CONCEPTS OF SAINTHOOD IN
FOURTEENTH-CENTURY
ENGLAND

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There is a certain similarity among saints, for all are expected to resemble Christ and to exhibit his virtues. The attribution of sanctity to a man implies the presence in him of at least some of the virtues found in other saints, so those who wish to portray a putative saint tend to paint him in colours which are intended to evoke those whose sanctity has already received recognition. This resemblance of saint to saint has become a commonplace. What has received rather less attention is the change in the virtues or aspects of character emphasized. Changes in concepts of sainthood took place continually throughout the Middle Ages but not at a uniform pace, and it is those which occurred in fourteenth-century England that I wish to examine here.

My concern is both with those whose sanctity received recognition by canonization and with those, much more numerous, for whom this recognition was sought, or by whom it was claimed. I have ventured to consider only historical figures of the fourteenth century for whom canonization was requested or who were the object of a cult, and have not examined the changes which are apparent in the legends, historical and romantic, of recognized saints, nor those, parallel and conflicting, which can be seen in the lives of continental saints of the period. The magnitude and complexity of these larger topics will, I hope, excuse the artificial but necessary isolation of the segment considered here.

By the fourteenth century the process of canonization was firmly established among the orthodox as the only universally respected means by which the attainment of the status of saint was recognized. Refinements in the process had already taken place, although the definition given by Molinari was not fully applicable: "Canonization is an act or definitive sentence by which the pope decrees that a servant of God, member of the Catholic Church and already declared blessed, be inscribed in the book of saints and be venerated in the Universal Church
with the cult given to all saints". Although a distinction between "beatus" and "sanctus" was recognized, it was not fully established and there is little to suggest that the former was regarded as an intermediate process.

The *Vita* which was drawn up for presentation at Rome or Avignon was usually divided into two sections, the first dealing with the life and the second with the miracles, and they were examined separately. The original material was gathered by officials sent from the papal court or by locals, usually bishops, appointed by the pope for this purpose. Before what could, even then, be called the Informative Process was begun, it was necessary to appeal to the Holy See both forcefully and frequently, usually for many years. The canonization of Thomas of Cantilupe took place less than thirty years after his death, a comparatively short lapse of time, after many requests from the king and nobles of England. The length of time required and the expense of the undertaking ensured that there was little possibility of a case being promoted except by large and wealthy bodies, and that was usually done only for a member or subject. Non-canonization did not, therefore, axiomatically imply rejection by the Holy See, but could mean merely that the putative saint lacked the necessary institutional support.

No records survive which present a truly popular approach to the question and it is unlikely that they ever existed, but there is information about popular actions and reactions. The *Political Songs* may have been intended for popular dissemination but were patently the work of educated and often learned writers whose purpose was less to reveal popular attitudes than to form them, but by attempting the latter they achieve at least something of the former. The chronicles of the period, which were not intended for general dissemination, contain some records of popular veneration and "cultus". They were works of men who differed greatly in character, perspicacity and political affiliations, and who ranged from the merely literate to the truly learned. Although unqualified reliance cannot be placed on their

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1 Canonization of Saints (History and Procedure), in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, iii (1967), 55.


accurate recording of events or on their disinterested interpreta-
tion, they provide an immensely valuable record of contemporary
attitudes. The quantity of material recording incidents of venera-
tion, or advocating or criticizing it, indicates a lively interest in
the events that inspired it and sometimes in the qualities that
should do so.

Of those for whom requests were made to the pope for
canonization, only two in the fourteenth century were successful.
This was a very substantial diminution from the preceding cen-
tury, when six English saints were canonized, the majority of
them bishops, among whom were Hugh of Lincoln and William
of York. Thomas of Cantilupe, Bishop of Hereford, who lived
in the second half of the thirteenth century, was not canonized
until 1325. He appears a true successor to those canonized in
his own century: he was exemplary in the performance of his
office, whether as Chancellor of Oxford, Chancellor of the Realm,
or Bishop of Hereford, and he was noted for his learning and his
piety. He was also admired for turning from the study of
canon law to that of theology, and that at a time when the
ambitious sought legal qualifications to further their careers.

The element of local partisanship was not entirely absent from
the praise accorded to him; “pro causa ecclesiae suæ, quam
contra fratrem Johannem de Pecham de ordine Minorum et
archiepiscopum Cantuariensem viriliter defendebat”4, he suffer-
ed much. The chroniclers did not dilate upon the discord or
mention his subsequent excommunication, but his sufferings in
the defence of Hereford’s rights have been described with hagio-
graphical exaggeration by the clergy of Hereford in support of
their belief in his sanctity5. More importance was attached, in
the known chronicles, to his exemplary life and the performance
of miracles at his tomb. This is quite apparent in the official
appeal to the pope in 1305:

pauper Spiritu, mente mitis, justitiam sitiens, misericordiae deditus,
mundus corde, verè pacificus ... quemadmodum degens in seculo
magnis pollebat meritis, nunc veniens in cælo, magnis coruschare

4 “Annales Londonienses”, in Chronicles of the Reigns of Edward I and
5 André Vauchez, La Sainteté en Occident aux derniers Siècles du Moyen
Âge, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome, ccxli (Rome,
1981), 201-02.
miraculis dinoscatur, in tantum, quod ipsius meritis et intercessionibus gloriosis lumen cecis, surdis auditus, verbum mutis, et gressus claudis, et alia pleraque beneficia, ipsius patrocinium implorantibus, de quorum miraculorum coruschatione multiplici, nonnullis de Regno nostro certitudinaliter inotescit.⁶

The letter sent in 1307 repeated this more briefly, reminding the pope that a request had been made by Edward I “ad inquirendum de fide, vitâ, moribus, famâ & miraculis ejusdem”⁷.

Neither the official requests for an addition to the number of compatriots who might act as advocates in the courts of heaven⁸ nor the accounts of the chroniclers make detailed mention of the austerities he practised or of the physical manifestations of his devotion to the sacrament of mass, but both aspects of his piety were of interest to the compiler of the *Nova Legenda Anglie*, whose intention was avowedly to edify⁹. “Corpus suum vigilis et ieuniis maceravit, aspero cilicio annis secretius utens”. “Tantam in missa lachrimarum habundantiam emisit, quasi presentialiter in carne dominicam passionem videret”¹⁰. His source appears to have been, at least indirectly, material submitted to the officials appointed by the Holy See to collect statements from witnesses for examination in the process of canonization¹¹.

St. John of Bridlington, also known as John de Thwing, died in 1379 and was canonized in 1401 by Boniface IX when the enquiry into his life and miracles had been satisfactorily completed. There was little indication of patriotism, and none of party politics, in the appeals made for his canonization. Local interest was strong and not entirely disinterested, but Bridlington’s partisanship had been limited to Bridlington Priory and there is no suggestion that he had participated in public affairs on a larger scale. There is a reference in the *Nova Legenda Anglie* to his having defended the priory against terrible op-

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¹⁰ Ibid., ii. 372 and 371.
pressors, one of whom was won over by the saint’s rebuke, which may be related to the unusually numerous lawsuits in which the priory was involved during his rule.

He had displayed great piety, even in youth, “considerans vanas esse mundi illecbras, suum Redemptorem quesivit affectuose”, and at the age of twelve he took a vow of chastity. While at Oxford he was noted for his patient suffering of abuse and, as prior of the canons regular of Bridlington, for his charity and efficiency: “Namque famem reficit, nuditatem vestitit, frigus temperat, ... deruta renouat, struit edificia, agros fecundans et horrea”. As “cellerarius” he had exhibited the generosity which verges on improvidence, an established indication of strength of faith. He refused the extra comforts which fell to his lot as prior, a position which he, despising worldly distinction, may have refused or resigned from after the first election.

Bridlington was sent to Oxford where he excelled in dialectic, but he abandoned his studies and returned home “vbi magis superfusa vnctione gratie quam magistrali informatione scientiam perquisiuit”, an attitude which recalls the decision of St. Bernard and which, earlier in his own century, was paralleled by Rolle’s flight from the university.

He gave much time to communal and private prayer and was particularly noted for the practice of contemplation, which was remarked upon even in what is probably the earliest extant account of his life: “in scala Jacob, per gradus contemplacionis assendebat in dominum”. But more overtly striking than the gift of contemplation was the strength of his devotion to the sacrament of mass, not mentioned in the Kirkstall Chronicle. “In aurora vero cuiuslibet diie ille beatus vir missam cum tanta devocione tantoque timore et tremore celebravit, quod sepius

12 NLA, ii. 72.
15 NLA, ii. 67.
17 NLA, ii. 66.
18 Ibid., ii. 65.
20 Ibid., p. 123.
dum legeret canonem de ipsius capite magna guttarum aque quantitas stillabat et multe lacrime de oculis suis erumpabant". The description given in the *Nova Legenda Anglie* is still more dramatic but, as that life was a late addition to the collection, little reliance can be placed on the emotive colouring of Bridlington's practices found in it as either a record of his behaviour or an example of fourteenth-century opinion concerning the behaviour considered appropriate to a saint and therefore imposed upon him.

