

THE PLACE OF ST. THOMAS OF CANTERBURY IN HISTORY. A CENTENARY STUDY.¹

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IT is now just seven centuries since the feast of the translation of St. Thomas the Martyr was first celebrated in the church of Canterbury. For three centuries every return of the long and genial July summer saw the perennial stream of pilgrims swell to the dimensions of a mighty river. For those same three centuries every recurrent fifty years witnessed the abnormal crowds of the faithful that attended the celebrations of the jubilee of that transference of the sacred relics, to witness which, the great Stephen Langton had summoned the whole world to Canterbury, on 7 July, 1220.

Nearly four centuries after the Reformation, Canterbury once more commemorated Thomas' jubilee on the occasion of the seventh centenary of his translation on 7 July, 1920. It could hardly be celebrated better than by interrogating historical science as to Thomas' place in history. Let us make this enquiry in the spirit of a science which should be neither sceptical nor credulous, neither clerical nor anticlerical, neither Anglican nor Roman, neither Catholic nor anti-Catholic, but should aim simply at the sympathetic yet critical study of facts as they happened. For this the first requisite is to get at the facts themselves and to try and appreciate them in due proportion. In our search for the truth we must distinguish between the mass of irrelevant detail and the principles which the flood of detail almost overwhelms. We must distinguish also between what St. Thomas stood for in his lifetime and what men believed him to have stood for

¹ This paper is based on a lecture delivered in the chapter house of Canterbury Cathedral on 7 July, 1920, on the occasion of the seventh centenary of the translation of St. Thomas. It was repeated on 8 December, 1920, at the John Rylands Library, and on 25 January, 1921, before the Durham branch of the Historical Association.

in the generations that succeeded his death. To do this we must understand and sympathise with the mediæval mind and the mediæval point of view, in some ways so different, in others perhaps not so widely separated from our own. And of one thing at least we may feel assured, that both St. Thomas and his enemies shared in this mediæval point of view. It was no fight, as some have imagined, between modern anti-clericalism and aggressive priestcraft. Still less was there any element of a national movement, whether ecclesiastical or civil. It was only to a certain extent a contest between the state ecclesiastical and the state political. There were ~~as many good churchmen against Thomas as there were for him~~ in the six years strife that preceded his catastrophe. But if Thomas' detractors persecuted him in his life, they joined with his disciples in venerating his memory after his martyrdom. The rights and wrongs of the living Thomas fiercely divided his contemporaries, but friends and foes agreed in worshipping the saint and martyr. Bitter lifelong antagonists went on pilgrimage to his shrine, joining with his faithful disciples in testifying to his high character and to the wonders which his sacred relics wrought. It was this remarkable consensus of opinion that gave St. Thomas of Canterbury his undoubted position as the most famous of English mediæval saints.

The study of the lives of the saints takes us over difficult and thorny ground. But the problem as to what the main facts were, so insoluble in the case of those early saints as to whom we have little or no authentic or contemporary testimony, does not concern the historians of St. Thomas. More is known about St. Thomas' life than about that of almost any one of his contemporaries. He had as many and as good contemporary biographers as St. Bernard or as Henry II himself. Had we to attempt the detailed study of his acts, we should be appalled by the mass of evidence through which we have to wade. We might also be well discouraged by the inadequacy of the exposition and interpretation of the facts shown by most of the writers who have in later times attempted to deal with the question. There is no such problem here as there is in dealing with those ancient saints whose historical existence is chiefly vouched for by the names of the churches which they have founded, and whose records are to be found in biographies, written in later ages either from the motive of edification, or with the less praiseworthy though very human object of writing up a famous

church and proclaiming the wonders wrought by the local saint to a public bent on pilgrimages. It would be too much to say that either the motive of edification or the motive of advertisement are absent from the lives of St. Thomas. But with all allowance made for this, these writers knew their man. They were contemporaries, and eye-witnesses ; they knew the facts and had little motive for distorting them. The most sceptical cannot deny the main features of the record ; they can only question the wisdom or the impartiality of the interpretation. Fortunately for us neither the biography nor the character of St. Thomas is our direct concern. Our business is with opinion rather than with events, with generalities rather than with details. Let us in this spirit ask ourselves what St. Thomas stood for, why did his contemporaries uphold him or denounce him in his lifetime : and why after his death did all alike join together in cherishing his memory ?

In discussing St. Thomas' place in history, we shall have mainly to examine his place in the history of the church. But because the ecclesiastical aspects of his career are so obvious, it will be well if, before we approach these, we concern ourselves for a moment with St. Thomas' place in civil history. For the career of Thomas as a champion of the liberties of the church was a brief one. His early career is only accidentally that of a churchman. The young and promising Londoner, who began his life's work at the court of Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury, sought fame and advancement, rather than the functions of a Christian minister. He was a clerk because in the twelfth century all educated men, all who sought to win their way by their brains, were necessarily clerks. Though he worked in an archbishop's household, and therefore incidentally served the church of Canterbury, yet he was no more a clerk than if he had attached himself to the service of the crown or of a great secular lord. His functions were administrative, diplomatic, secretarial, anything but those of the servant of the altar. If he had his reward in livings, prebends, provostships, it would have been the same had he joined the household of a lay magnate.

For the greater part of his service in the archbishop's household Thomas was, though a clerk, yet not in holy orders. It was only after some twelve years of such service that he was ordained deacon on his appointment as archdeacon of Canterbury. And in these days the archdeacon was a personal servant of his bishop, the *oculus episcopi*, a member of his household or *familia*, the judge of the

ecclesiastical court of first instance, the administrator. Such an officer was, as his name suggests, normally in deacon's orders, and not, as now, a priest of senior standing. And a small diocese, like that of Canterbury, still kept up the primitive fashion of one archdeacon whose sphere was the whole diocese. Nor did Thomas as archdeacon remain attached to the archbishop's household for a long period; almost immediately afterwards he was, with Theobald's goodwill, transferred from his household to that of the king, though retaining his office as archdeacon.¹ As royal chancellor between 1155 and 1162, he was as much the household servant of a great lord, as when between 1143 and 1155 he had been the *familiaris* of Theobald as clerk and archdeacon. From the household clerk as from the household knight, mediæval morality required above all things unlimited and unquestioned devotion to the will of his lord. Just as the *comes* of the primitive *princeps* fought not for victory but for his master, so did the *familiaris* of the mediæval magnate regard the absolute and unquestioning subordination of himself, soul and body, to his lord's interests, as the primary duty of his station. It was all of a piece when Thomas, as the archbishop's *familiaris*, sought to uphold the interests of the church of Canterbury as when, as the king's chancellor, he strove with all his might to promote the interests of the Angevin monarchy. The secular absorption, the "unclerical" acts, such as appearing in armour in the war of Toulouse, the hot zeal with which Thomas extracted from the clergy the uttermost farthing of their means to promote the king's campaigns in Southern France, were all the natural results of his loyal and unbounded devotion to his lord for the time being. Save a few precisians, contemporaries saw little unseemly in them in a clerk in deacon's orders. If the pomp of the chancellor was criticised as excessive, it was assumed to originate in his desire to impress upon the world the greatness of his master the king. It was a suggestion of highmindedness, a premonition of future sanctity, that this brilliantly garbed and lavishly attended servant of the crown lived a life of blameless chastity and self-restraint. In all this devotion to his personal lord Thomas the clerk was but obeying the same standard of duty as that which inspired his junior contemporary, William the Marshal, to con-

¹ It was not until 1163 that Thomas, at the king's request, transferred the archdeaconry to his clerk, Geoffrey Ridel, who soon became his uncompromising foe.

secrete a long and unblemished career to the service of Henry II and his sons. The questionable acts that resulted from such devotion were taken as a matter of course. If Thomas fleeced the church to pay for the war of Toulouse, William Marshal's personal devotion to his lord compelled him to remain faithful to King John against Stephen Langton and the barons who upheld the Great Charter. We shall see that the same principle of devoted service to his lord made Thomas as archbishop the protagonist of ecclesiastical freedom and led him straight on to his martyrdom.

