

Becket and the Cistercians

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Archbishop Thomas Becket and the monks of the Cistercian affiliation shared many aspirations but upon one they are to be especially identified. That was the wish, so cogently expressed by Pope Gregory VIIth, "to free the Church from the vile bondage into which the princes of this world had forced her." Becket's conversion to Gregorian ideals came late in life and, if we accept the view of many modern commentators, resulted in large measure, from his elevation to the See of St. Augustine. The White monks, *au contraire*, were early adherents of the high reform party and by reason of the effective and frequent interventions of one of their number, Bernard of Clairvaux, were made both the instruments through which the Gregorian ideals were disseminated into the countrysides of Europe and England, and, the spokesmen to the world of the varied and many new religious institutes then emerging.

The Becket controversy has for long exercised the imagination and skills of historians while, during the past score of years, interest in the new monasticism of the Twelfth century has enjoyed something of a second spring. My purpose here is to indicate where a few of the contacts between the Primate and the Cistercians lay, their intensity, and, to show to what extent the position of each influenced the other and/or were affected by it. Some apology might perhaps be in order for the further consideration of a subject which has already been given some attention in the very fine work of Martin Preiss.¹ Still, a partial if not complete, vindication of a new look at the subject may be found in the fact that Preiss' work is little known in the English-speaking world and that at the time of writing he did not have the advantage of the broad balanced and lucid overview of English religious history since provided by Knowles.²

The earliest formal contact recorded between the then Chancellor and members of the Order occurs shortly after Becket's initial refusal to accept appointment to the See of Canterbury. At that time, the legate, the Cistercian Cardinal of Pisa, Henry, intervened to stress upon him the sacred obligation

¹ M. Preiss, *Die politische Tätigkeit und Stellung der Cisterzienser im Schisma von 1159-1177*, Halle, 1934.

² D. Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge: University Press), *The Religious Orders in England*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: University Press).

which that nomination had put him under, and, a contemporary writer assures us that it was only because of Cardinal Henry's solicitation that Thomas was finally persuaded to take office.³ As is well known, less than a score of months was to pass until the rapport between the king and his new primate was in full decline. Becket's resignation from the chancellorship, his resistance to the sheriff's aid, his opposition to William FitzEmpress' marriage and his excommunication of one of the king's trustees engendered suspicion and then anger. As the tension between himself and the king grew, Thomas cast about for the support and comfort of those upon whom he might count, as well as to old friends. One of his earliest appeals was addressed to the Cistercian community at Rievaulx.⁴ It was logical that he should call upon the White monks, and shrewd that he should single out that particular cloister. In the first place, his acquaintance with the realities of the power politics of the day and the vast influence which the monks of the Cistercian affiliation wielded

³ *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, 7 vols., eds. J. C. Robertson and J. B. Sheppard, *Rolls Series* No. 67 (London: 1875-1885), I, 9; II, 305; III, 180.182; *Gervase of Canterbury: Historical Works, the Chronicle of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 2 vols., ed. W. Stubbs, *Rolls Series*, No. 73 (London, 1879-1880) I, 169. H. F. Reuter, *Geschichte Alexander des Dritten und der Kirche Seiner Zeit*, 3 vols. (Berlin, 1845), I, 264 derides the assertion that it was because of Henry of Pisa that Becket accepted his appointment, but his observations are based on misinterpretation of the latin passage he quotes.

⁴ This letter has not survived but the text of the reply was discovered and edited by F. M. Powicke, "Maurice of Rievaulx," *EHR*, XXXVI (1921), 17-29. In the accompanying commentary the editor identified the author as Abbot Maurice (c. 1145-1147). Several years later in his edition of Walter Daniel, *Vita Aelredi*, ed. F. M. Powicke (London: Nelson, 1950), xlix-1, he modified his earlier conclusion and admitted the possibility of Ailred's authorship. One can appreciate caution but in this instance I am inclined to feel that it is misplaced and unwarranted. There can be little doubt but that Ailred was personally known to Thomas inasmuch as the latter was chancellor when the abbot came to court to plead Alexander's recognition. Moreover, the archbishop witnessed at least two charters issued to Rievaulx by Henry when he was chancellor, the one a charter of customs immunity and the other a letter of protection. The former seems to have been granted in the late fall of 1157 but the latter is of uncertain date. cf. "Cartularium Abbathin de Rievallie Ordinis Cisterciensis," ed. J. C. Atkinson, *Surtees Society Publications*, LXXXIII (1889), London, 1891, 145-146, Nos. 200, 202. Both witnessed a concord between the bishop of London and the abbot of St. Albans on 8 March 1163. *Calendar of Charter Rolls*, IV, 141-142. It is reasonable, moreover, to assume that if Thomas desired Rievaulx's mediation he would seek aid from a monk of his acquaintance rather than from one known only through reputation. The scholarly Maurice moved in a circle quite removed from the one in which Becket shone. For Maurice see F. E. Croyden "Abbot Lawrence of Westminster and Hugh of St. Victor," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, II (1950), 169-171.

would determine him to engage their assistance. Moreover, by petitioning Ailred in particular he evinced a real appreciation of that abbot's importance within the northern Cistercian houses and recognized, as well, the potency of his counsel at the royal court.⁵ It is clear from the reply that Thomas had hoped the abbot would mediate the dispute and arrange some sort of reconciliation.

