but we are reading those who created a version of the history. We are reading what they want

[11] Pepin, *Anselm & Becket*, p. 80.
[12] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 26.
[13] In Chibnall, *The Empress Matilda*, Thomas is described as 'a wealthy pluralist', p. 166. He seems to have been reluctant to abandon this predilection entirely.
[14] Thomas's intolerance and persecution is revealed in this selection of letters: *CTB1*, 86 (p. 353), 105 (p. 491); *CTB2*, 213 (pp. 933-935), 235 (p. 1017), 300 (pp. 1275-1277).
[15] Anne J. Duggan, 'Geoffrey Ridel' in *ODNB* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/23618> [accessed 10 February 2021] (para. 1 of 4).
[16] The duality of the roles could have resulted in a harmony between Church and state that would have served England well, and set a precedent for the future. A generation later, Hubert Walter held both positions: Morris, *King John*, p. 57. Others were to follow suit, including Simon Sudbury, mentioned above on p. 1.

us to know, and omitting that which is, in their view, egregious in the life they were transmitting to posterity. Thomas Becket would not have made that decision alone; he would have taken advice. The only advice available to him at the time was coming from committed churchmen who above all wanted a committed churchman to lead them. They were blind to the political and personal ramifications for Thomas himself, but alive to the possibility that Thomas might retain some contacts at court which could work in the Church's favour. They would also be aware of the new archbishop's own considerable appetite for hard work, and with their guidance this could promote the Church into a position of pre-eminence. Unhappily, the closeness between the king and Thomas during the latter's chancellorship had been but an illusion; it has been fairly observed that Thomas wanted to believe he had 'a relationship of near-equals, whereas in reality it was a partnership of convenience'.[17] This must have come as a shock to Thomas.

Despite all the efforts to slander or libel the king expended by the archbishop and the emotional community surrounding him, Henry was not a monster,[18] and neither was he simply a guardian of royal privilege, demanding that special favours be reserved for him only. In the quasi-feral world of medieval politics and society, the only truly successful ruler was a strong one. This is particularly true of those whose heritage stretched beyond the boundaries of a single domain. Henry had acquired control of Aquitaine by virtue of his marriage to Eleanor, and inherited the rest from his parents.[19] It was not unreasonable of the king to want to protect what he regarded as his legal birthright and that of his wife. Threats of any kind within and outside his lands were always regarded seriously, and this applied no less to those dangers emanating from an ambitious cleric. The king could not afford to do anything else, and neither should Thomas Becket have expected a different response. Capitulation, even a partial concession, to an enemy signalled weakness and this in turn encouraged others to rebel. Henry knew this and his initial resistance to Thomas Becket would be based on this premise. It can be argued that this attitude was thoroughly vindicated when, after Henry's settlement with Becket in 1170, and the formal compromise

[17] Guy, *Becket*, p. 118.
[18] *CTB2*, 274 (p. 1165).
[19] Anjou had been his father's domain, and he derived his claim to England and Normandy by virtue of his descent through his mother from Henry I. He compounded his problems by his invasion of Ireland in 1159.

made at Avranches in 1172,[20] he was seen as a diminished ruler and suffered the rebellion of 1173/4 when his own family organized a revolt which almost defeated him. Other factors were involved in this insurrection, but it is undeniable that Henry's adversaries saw him as a ruler who had been subject to defeat in the past and therefore was clearly not invincible; thus the prospect of victory against him was improved.

Thomas Becket was his own worst enemy. The attempts by historians and writers such as Dom David Knowles and Father John S. Hogan to paint Becket as a man motivated wholly or primarily by faith are misconceived, especially when they qualify their conclusions by reporting the character flaws so obvious to anyone who studies the sources.[21] Even Hogan, who embellishes his work with platitudes one would expect to be made of a saint, includes the comment that Thomas's 'zeal might have been excessive and he would have been better served seasoning his actions with prudence'.[22] This remark is well-made, but even so it is something of an understatement. However, Hogan implies that the 'zeal' is for the pursuit of the glory of God, and not for personal glory. This study contends that the 'zeal' was for both, because Thomas Becket could not distinguish between the two. By the end of his exile, he had become the personification of the Church, and he believed the Church was in danger.[23] The biographies in particular imply that Thomas was seeing himself as a Christ-like figure,[24] sent to be a sacrifice.[25] Is this a road he travelled alone, or was the weight of motivation propelled by other forces so consistently that he began to believe it?