Thomas' position for the first twenty years of his public career was then that of the exemplary household clerk, obliged as his first duty to devote himself to the service of the immediate lord whose bread he ate. In this he was a pattern to his age of the faithful *familiaris*. But Thomas' two masters were men of exceptional character, ability, and resourcefulness. Membership of their households involved no common obligations or privileges. In the twelfth century, as in earlier ages, no line was drawn between the private and the public activities of either a lay or an ecclesiastical magnate. Both the prince and the prelate had to govern his huge train of followers, feed them, clothe them, and house them, and to administer the estates which provided the resources for the expenditure involved. Moderns would regard this as a matter of private estate management. But the early middle ages confused with this domestic economy the management of the public charges which fell upon the dignity of state or church. Accordingly, the pope ruled the church universal, the archbishop ruled his province, the emperor governed the vaguely defined Roman empire, the king ruled his kingdom, the baron his barony by the same persons and by the same machinery as those through which he ruled his own domestic establishment. Moreover, by this time law and sound rule were emerging from feudal chaos. Nowhere was this more the case than in England where the feudal anarchy of Stephen's reign involved two contradictory reactions. In the absence of effective state control, the church, headed by Theobald, perforce undertook many of the functions of the state. After Stephen's death the state, now controlled by Henry II, set itself to work to restore the strong rule of William the Conqueror and his sons. Both archbishop and king worked to this end through their organised household.

Thomas' early experience as Theobald's clerk and his later

experience as Henry II's chancellor gave him a full experience of both sides of this process. The household of Theobald was the centre of politics, of government, of learning, and of piety. Part of Thomas' legal lore came from his studies at Bologna, but part may have come from attending the lectures given by the famous Lombard jurist, Vacarius, not at Oxford, as was once thought, but in the court of the archbishop of Canterbury. His political and ecclesiastical ideas certainly came from a brother clerk of Theobald's household, John of Salisbury. His first diplomatic mission was when, as Theobald's agent, he persuaded the pope not to perpetuate anarchy by allowing Stephen's son to be crowned king. This service to the house of Anjou made natural Thomas' appointment as chancellor. In the seven years (1155-1162) in which he held that office, the Angevin chancery became the most perfect piece of administrative machinery that Europe had yet known. The mediæval chancery was, we must always remember, not a law court, like our modern chancery. It was an administrative office, the branch of the royal household devoted to drafting and sealing documents, issuing orders in the king's name, and not seldom suggesting the policy which those orders involved. It itinerated with the court of an ever wandering king. Its sphere was not England—to call Thomas Chancellor of England is an elementary error. Its sphere was as wide as the mighty Angevin empire that ranged from Scotland to the Pyrenees, and included a third of modern France. The chancellor was the king's chancellor, not the chancellor of the kingdom. Like his master, he spent more time in Normandy and Anjou than in England, and, wherever he was, he and his clerks issued their writs which the king's lay officers made it their business to enforce. He was as much the chancellor at Rouen, at Poitiers or at Bordeaux, as at London or York.

The immediate function of the king's chancery was formal—the issuing and classification of writs. Those writs, or letters, were famous for their precision of form, their businesslike brevity, their effectiveness in expressing their meaning. So anxious was the chancery to spare words and parchment that instead of "Henricus" the initial "H" was used to represent the king's name, and the traditional formula "King by the grace of God" was cut out by omitting the reference to divine favour. The great French scholar, Léopold Delisle, has shown that the excision of *Dei gratia* was characteristic of

Henry II's writs from his accession to 1173.¹ It still remains for the historian of St. Thomas to point the moral that this omission was accomplished and continued when the future martyr of ecclesiastical liberty was the king's chancellor, his most powerful, beloved, and influential minister. It is true that there was no profanity ; no suggestion of anti-clericalism or secularism was possible at such a time. It was just to save trouble with unnecessary forms.

The king ruled his whole dominions through his one household. The chancellor was his secretary ; not yet in name but already in fact, he was his secretary of state for all departments. We might even call him the king's private secretary, only we have already learnt that the contrast of private and public was meaningless to the men of that age. But a good secretary always has power to suggest policy. Though Henry II was eminently capable of ruling for himself, and possessed, I feel sure, more originality, breadth, and insight than his chancellor ever had, it is inconceivable that so active and so useful a servant did not do something towards determining the current of the royal wishes. He perhaps did this the more effectively since his attitude was just that of the good private secretary of a modern statesman. His mission was to do his master's bidding, to efface himself, and get his master the credit for his acts. This work he did so well that Henry became on the most intimate and cordial terms with his minister. Thomas then was the first of our great chancellors. He raised an important but unassuming court office into something approaching an independent political status. It is clear that even the king's justiciar, the only great official of those days, was becoming comparatively effaced. The best proof of this is that, when, a year after Theobald's death, Henry imposed Thomas on the Christ Church monks as their new archbishop, he had every intention of combining the see of Canterbury with the office of chancellor. In earlier days the chancellor, like Thomas, seldom held higher church preferment than an archdeaconry. When he became a bishop, he left the chancery and the court and devoted himself to ecclesiastical work. It was a rude shock to the masterful king when Thomas, on becoming archbishop, insisted on resigning the office of chancellor.

With this great renunciation we pass to the ecclesiastical side of

¹ See for this Delisle's *Introduction* to his monumental *Recueil des actes de Henri II concernant la France*.

¹Thomas' career. But it is worth while in insisting on what may seem disproportionate length on the administrative aspect of Thomas' work. It gives him another niche of his own in history, as one of the first household clerks of a great archbishop, and a greater king. In this capacity he stood out from among a class just struggling into importance by reason of his superior efficiency, competence, and absorption in the faithful execution of his lord's work. But Thomas, on becoming chancellor, was more than this. He did for the chancery what Roger of Salisbury, in the days of the king's grandfather, Henry I, did for the exchequer. He prepared it for the position it later gained as the great administrative office of the state, just as Roger prepared the way for the Angevin exchequer becoming the financial office of the state. Only the exchequer was more advanced: it was going out of court: it was becoming English, localised, sedentary at Westminster, even in a sense national. All this was in time to be the case with the chancery also. But Thomas here was only a forerunner. The events after his resignation cured Henry of any wish to make the chancery what the exchequer had already become, a virtual office of state, independent of the household, with its own rules and traditions strong enough to temper even the personal will of the king. It is because the position of Thomas the chancellor has been so little recognised by historians, indifferent to the history of administration, that a student of administration feels in private duty bound to stress, perhaps to overstress, this aspect of his work. Yet he who neglects administrative history can hardly understand aright the process by which the two great machines of church and state, often at variance, but even more often in fairly friendly co-operation, restored law and order to Europe, overthrew feudal anarchy, and made peace, civilisation, arts, and science once more possible.