Another contact which the primate had with the Order was through his old friend and colleague John Belmeis, since 1162 bishop of Poitiers and after 1182, metropolitan of Lyons. When Treasurer of York, John had made many friends among the regular clergy of that province. Now, as the ordinary of an affluent diocese he was a prominent figure in French ecclesiastical circles and on close terms with the abbots of Cîteaux, Pontigny, Stella Isaac, Le Pin and with Peter, the Cistercian Archbishop of Tarentaise.⁶ Becket early sought the

⁵ As a clerk in the household of Archbishop Theobald, Thomas had occasion to witness the influence of the Cistercians at the Council of Rheims. There, Bernard of Clairvaux drew up a confession of faith of four articles in order to refute the preachments of Gilbert de la Porée. See, John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis*, ed. and trans. by Marjorie Chibnall (London: Tho. Nelson & Sons, 1956), 17. As chancellor he was Henry's advisor in the papal election dispute and was aware of Cîteaux stand on that issue. A letter of Philip of L'Aumône to Alexander III, *Patrologite Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, 221 vols., ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Garnier, 1842-1890) CC, 1359.1361, deserves close scrutiny also various charters to Cistercian houses were attested by him while in the chancery of the king; e.g. Bordesley (*C.Ch.R.* II, 65), Combe (*Ibid.*, I, 351), Fountains (*Early Yorkshire Charters*, I, No. 74), Garendon (*Ibid.*, II, 101-102), Kirkstall (W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6 vols., in 8 pts., ed. J. Caley and B. Bandinell (London: 1846), V, 535-536, Louth Park (*C.Ch.R.* III, 247-248, 268), Revesby (*Dictionary of Biography*, XLIV), Rufford (*C.Ch.R. III*, 294), Thame (*The Theme Cartulary*, 2 vols., ed. H. E. Salter, *Oxfordshire Record Society*, XX, 1947, XXVI, 1948, No. 172), Tintern (*C.Ch.R. III*, 88-89), Woburn (*Ibid.*, III, 285-286). In company with Abbot Ralph of Buildwas he witnessed a charter of Henry II in favour of the Abbey of Foucarmont (*Calendar of Documents France*, No. 186). As Archbishop he attested Henry's charters to Sibeton (*C.Ch.R.* II, 97).

⁶ John was witness to grants and confirmations made to Rievaulx by Henry II, Roger Pont l'Éveque, archbishop of York, the Dean and chapter of that cathedral, Roger Mowbray and Hugh Malebis. *Cart. Riev.* Nos. LVII, LXXIV, CXC VII, CCXV, CCXXVIII and CCXXIX; W. Map, *De Nugis Curialium*, ed. M. R. James & J. E. Lloyd (London: *Cymmrodorian Society*, 1923), 70-71. For his relations with Pontigny, see A. L'Huillier, *Saint Thomas de Cantorbéry*, 2 vols. (Paris: Victor Palme, 1891-1892), I, 389-390. No better testimony to the high regard which Becket had for the order can be had than that he spent the last nine years or so of his life in prayer and meditation at Clairvaux whether he retired in 1194. *Gallia Christiana in provincias ecclesiasticas distribute*, 16 vols., ed., Congregation of St. Maur (Paris: 1856-1899), II, 1180-1181; IV, 1303; *Dictionary of National Biography*, IV, 197.

bishop of Poitiers to represent his interests at the Curia and, in answer, John promised every assistance but warned him not to be too sanguine about the willingness of the pontiff to give him overt support. In the same letter he explained that he was arranging to meet with abbots Geoffrey of Clairvaux and Gerard of Fossa Nova – both then at the papal court at Sens – and they together would make every effort to obtain a favourable hearing.⁷

A third tie with the White monks was through John of Salisbury whose connections with the Order were long standing and weighty. From 1146 to about 1153, John acted intermittently as a clerk in the court of the Cistercian pontiff Eugenius. With him he attended the council of Rheims in 1148 and was presented to Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury by no less a figure than Bernard of Clairvaux. From a letter which abbot Bernard wrote in John's favour shortly afterwards, it appears that Salisbury was both widely known and well liked by the monks.⁸ Theobald employed John as a secretary and, upon that prelate's death, he filled the same office for Becket. In the last months of 1163, Salisbury either fled or was exiled, having incurred the displeasure of the king for his stout and persistent defense of church rights.⁹ During his stay abroad, particularly when in Paris, Salisbury established contact with Becket's envoy to the papal court, a certain Master Henry, and with the bishop of Poitiers.

⁷ *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, 7 vols., eds. J.C. Robertson and J. B. Sheppard, *Rolls Series* No. 67 (London: 1875-1885), V, 41. In October of the same year he had a long conversation with Guichard while the latter was making his annual visitation of daughterhouses in the Poitiers diocese. *MPL*, CXC, 1026.

⁸ Still the best modern treatment of Salisbury's career and work is that of C.C.J. Webb, *John of Salisbury* (London: Methuen & Co., 1932). R. L. Poole has edited the *Policraticus*, and written on various aspects of his life. See, "John of Salisbury at the Papal Court," *EHR*, XXXVIII (1923), 321-330; "Early Correspondence of John of Salisbury," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XI (1924-25), 27-53; "The Early Lives of Nicholas Breakspear and Robert Pullen," in *Essays in Medieval History Presented to Thomas Frederick Tout* (Manchester, 1925), 68-69. A critical edition of his letters is in process for Nelson Medieval Texts, by C. N. L. Brooke. For the meeting at Rheims see *MPL*, CLXXXII, 562. Bernard remarked, "he is a friend of mine and of my friends, and I beg that he may benefit from the relationship for which I count on you. He has a good reputation among good men, not less for his life than for his learning. I have not learned this from those who exaggerate and use words lightly but from my own sons whose words I believe as my own eyes." Letters, 459, No. 389. No other Cistercian had more to do with John than Eugenius and his office demanded careful as well as discerning character assessments. The sentiments expressed by Bernard and Eugenius find their counterpart by John in the *Policraticus*, Bk. V, c. 15.