[20] Brief details are listed in Warren, *Henry II*, p. 531, and it is also discussed in Duggan, '*Ne in dubium*. The official record of Henry II's reconciliation at Avranches, 21 May 1172' in *Thomas Becket: Friends, Networks, Texts and Cult*, pp. 643-658.

[21] Knowles praises Thomas for his 'papalist allegiance', but doubts that he could be considered as possessing 'wise statesmanship', *Becket*, p. 85.

[22] Hogan, *Becket*, p. 192.

[23] 'Becket's struggle with the king had become for him a cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil': Guy, *Becket*, p. 282.

[24] Staunton has observed that Herbert of Bosham's reflections on this 'seem to border on blasphemy': *Thomas Becket and his Biographers*, p. 215.

[25] This theme heightened towards the end: *CTB2*, 320 (p. 1335); 326 (p. 1347); see also Urry, *Last Days*, p. 59. In the minutes preceding the martyrdom Thomas commanded the murderers to leave his companions alone: Greenaway, *Becket*, p. 156. This echoes Christ's own instruction when he was arrested: *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments*, Revised Standard Version, 2nd edn (New York and Glasgow: Collins, 1971), John 18.8.

The advice of Thomas's companions was continually forthcoming throughout the archbishop's tenure of his office. John of Salisbury was a prolific letter-writer who was fond not only of relating events as he saw them, but often embellishing them with personal observations in a style that Beryl Smalley described as 'urbane cattiness'.[26] However, this description suggests that John was a harmless imparter of amusing anecdotes delivered with a sharp wit and John was so much more than this. His influence was dangerous. His wide circle of acquaintance was to be admired, some of whom Thomas Becket himself strove to charm, and failed.[27] John's grasp of the classics, church law and the scriptures rivalled that of most contemporaries and certainly surpassed that of the archbishop and was enough to impress him, despite John's tendency to adapt, alter or simply invent episodes.[28] At one stage he wrote that 'the archbishop of York has been enjoined to recognise [Thomas] as his primate by showing obedience',[29] a claim that is almost certainly not true. John's advice was asked for and often acted upon, and it was he who persuaded the archbishop not to send the hostile letter to William of Pavia,[30] and he wrote a replacement letter.[31] Yet John too could be aggressive and he upbraided his archbishop for being too slow in dispatching condemnatory letters to England in the matter of the young king's coronation.[32] We have here a strong example of how John of Salisbury worked. He wanted Thomas to flatter someone who could be of use to their project until that person was proved to be inimical or useless whereupon his attitude changed, as in the case of Gilbert Foliot.[33] In the case where soft words would not stop an action injurious to them, John wanted Thomas to strike swiftly and do as much damage as he could.[34] Others have noticed John's failings. Far from holding a balanced view in the dispute, which may have resulted in John giving better advice to the archbishop, John's antipathy towards what he

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[26] Beryl Smalley, *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), p. 112.
[27] His attempt to win Peter of Celle as a correspondent failed: *MTB*, 5, Ep. II, pp. 3-4; Peter's attitude may never have changed significantly: Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 274-275.
[28] David Luscombe, 'John of Salisbury in Recent Scholarship' in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. by Wilks, pp. 21-37 (p. 32).
[29] *LJS2*, 184 (p. 219).
[30] *CTB1*, 133 (p. 625), 136 (pp. 633-635).
[31] *CTB1*, 138 (p. 639), *LJS2*, 228 (p. 401). These are the same letter but in different collections.
[32] *CTB2*, 298 (pp. 1257-1259).
[33] Early in the dispute John was happy to petition Gilbert for help: *LJS2*, 150, (p. 49) and 152 (p. 53), where he optimistically described himself as an 'old friend'. A year later John was comparing Gilbert to the biblical characters Achitophel and Doeg: *LJS2*, 175 (p. 157). It is not a flattering comparison.
[34] John was quick to advise Thomas to react when Henry persisted with his son's coronation: Knowles, *Becket*, p. 130.