We next come to the second great stage in Thomas' career, a stage that lasts from 1162 to his death in 1170. The abruptness of the transition is emphasised by the fact that he was only ordained priest on the eve of his consecration as bishop, and that he said his first mass as effective primate of all England in his metropolitan cathedral. During these eight years he belongs to an even wider, and much more generally recognised type, a type with which the middle ages were only too familiar, the type of the political ecclesiastic. By this we mean that church interests were uppermost in his mind, that he conceived it

his chief duty to fight for the church, and make himself its champion. But his conception of the church remains a quasi-political conception. He regarded the church as a great organised society, a sort of state over against the state, a super-state if you will, with a higher mission, a greater right to control men's minds, but nevertheless as a body whose essence was political rather than spiritual, a machine, an organisation, a something concrete and tangible, whose function indeed was to promote God's glory, sound doctrine, and the good life, but whose method was to watch the lower organisation, that state which, though of God, was relegated to a lower and limited plane, which in effect was only too often to be envisaged as the work of sinful man, it may even be as the creation of the devil. It was the business of this organic and militant church to save the world from the overgrown might of the state, which, under strong and ambitious kings, was ever encroaching on the sphere of the church so that the zealous churchman was forced to stand, as it were, upon the defensive, to safeguard its privileges, to uphold its liberties, believing that in so doing he was best promoting the welfare of humanity, the glory of his Maker, and the prevalence of the things of the mind and soul over the things of the body. There were hundreds of conspicuous prelates of this sort, so many that it is hard to decide who were the most zealous, who the most characteristic of this mighty band. If Thomas be regarded, as well he may, as the sublimation of this type, he remains a striking and extraordinary but still not a unique figure in history.

What then did Thomas stand for in the years between 1162, when he became archbishop, and the year 1170, when he became Thomas the martyr? From 1162 to 1164 he remained in England; but even in those early years of his new dignity he was involved in all sorts of different disputes with the king. On becoming archbishop, Thomas, faithful to his long tradition of whole-hearted allegiance to his lord, threw himself with all his might into the new service to which he had now been called. Henceforth he was the servant neither of archbishop nor of the king but of Holy Church, and he devoted himself with heart and soul to safeguarding the interests of his new mistress. Henry II was bitterly disappointed. He regarded Thomas as bound to himself by personal as well as by official ties. Resenting his new attitude, the king took no pains to avoid the conflict which was soon imminent between him and the primate. The occasions of dispute

multiplied. Their immediate grounds are too trivial to detain us here, but they were all based on the incompatibility of interests and the similarity of temperament of the two protagonists. Soon they were all merged in the great dispute as to whether or not Thomas would accept what Henry's lawyers professed to be the "ancient customs" regarding the relations of church and state which were embodied in the Constitutions of Clarendon. To these constitutions Thomas for a moment gave a grudging and reluctant assent. But he repented almost immediately of this unworthy concession to the secular arm, and from the moment of his repentance there was no chance of a reconciliation between the rival authorities. Soon Thomas sought in exile freedom to uphold the liberties of the church. But the dispute was no mere English dispute. Henry was as much at home in France as in his island kingdom, and Thomas was more at home in his monastic retreats at Pontigny and Sens than he could have been in any spot that yielded civil obedience to Henry. The conflict was the world conflict of church and state that distracted western Christendom for centuries. It was in vain that pope Alexander III and Henry himself strove to isolate and localise the dispute. Alexander threw floods of cold water over the over-eager exile; but the pope's attitude, like the solid support given by the English bishops to the king, only convinced Thomas the more that he was waging, alone and unaided, the good fight for freedom. It was equally to no purpose that both sides used every effort to involve others in the controversy and fight out their fight alike by fair means or foul. By stopping all supplies from the resources of the church of Canterbury, Henry strove to starve out his enemies. By driving Thomas' kinsfolk into exile, he sought to make the dispute as bitter and as cruel as he knew how. By coercing the Cistercian order, afraid to quarrel with the mighty Angevin, Henry deprived Thomas of his quiet refuge at Pontigny. It was only through the support of the English king's political enemies, notably Louis VII of France, that Thomas could obtain a home to live in and the means for a precarious subsistence.

As time went on Thomas' prospects grew brighter, notably when Alexander was able to return to Italy, though not to Rome, from his long exile in France, and therefore felt himself in a stronger position to back up Thomas in his efforts. But new disputes complicated the position, and especially the unwarrantable intrusion by Henry on the

rights of Canterbury when he encouraged Roger, Archbishop of York Thomas' most malignant enemy among the English episcopate, to crown his son, the younger Henry, as joint King of England, on Whitsunday, 1170, in Westminster Abbey, despite the protests of the exiled archbishop and the stern prohibition of the pope. But by this time both protagonists had grown weary of the struggle, and there followed the strangest turn of all in the long controversy. This was the sudden and altogether unsatisfactory reconciliation in which no word was said either about the disputed customs or about the new offence of Roger's aggression in the southern province. So imperfect was the patching up of the feud that there was no real attempt at a renewal of personal friendship. Nevertheless, Thomas was suffered to return to Canterbury, only to find that his sequestered estates were still administered by brutal knights in the king's service and that he was denied access to the young king Henry, who was nominally governing England during his father's absence in Normandy. Driven back to Canterbury, Thomas at once took up the challenge thrown down by archbishop Roger, and fulminated excommunication against all who had taken part in the irregular coronation of the young king.

Thomas' action, however injudicious, was only what any intelligent person who knew his character must have anticipated from him. Nevertheless, when the news of it passed over the seas to Henry, the king burst into a characteristic fit of temper in the course of which he uttered the rash words that encouraged four over-zealous knights, attached to his household service, to hurry over the channel, make their way to Canterbury, and murder the archbishop in his cathedral. With the tragedy of that dark winter day, 29 December, 1170, Thomas ceased to be the hot-headed and quarrelsome ecclesiastic, fighting for the privileges of his church. He became the saint and martyr. With his death he became an infinitely more powerful enemy to his king than ever he had been in his life. After it begins that posthumous history of Thomas of Canterbury which alone has given the martyr his unique place in history.

Before we begin to consider the last and most important stage of Thomas' influence, we must pause to ask ourselves what he was fighting for during these eight years of conflict. To do this properly we must try and enter sympathetically into the archbishop's point of view. To do this is not easy, since all the voluminous correspondence and

literature, arising from the controversy, though full of strong language and vituperation, is singularly unhelpful in material to enable us to narrow down the points of dispute into a definite shape. Thomas himself does little to put his views clearly. He was neither a scholar nor a thinker. He acted on impulse and on instinct rather than on reason, and he seldom presented a reasoned case either to himself or to others. He was above all things an administrator, a man of action, a man of practical affairs. He had little imagination or sympathy, little originality, and not much sense of humour. His culture was limited, and so far as it went was legal. He may have attended the lectures of Vacarius on Roman law in Theobald's court. He certainly frequented the schools of Bologna for a short season, when released by Theobald from the service of the court of Canterbury, in order that he might fit himself for his work as archdeacon by studying canon law at a time when the famous Gratian still taught at Bologna. He was no theologian. Though after his consecration he wore the black robe of an Austin canon and macerated his body by severe asceticism, his piety was that of the ordinary monk whose ideal was personal salvation for himself rather than ministerial service to the community.

The very simplicity of Thomas' point of view prevented any occasion from breaking from his old principles. His mainspring of duty was still loyalty to his immediate lord. This in no wise stood in the way of his abandoning his ancient habits and former relations to others. His early friendship from the days of his membership of Theobald's household he still kept up, just as he did his ancient enmities, notably his feud with Roger of Pont L'Evêque, who, like him, had been one of Theobald's clerks and had preceded him as archdeacon of Canterbury, releasing that post for him only on his nomination to the see of York.