⁹ *Materials*, III, 46; V, 544.

While these advocates were assaying continental monastic and secular attitudes, the Archbishop had entered into a critical engagement with the king at Westminster in early October, 1163. King Henry outlined two propositions to the bishops; the one would make crimmous clerks amenable to royal courts, the other would make all bishops swear to obey the ancient customs of the realm. Thomas, as we know, opposed both and rallied the episcopate behind him with the result that the conference was adjourned by Henry. A little more than a week later all met again before the remains of Edward the Confessor – only recently raised to the altars by Pope Alexander – in a solemn rite of translation during which Abbot Ailred preached the homily and Archbishop Becket presided.¹⁰

In this great gathering of clergy King Henry perceived an opportunity for reversing the stand of the bishops and of isolating Thomas. His chief agent in this business was Arnulf, the Bishop of Lisieux and shortly, a wholesale defection to a compromise position occurred leaving Thomas virtually alone in opposition.¹¹ Unhappily, too, the news communicated by his partisans on the continent was almost uniformly gloomy. John Belmeis wrote to say that he could expect no support from the Curia if the king's interests were at stake and that, although Henry of Pisa continued to strive to secure some expression of assistance from the pontiff, it seemed that the only path open to either of them was exile. In anticipation of that eventuality he had enlisted the aid of the Cardinal of Pisa. By way of encouragement John ended his letter with a promise to entreat the monks of Pontigny for prayers on their behalf. Later, through the offices of the Abbot Philip of L'Aumône, Cardinal Henry informed him that a refuge was being sought for both.¹²

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 376; III, 273-274; IV, 96. Of the Cistercians, only Ailred seems to have attended this meeting. D. Knowles, *The Episcopal Colleagues of Archbishop Thomas Becket* (Cambridge: University Press, 1951), 57. For a description of the rites see *Materials*, III, 261; *Chronicon Petriburgense*, 98.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, 377; III, 276; IV, 30.

¹² His remarks about the abbot and community there are enlightening: “Invenietis quoque et eamden domum utilitatibus vestris etiam temporalibus deservire paratum, si necesse fuerit. Industria enim et sanctitate supradicta abbatis sui omnibus Cisterciensis ordinis abbatis plus potest” (*MPL*, CXC, 1027). In anticipation for the day of exile John proposed that Thomas write to Abbot Guichard and take him into his confidence because he was sympathetic to Thomas' stand. This would allow Pontigny to identify itself with his cause (*Materials*, V, 110 seq.). It is certain that the primate had at least one supporter in the community at Pontigny before the trouble with the king erupted. William of Canterbury tells us in his Book of Miracles that a certain Robert was a servant of Thomas when he was chancellor and had become a lay-brother at Pontigny. Apparently also the abbot of Etouilles was one of Becket's partisans. L. Janauschek, *Originum Cisterciensium* (Vienna: 1877).

Salisbury's first letter from exile envisages even poorer prospects. Any effort, he claims, that he would make at Sens would be defeated by a combination of papal pique and the venality of the Curia. The worst blow would occur when the bishop of Lisieux arrived to present the king's case. The one ray of hope was provided by Master Henry who reported that the monks of Clairvaux, Pontigny and Cîteaux had been ordered by Pope Alexander to pray daily for Thomas and his church.¹³

Disheartened no doubt, by the timidity of his fellow bishops and the foreboding posture of the Curia, the archbishop could take some consolation from the moral support which clearly was gathering up within the Order of Cîteaux, and he was grateful for it. An incident which occurred about this time points up that fact. That old gossip and scurrilous detractor of Cistercians, Walter Map, records that a minor member of the primate's *familia*, John Planeta, told a very disparaging tale about the founder Abbot of Clairvaux in the presence of his master and of two guests, abbots of the Cistercian affiliation. For his sally he received a severe tongue lashing from Becket.¹⁴

A Cistercian was the instrument through which Thomas sustained his next reverse. Near the end of October Abbot Philip of L'Aumône arrived with a letter from Pope Alexander. It corroborated the predictions of Belmeis and Salisbury; Becket was to be both moderate and doughty in the defense of the church but he could only hope for a "just and reasonable support" from the papacy. One of Becket's biographers avers also that Philip bore certain verbal instruction from Alexander. If Thomas gave his consent to Henry's demands, so this story goes, the pontiff would remove him from all further responsibility in the struggle and himself negotiate with King Henry. It seems quite likely that it was at this juncture that Abbot Philip intimated to Thomas that the Cistercians were preparing a refuge for him in one of their

¹³ *Materials*, V, 61, 98-101.