Even without this later, somewhat questionable, evidence it is apparent that in John of Bridlington is found a stronger form of the affective devotion revealed in the accounts of the life of Thomas of Cantilupe. It would seem, from the absence of any mention of the physical effects in the Kirkstall and other chronicles, but by its presence in the Bull which confirmed his canonization, that considerable importance was attached to it as a manifestation of extraordinary virtue and special grace, but that this was not general but limited to religious specialists to those wishing to produce works of an edifying nature and to their readers. Much greater general importance was attached to his miracles.

These took place even during his lifetime and, as well as miracles of healing, concerned the multiplication of food, the changing of water to wine, and the fertility of the priory's lands. The miracle of the sailors who were saved from shipwreck by a vision of the saint, whom, in some versions, they had not met before, is found in all extended accounts of the saint's life, including the Bull of canonization. One of the prayers in the office of St. John of Bridlington refers to him as one whom God "tam in vita sua quam eciam post mortem suam in magnificis choruscare voluisti miraculis".

Evidence of the respect in which he was held is provided by the attribution to him of some prophetic verses about the reign

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21 Bull of Canonization of John of Thwing, Purvis, op. cit., p. 34.
22 *NLA*, ii. 67-68.
23 Ibid., i. xvii.
24 Purvis, op. cit., p. 34.
26 Purvis, op. cit., p. 36.
27 Ibid., facing frontispiece.
of Edward III. These verses, which are not distinguished by any poetical quality but by a certain amount of obscurity and occasional scurrility, were circulated with an ostensibly later commentary. Both sections of the work are now considered to have been the products of the literary endeavours of John Erghome, an Austin friar of York. The later ascription to John of Bridlington was apparently an attempt to gain credence for the prophetic section of the poem, for the gift of prophecy was one of the attributes frequently ascribed to contemporary continental saints and was attributed to, or claimed by, most of the English putative saints of the same period.

Both Cantilupe and Bridlington belong to the long line of confessors whose legends were edifying and whose miracles were sometimes of an exemplary nature, like the miracle performed by Bridlington when, in answer to his prayer, the water in his cup was changed to wine so that his austerities should not be observed—a miracle familiar even to those with only a slight acquaintance with hagiographical works from its appearance in a number of lives.

I should like to look briefly at three others who have been described as 'political saints', not, I think, quite deservedly, for, although some features link them with the political saints to be considered, they clearly belong to the same tradition as Cantilupe and Bridlington. All were bishops, two were men distinguished for their theological scholarship, and for all three requests for canonization were made by contemporaries, or near contemporaries, and were unsuccessful.

The appeal for the canonization of Robert of Winchelsey was given only limited support, for it was promoted mainly by the monks of Christchurch, Canterbury, and Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, to whose cause the Archbishop had given some support. Winchelsey's alleged leadership of the baronial party has been challenged by a recent biographer who has suggested that, as his concern was primarily with ecclesiastical rights, his alliance with a lay group was temporary and incidental, occurring
at moments of coincidence of interest.\textsuperscript{32} His political role has perhaps been distorted by the linking of his name with that of Thomas of Lancaster in the appeals for canonization made by the new rulers early in the reign of Edward III as part of the denigration of the deposed Edward II, who had had Lancaster executed and had shown no great affection for Winchelsey. In the first year of the young king’s reign a petition was presented in parliament requesting him and the lords of the realm “supplier au Pape ... Canonization du noble Counte de Lancastre, et de seinte memorie Robert Ercheveske de Cauntirbir”,\textsuperscript{33} and this was indeed done.\textsuperscript{34}

The chroniclers of the fourteenth century bear witness to the popularity of his stand, at least among the religious, as a defender of ecclesiastical liberty. Even Langtoft, who did not approve of the barons’ refusal to support the king, especially against a foreign enemy\textsuperscript{35}, expressed great admiration for Winchelsey’s stand.

Et cil pur sainte eglyse se profre champyoun,
Et vait al parlement abataunt cum leoun\textsuperscript{36}.

The image presented is that of Professor McKisack’s “lonely giant”\textsuperscript{37}. Rishanger’s report of the quarrel between Edward I and Winchelsey in 1305 and 1306 sounds a rare note of severe criticism among the chroniclers; Edward I was angered by the archbishop “quod seminasset discordium et conspirationem inter ipsum et baronagium suum”.\textsuperscript{38} He was usually presented as one who embodied the virtues of the early Christians, “vir per omnia justus et in censura rigidos; apud quem non erat acceptio personarum, nec multitudo donorum ipsum a justitia aliquando potuit inclinare”, who protected the Church against the kings and their evil exactions.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., pp. 207 and 257.
\textsuperscript{33} Rotuli Parliamentorum, Record Commission, ii (London), 1767-77, 7a.
\textsuperscript{34} Fædera, Vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 695 and 696.
\textsuperscript{35} The Chronicle of Pierre de Langtoft, ed. Thomas Wright, R.S., ii (London, 1868), 292.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., ii. 288.
\textsuperscript{39} Chronica Monasterii de Melsa, ed. Edward A. Bond, R.S., ii (London, 1867), 328.
His constancy in the period of privation which followed the sentence of outlawry given by Edward I is described in detail and, in the *Chronicles of Walter of Guisborough*, reference is made to the divine retribution which fell upon the king’s armies on the day the sentence was passed: “Et vt creditur miraculose contigit eadem die qua extra proteccionem suam rex clerum posuerat confusi sunt milites sui in Wasconia et a Francis deuicti”.

Guisborough and the compilers of the *Flores Historiarum* appear to have been Winchelsey’s most enthusiastic admirers. One finds, in the *Flores Historiarum*, a description of Winchelsey’s death which, in its depiction of the spiritual darkness which fell upon the Church, is evocative of the biblical account of the darkness which fell upon the land when Christ’s passion was over: “Palluerunt in ecclesia Anglicana radii solares, occurrente turbine tenebroso, et descendente pastore praecipuo domino Roberto de Wynchelse Cantuariensi archiepiscopo, clarum diei lumen in clero densa noctis obscuritas irruens obfuscavit”. He was not, however, referred to as a saint, great though the admiration of the chroniclers was, nor was any attempt made to compare his sufferings with those of Becket, even in the appeals to the pope made by those who supported his canonization for propaganda purposes. He might plausibly have been compared with Grosseteste, who was connected with a baronial party which opposed the crown and for whom requests for canonization were made, but I have not discovered any records of this.

The case for his canonization rested largely on his role as defender of the Church and on the performance of miracles which were alleged to have taken place at his tomb at Canterbury. A brief reference, in a letter of Thomas of Lancaster, to the chapter at Canterbury concerned miracles which Winchelsey had performed “aussi bien en sa vie come apres sa mort”, but, apart from the discomforting of Edward I’s armies, the archbishop’s life was noted more for the vigorous performance of his pastoral duties and the unflinching prosecution of the political activities in which his position involved him than for the per-


41 *Flores Historiarum*, ed. Henry R. Luard, R.S., iii (London, 1890), 154.

formance of miracles. In the letter of 1326 to the pope, Walter, Archbishop of Canterbury, wrote of Winchelsey's maintaining a high standard of Christian probity and clerical performance: "et circa morum honestatem diligenter intentus; et in divinis officiis jugiter devotus existens, sibi ipsi vitæ sanctitate multipliciter proficere, aliosque prædicationibus, exemplis variis, pariter et doctrinis indies instruere salubriter satagebat".  

The official appeals for his canonization seem to do him less than justice; had he gained the attention of a hagiographer, more attention might have been paid to his profound learning, and that in theology, as well as to the austerities he practised, the tears he shed when mass was celebrated. These aspects, mentioned in the testimony of his household, link him with Cantilupe and Bridlington; his use, after death, as a means of denigrating a past régime link him with the political figures to be considered. His failure to attract more than temporary reverence among the people, attested by the list of miracles once attached to his tomb but no longer extant, can be ascribed in part to his dying a natural death. He lacked the curious fascination which a violent death appears to impart to the victim. In addition, his political utility was short-lived, for, after the assumption of power by Edward III, the animosity expressed towards his father, in the form of veneration for his victims, came to an end.