Another old colleague in the court of Canterbury is of especial interest for us. Conspicuous among the band of scholars who frequented the household of Theobald was John of Salisbury, the greatest English man of letters of the time, with whom Thomas established life-long relations of intimacy. There was a great contrast of temperament between the two friends. John of Salisbury was a man of letters, the chief classical scholar of his age, the greatest product of the humanistic school of Chartres, moderate, balancing, tactful, and diplomatic, a sort

of Erasmus of the twelfth century, but quite free from the humorous scepticism and the restless spirit of investigation that marked the great Renaissance scholar until the rash violence of a Luther drove him into the conservatism of his old age. John of Salisbury was not only a man of letters and a scholar. Though hardly an original thinker, he was deeply interested in speculation, and beguilèd a prolonged leisure of half disgrace in writing a huge treatise on political philosophy called the *Policraticus*, in which he laid down the approved twelfth century doctrine of the relations of church and state. He was a strong churchman, too, and had entered the household of Theobald on the recommendation of the great St. Bernard of Clairvaux to whom scholarship and philosophy were anathema, except when wholly devoted to the service of the church. The leisure which enabled John to put together this mighty tome had been secured because his hierarchical principles had early brought him into conflict with Henry II, so that for a season the court of Canterbury was an unsafe place for him. The reason of the dispute seems to have been that John had denounced too freely those spoliations of the church by which Henry had financed the war of Toulouse, and for which Thomas, when the king's chancellor, had been, as we have seen, responsible. But the trouble was soon patched up ; John returned to the archbishop's household and was continued there after Thomas had succeeded Theobald. For the rest of his life the scholar and the new archbishop were the closest allies. It was to Thomas that John dedicated his *Policraticus*, and we can now read in print an edition of that work, edited with admirable scholarship from the very copy which John presented to his patron. This manuscript was preserved in the church of Canterbury until in Elizabeth's time Archbishop Parker probably saved it from destruction by including it in the great collection of manuscripts which he bequeathed to Corpus College at Cambridge, his own old college.¹ From this time onwards John of Salisbury made himself the brain of Archbishop Thomas. John the scholar stood to Thomas, the man of affairs, as John Locke stood to the first Earl of Shaftesbury or as Edmund Burke stood to the Rockingham Whigs, the source of their inspiration, the fountain of their ideas of general principle. From

¹ The best and most recent edition is that edited by Mr. C. C. I. Webb, *Policratici sive de nugis curialium et vestigiis philosophorum libri VIII.* (2 vols., Oxford, 1909).

him, if from any one, we can learn what Thomas' theory of church and state really was.

Like Thomas, John of Salisbury was not original. His *Politicus* is the accepted doctrine, illustrated with great learning. In it he lays down the time-honoured distinction between the constitutional king, the *rex politicus*, who reigns by law and the tyrant who overrides the law in the interest of his own individual caprice. For the law-abiding king, John has the utmost respect. His power comes from God, for all lawful authority is from on High. He who resists the prince resists God Himself. But the prince, though the servant of law and equity, is himself released from the trammels of law because he represents the public authority. Even when, like Attila, he is the scourge of God, his rod is to be endured, for whomsoever the Lord loveth, He chasteneth. But the sword of justice, thus wielded by the righteous prince, comes from the hand of the church. The church hands over the secular sword to the prince, reserving the sword of spiritual justice to the bishops. The prince is, therefore, in a sense the minister of the priesthood, because he exercises that part of its sacred office which it regards as unfitting to be discharged by priestly hands. Thus the secular office is lower than that of the priest because it involves the punishment of crime and, after a fashion, resembles the work of a butcher. Conscious of his limited sphere the Emperor Constantine, though he summoned the first General Council to Nicæa, did not take the first seat in it but the last, and regarded the decisions of its fathers as sacrosanct. A crowd of ancient examples, evoked from the scholar's learning, now darkens John's general principles. It is enough for us if we remember his primary doctrine of the *regnum* as the minister of the *sacerdotium*, of the prince as the executive officer of the church. For who are to know the law, to ascertain justice, and the divine will, if it be not the priests of the Lord?

It was from the point of view thus expressed by John of Salisbury that Thomas regarded the secular power. Henry II was so little trammelled by the divine law that he was a tyrant rather than a law-abiding prince. It was in vain that Henry pleaded that the customs formulated at Clarendon represented the traditions of his grandfather, Henry I, and of his great-grandfather, William the Conqueror. Much might be said for and against this contention. But to Thomas

the historical question of the truth of the king's allegations was a matter of no importance. If the customs were really customs, then so much the worse for the customs. It showed not only that Henry II was a tyrant, but that the imputation of tyranny could rightly be extended to William the Conqueror and his two sons. A good archbishop was bound to set his face against so wicked a tradition. In resisting the customs he was fighting for the liberties of holy church. And it was as the upholder of the freedom of the church that Thomas regarded himself. It was intolerable to him that a prince, whose function was to be the sword of the church, should tell the church what it could do and what it might not do. The church had ordained that ecclesiastical suits might upon occasion be brought before the papal curia. Could a prince of this world instruct God's people that they could not lay their causes before the vicar of Christ without his permission? Could a king check the flood of pious pilgrimage to the threshold of the apostles by forbidding the higher clergy from leaving the realm, save with the royal consent? Above all, could God's ordained ministers be dragged before secular tribunals, when the courts of the church were specially appointed to deal with them? And this plea for clerical immunity from the civil courts was the stronger since every special class had in those days its special exemptions from the ordinary law. When barons were tried by barons, townsmen by their fellow-townsmen, and even the misbelieving Jew brought before a court of his co-religionists, was the clerk alone to be submitted to the unsympathetic judgment of the royal courts?

Henry II himself so far felt the force of this plea that he did not so much as ask that clerks should be treated just like laymen and be exclusively judged in secular courts. To have made this request would have put the king hopelessly in the wrong with all serious contemporary opinion, and Henry was much too shrewd to have made so fatal a blunder. Accordingly he cloaked his statement of the "ancient custom" of the land in terms so ambiguous that they admit of very different interpretations. The result has been that it is still a question of probabilities and likelihood as to what was really required. One thing, however, is sufficiently clear and this definite point seems to me to be at the root of the matter. Henry insisted that clerks accused of any misdeed should on summons appear before the court of the king's justice, and thus recognise the royal supremacy.

His motive here seems to have been very much that which inspired the Reformation sovereigns to describe themselves as "over all persons and in all causes supreme". It was in effect a demand that clerks liable to judicial proceedings should recognise the king's authority over all his subjects.

In the same way it was insisted that, if the clerk, arraigned before the royal court, pleaded his clergy as a reason why the king's justice had no jurisdiction over him, it was left to the court to decide whether his plea was valid or not. If it were recognised, some officer of the court was to be sent to the ecclesiastical tribunal, and if the clerical offender confessed or was convicted, the protection of the church was to be withheld from him in the future. Save for this, the church could do what it liked with its own. But its punishment of the criminous cleric was to involve degradation from his orders so that he had no claim to clerical immunity for a second offence. The effect was that for a first offence the cleric was let off with the mild punishments which a sympathetic tribunal of men of his own profession was empowered to mete out to the erring cleric.

This is all that the plain text of the Assize of Clarendon requires of the clerical offender. But it is very possible that Henry may have indirectly asked for more than this. He may also have demanded that the criminous clerk, after conviction and degradation from his orders in the ecclesiastical court, should be brought back to the civil court and then be condemned to the barbarous punishments which the middle ages inflicted upon the peccant layman. That this was insisted upon by the king is the weighty judgment of the late F. W. Maitland, supported by texts and analogies from canon law.¹ Moreover, the view is supported by the statement of two chronicles, not very far removed in time and both written by men who had no ill will to Henry II.² It is also borne out by the argument used by Thomas himself against the king that God himself does not punish a man twice for the

¹ F. W. Maitland, *Collected Papers*, iii. 232-250, the most illuminating essay dealing with the problem of the criminous clerk.