¹⁴ *Map*, 42-43, claims that he was present. There were only two periods in Becket's episcopal career when this incident could have occurred. In the year or so before his exile or in the last month of his life. We can only surmise as to the identity of the two abbots. His most probable guests were those whose houses were closest to Canterbury, Boxley, twenty-five miles due east and Robertsbridge forty miles to the south-west. According to the *Thomas Saga Erkibyskups*, 2 vols., ed. E. Magnusson, *Rolls Series*, No. 65 (London: 1875-1883), I, 106; Boxley's abbot seems almost certain to have been one *vide Janauschek*, 91, where Salisbury suggests that a monk of that abbey be used to carry a present to Peter Celle. Having known Bernard it is understandable why Thomas was so respectful of his memory and his tone is so severe that one cannot explain it away to the mere presence of the abbots.

houses in the event that he would be forced to leave England.¹⁵ It seems that the pontiff's offer was not accepted, for in a second meeting with Philip, the Bishop of Hereford, Robert of Melun and John, Count of Vendôme, were present to add their pleas for a compromise. But the primate remained unshaken. When, however, Philip, produced other letters from the legates affirming that King Henry had pledged to them that he harboured no malicious designs on the church but merely wished to save face, through a verbal assent to his propositions, Thomas gave way.¹⁶

Confident that Henry meant to keep faith, Becket journeyed to Oxford to promise him that he would obey, unreservedly, the customs of the kingdom. By then Henry decided that the time was ripe for a definition of those traditions and so summoned the magnates to meet with him at Clarendon. Becket's refusal to abide by the Constitutions formulated there led, in turn, to the convocation of another council at Northampton in the fall of 1164 to try the prelate for high treason. The meeting was a tragedy. Convinced now that nothing could be gained by remaining in England, he fled with the assistance of the Gilbertines.¹⁷

When he made his landfall on the French side of the channel at Gravelines, Becket threw off his Gilbertine disguise and donned the garb of a White monk for travelling and proceeded up the Aa river to the Cistercian cloister of Clairmarais a few miles outside St. Omer.¹⁸ For several days he remained in and around that town when both for his own safety and the security of his hosts he deemed it expedient to go to Soissons, a centre which lay within the dominions of the French king. There he was received hospitably and given funds to continue his journey to the Papal court at Sens.

Becket's appearance at Sens placed Alexander in an almost impossible position. He sympathized with the hardships and misfortunes of his petitioner

¹⁵ *Materials*, V, 54. Philip was no stranger to England. In 1149, for instance, he attended a chapter at Kirkstead in which a dispute he was having with the superior of Tintern was settled. *Monasticon*, V, 426. *Materials*, V, 56. "Laborat tamen Pisanus noster, ut mihi in loco tutiori prospiciatur. Ed id ipsum se vobis per abbatem de Eleemosyna intimasse, asseverat." *Ibid.*, V, 57.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 378; IV, 31.33. Neither Bosham nor William of Canterbury mention any letters from the cardinals but on the other side the bishop of Poitiers is quite explicit about the reservations which Alexander would not commit to paper. *Materials*, V, 56.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 134. *Ibid.*, II, 399; III, 69, 312, 323-324; IV, 53-55. R. Graham, *St. Gilbert of Sempringham and the Gilbertines* (London: Elliot Stock, 1901), 17-18.

¹⁸ A Manrique, *Cisterciensium seu verius ecclesiasticorum Annalium a condita Cistercio*, 3 vols. (Lyons: 1642-1649), II, 389 claims that his escorts through England were Cistercians.

and it was impossible to repudiate so ardent a champion of the church. At the same time, nevertheless, his own policy of caution and moderation ran counter to the uncompromising position which Becket had adopted. At another time he could perhaps have accommodated papal policy to Thomas' views but not at that moment. To have done so would have meant the alienation of one of his most constant allies in the struggle than progressing with the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. Furthermore, it could hardly have been reassuring to know that at least half of the Curia supported the king against the Archbishop. At all events, by following a course of official silence Alexander hoped to avoid an open break with King Henry while his verbal condemnations of several clauses of the Constitutions allowed the primate's more ardent partisans to continue to claim that they were null and void.¹⁹

All the while the Monarchs of France and the Holy Roman Empire endeavoured to turn the controversy to full political advantage. The former, because of his commitment to the pontiff had less freedom of action in this respect although on occasion he did not hesitate to embarrass his rival. The latter, under no restraint, used every means at his disposal to widen the gulf between the contestants and so detach England from Alexander's side.²⁰

Becket remained at the papal court for nearly a month after which, on the pontiff's advice, he retired to the cloister of Pontigny (Nov. 30, 1164). There, only forty miles from his spiritual overlord, he resided for the next two years.²¹ His sojourn at this house is remarkable for the mutual respect and love which it generated between hosts and guest. Thomas wholeheartedly adopted the harsh life of a White monk; Alexander sent him the Cisterian

¹⁹ *Materials*, II, 341, 403; III, 337-338, 343; IV, 63; VI, 205.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 162. *Ibid.*, I, 44; III, 332; IV, 58. Early in April of 1165, Reginald Dassel, archbishop of Cologne was sent to London to propose a double marriage alliance between the Angevin and Honbenstaufen houses. *Radulphi de Diceto Opera Historica*, 2 vols., ed. W. Stubbs, *Rolls Series*, No. 68 (London: 1876), I, 318; *Materials*, VI, 80. In the following month Henry sent a delegation to an Imperial diet at Wurzburg where allegiance was pledged to Pascal III, *Materials*, V, 183-188. The king later repudiated the acts of his envoys although his anger with Alexander was still such as to prompt him, in the spring of 1166, to write to Dassel to say that he had demanded Alexander to depose Becket, had requested power to appoint a replacement and that if he did not comply he would spurn him and recognize Pascal. *Materials*, V, 428.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, 201; III, 397-404; Matthew Paris, *Historia Minor 1067-1253*, 3 vols., ed. F. Madden, *Rolls Series* No. 44 (London: 1866-1869), I, 330; III 196. Preiss, *op. cit.*, 81, claims that he arrived at Pontigny early in January 1165. He is clearly wrong here. Bosham asserts that they left Pontigny after two years there. The phrase he uses is *biennio Pontiniaci expleto* (*Materials*, III, 402-407). Gervase dates his departure from the abbey as about 11 November 1166 (*Gervase*, I, 201). L' Huillier, *op. cit.*, I, 391, agrees with this date.