John of Dalderby, Bishop of Lincoln from 1300 to 1320 and, earlier, a secular master at Oxford with Winchelsey, is a rather shadowy figure. He appears to have avoided almost all service to the crown, and, even after his elevation to the see of Lincoln, while he devoted himself to the care, spiritual, material and legal, of his church, he took very little part, for a bishop of one of the great English sees, in national affairs. His support of Winchelsey in 1302 in his opposition to the levy of a tax by Edward I, and his unsuccessful petition to the pope in 1307 for the canonization of Grosseteste, inspired one historian to see him as a Bishop of Lincoln "still upholding the tradition of active resistance to oppressive measures". This is something

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43 Ibid., iii. 402.  
of an over-statement. His veneration for Grosseteste, bishop, scholar and distinguished preacher, is scarcely surprising, for Dalderby, preferred to the same see, was also a scholar who preached.\textsuperscript{47} His resistance to the royal imposition of 1302 was an isolated event\textsuperscript{48} and must be considered as a stand taken on a particular issue in response to a command given by his ecclesiastical superior, rather than as an act representative of a consistent policy of opposition to royal authority.

The most detailed description of him is almost without any individual features and could, except for the reference to scholarship in the case of John of Bridlington, be applied to any of the figures already discussed, with its emphasis on public duties conscientiously performed but with the intimation in "contemplativus" of a more than formal, personal devotional life:

Iste Johannes gemma fulsit scientia, utpote qui in artibus et theologia rexerat eleganter. Hic fuit vir facundus, contemplativus, piissimus; verbi Dei predicator egregius; non avarus; velut alter Nicholaus se amabilem clericis praebens; largus, munificentus; et sicut alter Joseph, in cunctis prospere satiis agens.\textsuperscript{49}

The office composed in honour of his canonization adds little to one's knowledge of the man, except for the reference to the austerities he practised.

\begin{quote}
Utendo cilicio  
Sese flagellavit  
Arto quoque jejunio  
Carnem maceravit.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

This may be an example of the dichotomy to be found in some of the material submitted to the papal court in support of an appeal for canonization, in which the virtues of an ascetic were grafted on to those of a great ecclesiastical administrator, so that the latter, the historical figure, might gain favour in official circles where the former was still considered to be the model for saints.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{48} Calthrop, op. cit., p. 34.  
\textsuperscript{50} R. Wickenden, "John de Dalderby, Bishop of Lincoln, 1300-1320", \textit{Archaeological Journal}, xl (1883), 220.  
\textsuperscript{51} Vauchez, op. cit., pp. 351-52.
Of William de Marchia, Bishop of Bath and Wells and former royal treasurer, who died in 1302, there are no extant records which explain the development of a cult except the miracles recorded as having taken place at his tomb. It was some twenty years after his death that efforts to obtain his canonization were made. Denton considered that the veneration offered him was politically motivated but it is a little difficult to see whom it would benefit, except the chapter, twenty years after his death and almost as long after that of the king he had served and who had possibly used him as a scapegoat.

In addition to these holders of high office, I should like to consider the strange figure of Master John Schorne, certainly rector of North Marston, Buckinghamshire, and possibly, before that, an official of the Italian Archdeacon of Buckinghamshire. His cult was marked by a number of curious, even bizarre, features which probably do not reflect his personal characteristics: he is alleged to have put the devil in a boot, and so he is depicted; he struck the ground with his staff and brought forth a well; his head was unearthed in 1448 by the then vicar of North Marston who placed three drops of blood upon it; and, finally, his body was translated to a shrine in St. George's Chapel, Windsor. The cult appears to have been a flourishing one, but no records of appeals for canonization are known. The central figure seems, from the fragmentary legends, to have been imbued with some of the mystique of a “magus” by his devotees, and this contributes to the width of the gulf which clearly separates him from the other saints, actual or putative, of the period.

The most ardent supporter of Winchelsey’s canonization, outside his chapter, was Thomas of Lancaster, the king’s cousin and, after the death of his father-in-law, the holder of five

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54 Ibid., p. 72.
57 *VCH Bucks.*, i. 288.
earldoms. The sheer bulk of his possessions impressed contemporary and near-contemporary chroniclers greatly. His pre-eminence as a landowner did not make him casual with his possessions or indifferent to further acquisitions of property, especially if these made his holdings more compact, and to achieve this he was prepared to resort to intimidation and even violence. "Lancaster may have been a good lord to his retainers but to his tenants, his neighbours, and those over whom he had feudal rights, he was a harsh and uncompromising one" 59.

His political activities were characterized by a singleness of purpose, a consistent adherence to, and insistence upon, the observance of the Ordinances, but by only intermittent activity to enforce this. It has been suggested that the excuse of ill-health given for non-attendance at parliaments was not without foundation 60, but, as Lancaster habitually refused to comply with Edward II's summonses, except in the two years after the battle of Bannockburn, his other excuse being that he feared for his life, the impression given tends to support Tout's suggestion of sulky isolation 61.

The murder of Gaveston in 1312, for which he assumed responsibility, found favour with all but the king, but it did not provide a solution to anything except the personal annoyance which the victim caused. After the quarrel with Edward in 1316 Lancaster appears to have withdrawn from vigorous political activity and to have concentrated even more on the care of his estates.

The degree of personal animosity between Edward and Lancaster and within the factions, and the extent to which this prevented the united action of the lords of the land for the improvement of conditions within and the protection from foes without, is nowhere more apparent than in the dealings with the Scots. Lancaster and some of the other lords refused to serve on the 1314 campaign against the Scots and cannot be considered totally without responsibility for the resounding English defeat at Bannockburn. The reference, in the Vita Edwardi Secundi,


60 Ibid., p. 189.

61 "The Captivity and Death of Edward of Carnarvon", in The Collected Papers of Thomas Frederick Tout, ed. F. M. Powicke, Publications of the University of Manchester, iii (Manchester, 1934), 147.
to the rumour that Lancaster was responsible for the failure of the siege of Berwick and had accepted an enormous bribe from the Scots, permitting them to march unopposed through his lines, is indicative of contemporary suspicion rather than proof of treachery. The question of the letter, allegedly found on the body of the Earl of Hereford and produced at Lancaster’s trial, remains open. If it were genuine and Lancaster a signatory to an agreement with the Scots to mount a combined invasion of England, his treachery, here distinguished from his rebellion against the king, would be beyond doubt.

There are further suggestions of complicity with the Scots. Lancaster’s malicious participation in the curious affair of the attack on the Beaumonts and the two cardinals travelling north, was vigorously denied by Edward III in his letter to the pope in 1331 and described as a mere “commenta maliloquium”.

This brief survey of Lancaster’s public life indicates that it was not exemplary. His principles, in the abstract, may have been excellent, but his application of them was at least ill-advised and erratic. It is difficult to avoid gaining the impression, from the extant material, that what some chroniclers depicted as patriotism was, in him, little more than lamentably unenlightened self-interest.

No record of his private devotions or piety is known. The borrowing of a French Bible and the very substantial donations to religious foundations, particularly to memorial chapels, can hardly be considered signs of exceptional devotion. The establishment of religious foundations and the endowment of memorial chapels were not rare among the wealthy in fourteenth-century England and Lancaster was remarkably wealthy. Nothing, other than the donations and the statement that “religiosos honoravit”, possibly a reference to his activity in support of the canonization of Winchelsey, indicates a life of virtue, heroic or otherwise. He certainly did not always respect the religious.

His domestic life does not appear to have been an exemplary one. There is no suggestion that his marriage was childless because he had taken a vow of chastity and although his wife,

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63 Maddicott, op. cit., p. 205.
65 *Melsa*, ii. 344.
66 Maddicott, op. cit., p. 5.
when she left him, was aided in her flight by his political opponents, the flight, as distinct from the aid, was not politically motivated.

It was upon his death and the events leading to it that his admirers concentrated. Lancaster and his confereates were halted at Boroughbridge and Lancaster himself taken back to the king at Pontefract, tried hastily and executed. The various accounts are substantially the same; the variations are less in the facts than in the colouring of those facts, in the depiction of character and motivation.

The compiler of the *Flores Historiarum* referred to the nobles who sat in judgement as being, on the whole, descendants of long lines of traitors, reinforced by the presence of “Anna et Caypha”, the Archbishops of York and Canterbury. There is little doubt that the trial did not follow the due process of the law: Lancaster was not permitted to reply and the gathering of peers was not representative. It was possibly intended to recall the trial which preceded the slaying of Gaveston. Some of the charges against the earl referred to events which had taken place much earlier in Edward’s reign and for which he had been pardoned. It was suggested that the true cause was not mentioned at all.