² Diceto i. 313: "Rex decreverat . . . ut . . . curiae traderet puniendos. In contrarium sentiebant episcopi, quos enim exauctoraurent a manu judiciali contendebant protegere, alioquin bis judicatur in idipsum." Compare Hoveden, i. 219-20: "Rex volebat presbyteros, diaconos, subdiaconos et alias ecclesiarum rectores ducere ad secularia examina et punire sicut in laicos."

same offence.¹ The church courts could not deal out punishment affecting life or limb. But, besides degradation, they could inflict penance, imprisonment, fines, and other fairly adequate penalties. How far they did so for ordinary civil offences is another matter.

If Henry made this claim, he went too far. It is significant that, after Thomas' murder, we hear no more about it. It may well have been that under these circumstances the king had to draw in his horns. Anyhow the latter mediæval practice of benefit of clergy knew nothing of such reference back to the secular court for punishment, though in the appearance of the clerk before the king's court to plead his clergy, in the remittance of proved clerks to the ecclesiastical court, it secured exactly what Henry had certainly asked for in the constitutions of Clarendon. But in later times the action of the church court was from this point final. An offender relegated to the *forum ecclesiasticum* was normally left to expiate his misdeeds by such punishment as bishop or arch-deacon inflicted in accordance with the canon law. It was mainly in cases of heresy that the church courts invoked the secular arm to carry out the death sentence which the canons forbade them to impose.

It is important to grasp the line taken up by the high-flying ecclesiastic of the period. Otherwise we may fail to appreciate the point of view of men like Thomas or John of Salisbury. There is little danger of the modern reader being equally unsympathetic to the king's attitude. This is simply the claim of the state to control all its subjects. It was put on behalf of the king because the twelfth century could conceive no other form of state than monarchy, and for that reason when it claimed "divine right" for kings, it did not exalt monarchy at the expense of republicanism. It simply asserted the divine origin and sanction, the naturalness, as the Greeks put it, of the state. But monarchical authority, though the only conceivable form of polity in the twelfth century, was in practice exceedingly greedy and oppressive. The best of kings were pretty unscrupulous tyrants: the petty feudal prince was often very much worse than the more responsible lord of a great state. But the great monarchs of the twelfth century, with all their brutalities, were making an orderly state of society possible and so were promoting the course of civilisation. Moreover,

¹ "Non enim Deus judicat bis in idipsum;" Will. Cant. in *Materials*, i. 28. The same phrase, perhaps borrowed, is in Dicoeto, as above. William was the earlier writer.

they were so powerful that it needed a rare courage in a man with no armed force behind him to set himself up against the king's pleasure. The lay lord might rely upon his own armed following : but the prelate had little to fall back upon except moral force. And there is always something respectable in the resistance to physical force by moral force. Already by the twelfth century public opinion had its weight even against the strong man armed. From this aspect of the case St. Thomas deserves, at least, respect.

Thomas has been sometimes regarded as the champion of all sorts of causes with which he had nothing to do. It is easy, however, to say what he was not fighting for. No man now believes with Thierry that he was the champion of Englishmen against Normans, and we must now dismiss the notion that he was an early example of resistance to "unconstitutional" taxation, a doctrine which attracted Stubbs, though that prudent scholar never really committed himself to it. But nationality, like taxation by consent, representative assemblies, and all the paraphernalia of later constitutionalism, was not yet in existence. A twelfth century man must be judged by twelfth century standards. These standards were universal, cosmopolitan, international—however you like to put it. The strong international bent of the western church secured for all Roman christendom a common standard of ideals. And if there were no national state, still less could there be a national church. It would be futile to regard the little bickerings of Thomas with Alexander III as a protest of the head of the English church against a foreign ecclesiastic. To Thomas, as to all men of his time, the pope was the supreme head of the church whose *ex cathedra* utterances no good Christian might gainsay.

This, then, was the cause for which Thomas believed himself to be fighting. It was the battle of ecclesiastical liberty, the supremacy of things of the mind and soul over things of the world and the body. What the liberty of the church quite meant, he did not so much define as assume. This battle for ecclesiastical freedom he fought, strenuously indeed and with all his might. But he fought it violently, tactlessly, intemperately, unscrupulously even, playing for his own hand with almost as much recklessness as Henry II showed in the conflict against him. It was this impolitic rashness that tended to withdraw from Thomas much support on which he believed he could have counted. It was his trouble that he got so little sympathy even among

churchmen, that his fellow metropolitan, Roger of York, was his worst enemy, that most of the bishops were on the king's side, that even the pope and the austere Cistercians feared to incur the king's anger by upholding the self-appointed champion of the church's cause. Thomas felt his loneliness exceedingly, but he fiercely resented the cowardice, and time serving, which, as he imagined, stood at the back of the lukewarmness of his brethren. He was the more convinced that he was fighting the cause of God because he found so little sympathy among men.

Besides the obvious tendency which impelled worldly ecclesiastics to make themselves friends with the mammon of unrighteousness, there were other reasons why public opinion was so nicely divided. Some of the bishops opposed to Thomas,—Gilbert Foliot of London, for instance,—were in their way as high minded as the archbishop himself. But the chief factor in the situation was that there was no clear cut line of division between the policy of the king and that of the archbishop. Henry himself would probably, like most men of the twelfth century, have accepted in essentials Thomas' general doctrine of the relations of church and state. Neither Thomas nor his literary mentor showed any disposition to preach resistance to the divine right of the political state. It was not so much the clash of opposite principles as of opposite temperaments. It is not very likely that Henry had a very clear theory of the state, but if he had, I feel sure that it would have been hard to fit it in in practice with Thomas' theory of the church. It is for the philosopher or the divine to say which of their theories was true. But the historian must record that all through the middle ages the champions of the *regnum* and the *sacerdotium* went on stating their own side without much reference to their enemies' position. And nobody even seemed a penny the worse for these incompatibilities. The two doctrines were each asserted independently and out of relation to each other. Neither then nor later did church and state fight out a square issue of principle. The points in dispute were intricate, personal, historical, and practical details. William the Conqueror and Lanfranc doubtless differed in principle as much as Henry II and Thomas. But their personal friendliness and their practical good sense enabled each to keep his principles in his pocket and live on good terms with his rival. Thomas and Henry were so similar in their eagerness, their self will, their violence of

language, and their blind forgetfulness of the situation as a whole that they were bound to be at variance. Had they quarrelled on broad issues, they could hardly have even pretended to a reconciliation which left all those issues untouched. However these things may be, it is unlikely that in his lifetime Thomas could have won his posthumous reputation as the protagonist of ecclesiastical liberty.

The liberty of holy church is a fine phrase but a vague one, too vague to stir men to join issues unless it be more closely defined. Not even the most obstinate of mediæval kings would have denied the principle of ecclesiastical freedom, however much he over-ruled it in practice. Every monarch, from Henry I to Edward I, who issued a charter of liberties wrote down as the first article "*Ecclesia Anglicana libera sit*". But did this broad platitude take anybody any farther? All depended on its definition, and the only definition that the most detailed of the charters gave to it was that illusory freedom of election to bishoprics and abbeys, always conceded in theory, always denied in practice. There was nothing in such an issue to stir men's blood. A martyr must lay down his life for something more concrete than this vague abstraction. But we have no reason for not believing that to Thomas the freedom of the church meant something very real and living. But he went into exile, not to uphold this abstraction, but because the king and he were incompatible in temper and disagreed upon very concrete questions of detail.