habit of thick and rough woolen cloth which he privately received from the hands of Abbot Guichard²² and, though the community was ready enough to stock his table with a fare in keeping with his station, the exile determined to follow their dietary regulations and so ate nothing “except what was dry and without taste.”²³ One of the monks, Roger by name, was appointed by Abbot Guichard to attend him and came to be on such intimate terms with his charge that upon the prelate’s demise he composed a *vita* which is presently considered one of the best sources for the years which the saint spent in exile.²⁴

While the peace and confraternity offered by the Cistercians sat well upon the Archbishop, he was not, thereby, prevented from maintaining his connections with the world. He neglected no chance to set before the civil and spiritual powers, friends and foes alike, the rectitude of his stand and the sufferings which he was compelled to bear because of it. In fact his over-zealous activity in prosecuting his cause seems to have begun to limit the time spent following the daily order of the house because John of Salisbury suggested, in May of 1165, that he should concern himself less

²² S. Lenssen, “L’Abdication du Bienheureux Geoffroy d’Auxerre comme Abbe de Clairvaux,” in *Collectanea Ordinis Cisterciensium Reformatorium*, XVII, (1955) 105 n34 contends that Doml’Huillier is wrong in making the habit given to Becket by Alexander a Cistercian one. He claims that it was black because the archbishop was technically the abbot of Christ Church, a Benedictine house. In support of his contention he cites Alan of Tewkesbury’s account of the incident (*Materials*, IV, 346). But the passage *de laneo utique panno grosso et crudo* militates against that argument. At the time the Benedictine habits were anything but as described. St. Bernard’s “Apologia ad Willelmum,” *MPL*, CLXXXII, 912-913 makes that abundantly clear. Nor do we need to use evidence which might be regarded by some as coming from a hostile witness when the monks themselves and their abbot provide us with similar statements. A little more than a century later when Winchelsey made his visitation he found his monks wearing silk girdles and furs. *Register of Robert Winchelsey, Archbishop of Canterbury*, 10 pts., ed. R. Graham, *Canterbury and York Society* (London: 1917-1942), IV, 91-93. Those at Abingdon donned lambskin and cats fur. *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, 2 vols., ed. J. Stevenson, *Rolls Series*, No. 2 (London: 1858), II, 300. The arguments offered by l’Huillier, *op. cit.*, II, 383n are not only imposing but his observation that “de la couleur il n’est rien dit, et si elle eut été noire, le biographe n’eût pas omis un détail si précieux pour son ordre...” seems decisive.

²³ *Materials*, II; his health could not stand up to the rigor of Cistercian austerities and he became quite ill. “Nam non multo post una facierum in tumorem versa usque ad interiores fauces computruit, et in morbum quem fistulam dicunt tumor excrevit. Diutius autem hac passione laborans non multa molestia et dolore extractis inde duobus ossibus demum sanatus est.”

²⁴ *Ibid.*, IV, 1-79; a much later and less valuable life of Becket was written by another Cistercian monk, Thomas of Froidmont. *Anecdota Bedæ, Lanfranci, et aliorum*, ed. J. A. Giles (London: Caxton Society, 1844).

with his legal position and more with his spiritual progress.²⁵

It was extremely trying for Thomas to play, at one and the same time, the role of a monk and the even more demanding part of a great and influential bishop, especially when those who had suffered because of his stand now flocked around Pontigny's portals. King Henry had been offended by Pope Alexander's suave evasion to his request that Thomas be ordered back to England and in retaliation ordered the Canterbury estates confiscated and commanded all of the primate's relatives and friends to leave the kingdom upon taking an oath to present themselves before the doors of Pontigny. If the numbers stipulated by the contemporary accounts are exaggerated there can be little doubt but that the resources of the abbey were sorely strained by the numbers of Becket's supporters. Still, Abbot Guichard would have considered it an offense against Cistercian charity to tax his client about the great burdens which this new duty imposed upon his community and it seems probable that he requested the Bishop of Poitiers to intervene. In any case, in July of 1166, Belmeis wrote to Thomas protesting the size of the entourage that had grown up around him and argued that it should be severely reduced.²⁶ The suggestion affected its purpose and a large number departed and went elsewhere for maintenance. Already many members of his *familia* were being cared for by the generosity of the French king, the Empress Matilda, various of the nobility and religious houses. Among these latter, the abbey of Clairmarais was singled out by Pope Alexander for special commendation. Early in 1165 the abbot there received from him a note in which praises were intermingled with promises for the hospitality which his community had extended to the archbishop's sister, Agnes and her family.²⁷

In June of 1165, two notes were delivered to Becket from the pontiff, their contents a marvellous blend of honey and salt. The first quashed the sentence which the Second Council of Northampton had passed on him while in the other he was ordered not to use any spiritual sanctions against King Henry until after Easter of the following year.²⁸ Yet, the year closed out and Alexander's fortunes improved, special authority was delegated to Thomas under which he could anathematize all those invading his estates; more discretion was allowed him in his dealings with Henry and he was given a

²⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 163. "Meanwhile, lay aside all other preoccupations as far as you are able, because, although many things seem necessary, that which I advise is to be chosen first because it is most necessary of all. Indeed laws and canons are of much profit; but, believe me, at the moment there is no need of them. 'Non hoc ista sibi tempus spectacula poscit' For they do not so much excite devotion as curiosity."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 4647; II, 313, 314, 404; III, 75, 359; V, 152, 197, 242. L'Huillier, *op. cit.*, I, 398.