Howbeit, other adequate cause was brought forward and alleged, to wit, “that he had borne arms against the King of England in his own realm; but those who best knew the king’s mind declared that the earl never would have been summarily beheaded without the advice of parliament, nor so badly treated, had not that other cause (revenge for Piers Gaveston) prevailed, but that he would have been imprisoned for life or sent into exile.

When sentence had been passed, and some mitigation in the form of execution granted, Lancaster was set upon a decrepit horse and led forth to the place of execution.

One of the most interesting accounts of this defeat, trial and execution is that found in *The Brut*, in which his sufferings were depicted, as far as possible, as similar to Christ’s. He was twice betrayed, first by Holand, a protégé, who “stale away”, and then by “Sir Andrew of Herkela” who “went in his way as a false

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67 *Flores Historiarum*, iii. 206.
traitour, a tiraunt, & a forsoure man”⁶⁹—Peter and Judas. His offer of an enormous bribe to Harclay, although not quite consonant with the image the writer wished to convey, is given the respectable motive of being part of an attempt to persuade Harclay to “consent to destroye the venyme of þe reaume⁷⁰. Lancaster finally yielded, not to Harclay but to God. He was stripped of his armour, clad in his squire’s livery and bound like a thief⁷¹. On his way through York he was insulted and snowballed by the populace “But þe gentil Er þat suffrede and saide neper on ne opere”⁷². When he had been sentenced “wipouten iugement of his peris” in the hall þat he hade made þerin meny a faire fest, boþ to riche and eke to pore … po sette þai oppon his heued in scorn an olde chapelet; al-to rent & torn, þat was nouþ worþ an halpeny; & after þai sette him oppon a lene white palfray, ful vnsemeliche, and ek al bare, wip an olde bridel; and wip an horrible noyse þai drow him out of þe castel toward his deþ, and caste on him meny balles of snowe⁷³.

His demeanour was meek and patient.

An interesting comparison is to be found in “Fragmenta de bellis et causis bellorum”. The same events are described by a writer who clearly considered the trial and execution a shocking and improperly conducted business, but to whom the earl was not a member of the heavenly hierarchy⁷⁴.

Lancaster’s place of execution, tomb and the “table” which he had set up in St. Paul’s as a memorial to the granting of the ordinances, very soon became places of pilgrimage where miracles were performed in large numbers⁷⁵. The very number of places at which miracles took place was cited as evidence of Lancaster’s great sanctity.

Divinae dispensationis misericordia … tantis miraculorum copiis dominum Thomam Lancastriae, cooperante Spiritus Sancti gratia, sublimavit,
ut ex longe positis regionibus turbæ languentium catervatim ad ejus sepulcrum in prioratu de Pontefracto sincera devotione confluebant, gratia recuperandæ sanitatis ... Nec ista solum ... circa locum ipsius acciderant sepulturæ, verum etiam apud civitatem Londoniarum, in ecclesia sancti Pauli ejusdem civitatis ad quandam statuam in similitudinem ipsius armatam, in brevi tabula lignea protractam, consimila copiose miracula refulsere³⁶.

Great efforts were made by the king to put an end to this and he had guards set about the place of execution as well as having Pontefract Priory closed. Those who had come to perform acts of veneration were not turned aside lightly and fierce clashes took place at the execution ground and in London. The acts of devotion continued³⁷. The reason given by Edward for his closures, and for the removal of the objects venerated, was that Lancaster had not been canonized and so his cult was not sanctioned by the church³⁸. He appealed to the Bishop of London to put an end to so unseemly a cult³⁹.

While the letter to the pope, sent in Edward III’s name in the first year of his reign, referred to Lancaster’s miracles, it concentrated on his extreme moral excellence, in entirely non-specific and rather surprising terms⁴⁰. In this emphasis it was unique. The letters to the pope and cardinals in 1331, also requesting his canonization, based their case on the miracles performed at Lancaster’s intervention⁴¹. The same basis is apparent in the exchange given in The Brut between Edmund of Woodstock and pope John XXII. Woodstock “saide þat Almyghty God hade meny tymes done, for Thomas loue of Lancestre, meny Gret miracles to meny men and wymen þat Were þrouȝ diverse sikenesse vndon as to þe world, and þrouȝ his preier þai were brouȝt vnto her hele”. The pope refused to grant recognition of his sanctity “vnto þe tyme þat he were bettre certesied of þe clergie of Engeland”⁴².

The unreliability of the material submitted in support of Lancaster’s canonization is underlined by the alleged occurrence

³⁶ Flores Historiarum, iii. 213.
³⁷ Chronicles of London, ii. 27.
³⁸ Kemp, op. cit., p. 123.
⁴² Brut, p. 263.
of miracles at sites connected with the execution of his associates. In the two years after the destruction of the dissident barons, when the Despensers were again in power and the surviving nobles discontented but impotent, the gallows at Bristol, still bearing the bodies of Lancaster’s supporters, became, or were made, a centre of veneration. Rumours of miracles worked there were spread, for indubitably political purposes and miraculous cures manufactured.

The element of patriotism appeared in the Commons’ appeal to the king in 1327 to request Lancaster’s canonization from the pope “a l’honour de Dieu et de Seint Eglise, et pur leshance-ment de l’estat du Roialme,” but it is difficult to suppose that this expression of a desired end can have been considered a reason for believing him a saint, though it was a solid one for supporting his canonization.

The element of divine retribution is emphasized. Sir Andrew Harclay died a traitor’s death, worse than Lancaster’s because he was executed according to the full rigour of the law, as the earl had foretold. When Isabella and Mortimer returned to England the Despensers and their supporters were executed and so deide the traitours of Engeland, blissede be Almighty God! & hit Was no wonder, for þrouþ her council th[e] gode Erl Thomas of Lancastr’ was done vnto deth and al þat helden with Thomas of Lancastre þrouþ þo traitoures were vndon and all her heires dis-heritede.

Not all those who favoured Lancaster’s cause, even if only because it was an expression of protest against Edward II, accepted the claims of his more extreme partisans that he was enrolled among the saints in heaven, even if this had not been recognized on earth. One such was the author of at least this section of “A Chronicle of the Civil Wars of Edward II.” One sees in their works the denial that violent death, particularly

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84 Calendar of Chancery Warrants, A.D. 1244-1326, Record Commission, i (London, 1927), 543.
85 Rotuli Parliamentorum, ii. 7a.
87 Brut, pp. 240-41.
88 Ed. Haskins, p. 78.
when it was involuntary, and even miracles gave substance to the claim to sanctity.

Of his erie and of his dedes is ofte greet stryf among comoun peple, wheber he schulde be accounted for seyntes oper none. Some seyn sis, for he dede many almes dedes, and worschipped men of religiou, and maynteyned a trewe querel, as it semed, to his lyves ende; also his enemies durede afterward but a while, and deyde in schentful deeb. Oper seien þe contrarie, and telleþ þat he was an housbonde man, and rout nouþ of his wyf, and defould a greet multitude of [gentil] wommen and of gentil wenches; jif eny man offended hym a lite, he lete slee hym anon. And postataes and eveł doers he favored strongliche, for he schulde nouþ be ipunsched by þe lawe. Also he wolde commytte all his doynges to oon of his secretaries to doo wip as he wolde. Also þat he foloweþ schamefulliche in tyme of fytinge for þe right anon to þe deth, and suche on schulde nouþ be accounted [a saynt], nameliche when he was i-take and i-slawe maugre his teeb. But offrynges and liknes of myracles þat now beþ i-doo in þe place þere he was byheded what issue by schulde take, it schal be knowe after þis tyme.89

The next candidate for sainthood to be considered was, ironically, the man responsible for the martyrdom of Thomas of Lancaster, his cousin Edward II. Contemporary chroniclers left many descriptions of his character and tastes, all of them agreeing in essentials.

Rex Edwardus, cujus gesta transcurrendo descriptusimus, fuit corpore quidem elegans, viribus præstans, sed moribus, ut vulgo dicitur, multum discrepans ... in dando prodigus, in convivando dapsilis et splendidus, ore promptus, sermone varius, contra hostes infortunatus, in domesticos efferatus90

The most favourable judgement given was that of Sir Thomas Gray of Heton whose opposition to Lancaster and his supporters is unmistakable. “Il fust sagis, douce, et amyable en parole; mais mesoerous en fait”91.