The same vagueness of position that marked Thomas' controversial attitude from 1164 to 1170 did not extend to the definite point of issue which he took up when he got back to Canterbury in December, 1170. This was the defence of the rights of the see of Canterbury against the encroachments of Archbishop Roger of York. It was for this limited cause that Thomas, as a matter of fact, died, and it is a commonplace with his modern critics to say that it was hardly a cause worth dying for. It is true that the trivial disputes of the two archbishops as to the right of each to bear his cross erect in the province of his rival are among the most ridiculous of the long quarrels about very little that are so characteristic of the litigious middle ages. But there was something more than personal rivalry involved. The rights of the church of Canterbury seemed to Thomas and to many more thoughtful men a thing worth fighting for. It was not only the personal ill will between two old enemies that so far embittered the strife of

the northern and southern metropolitans. Remember how much Canterbury had lost within living memory! How Lanfranc had been forced to recognise the Archbishop of York, a mere titular metropolitan before this period, as an equal, though less dignified, sharer in the ecclesiastical government of England. How Roger, with the king's connivance, had striven to filch away from Thomas the position of papal legate, an effort the more alarming since Henry of Winchester, another aspirant to the pallium of a metropolitan, had usurped the apostolic legation in Theobald's early days. Moreover, Gilbert Foliot was contemplating a new, or reviving an old, archbishopric of London, and Gerald of Wales was before long to put down a similar claim for St. David's. A recent pope had taken away from Canterbury its vague jurisdiction over the Danish bishops of the Irish coast towns by providing Ireland with four up-to-date metropolitans of its own. All these things might well make Thomas alarmed for the rights of the church of Canterbury. Here at least he had the pope strongly on his side, for the attack on Canterbury was also an attack on the curia. We could forgive Thomas the more easily but for the personal rancour which he threw into his assault. But Roger was cruelly revenged when the swords of the four knights made Thomas the archbishop Thomas the martyr.

We must now go on to what I have called the posthumous history of St. Thomas. This is out and away more important than his personal life. This is what gave Thomas his real place in history. So long as he lived, he was one angry man quarrelling with others. His opponents seemed to many wise men to have just as good a cause as the hot-headed Archbishop of Canterbury. The moment of his cruel death there was but one opinion about him. The king, whom he had withstood to his face, repudiated all complicity in his murder. He atoned for the rash words that had incited his knights to perpetrate the deed by a signal penance and severe chastisement in the crypt beneath the Trinity Chapel where the martyr's bones then lay. The murderers sought by penitence, crusadings, and pilgrimage, to wipe out the stain of the martyr's blood. The monks of Christ Church dedicated to the king the great collection of Thomas' miracles by their brother monk William,¹ feeling confident that it would be a pleasing offering to the royal majesty.

¹ *Materials for the History of Thos. Becket*, i., 137 et seq.

The very ministers of the baffled tyrant were foremost among the champions of the martyr. Richard of Lucy, the justiciar, who had been involved in Thomas' broadcast sentences of anathema, renounced the world and retired to a house of Austin canons, founded by him in honour of St. Mary and Thomas of Canterbury, saint and martyr, and there at Lesnes he died in that black habit which Thomas had worn during all his later years. Lukewarm friends become eager partisans. The half-hearted pope made the man he had snubbed in life a canonised saint within three years of his death. The timid bishops of the province, who had checked him at every stage, were now the most loyal of the worshippers of the new saint. Gilbert Foliot of London, one of the most inveterate of Thomas' episcopal enemies, recovered from a grievous sickness by vowing that if he recovered he would visit the tomb of the martyred Thomas.¹ The few faithful friends rejoiced in his fame, and glorified his sufferings. John of Salisbury, called within a few years to become ruler of the church of Chartres, styled himself "bishop by the grace of God and the favour of St. Thomas the Martyr". There were no two opinions now about Thomas' merits and sanctity. He was now in very truth the martyr who had laid down his life for the freedom of Holy Church. All England worshipped his memory, believed in the countless cures worked by his relics, and went forth on pilgrimage to his shrine. The live Thomas had ploughed his lonely furrow amidst the indifference or hostility of the mass of Englishmen. The dead Thomas was acclaimed on all sides as a saint and a martyr. Yet the substantial continuance of the "customs" against which Thomas had protested showed that even the saint and martyr was not omnipotent. The only important article of the Constitutions of Clarendon which altogether missed fire was the one forbidding appeals to Rome without the sanction of the crown. But here, at least, the king was the innovator, and so trenchant an attack on the liberty of the church universal failed because every good Christian believed with all his heart that the supreme and unlimited ecclesiastical power was inherent in the pope, the vicar of Christ on earth, the "universal ordinary". Accordingly while Henry evaded in making his submission to the pope any formal renunciation of the Constitutions of Clarendon, he was constrained to agree that appeals to the pope should be allowed.

¹ *Miracula S. Thomae* in *Materials*, i. 251-252.

The results of the swift revolution of feeling following on the martyrdom of St. Thomas were conspicuous for the rest of the middle ages. At last England had produced a saint of world-wide reputation, whose tomb rivalled the shrine of the three kings and the eleven thousand virgins of Cologne, or the burial place of St. James the Apostle at Compostella in Spain. The most holy of pilgrim resorts, the threshold of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome, nay, the sepulchre of the Lord in Jerusalem itself, could hardly boast of a greater affluence of the faithful than that which sought help from, or returned thanks to St. Thomas of Canterbury. Not only did the pilgrims throng, as Chaucer tells us, from "every shire's end of England". The steady rush of pilgrims from beyond sea compensated in some fashion for the outflow of British pilgrims to foreign sanctuaries. They came high and low, gentle and simple. The pilgrim records of three centuries include kings of France, such as Louis VII and John, who visited the shrine on his release from captivity in 1360. Kings and princes deemed it a privilege to lay their bones hard by the sacred dust of the archbishop. Edward the Black Prince ordered his burial at Canterbury in a space adjacent to the tomb of Thomas the "true martyr" Henry IV, the clerically minded king, chose the same place of sepulture. Neither of these princes thought that they were in anywise abdicating their sovereign claims in this association with St. Thomas. He was the saint of all good Englishmen. And not of Englishmen only. Western emperors, like Sigismund of Luxemburg and Charles V, eastern emperors, like Manuel, could not complete a visit to England without the Canterbury pilgrimage. There is no need to labour these points. The literature, the social life, the language, the very oaths of Englishmen reflect the power of the dead Thomas over the mind of the everyday man. The extraordinary splendour of St. Thomas' shrine, glittering with gold and silver, with jewels and precious stones, bore testimony enough to the mightiness of the saint whose bones were thus so honourably interred. All over Christendom relics of St. Thomas were in the highest request.

Three illustrations may be briefly given of the posthumous influence of St. Thomas upon the western church. Two shall be general, and one local to his own church of Canterbury. The general illustrations are founded on the extent of territory over which his miraculous powers were reputed to be exercised, and the wide diffusion of the dedication

of churches and monasteries in honour of his memory. The local illustration shall be the extent to which the imitation of St. Thomas was an abiding principle to his successors in the church of Canterbury.

The long catalogues of miracles wrought by the intercession of St. Thomas are for the most part rather monotonous and unprofitable reading. But they have their value, and that a many-sided one. For us their interest must be limited to the proof they afford of the widespread cult of the saint. The first marvels happened, naturally enough, at Kent, and notably at Canterbury. But if we turn over the two lists of miracles, drawn up within a few years of Thomas' martyrdom by Benedict and William, both monks of Canterbury, we shall see how little the saint's wonders were limited to his own locality. We read of cures wrought on a clerk of Orleans and how a blasphemous clerk of Nantes was condignly punished. The burgesses of Bedford send to the church of Canterbury a well-attested list of miracles wrought by St. Thomas in their midst. A knight of Pontefract has his son restored to life; a moribund canon of Beverley was restored to health; a Warwickshire nun was cured of epilepsy. There were cures in Wales and in Ireland, in Normandy and in Poitou, in Hainault and in Artois, in Flanders and in Périgord, at Piacenza and at Genoa, in Slesvig and in Sweden, in Germany and in Russia, in the Holy Land and on the Mediterranean. Not only men and women, but brute beasts profited by his potent intercession. St. Thomas restored to life a gander near Canterbury, and a sucking pig, drowned in Norfolk, was brought to life on being devoted to St. Thomas. Nay, well-established saints showed a rare delicacy of feeling in declining to perform their accustomed miracles and in advising the afflicted to give a chance to the new saint. Thus patients to whom our Lady of Rocamadour in Quercy and the great Saint Denis of France would afford no relief, obtained the hoped-for cure by St. Thomas' mighty intercession.