perceived as their enemies induced him to use his eloquence to make 'rapier-sharp thrusts at those who were [...] so misguided as to support the wrong side' rather than try to win them over.[35] Moreover, Anne Duggan has commented that there are 'questions about his attitude to the archbishop' which, together with the 'tenor' of some of his letters, 'suggest a certain detachment from Becket, if not actual alienation'.[36] John was uncaring of the bigger political picture and perhaps even of what might happen to the archbishop, and it is to be wondered if he had the ability to place himself outside the closed circle of companionship surrounding Becket to appreciate how others saw him or the archbishop. John, who had featured greatly throughout the affair, was not with Thomas when the drastic consequences of Becket's struggle came to fruition. He abandoned the archbishop to his fate, running away and hiding in the lengthening shadows inside the cathedral,[37] unable to support Becket at the time he needed it most,[38] even though in the past he had remarked through a quotation from the classics that it was the 'basest wickedness to set life before honour'.[39]

Herbert of Bosham had been sent out of the country prior to the murder and his absence during the last few days of Thomas's life is suggested as an attempt on the archbishop's part to save him,[40] but if this were so, why was no further action taken to distance others at this time? John of Salisbury had already suffered at Henry's hands, and his safety would surely have merited some thought. Herbert's mission in December 1170 was similar to John's in 1163/4: Herbert was to supply Henry's enemy, King Louis VII, with first-hand reports of the problems in England,[41] thus stoking the fire against Henry's faction, knowing that these stories would reach the pope's ears.

Herbert had remained with Becket throughout the exile and he was the last of Becket's contemporaries to write a biography of the saint. It has been noted that Herbert's request in

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[35] Marjorie Chibnall, 'John of Salisbury as Historian', in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. by Wilks, pp. 169-177 (p. 177).
[36] Anne J. Duggan, 'John of Salisbury and Thomas Becket' in *The World of John of Salisbury*, ed. by Wilks, pp. 427-438 (p. 428).
[37] Greenaway, *Becket*, pp. 154-155. This was another fact John of Salisbury omitted from his biography of Thomas.
[38] Or, as William Urry delicately put it: 'that worthy had fled before the violence began': *Last Days*, p. 135.
[39] *LJS2*, 217 (p. 367). The quotation is from Juvenal (n. 13).
[40] Guy, *Becket*, p. 307, and Barlow, *Becket*, p. 233.
[41] Herbert of Bosham's account in Staunton, *Lives*, pp. 193-194.

1166 for reinstatement and pardon was rejected by the king and subsequently Herbert devoted all his considerable talents to devising methods by which the archbishop could gain the advantage of the situation. He may even have been behind the angry letter drafts to William of Pavia,[42] as his loyalty and passion were consumed by the archbishop's plight. Thomas Becket and the affair inevitably became the focus of Herbert's life and Frank Barlow's comment that after the martyrdom took place Herbert 'was an unwelcome reminder of everything that the post-martyrdom world wanted to forget' is probably closer to the truth than perhaps Herbert would have wished to confess.[43] Whereas John of Salisbury's connections brought him the ultimate eminence of being the bishop of Chartres,[44] Herbert died in relative obscurity. It may not be out of place to remark that the brevity of John's biography of Thomas, occasionally commented on by historians,[45] raises a supposition that John was not willing to re-examine his part in the whole affair and because of this reluctance he was able to move on somewhat from the shock of the martyrdom, and Herbert of Bosham was not.

Throughout the progress of the Thomas Becket Affair, disaster followed upon disaster, and the root cause was emotion. Thomas's dithering at Clarendon illustrated his inadequacy as a leader, so cogently explained by Gilbert Foliot in *Multiplicem Nobis*. At this point Thomas failed to understand that he was actually occupying a position of authority and unusual power. His brother bishops were in support of his attitude towards the king's demands for recognition of the Constitutions. Even one of his recent apologists accepts this.[46] The hostile Bishop Gilbert of London stood by Thomas in his objections to sealing the Constitutions. Thomas Becket could have maintained his position of antipathy towards the king's demands. His associates supported him, and Thomas's temporary change of mind completely wrong-footed them. They were left with the choice of continuing their own opposition to the Constitutions without the protection of their leader, thereby exposing