91 Sir Thomas Gray of Heton, Scalacronica: A Chronicle of England and
He has fared no better with modern historians. Professor McKisack characterized him as "feeble, incompetent, and irresponsible"\(^9^2\), while his behaviour has been described, in a recent work, as an example of "ruinous mean-mindedness"\(^9^3\). There has been only one attempt to present him in a favourable light and that has not been totally successful\(^9^4\). It is difficult to find any aspect of his life not marred by folly; he allowed personal desires to govern public decisions and showed little judgement in either.

As a military leader he was a disaster. The accusation of cowardice in battle appears to be unfounded for he was capable of performing deeds of reckless courage, but he had no discretion—even taunting the leader of an important division of his army until he made a suicidal attack—no tactical sense and he did not inspire personal loyalty.

He permitted his relationship with Gaveston to become a source of public dissention and strife when he might have kept it to the level of a minor scandal. The relationship has been the subject of considerable conjecture. The accusation of homosexuality levelled against Edward cannot be considered similar to that made against the Templars, for that was of a general and extravagant nature and obviously propagandist. The extent of Edward’s infatuation was repeatedly remarked upon: "Sane non memini me audisse unum alterum ita dilexisse. Jonathas dilexit David, Achilles Patroclum amavit; sed illi modum excessisse non leguntur. Modum autem rex noster habere non potuit"\(^9^5\). It was his indulgence of his favourite, which made only too clear the unreliability of his oaths, that incited the barons to kill Gaveston, thus consolidating the hostility which already existed between them and the king.

His second favourite, Hugh Despenser the Younger, an extremely efficient lord but inordinately grasping, even for a Marcher, aroused resentment among the nobles both by his

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\(^9^2\) The Fourteenth Century, p. 103.
influence and by the extent and scope of his exactions. Like Gaveston, both Despensers were exiled, only to be recalled as soon as Edward thought the situation had changed. Like Lancaster, the king put his own interests, or desires, before the welfare of his country. His protection of, and indulgence for, his favourites far outstripped the obligation of loyalty to ministers and friends.

Poor judgement and, at the end, what seems like instinctive bad-timing marred Edward II's marital relationship and brought Isabella back to England with the heir to the throne, prepared, in his name, to topple her husband from it by force.

Edward II's life was not notably edifying: his failure as a king was not compensated for by extraordinary piety, although he was a supporter of the Dominicans, or domestic devotion. The attempt to number him among the saints was based solely on his unfortunate death and the miracles which allegedly occurred at his tomb.

Among the miracles, although not occurring at his tomb, must be counted the retribution which fell upon his murderers. Of the two men held responsible for his death one was beheaded at sea, so that he should not betray his fellow conspirators, the other remained abroad.

The conversion of the former tyrant into the hero of a hagiographical romance became effective from the time of his captivity. His abdication in favour of his son was movingly described; he was led off into comfortable captivity by the Earl of Leicester and there he languished in the absence of his wife, who soon ordered him to be committed to the custody of Thomas de Corneye and John Maltravers. He departed "inter inimicos, securus de vita plena doloris". A temporarily successful abduction led his captors to immure him in Berkley Castle, after subjecting him to humiliating torments and making repeated attempts to poison him. There he suffered the last of his torments in a little chamber over a charnel house and the final degradation,

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99 Ibid., p. 30.
a brutal and disgusting murder. Other accounts, less colourful than le Baker's, merely referred to the suspicion that he had been murdered. The author of the *Chronicle of London* recorded it as a fact, and that not without satisfaction: "and by the advice of certain person[s] and the assent of his false guardians, he was barbarously murdered by night, as a false and disloyal per- jurer"\(^{100}\).

The main interest of both le Baker's chronicle and the "lamentable complaynt" ascribed to Edward II\(^{101}\), lies not in the historical accuracy of the picture presented but in the deliberate depiction of a martyr: neither gives the reader reliable information about either the extent of the sufferings of the deposed monarch or about his character, which, it appears, was one of extraordinary patience and sweetness, but both, because of their obviously propagandist purpose, reveal a certain amount about contemporary requirements for saints, and more particularly for martyrs. Dire humiliation and physical maltreatment at the hands of monsters, both borne with exemplary patience by the innocent victim, should culminate in an unnatural death.

While there is no firm evidence, not even in the very delayed trials in his son's reign, that Edward II was murdered, and while sudden and apparently inexplicable death was not uncommon, his assumed death seems a little too convenient to be accepted as natural. I do not propose to consider the alternatives of continued but secret imprisonment or a life of voluntary, pious confinement abroad\(^{102}\), as these were either unknown to those interested in Edward II as a saint or ignored by them. There was no known supporter of him as a confessor.

The development of a cult began almost immediately after the announcement of his death and his tomb at Gloucester became a pilgrim centre where miracles were allegedly performed. The most interesting comment upon this is to be found in the *Annales de Oseneia*:

De cujus meritis, an inter sanctos annumerandus sit, frequens in vulgo, sicut quondam de Thoma comite Lancastriae, adhuc disceptatio est; sed revera nec carceris foeditas, nec mortis vilitas, cum ista sceleratis

\(^{100}\) *Chronicles of London*, ii. 48.


\(^{102}\) Fryde, op. cit., pp. 203-06.
The accounts of the last of the political martyrs of the fourteenth century, Richard, Earl of Arundel, have many features in common with those of his predecessors. His trial, although conducted by his peers, was unjust; the foundation of his defence, the Charter, was destroyed by the assertion that it had been repealed. Like Lancaster, he was condemned to dying a traitor's death but his sentence was reduced to decapitation because of his relationship to the king. Unlike Lancaster, he received his sentence with composure and proceeded to Tower Hill, surrounded not by hostile but by commiserating crowds, and to these he gave his last coins. The fine flourish with which he felt the edge of the axe and the grisly detail of the truncated body rising to its feet were not forgotten:

Cum cujus anima utinam me participem fieri mererer! quia pro certo ipsum sanctorum collegio non dubito aggregari. Corpus tamen suum, licet tunc irreverenter apud Augustinienses Londonie tumulatum, modo cum summa reverencia et populi frequenti oblacione quam gloriose veneratum existit.

Miracles reportedly occurred at Arundel's tomb and the church became a place of pilgrimage. When rumours of this reached Richard, they made him so anxious that he had the body exhumed and examined. After re-interment paving stones were laid over the grave to prevent recognition of the spot. The elements of vengeance and prophecy, so familiar, also appear in connection with Arundel. On his way to Tower Hill the earl fortold the misfortunes of his treacherous nephews, the Earls of Nottingham and Kent, and so haunted Richard in his dreams that he posted guards in his bedroom and, becoming less concerned with the state of the realm, "plus se tyrannum quam regem deinceps

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103 In *Annales Monastici*, iv. 348.
105 Ibid., p. 216.
106 Ibid., p. 218.
moribus exiberet". The martyrdom of Arundel did not arouse the same degree of fervour as did those of Edward II and his cousin, Thomas of Lancaster, but, as for them, it was death that so became him, not life.

Thomas de la Hale, monk of Dover, is included here simply because he met with a violent death. He was killed by a French raiding party in 1295. An indulgence was granted only five months later but the Bull authorizing an inquiry into his faith and morals was not sent until 1380. The two lives of very different length, but both by John of Tynemouth, have a splendidly rhetorical tone and a grandeur which militates against their conveying total conviction. In the longer life it is de la Hale's complete obedience to the rule and his keeping solitary vigil in the church that is emphasized, in the shorter it is his miracles.

The monk of Dover can only with difficulty be considered a political saint and the description of his cult as an example of "defiance of the law" is scarcely apt. Politics of any sort are apparent in whatever cult there was only in the form of the negative aspect of patriotism, hatred of the French; and the French, as invaders, can scarcely be considered upholders of the law.

Of the group of political claimants to sainthood, Thomas of Lancaster is most truly in the tradition of the rebel hero. Earl Waltheof, executed by William I, was perhaps the first of these; Becket, slain in his own cathedral by the king's men, was the only one to be canonized; Simon de Montfort, Earl of Leicester, was the closest in time and motivation to Lancaster, who later held de Montfort's lands and title as well as his position as leader of the baronial opposition.

De Montfort fell in battle and his body was mutilated, but, although no mention of a mockery of a trial could be made in connection with his name, the hagiographical details found in

108 Trokelowe, p. 219.
111 NLA, ii. 554.
112 Ibid., ii. 403.
113 Kemp, op. cit., p. 124.
some descriptions of the capture and trial of Lancaster are present. De Montfort also was betrayed: "Comes igitur Gloverniae, veneno diabolic0 intoxicatus, vestigia proditoris iniquissimi Judæ secutus est". As Lancaster asked mercy of Andrew Harclay, so de Montfort asked for mercy from those who surrounded him at Evesham; he also was refused it. His death was exemplary, his last words being, "moriar pro deo et iusticia". Some, although not all, of his betrayers perished miserably. The gift of prophecy was not attributed to him but it was exercised in his cause. Grosseteste, another putative saint, was said to to have foretold his death and those of his sons, and to have promised that those who fell in his cause should receive the martyr's crown, for the peace of the Church could not be kept without the sword. His Christ-like role was mentioned explicitly, not implied, on at least one occasion:

Non sic venerabilis .S. de Monte-forti
Qui se Christo similis dat pro multis morti.