For all these benefits a pilgrimage to Canterbury was not a necessary preliminary. Many pilgrimages were in recognition of favours already received. A general means of cure was the "water of St. Thomas," a fluid which contained some of the martyr's blood. It was taken away from Canterbury by pilgrims in small leaden bottles, the bearing of which became the characteristic mark of the pilgrim of St. Thomas.

Dedications to St. Thomas soon became very frequent. One of

the first was Richard of Lucy's abbey of Lesnes in Erith, which has been mentioned already. Other religious houses dedicated to St. Thomas include Beauchief near Sheffield, Woodspring near Weston in Somerset, Bec in Norfolk, on the pilgrim's road to our Lady of Walsingham, and the Eastbridge hospital in Canterbury, sometimes said to be founded by Thomas himself. All these were convents of some sort of regular canons, mainly of Austin canons, whose black habit St. Thomas himself wore, though never formally a member of any order. They were largely devoted to eleemosynary and hospital work, a circumstance which enabled the most famous hospital, dedicated to St. Thomas, to survive the Reformation and continue its beneficent work to our own day. This is the great London hospital at St. Thomas, "refounded" by Henry VIII after his unique fashion of getting glory from other people's money, but luckily still preserving its original dedication, though few Londoners know that it is dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury and not to St. Thomas the Apostle. The same is the case with a great multitude of parish churches, now simply called after St. Thomas, and sometimes specifically called from St. Thomas the Apostle by reason of a change of dedication in the reign of Henry VIII. Indeed it may well be true of the great majority, for the doubting apostle was no favourite in mediæval England, and apart from post mediæval dedications we may claim the mass of early Thomas churches for the saint of Canterbury. Besides individual dedications a whole order was established under Thomas' invocation. This was the only English order of crusading knights; the order of St. Thomas of Acre, founded in the Holy Land when the saints' memory was still fresh. Its London house in Cheapside was established on the site of the home of the saint's parents, where Thomas first saw the light. It was conveyed to the order by St. Thomas' sister. But the community never greatly flourished. It lost its *raison d'être* when in 1291 Acre fell to the infidel. It dragged on only an obscure existence until the Reformation. To these dedications we must add altars, chapels, commemorative pictures and the like, rare now in England, thanks to Henry VIII, but still found abroad where Thomas' memory was almost as famous as at home. There is an early mosaic of St. Thomas in the cathedral of Monreale, near Palermo, set up by William, the good king of Sicily, who married a daughter of Henry II.

Canterbury naturally remained the focus of the cult of St. Thomas. Let us therefore revert again to our local illustrations. Its cathedral was in popular belief "the church of St. Thomas,"¹ though it seems certain that it was always officially styled Christ Church. Just as Thomas had braced himself up to martyrdom by the example of his predecessors Alphege and Anselm, so his successors at Canterbury found in his career an incentive to duty, notably to stand for the freedom of the church and especially for the church of Canterbury. This did not prevent archbishops quarrelling with the monks of Christ Church, where excessive privileges made them almost independent of their diocesan and nominal abbot. But the wealth that St. Thomas brought to Christ Church made the monks' position against the Archbishop even more impregnable than ever. This Archbishop Baldwin found to his cost when compelled to desist from his attempt to set up a rival secular college, which might become his cathedral, first at Hackington, then at Lambeth. There was little that smacked of truth in the allegation of his proctor at Rome that St. Thomas had initiated this undertaking.² St. Thomas, who quarrelled with all men, never quarrelled with the monks of Christ Church. And of how few mediæval archbishops could this be said?

The influence of St. Thomas on his successors came out first in the case of Stephen Langton, who when involved, like St. Thomas, in hostility to the king, consoled himself for his exclusion from England by seeking a refuge at Pontigny amidst the scenes hallowed by Thomas' abode in exile. Returned to England, Langton procured that famous translation of 7 July, 1220, whose seventh centenary has recently been celebrated. The vast concourse of the faithful, their lavish entertainment by the archbishop and his own sermon on that occasion afford the best of testimonies to the influence of Thomas' career on the mind of his distinguished successor. A very different archbishop to the great theologian and statesman was the pious and gentle Edmund of Abingdon, who, finding the business of ruling the English church in troublous times too much for his sensitive and scrupulous temper,

¹ Erasmus, in describing his famous "peregrinatio religionis ergo" to Canterbury, does not scruple to call Christchurch "templum divo Thomae sanctum" and "quod nunc appellatur sancti Thomae," *Colloquia*, p. 312 (Amsterdam, 1754).

² Gervase, ii. 401.

abandoning his charge in despair, ended his life at Pontigny, meditating on the example of his predecessor and emulating his ascetic practices. He had his reward in the honours of sanctity, being the only archbishop since Thomas admitted into the canon. Behind the high altar of the great church of Pontigny, in which Thomas and Stephen had prayed, the sanctified body of St. Edmund can still be seen enshrined, having escaped the iconoclasm alike of sixteenth century Calvinism and of modern Jacobinism.

The example of a fighting saint like Thomas appealed with even more force to archbishops of combative instincts than to a man of the type of St. Edmund of Abingdon. Archbishop John Peckham, the Franciscan friar, who was always on the verge of a great conflict with Edward I, but whose prudence, combined with that of the king, prevented at the eleventh hour more than the mere preliminaries of strife, declared that when he came to Canterbury he set before himself to follow in the footsteps of the glorious martyr Thomas and to defend with all his might the freedom of the Church, which was, he believed, in his days more trodden under foot by the world than had even been the case when Thomas laid down his life in that sacred cause.¹ Far less saintly archbishops than the high-minded and excellent Peckham followed the same policy. Peckham's successor, Robert Winchelsea, who fought for the freedom of the baronage as well as of the church, and succeeded in imposing real checks on the power of Edward I by wresting from him the most complete confirmation of the Great Charter, was inspired by the same exemplar of devotion. And worst of all, a self-seeking worldling like John Stratford, who had won high office in the church by the most questionable means and whose place in history is purely that of a statesman, when driven by Edward III from office, shut himself up in Christ Church, Canterbury, and preached against his enemy the king in a series of sermons in which he compared himself with St. Thomas. There is some declension here from the mediæval ideal.

Mediæval traditions were now rapidly losing their hold over men's minds. Thirty years later another archbishop, Simon of Sudbury, dared to tell a throng of Canterbury pilgrims who were making their way to the jubilee of 1370 that the plenary indulgence they

¹ Peckham's *Letters*, i. 22, "proponens gloriosi martyris Thomae sequi vestigia"; cf. i. 243, "martyrem non facit poena sed causa".

sought for was of little avail to those that did not approach the shrine with clean hands and a pure heart. Not only the piety but the vested interests of the Kentish inn-keepers and shop-keepers that profited by the pilgrimages, bitterly resented this saying. The cruel death of Archbishop Simon in 1381, at the hands of the Kentish mob that followed Wat Tyler to London, was looked upon as the vengeance of St. Thomas upon the impious archbishop that spoke lightly of the spiritual benefits of the Canterbury pilgrimage. Yet the poet Gower prosily compares the death of Simon and the death of Thomas :—

Disparilis causa manet et mors una duobus.