²⁷ *MPL*, CC, 508, No. 506. His other sister Mary, a nun of the Benedictine convent at Barking also found refuge in a French convent. Mary was elected abbess of Barking within a year of her brother's death. *Monasticon*, I, 437.

²⁸ *Materials*, V, 178, 180.

legatine commission to the entire kingdom outside the province of York.²⁹ Once Easter passed Becket took up his pen. According to his secretary Bosham, he began his first letter to the king with *verba utilia, suavia et pacifica* but because the prince remained unmoved by his pleas, his second missive assumed a more imperious and impatient tone. As well, the status of the envoys who were charged with the delivery of the notes reflects the increasing exasperation of the writer. The first two communications were carried by Abbot Urban of Cercamp, a daughterhouse of Pontigny, who was also instructed to press verbally for a conference between the disputants. The last letter, best regarded as an ultimatum, was committed to a lowly monk named Gerard, a person who has been picturesquely described as a “shoeless, tattered and enthusiastic religious.” The gist of this letter is that the king must restore all as it existed before the contest erupted otherwise he “shall feel the Divine severity and vengeance.”³⁰

Henry was in council at Chinon when Gerard conveyed his message. And, hard upon his heels, a second messenger arrived bringing word that the archbishop had, from the pulpit of Vezelay church, formally excommunicated the principal royal advisors. The Angevin’s reaction was, predictably, swift, effective and twofold. First, an appeal was immediately launched at Rome in the name of the Canterbury clergy. To this, the pope promised the appointment of a legatine commission to settle all the issues.³¹ At best, however, this tied the primate’s hands for a short time only. Far more effective and aggravating was the pressure now exerted by the king upon the primate’s protectors and hosts, the monks of Pontigny.

For some time past, it had been obvious to all that the aid and comfort given to the archbishop by that community represented not merely the sentiments of one house but that of a very large number of Cistercian affiliates. How else could one explain the apparent willingness of various houses within and without the king’s dominions to place at Becket’s disposal the services of their members? Recognition of Cistercian accommodation to the cause of

²⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 316-317, 328-329. Pope Alexander returned to Rome in November 1165, the schismatics having been ousted from the city and the Imperial general, Christian de Buch, defeated by a joint Sicilian-Roman army. *Ibid.*, V, 219.

³⁰ Bosham says of him “Abbas hic Urbanus nomine, et vere urbanus: Urbanus nomine, urbanus et re, urbanus et in sermone. Salus quippe talis idoneus ut tali fungeretur legatione.” *Materials*, III, 383-384. *Janaushek*, 66 and l’Huillier, *op. cit.*, II, 3, think that Guarin selected Urban to carry the letters. For the last two letters of *Materials*, III, 385; V, 266, 269, 278.

³¹ *Materials*, VI, 82, 84, 86, 123, 125-126. Upon receipt of Gerard’s message a delegation was despatched by Henry to Pontigny to remonstrate about the threatened excommunication. However, by the time they arrived there Thomas had already begun his journey towards Vezelay. *Ibid.*, V, 381. Bosham claims that this visit was made after the excommunications had been launched. *Ibid.*, III, 393. Thomas wrote to the pontiff shortly after telling him what he had done and that he had been prompted to do so by Henry’s threat to the Cistercians about sheltering him. *Ibid.*, V, 386.

the exile came early to the English court. The expulsion of the archbishop's friends and relatives to Pontigny was meant as much to warn the monks away from any connection with Thomas as it was to confound and confuse their guest. The scheme failed and thus a more direct and less subtle approach was set upon. We get our first intimation of what Henry was about when Cardinal William of Pavia and the Abbot of Cîteaux were summoned to meet with him at Rouen.³² The king complained bitterly to Abbot Gilbert about certain monks of his Order who were acting as agents for his enemies. "He had not," he declared, "maintained and advanced their interests in the face of great opposition from his subjects and at great expense to himself only to have his honour and dignity impugned by them." These reproaches brought forth a promise from the abbot that he would redress the wrong and do all in his power to prevent any future attempts by his subjects to act against the king's interests.³³

Even before he set out for Rouen the Abbot General must have suspected the reason for his citation. A few months earlier the Abbot of Clairvaux, Geoffrey, had returned from a visitation of his daughterhouses in England and given him a full and particular account of the grave situation developing there.³⁴ It was while on this tour that Geoffrey presided with Gilbert of Sempringham over a joint meeting of their abbots and priors in the Lincolnshire monastery of Kirkstead. Central to their discussions was the projected association of the Cistercian and Gilbertine Orders, an issue which was first raised at a General Chapter at Cîteaux in 1147 by saint Gilbert.³⁵ Of no less interest to them was the Becket affair which was studied as to the possible consequences it might have for their respective Orders. Apparently there was some fear on the part of the English affiliates as to their sister establishments.³⁶ Animated no doubt by his friendship for King Henry,

³² Henry was at Rouen only once during the year 1165. After his conference with King Louis at Gisors on 11 April of that year he retired there to meet with the Emperor's envoys who had been sent to Westminster to negotiate a marriage alliance.

³³ *MPL, CXC*, 1040.

³⁴ The interest of continentals in every little bit of information seeping out of England on the contest is clear from sundry remarks of nearly every commentator. No one, however, was more surprised by that fact than John of Salisbury. *Materials*, V, 224.