Like the later Lancaster, de Montfort was not always admired, but his critics appear to have been fewer. Langtoft wrote with some asperity about both his personal qualities and his cause. The loss of life at the battle of Evesham particularly roused his ire, apparently to the point of ignoring the death of de Montfort himself:

Dure fu la bataille, et graunt fu la folye;
Ke primes le comença, Jhesu ly maldyey.

Although de Montfort died excommunicate, a devout and pious life was attributed to him and the practice of austerities, but it was his devotion to his cause that was given the most attention by the chroniclers.

The battlefield of Evesham, where he was slain, and particularly the spring, became, in the two decades following his death, a pilgrim centre where miraculous cures allegedly took place.

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115 Flores Historiarum, iii. 4.
116 Guisborough, p. 201.
117 Rishanger, p. 36.
120 B.L. MS. Cotton Vespasian A VI, ff. 163r-183r.
De Montfort’s cult, like Lancaster’s, was most fervent immediately after his death and dwindled almost to nothing after about twenty years.

The identification of de Montfort’s cause with that of Becket was demonstrated in the tale of the unknown knight and bishop who appeared, blessed the baronial army before the Battle of Lewes, and then vanished, and whom some believed were St. George and St. Thomas. This identification of cause is to be found elsewhere as well.

Comes symon thomam querit,
causam thome simon gerit
et cum thoma falsa terit,
leges per martyrium.

Mes par sa mort
Le cuens Mountfort
Conquist la victorie;
Come ly martyr
De Caunterbyr
Finist sa vie.
Ne voleit pas
Li bon Thomas
Qe perist seinte eglise
Ly cuens auxi
Se combati
E morust sauntz feyntise.

The link with the later political martyr, Thomas of Lancaster, was not overlooked by Thomas de Burton, who placed him firmly in the rebel-saint tradition: “De quo Simone fert fama celebris quod multis post obitum radiavit miraculis, quæ propter metum regium non prodierunt in publicum. Et dicitur quod eadem causa occisis est qua postea Thomas de Lancastria, anno Domini 1319 fuit interemptus.”

In the early fifteenth century Archbishop Scrope, in circumstances not dissimilar from those of Lancaster and Arundel,

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124 Melsa, ii. 131. See also Polychronicon, viii. 251.
became an object of veneration. The claims made for him were somewhat more elevated, and considerable emphasis was placed upon the purity of his life, but the accounts of his sufferings were similarly exaggerated and the nobility of his cause not omitted. As the first English archbishop to be officially, although not perhaps legally, executed, his death caused considerable scandal. He, too, was divinely avenged.

The answer to the question of how far some contemporaries considered that the requirements of sainthood had been fulfilled by these martyrs is given by the Abbot of Meaux in his discussion of the claims made for Edward II:

De cujus quidem Edwardi meritis, an inter sanctos annumerandus sit, frequens in vulgo sicut de Thoma comite Lancastriæ disceptatio fuit. Sed revera nec carceris fœditas nec mortis vilitas, cum ista sceleratis debeantur, nec etiam oblationum frequentia aut miraculorum simulacra, cum talia sint indifferenta, nisi corresponderet sanctimonia vitae preceding, quenquam sanctum probant.

This is an echo of Innocent III’s Bulls of canonization of St. Homobonus and St. Cunegunda, but the papal pronouncement gives the positive requirements:

although the grace of final perseverance alone is required for sanctity in the Church triumphant, yet in order that a person may be venerated by the Church militant, two things are necessary, the virtue of morals and the virtue of signs, that is, there must be proof of a good and pious life, and this must be confirmed by evidence of miracles wrought after death.

While the emphasis in the works of the period considered here is on the sufferings of the martyr and the injustice of his persecutors, the emphasis of the Church, as early as Cyprian, was “non poena sed causa”.

The constituent elements of a sufficient cause have been repeatedly discussed. To suffer death for the preservation of Christian virtues or for refusal to deny the Christian faith was,

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125 *Political Poems*, ii. 115.
126 His cult has been treated in some detail by J.W. McKenna, “Popular Canonization as Political Propaganda: The Cult of Archbishop Scrope”, *Speculum*, xlv (1970), 608-23.
127 *Melsa*, ii. 355. See also *Polychronicon*, viii. 325-27.
128 Kemp, op. cit., p. 104.
129 Ibid., p. 11.
and is, considered adequate and appropriate. The argument for the sanctity of the fourteenth-century political martyrs is circular: the justice of the cause and the sanctity of its champion were interdependent, the sanctity of the latter establishing the justice of the former, while, conversely, the justice of the cause proved the sanctity of its slain defender. It is interesting to note that, in the lives considered in this section, it is only in the longer life of Thomas de la Hale\textsuperscript{130} that there is any suggestion that the proponent played his role from submission to the divine will. It was not the working out of God's plan that was central to these accounts but the virtuoso performance of the hero. This was the element, as Wolpers emphasized\textsuperscript{131}, which distinguished the hagiographical from the non-hagiographical narrative, but, however, it is this element which cannot, strictly, be attributed to the subject of the account but to its composer. It might be suggested that the attitude of the subject would be reflected in the approach of the writer, but this cannot be considered a universally applicable and reliable criterion, but merely an aspect to be taken into account.

The possibility of miracles being worked by the imperfect, or even by the evil, had long been accepted. The weight given to the performance of miracles in exciting acts of veneration is extremely difficult to estimate. It is clear, from both chroniclers and records of processes of canonization, that miracles were necessary but were alone not enough to excite wide-spread veneration. The body of Joan of Acre, lying "h001 & incorrupt" at Claire, was the reputed channel of miracles of healing in the next century, but does not appear to have attracted multitudes\textsuperscript{132}. Maddicott expressed the opinion that, in the case of Lancaster, popular veneration was possibly an indication of appreciation of, and support for, his cause, and that there may have been a greater degree of political awareness at a lower social level than has been realised\textsuperscript{133}. This implies that the miracles, or apparent miracles, engendered as they appear to have been by the emotional intensity and general excitement of

\textsuperscript{130} NLA, ii. 553-58.
\textsuperscript{132} "Mappula Angliae, von Osbern Bokenham", ed. Carl Horstmann, Englische Studien, x (1887), 11.
\textsuperscript{133} Maddicott, op. cit., p. 313.
devotees at the shrine, were a product, rather than the cause, of popular veneration.

In this realm of conjecture one point is clear and indisputable: a cult and the miracles worked by, or through, its object, were inter-dependent. When the number of supplicants or devotees dropped, the number of miracles dwindled. This would confirm the implication of Maddicott's theory, mentioned above, if the records, unfortunately fragmentary for these shrines, indicated clearly that the cult had begun to lose its attraction while miracles were still being worked.

The negative aspect of the theory, that the veneration of these political figures indicated political affiliations, that is, that it was an expression of protest against the alleged saint's persecutor rather than one of support for his policy, is consonant with what is known of the expression of veneration and does not require of the pilgrims to the shrines more than a very elementary political awareness. Unfortunately, it is also difficult to assess the degree to which any cult arose spontaneously, as there are records, for the bishops and for the political figures, of the promotion of the cult by interested parties. The only known exception to this is that curious figure, John Schorne. He is also, with Thomas de la Hale, exceptional among his fellows in not being either a prince of the church or one of the magnates of this world. Elevation of status did something to provide the touch of drama which a survey of the cult-figures of this period suggests was required.

In the third and final group to be considered here the dramatic element is internal and the stature of the putative saint not enhanced by social or political position.

It was near the time of Thomas of Lancaster's execution that Richard Rolle began to experience the joys of contemplation. He had earlier spent some time at Oxford as a student before he, like John of Bridlington, abandoned first the University and then secular life. He did not take monastic vows but, dramatically, the garb of a hermit and fled from his father's house. His flight into the wilderness was not of long duration, for he soon found himself under the patronage of John of Dalton, who,

for a time, supplied him with the necessities of life. The accounts of his movements are allusive rather than particular, and it would seem that he several times changed his abode "propter aliam rationabilem causam". In 1349 he died and was buried in the churchyard at Hampole, where his grave attracted pilgrims.