Immerito patitur justus uterque tamen.¹

Worse was now to come. The gentle satire that underlies Chaucer's immortal framework of the Canterbury pilgrimage shows how the journey to St. Thomas' shrine was now to most men a holiday junketing rather than a week of earnest piety. The famous pilgrimage of Erasmus and Colet, which Erasmus has so brilliantly described, showed both in the scoffing of the humanist sceptic, and in the hot indignation of the earnest theologian who accompanied him, that St. Thomas' reign over men's minds was coming to an end. The huckstering spirit that spoilt the jubilee of 1520 because the Christ Church monks and the Roman curia could not agree upon the sharing of the spoils shows a further stage of declension. The final act came when Henry VIII destroyed Thomas' shrine, erased his name from the service books, and bade all men cease to worship "Bishop Becket," because he was neither a saint nor a martyr, but a false knave and a traitor. Then to the scandal of all old believers, Henry's creature, Archbishop Cranmer, openly ate meat in his palace on the eve of the feast of the most famous of Canterbury saints. It remains for us to draw the balance between the blind enthusiasms of the twelfth century and the vulgar iconoclasm of the sixteenth.

Nowadays there is no need to dwell upon the strain of superstition, credulity, imposture, money-making, and mere holiday junketing that in all ages had their share in the cult of a popular mediæval saint like St. Thomas. There is as little occasion to overstress the fanaticism, one-sidedness, and mere greed for worldly wealth and power that inspired much of the imitation of St. Thomas, and were not altogether

¹ *Vox Clamantis* in *Works*, i. 52, ed. Macaulay.

absent in the career of Thomas himself. But these excesses lay outside the root of the matter, and it is beside the mark to treat these exuberances as if they were the essence of the whole thing. With all his faults Thomas was a great, an appealing, and a human figure, and if his posthumous worship soon smothered up the man, and replaced him by an abstract image of devotion to ecclesiastical liberty, both St. Thomas, as he really was, and St. Thomas, as he appeared to be to posterity, have their place in history, and that not an altogether unhonoured or discreditable one. Unshrinking courage and devotion to an ideal are none too common, whether in St. Thomas' days or since for it. It was no ungenerous instinct that led twelfth century Englishmen to the worship of St. Thomas, for the cause, as it seemed, of freedom against tyranny, right against might, the spiritual and moral law against the forces of the world. There was not only sympathy for his cause. There was genuine pity for his sufferings. Rude and cruel as mediæval man commonly was, he was capable of great outbursts of genuine emotion. And nothing moved him more profoundly than a tale of a piteous end, and of a great career cut short by profane violence. Many worse men than St. Thomas excited compassion by reason of the tragedy of their fall from greatness. There was a cry for the canonisation of such men as Thomas, Earl of Lancaster and his cousin and rival King Edward II, men whose lives were evil, selfish, and purposeless, and whose enmities were based on little save personal animosities of a low kind. There were pilgrimages to the chapel outside Pontefract when Earl Thomas' headless corpse lay buried, and the tomb of King Edward in Gloucester Abbey threatened to attract a confluence of votaries as lucrative to St. Peter's at Gloucester as the cult of St. Thomas was to the convent of Christ Church at Canterbury. The good sense and moderation of the papacy saved England from the scandal of the canonisation of such men. Alexander III had shown politic moderation in mitigating the tempestuous violence of Thomas in his lifetime. He was swept off his feet by the wave of feeling excited by the cruel deed of the four knights, and canonised Thomas with a haste only paralleled by the canonisation of St. Francis within two years of his death. Thomas was no beautiful character, no pervading spiritual influence, no faithful imitator of Christ, as was Francis. He was, however, a much more characteristic man of his times, and because he was, so to say, a glorification of a

common type, it was the easier for his claims to sanctity to satisfy the somewhat exacting yet rigid standards of the papal curia. It is almost as difficult to regard him merely as an ambitious priest grasping after power as it is for most moderns to believe in the miracles wrought at his shrine, well attested as many of them are.

Whatever be Thomas' claims to sanctity, there is no doubt as to the great part he played in history. The first of our great chancellors, the most famous, though not the greatest, of our archbishops of Canterbury, the most strenuous of vindicators of the freedom which the middle ages best knew, the freedom of the church, the most piteous of victims of a cruel deed of blood, and finally, by far the most universally reputed and widely famous of English saints, St. Thomas of Canterbury claims a high place not only as among the conspicuous figures of his own age, but as one who made his influence felt and strongly felt in English history. If his power has passed away for centuries, there is still one little abiding influence of Thomas that can be felt by all who still date the latter season of the Christian year by Trinity Sunday and the innumerable Sundays after Trinity. It was Archbishop Thomas, we are told, who first in England set apart the octave of Pentecost for the special worship of the Holy Trinity,¹ choosing the day not so much because it was the date of his episcopal consecration, but because it was the day of the first mass which the newly priested primate had ever sung. England from his example at once took up the new feast. It only gradually became general, but at last Thomas' device of a Trinity Sunday was ratified for the church universal by Pope John XXII, 170 years later, when the Sunday after Whitsunday was universally appointed as the day for the celebration of this feast. But to this day the Roman calendar reckons the Sundays between Whitsunday and Advent as Sundays after Pentecost. Post Reformation England in still describing the summer and autumn Sundays as Sundays after Trinity is, all unconsciously, showing that the will of St. Thomas of Canterbury still exercises some special sort of influence in St. Thomas' own land.

¹ *Gervase Cant. Cont.*, i. 171 (1162) "consecratus autem . . . Cantuariensis archiepiscopus instituit festivitatem principalem sanctæ Trinitatis singulis annis in perpetuum die octavarum Pentecostes celebrandam, unde et ipse eadem die missam celebravit."

NOTE ON THE AUTHORITIES.

The chief original sources for the history of St. Thomas are collected by Canon Robertson and Dr. Sheppard in the seven volumes of *Materials for the History of Archbishop Thomas Becket*, published in the Rolls Series. This collection includes the chief biographies, the contemporary accounts of the miracles reputed to be worked by his remains, and a large collection of his letters. The modern literature devoted to the subject is more conspicuous for its bulk than for its value, much of it being inspired by controversial rather than historical motives. Perhaps the best of the formal biographies is the second edition, written from the Catholic point of view, by the Rev. Canon J. Morris, styled *Life and Martyrdom of St. Thomas Becket* (1885). There is also a good account of his early life in the Rev. L. B. Radford's *Thomas of London before his Consecration*. Among the not very edifying controversial literature produced by Thomas' career is the polemic of E. A. Freeman against the well written but unsatisfactory studies of J. A. Froude, reprinted in his *Short Studies*, vol. iv. Stubbs' *Constitutional History*, vol. i., and Pollock and Maitland's *History of English Law*, vol. i., expound with great moderation and scholarship two rather different points of view. To these Maitland's article on *Henry II and the Criminous Clerks*, already referred to, must be added. There is a good short biography by the late Miss Kate Norgate under Thomas in vol. lvi. of the *Dictionary of National Biography*. A glimpse into some of the contemporary records can be obtained from W. H. Hutton's *St. Thomas of Canterbury* in the series called *English History from the Contemporary Writers*. Canon A. J. Mason's *What became of the Bones of St. Thomas* (Cambridge, 1920) is an interesting and valuable contribution to the saint's fifteenth jubilee, and also includes a study of the narratives of the passion, a history of the tomb and shrine, as well as of the supposed discovery of the bones in 1888, copiously illustrated from original sources. The late Dean Stanley's *Memorials of Canterbury Cathedral* give a vivid and picturesque but not too scholarly an account of Thomas' last days and posthumous reputation.