³⁵ *Cart. Riev.*, 181-183. The Cistercians present were, Ailred of Rievaulx, Richard of Fountains, Walter of Kirkstead, Philip of Revesby, Ralph of Louth Park and Acii of Biham. (I have been unable to identify the last named.)

³⁶ Powicke has suggested that the Abbot of Rievaulx favored Henry II as against Becket. *Vita Aelredi*, xlix. He based his remarks on the differences in temperaments and upon the abbot's friendship with Gilbert Foliot, Becket's chief ecclesiastical foe in England. Neither of these arguments hold water. In the first place while few will dispute the contrast in their natures, fewer still would not recognize an even greater disparity of spirit between the abbot and the king.

repelled by the intransigent attitude of the archbishop and concerned for the inquietude of his dependents, Abbot Geoffrey advised the Abbot of Cîteaux that the interests of the Order would best be served if the archbishop were asked to leave his place of refuge. From the moment when this recommendation was made until Abbot Gilbert received a papal letter in the last week of March, 1165, the sequence of events within the Order is confused. The verifiable facts are few: (1) Abbot Geoffrey of Clairvaux was deposed near the beginning of 1165, (2) his removal resulted from a breakdown in monastic discipline and from having run afoul of French policy, (3) it took place despite the opposition of the Abbot of Cîteaux.³⁷

It appears that Gilbert of Cîteaux agreed with the assessment made by the Abbot of Clairvaux and that together they determined to recast Cistercian thinking about Becket.³⁸ The obvious method was to obtain first the support of their own communities and their affiliates. That course had several virtues, the most important being that it would lead to the creation of a large body of opinion favourable to the ouster of Becket from Pontigny if the matter were raised at the General Chapter. In turn, a decision by the Chapter would make the archbishop's departure a communal responsibility and thereby relieve Cîteaux from incurring the awesome displeasure of Pope Alexander. The silence of the community at Cîteaux seems to argue that the proposal was accepted there without any serious protest. At Clairvaux, Abbot Geoffrey found that his subjects not only rejected the proposition but hotly espoused the cause of the archbishop. So animated did the ensuing discussion become that within a short space the abbot and his monks were completely estranged.³⁹ Word of this condition eventually reached the French court through the agency, no doubt, of the king's brother, Henry, Archbishop of Rheims and a former monk of Clairvaux. Already suspect in the eyes of Louis for his close association with an arch rival, Abbot Geoffrey soon lost whatever credit remained to him at the French court when it was explained that he

Opposed to "the peace-loving equable" nature of Ailred stands the "eminently cruel, lascivious, greedy and false" nature of Henry. *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, 2 vols., ed. W. Stubbs, *Rolls Series*, No. 49 (London: 1867), II, xi. As regards his relations with Foliot, there is nothing in friendship that precludes differences of opinion. For a contemporary illustration of that fact note the Salisbury Becket relationship. Webb, *op. cit.*, 110. So too, the volume of sermons which were dedicated to the bishop of London proves nothing about Ailred's opinion of Becket for they were offered some little time before the primate and Foliot clashed.

³⁷ This reconstruction is based largely upon the considerations of Preiss, *op. cit.*, 85-92 and Lenssen, *op. cit.*, 98-110. In defending Geoffrey from the various charges made against him the latter's work has taken on a very definite apologetical hue. Reuter, *op. cit.*, II, 88-89.

³⁸ Gilbert's English origins, no doubt, made him especially sensitive to the fears of his compatriots. He was translated to Cîteaux sometime before April 1163 from the abbey of Ourcamp on the Oise where he had been abbot since 1143.

³⁹ Lenssen, *op. cit.*, 105-106.

proposed to deny sanctuary to a friend and client of the Capetian.

By causing Geoffrey's deposition, King Louis accomplished three ends: he subtly pricked his Angevin adversary, stilled the most prominent and vociferous advocate for Becket's expulsion from Pontigny and satisfied the demands of the community at Clairvaux then calling for the abbot's resignation.⁴⁰ Pope Alexander acquiesced in the proceedings partly because he was so dependent upon King Louis, and partly because it was by his command that Becket was taken into Pontigny. Yet it was some months before the negotiation and litigation surrounding this affair within an affair was laid to rest. Nor did Geoffrey's removal put an end to the movement which he originated. On the contrary, those who adopted the pragmatic approach grew in such numbers and strength that by April of 1166 they formed the majority opinion within the Order. A papal letter directed to the Fathers of the Order and in particular to the Abbots of Cîteaux and Pontigny uncovers that development. According to Alexander, a report that the archbishop was about to be removed from Pontigny and forbidden a refuge in all the houses of the Order because of certain threats had won widespread credence. The Holy See was astonished to learn, he asserts, that religious of their reputation would place the fear of man before that of God. He commanded them not to consider any such action then or in the future.⁴¹ Assuredly, the threat and the man referred to here was the king of England.

To be sure Henry was galled by the disgrace which Abbot Geoffrey had suffered at the hands of the monks of Clairvaux and the king of France. Moreover, in spite of Abbot Gilbert's pledge, religious of the Cistercian affiliation continued to assume duties and execute orders which plainly mocked him and demonstrated that their allegiance to Becket was as strong and devoted as ever it was. In his last communication with the Abbot of Cîteaux before the Vezelay excommunications Henry outlines in no uncertain terms the course he intends to pursue if his complaints continue unredressed. Either, he says, the excesses of the monks are corrected and equal amends are made for the broken promise or "we shall not be able to bear it further without a remedy for the insults"⁴² Obviously the Abbot General would

⁴⁰ *Loc. cit.*

⁴¹ "...quod vestrum quidam venerabilem fratrem nostrum Cantuariensem archiepiscopum, ... a Pontiniacensi monasterio removeri, sicut audivimus, voluerunt, et eidem ad minas et terrores quorumdam totius vestri ordinis solatium denegari." *MPL*, CC, 414, No. 395. Word of Gilbert's meeting with the king at Rouen was probably brought to the pontiff by William of Pavia who was commuting almost daily between the two courts. In the next month, Alexander wrote to the abbot of Pontigny again commending Thomas' interests. *Ibid.*, CC, 368, No. 339; *J-L*, 11192.