Rolle was a prolific writer of devotional literature, although it was not learning but love that he advocated. He also wrote two autobiographical works which are mainly on the subject of his spiritual development and the joys of contemplation, but which provide some information about his external life as well. There is no reference in his works to the personal practice of austerities, an important feature in the lives of saints of an earlier period, "quod sanctitas non sistit in cilicio et cinere nec in aliquo quod exterius operamus". His detractors accused him of frequenting the houses of the rich and dwelling "inter carnales", the implications of which he vigorously denied, for he claimed to practise moderation in food and drink. He wrote defensively, indeed bitterly, of those who sought to please God by excessive fasting. His sufferings in this world appear to have taken the form of criticism, based on imperfect comprehension of the nature of his piety. There is a reference to these sufferings, although not to their cause, in the office composed for his feast.

In monte dei constitutus
ricardus sublimatur
ab insultu semper tutus
cum sanctis letatur

135 The Incendium Amoris of Richard Rolle of Hampole, ed. Margaret Deanesly, Publications of the University of Manchester, Historical Series, xxvi (Manchester, 1915), 175.
138 Melos Amoris, p. 122.
139 Ibid., p. 132.
140 Ibid., p. 131.
141 Incendium Amoris, pp. 265-66.
An important theme in both his English and his Latin works was the frailty and transience of the flesh and its pleasures and the constancy of the joys of one who rests in God. These were not only the joys of the life to come but also the present joy of contemplation. In both the Melos and the Incendium Amoris this was specifically linked with his own status as a hermit. It was to the solitary alone that the high sweetness of contemplation was given, although not to all solitaries, and to the contemplative the gift of "armonie amorose"\(^\text{143}\), a sign that he was among the elect and had achieved spiritual perfection. There is no indication that the references to those who praised communal life were the product of any specific disagreement with a community but, as Arnould suggested in his edition of the Melos Amoris\(^\text{144}\), an idiosyncratic expression of an orthodox opinion: the eremetical life was higher but more dangerous and few had the strength to follow it in safety.

His claims to sainthood were not as direct or as obsessively frequent as Miss Allen stated\(^\text{145}\). "Sanctus", in both the Melos Amoris and the Incendium Amoris, was frequently used as a synonym for "electus", when used of the living, and for "paradisicola" or "celigenus" when used of the dead. Rolle wrote with total assurance about his own salvation, repeatedly referring to his expectation of eternal bliss "inter sanctos". His own claims were not to sainthood but to spiritual perfection. This is not quite a distinction without a difference: it was not that Rolle claimed to be a saint but rather that the implication in his works is that a saint would not have differed in any important respect from him. "Qui habet hoc gaudium [the joy of divinely oriented love] et in hac vita ita gloriatur, inspiratus est a spiritu Sancto. Non potest errare; agit quicquid libet securus est"\(^\text{146}\). The perfect man suffered the same longing as Rolle and was consumed with the same burning love.

It was this love which was the gauge of holiness of life—an orthodox opinion—but, for Rolle, the presence of love was particularly indicated by the intensity of the sensations experi-

\(^{143}\) Incendium Amoris, p. 158.
\(^{144}\) p. 205.
\(^{145}\) Hope E. Allen, Writings ascribed to Richard Rolle, Hermit of Hampole, and Materials for his Biography, Modern Language Association of America, Monograph Series iii (1927), 488-90.
\(^{146}\) Incendium Amoris, p. 176.
enced. The *Melos Amoris* is a paean of praise of the “canor”, the “calor”, the “flammam quam sub metaphorā ignem apel-lauī”\(^\text{147}\). This preoccupation with his own sensibility and his considering it a sign, not only of special grace, but of holiness, made it different from the physical manifestations of Cantilupe and Bridlington for, while they were both examples of the development of the later medieval affective devotion to the Holy Sacrament, an aspect of the practice of affective meditation on Christ’s passion, Rolle’s sensations appear to have been auto-suggestive, unrelated to external stimuli. He made no mention of any subject of meditation which inflamed him with the fire of love, although there are clear indications in his works of a devotion to the Holy Name\(^\text{148}\) and to Christ’s Passion. Music he found no stimulus to devotion\(^\text{149}\).

It was in his attitude to the second of the two signs of sainthood that Rolle was most remarkable. The most holy were those who, consumed by the fire of love, laid aside all worldly concerns and, because they did not seek pre-eminence, were less esteemed of men and “rarīus egrediunt ad miracula facienda, eo quod solummodo interioribus manent”\(^\text{150}\). The working of miracles was evidence of an incomplete absorption in God. At best, miracles were morally indifferent.

Alīis vero qui recte se diuinō serviciō subiciunt, et subditōs discrete regunt, ceteris eciām qui coram hominibus inaudita carnīs afflicciōnē uiuunt, plerumque uel in uita uel post mortem signa ostenduntur concessa, quamuis eciām in purgatorīo acerbe per aliquod tempus crucientur. Non enim omnes sanctī faciunt uel fecerunt miracula eciām nec in uita nec post mortem, neque omnes reprobi uel in uita uel post mortem miraculis caruerunt. Occultum quippe est iudiciō Dei, ut mali uisis signis peccatorum peiores fiant, et boni, contemptis his que bonis et malis communiter haberi possunt, in amore Conditoris sui amplius inardescant... Nam et sepe contingit quod mediocrīt boni et minus perfecti miraculis faciant... Ea enim que communia sunt bonis et malis a sanctīs non sunt appetanda; sed caritas et uirtutes spirituāles incessanter in cordibus nostrīs insigantur, que non solum animam a putredine peccatorum custodiunt, sed et corpus in eternam memoriam in iudiciō exaltabunt\(^\text{151}\).

\(^\text{147}\) Ibid., p. 146.
\(^\text{148}\) *English Writings of Richard Rolle*, p. 66.
\(^\text{149}\) *Incendium Amoris*, pp. 232-34.
\(^\text{150}\) Ibid., p. 153.
\(^\text{151}\) Ibid., pp. 153-54.
This attitude to miracles did not prevent the ascription of quite a number to Rolle by his devotees. The list of "miracula" which follows his office contains not only posthumous miracles which occurred through his intercession but also a smaller number performed during his lifetime.\(^{152}\)

The office itself, however, composed before 1400,\(^{153}\) was clearly written by one familiar with his works. The "legenda" are largely extracts from the *Melos Amoris* and the *Incendium Amoris* and, although his miracles were not overlooked—indeed were described in terms of which Rolle would scarcely have approved—\(^{154}\) the major themes of his works; the "contemptus mundi", the love-longing, the evidence of merit provided by the slights cast upon him, the emphasis on divine inspiration rather than academic training for the interpretation of Scripture, the sensible effects of divine ecstasy, were represented. There was, however, a reference to his practice of austerities.

\[\text{Vitam illam hic mercatus,}\]
\[\text{carnis tulit cruciatus.}\]
\[\text{datus penitencie.}\]\(^{155}\)

The mortification of the flesh was considered by others an indispensable adjunct to a life of sanctity.

The most complete compilation of the qualities considered essential for sainthood in the England of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries is to be found in the *The Book of Margery Kempe*.\(^{156}\) That its author did emphatically claim to be numbered among the saints is clear:

Dowter, I behote be þe same grace þat I be-hyte Seynt Kateryne, Seynt Margarete, Seynt Barbara, & Seynt Powle, in so mech þat what creatur in erth vn-to þe Day of Dom aske þe any bone & beleuyth þat God loyth þe he xal haue hys bone er ellys a bettyr thyng ... Dowtir, whan þu art in Heuyn, þu xalt mown askyn what þu wylt, & I xal grawnte þe al þi desyr.\(^{157}\)

\(^{152}\) *Officium and Miracula of Richard Rolle*, pp. 82-93.
\(^{153}\) Ibid., pp. 9-10.
\(^{154}\) Ibid., p. 12.
\(^{155}\) Ibid., p. 78.
\(^{156}\) *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. Sanford B. Meech and Hope E. Allen, EETS, OS cxxii (London, 1940).
\(^{157}\) Ibid., p. 52.
An extremely competitive note is apparent throughout the book\textsuperscript{158}: her feelings were often higher than those described in the books read to her and she was assured that the messages and visions given her were no less important than those vouchsafed to Saint Bridget\textsuperscript{159}. For one attempting to achieve some insight into her character and to gain some understanding of her mystical experiences, sincerity is not a relevant criterion. Although she was self-absorbed, she could not be considered to have the self-awareness which makes insincerity possible. Although she was shrewd, her mind was neither profound nor disciplined, and she lacked not sincerity but discrimination. She was as flamboyant in her religious practices as she had been formerly in her dress.