[42] It is known that Herbert did draft letters for Thomas: *CTB1*, p. xxiii.
[43] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 263.
[44] It is not clear whether John's short career as bishop was a success, and there is a debate to be pursued on this: David Luscombe, 'John of Salisbury' in *ODNB* <https://doi-org.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/14849> [accessed 4 August 2020] (para. 24 of 26); Cary J. Nederman, *John of Salisbury*, pp. 38-39.
[45] Duggan describes it as 'short' in *Becket*, p. 228; Staunton thinks it 'a disappointment' in *Lives*, p. 7; and to Barlow it is 'very brief': *Becket*, p. 4.
[46] Hogan, *Becket*, p. 217.

themselves to the king's wrath, or ignoring their collective conscience and showing weakness and indecision, just as Becket had done. If the archbishop of Canterbury had remained resolute, then the bulk of the English Church would have stood with him and Henry, for all his bluster and rage, would probably have been forced to seek another way or drop the matter entirely.[47] *Multiplicem Nobis* contains a great deal of contempt, but it is Thomas's weakness which seems to have disgusted Gilbert Foliot the most, with his damning report of the confrontation at Clarendon: 'we bewailed what we saw as a man's fall from the height of virtue and steadfastness'.[48]

The emotion of fear in Thomas Becket altered the path of the dispute irrevocably. The fear of completely alienating the king, the fear of losing the grand lifestyle he had, the fear of being physically attacked. It was his darkest moment, and Thomas never recovered from it. He was ashamed of himself; he withdrew from celebrating Mass;[49] and after his flight from England he attempted to abdicate his position as archbishop.[50] It is significant that the pope took three days to consider whether to accept Thomas's resignation,[51] raising the question as to whether Pope Alexander considered Thomas fit to be archbishop. Thomas's willingness to resign signals that he knew he had taken the wrong turn and also that he may have been confused. The trial at Northampton had exposed more of his fear as he tried to placate the king by initially accepting the sentences of fines and confiscations passed upon him. It was only at the end of the sojourn at Northampton that he finally found some courage, after a weekend closeted with his brother bishops during which the hopelessness of his situation manifested itself. Too late he changed his mind again, and hurriedly left the chaos he had created.

In the light of what happened, the actions of Becket's episcopal colleagues left in England can hardly be criticized harshly. They were left 'without a leader and without a policy',[52]

[47] As he did in the matter of the sheriffs' aid: Barlow, *Becket*, pp. 88-89.
[48] This was coupled with exclamations such as 'Who fled? Who turned tail?': *CTB1*, 109 (p. 511).
[49] *CTB1*, 28 (p. 87); Pope Alexander tells him that 'A man of your prudence' should know that an oath taken under duress is no oath at all.
[50] Alan of Tewkesbury in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 133.
[51] Barlow, *Becket*, p. 123.
[52] Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*, p. 90.

apparently to face the king's rage and (as they claimed) possibly death,[53] apparently having been afforded no prior notice of Becket's flight. Bishop Henry of Winchester had been a staunch supporter of Thomas and had offered his own money to broker a deal between the archbishop and the king,[54] but was clearly unaware of what had happened.[55] So it appears were the others.[56] The bishops' unwillingness to offer their Church leader comfort during the ensuing six years is understandable, although it provoked in Thomas and his companions anger and frustration. This anger continued and in fact grew as Thomas experienced disappointment abroad as hopes of a settlement fluctuated, and it became clear that Henry wanted to be rid of his troublesome primate. The archbishop was not a well man,[57] and in 1170 he was approaching his fiftieth birthday.[58] It was entirely conceivable that he would die in exile. He knew that he had limited options because of his earlier intransigence. The support of his companions was not unconditional; John of Salisbury wrote in April 1170 that if Thomas attempted to reach an agreement with the king 'so damaging and dishonourable to the Church', one with too many compromises, 'there is hardly anyone among us, if indeed there is anyone, who could tolerate his lordship or association thereafter'.[59] Subsequent to the coronation, when a peace agreement was established at Fréteval in July 1170, outwardly promising much to the exiles, it was grasped eagerly by Thomas's companions, allowing a resurgence of hope that at last the two major parties in the affair could come to some arrangement for the future that would enable the archbishop to return to England.