This is apparent also in her acts of charity. These can be divided into two distinct categories: those which were prompted by natural and practical kindliness, reinforced by the teaching of the Church on the seven acts of mercy, and those which were performed in emulation of other saints and are distinguished by a melodramatic quality and by their being of little advantage to the recipients. Her desire to kiss lepers and the wounded, which her confessor limited to women, is typical of the latter group.

\begin{quote}
\text{\textit{pan was sche glad, for sche had leue to kyssyn pe seke women & went to a place wher seke women dwellyd whech wer ryth ful of pe sekenes & fel down on hir kneys be-forn hem, preyng hem pat sche myth kyssyn her mowth for pe lofe of Ihesu. \& so sche kyssyd ber ij seke women with many an holy thowt \& many a deuowt teer}}\textsuperscript{160}.
\end{quote}

Her orthodoxy cannot be questioned, for she was orthodox on matters concerning which she had been taught there were heretical opinions. “I wil neiþyr meynteyn errowr ne heresy, for it is my ful wil to holdyn as Holy Chirche holdith \& fully to plesyn God”\textsuperscript{161}. This stood her in good stead when she was

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{158} Margery Kempe’s part in the composition of the work that bears her name has been questioned by John C. Hirsch, “Author and Scribe in The Book of Margery Kempe”, \textit{Medium Aevum}, xliv (1975), 149-150. The question of editorial influence on the composition would bear re-examination, but what is written here of Margery applies equally to any composite figure who may be responsible for the opinions expressed in The Book.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Margery Kempe, p. 47.
\item \textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 177.
\item \textsuperscript{161} Ibid., p. 122.
\end{itemize}
questioned on the nature of transubstantiation and the role of the priest in effecting it. The suspicion that she was touched with heresy was among the persecutions which she endured with fortitude and forbearance, although the reader may feel that a quieter manner might have averted the attacks of her critics.

Margery felt the attraction of martyrdom, even imagining that she had experienced it, and was promised the same reward as if she had indeed suffered death. She visualized a characteristically flamboyant but comparatively painless form of martyrdom, but more frequently considered her sufferings, the criticism and occasional abuse to which she was subjected, a form of martyrdom. "Dowtyr, it is mor plesyng'vnto me þat þu suffyr despitys & scornys, schamys & repreuys, wrongys & disesys þan s þin hed wer smet of þre tymes on þe day every day in seuyn þer". Margery also practiced austerities of various sorts at different times, taking them up or abandoning them as she felt instructed, but she does not appear to have considered them remarkable. Like Rolle, however, she resented suggestions that she was given to gastronomic indulgence.

The problem of sexual continence exercised Margery to a considerable extent. This was partly because her competitive nature feared that the value placed on virginity would diminish her spiritual status and she needed reassurance about her equality in Christ's eyes, partly because she came to feel increasingly strongly that her physical relationship with her husband was an obstacle to her spiritual progress. Her eventual success in persuading him to allow her to take a vow of chastity gave her much satisfaction. Two of the saints whom she admired were St. Katherine of Alexandria, the virgin martyr, and St. Bridget of Sweden, who, with her husband, had taken a vow of chastity.

Among the miracles to which she laid claim was the gift of prophecy, a gift attributed also to St. Bridget and St. Katherine. Margery's revelations were concerned mainly with the health and well-being of her friends and with the safety or danger of her own undertakings. On one occasion she expressed relief that a prophecy had proved correct, for it was not always easy to understand revelations aright and she had occasionally mis-

162 Ibid., p. 184.
163 Ibid., p. 131.
164 Ibid., p. 49.
understood the heavenly voice. The other miracles she recorded do not appear to be more than coincidences, although Thurston considered that those which related to her own physical condition were not surprising in an hysteric. Her claims to possess miraculous powers are quite clear, and occasionally shared, but there is no known evidence of a cult or records of any miracles performed through her intercession after death.

The main basis of her claim to sainthood was the force of her emotional response: the additional factors considered were subsidiary. It was the fire of love within her, the great upsurge of feeling which prostrated her or forced her to burst out into fits of noisy tears, which indicated her closeness to Christ her spouse and the great grace that worked within her. She occasionally used Rolle's terminology, and she took as her own confessor the priest who had performed that office for John of Bridlington. The stirrings of love, the music and the sensible fire of Rolle are in Margery wild tears, lights and bird-song.

One finds, therefore, in fourteenth-century England, three different but connected concepts of the attributes of sainthood, and only three. The friar of heroic virtue, the noble who gave himself up to a life of devotion or chose holy poverty, the nun of exceptional piety, do not appear among the putative saints. The canonized saint lived a life notable for the practice of certain Christian virtues: devotion to duty, the protection of and care for those committed to his charge, and the turning from worldly studies, possibly to the study of theology. It is clear from a study both of those who were canonized and of those who were not, but who share the characteristics of this group, that it is the learned public figure with heavy responsibilities who practised restraint in his way of life rather than the solitary with his heroic austerities who appeared a saint to his contemporaries. Although there are some indications that austerities were practised, the element of suffering common to all groups was provided for this one either by the carping of unnamed critics or by the actual persecution of ecclesiastical superiors or temporal lords. Of those considered, Winchelsey, Cantilupe and Bridlington are known

165 Ibid., pp. 219-20.
166 Surprising Mystics (London, 1955), p. 34.
167 Margery Kempe, pp. 22 and 163-64.
168 Ibid., p. 88.
169 Ibid., p. 125.
to have exhibited signs of passionate devotion, particularly at the sacrament of mass. The evidence of their acceptability to God was provided by the performance of miracles, rare in life but frequent after death.

Of these attributes only two are markedly present in the two other groups into which the other aspirants to sainthood fall. The manifestations of affective devotion and practice of meditation which, in Cantilupe and Bridlington, are only additional evidence of sanctity, appear, in the two figures who stand at either end of the century, as the basis of their claims to spiritual superiority. The "calor" and "canor" of Rolle become the wild outbursts of Margery Kempe and are, with the tears of Cantilupe and Bridlington, evidence of the presence of a cult of sensibility which won considerable respect for its adherents, provided that the manifestations of it did not appear unseemly. Although there was an increase in the strength of the manifestations during the course of the century, this cannot be attributed entirely to an increase in the importance attached to this sensibility, relevant as it was to the tolerance accorded to even bizarre displays. Some allowance must be made for personal idiosyncracies. It is apparent that, much as this attribute was admired in some circles, it was not the only grounds on which claims to sanctity were made. Miraculous powers were claimed by Margery Kempe and attributed to Rolle. Both suffered unjustified criticism and Rolle, like Bridlington, abandoned the University to pursue spiritual perfection.

Related to both these groups only by the reputation for miraculous powers and the fact of persecution were the political saints. They were distinct from the continental saints of the period who played political roles (St. Catherine of Siena and St. Bridget of Sweden, for example), for the English politicians were acclaimed as saints because their political activity ended in violent death; they were not involved in politics because of their reputations for sanctity. The circular nature of the argument about the interdependence of the justice of the cause and the sanctity of the deceased has already been discussed. It is notable that the passions of these martyrs show no development, in emotive colouring and interpretation of character and motivation, from those of earlier ones, with the possible exception of increased emphasis on the patient humility exhibited. The necessity of painting a picture of martyrdom which could not be
confused with one of political execution resulted in a rigidly formalized image in which individual traits were subsumed to "the conventional, unvarying, ideal characteristics of a certain class of person". 

It is unfortunate that too few details have survived concerning the miracles attributed to these saints, canonized or putative, for any significant changes to be noted. The exception to this is to be found in Margery Kempe's *Book*, in which she recorded her miracles, including among them her visions, tears and pains. The visions show strong Bridgettine influence, while the miracles, except for the element of doubt about their miraculous quality, are all familiar.

Members of all three groups were seen by some contemporaries as part of the community of saints, of the hagiographical tradition, but of a tradition unconsciously and partially adjusted to the changed patterns of fourteenth-century society. This is seen in its simplest form in Margery Kempe's account, where she recreated in her own life some of the more remarkable deeds of saints, ancient and contemporary; in its crudest and least flexible form in the contrived parallelism of the passions of the political saints; in its least forced, although very clearly changed, form in the lives of the great prelates; and in its most altered form, certainly in narrowness of emphasis, in the emotional fervour of Rolle and Margery Kempe.

Both the virtue of morals and the virtue of signs were attributed to those considered, but the importance attached to each of the two requirements for sainthood varied considerably. So did the morals extolled.

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