Emotions have played a large part in this study, and that is because they played a large part in the tragedy unfolding around Archbishop Becket. It cannot be denied that emotions ran high throughout the dispute. It is therefore inconceivable that they had no effect on the development of the outcome. The more intransigent the king was, the angrier the exiles

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[53] *CTB1*, 109 (p. 527).
[54] William Fitzstephen in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 104.
[55] Guy, *Becket*, p. 213.
[56] *CTB1*, 93 (p. 373).
[57] Urry was convinced that much of Thomas's occasional irrational behaviour was due to constant pain: *Last Days*, p. 35.
[58] The actual year of his birth is not known for certain, but is generally accepted as 1120: Barlow, *Becket*, p. 10; Guy, *Becket*, p. xxi; Duggan, *Becket*, p. 8; Winston deviates from the standard view by suggesting 1118, *Becket*, p. 6.
[59] *CTB2*, 280 (p. 1197).

became and the more violent the language that was used. Even if Thomas Becket and his companions truly believed that they were entirely without fault in their assertions, a continued and shared piety among them would not have caused them to be so loud and abusive in their recriminations and vindictive in their threats. The mere knowledge that they were reflecting the divine will should have been enough. It was not enough, and it made their emotions erupt which, in turn, drove the two sides of the argument farther apart than ever. To understand the conflict, it is necessary to try to understand the emotions and the power these had over the main participants in the affair.

If the dispute is examined merely under the lens of an impassive reader, then the heart of the problem is likely to be missed or at least misinterpreted. These were real people with strong beliefs and aspirations, and it is unthinkable that they would not have been charged with all kinds of emotions, caused either by desires for the endorsement of their policies or outrage at another's deed. Direct references to emotions sometimes spill out onto the pages of the letters, with John of Salisbury writing of his and his companions' 'bitterness' in a letter to the pope,[60] and Thomas himself indicating his strong emotion at the plight of the English Church in a letter to the bishops of England.[61] As a symbol of emotion, the reference to 'tears' is often used, with Herbert of Bosham recollecting his own and Thomas Becket's grief by mentioning tears,[62] and Fitzstephen recording the tears of the bishops and others.[63] Weeping is a symptom of high emotion, and these men were not ashamed to reveal that they have cried, or perhaps felt like crying. It is difficult to associate such high emotions with people who behave in a logical manner. Only by taking account of the changing emotions can we see how the feelings of the participants affected their judgement.

[60] *LJS2*, 219 (p. 371).
[61] Thomas claims that 'much is being presumed against Peter in the English realm, which we cannot recall to mind without pain or speak without tears': *CTB1*, 73 (p. 287).
[62] Staunton, *Lives*, p. 97; he also admits to 'tears pouring forth' when he left Becket just before the martyrdom, p. 194.
[63] Fitzstephen writes that John Planeta 'struggled to hold tears' and Ralph of Diss 'was very tearful': Staunton, *Lives*, p. 107. He went on to note later that at one point the bishop of Lincoln 'was crying and some others could hardly contain their tears': Staunton, *Lives*, p. 113.

Thomas's persistence in his complaints against the king and resistance to deposition would ultimately prove successful, but at a price that possibly only he realized must be paid. Writing after the event, Herbert of Bosham claims that he and the archbishop shared foreknowledge of what might happen,[64] but the element of hindsight here on Herbert's part cannot be dismissed. However that may be, Thomas was now back in his cathedral, and he knew that any misadventure befalling him there would be widely reported and condemned. His companions may not wish to see him die for the sake of the Church, because in that they would be losing their titular champion, the man who stood for what they believed were the Church's liberties and who, most importantly, was the shield between them and the king. But Thomas had progressed beyond them. If there was to be no glory in life, then perhaps there could be glory in death. It was a gamble: either the king and his men would finally come to terms with Becket's assumption of superiority through a disinclination to award him martyrdom, or they would destroy him. In those frantic last days, Thomas forsook the advice of others and trusted in himself. He lost the gamble. Then again, perhaps he won, because he would have believed that martyrdom opened the door to everlasting glory and triumph over his adversaries, and those who opposed him would be damned forever. It could almost have been a final act of vindictiveness.

'Think of the miracles, by God's grace, | And think of your enemies, in another place.'[65]

[64] Herbert of Bosham in Staunton, *Lives*, p. 194.
[65] T. S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935; repr. 1974), p. 40.

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