⁴² "Noveritis autem quod si excessus monachorum vestrorum non correxeritis, ulterius sustinere non poterimus, quin injuriam nostrarum quaeramus remedium..." *Materials*, V, 365. Abbot Urban had just delivered Becket's two letters to him. In another way Henry mentions the involvement of the abbot of Criscampo.

have difficulty satisfying both pontiff and prince.

When the abbots met in plenary session that autumn a formal protest was read from King Henry.⁴³ They were notified that one of their houses lodged his great personal enemy, the fugitive Thomas of Canterbury. They were warned in the most pitiless expressions that unless Becket was expelled from Pontigny all of their goods and possessions would be confiscated and all of their conferees harried out of Angevin territories.⁴⁴ The significance of this

⁴³ According to Roger of Pontigny the letter was carried to the General chapter by certain abbots of the order whom he does not identify. They were probably Norman or English. *Materials*, IV, 65. The annalist at Winchester reports the threat but assigns it to the year 1167. *Annales Monastici*, 5 vols., ed. H. R. Luard, *Rolls Series*, No. 36 (London: 1864-1869), II, 59.

⁴⁴ *Materials*, V, 389. I have been unable to discover anything that would form a basis for the remarks of Mrs. A. S. Green, *Henry II* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1888), 104 that all Cistercian lands were sequestered by crown during the Becket controversy. Her assertions are all the more difficult to understand in the light of her husband's observations on the same subject. J. R. Green, *A Short History of the English People* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1889), 108. In her revisions of his work, Mrs. Green did not alter his remarks but this does not signify that she finally accepted his version of events. It is the uncritical acceptance of her statement and its consequences that interest us here. The editor of the Rievaulx cartulary was led to construct an elaborate argument about the date of the alleged seizure. *Cart. Riev.*, lxxv-lxxvi. He claims that it probably happened between 1164 and 1166 and founds his conclusion on an appeal that the monks of Rievaulx made to Alexander III over Henry's head against certain despoilers of their property. Now apart from his initial slip the Rev. Atkinson's other assumptions possess fatal flaws. In the first place the appeal to which he refers was answered on 20th February from Tusculum and the pontiff was in that town on that date on only two occasions, during 1171 and 1172. *J-L*, II, 145 *seq.* It cannot, therefore, be properly identified with the royal seizures during the Christmas season of 1164-1165. Secondly, a variety of reasons could explain the call to Alexander instead of to Henry; the abbey was under papal as well as royal protection; the king was absent from the realm from Oct. 1171 to April 1172 foisting his authority upon the Irish; such pleas as this were common and the Avranches agreement a few weeks later formally recognized them; until that agreement was made the king's position vis-i-vis the church was an embarrassing one because of Becket's death and he was in no way to prevent an appeal. Finally, the celerity of the pope's answer to this petition had nothing whatever to do with abbot Ailred and all the influence he commanded: he was in his grave over four years when it was launched. Instead, the incident coincides with that rising tide of discontent and violence sweeping across the north, a turbulence which culminated in a rebellion in 1173-1174. Among the leaders were Roger Mowbray and his son Nigel, both patrons of Rievaulx and both named in the appeal. Their reasons for attacking the object of their own devotion are obscure but appear to have been connected with their dissatisfaction with Henry II's strong and orderly government. Besides, S. Wood, *English monasteries and their Patrons in the*

ultimatum cannot be overstressed. First, it marks the first premier occasion upon which an English king threatens the Order and thereby constitutes a precedent for similar future sanctions whenever personal interest or state necessity demand. In the second place, it underscores the great power and influence which the Order wielded but which could, under the proper circumstances, be blackmailed by an astute prince. Finally, that unanimity of opinion which had been so signal a virtue of the Cistercian fathers in the issues connected with church and state began now to collapse.

The General Chapter lasted three days. Because no official record of its proceedings have survived, all speculation about it must rest entirely upon the notices contained in the works of Thomas' biographers or in the correspondence of his contemporaries. For the most part these agree that a majority of the fathers were opposed to his continued residence at Pontigny. Conceivable, the forty-six English abbots present formed the core of the opposition to Becket; after all, their fates hinged directly on the Chapter's final sentence. To their number must be added most of the fathers whose establishments lay within the areas of Francia governed by the Angevin.⁴⁵ As a matter of course, a large number of the heads of houses beyond were won over by the argument of expediency. Unquestionably, too, the most prominent figure in the last group and the principal advocate of eviction was Abbot Gilbert of Cîteaux.

As we noted Gilbert, was, from the autumn of 1164 onward, caught between Scylla and Charybdis. The enlightened self-interest of his Order directed that King Henry's demands be met, but, Pope Alexander's mandate precluded any such concessions. In his quandry the Abbot of Cîteaux did have the counsel of William of Pavia, one of the cardinal legates to the English court and a former monk of Clairvaux.⁴⁶ The Cardinal was on close terms with the Angevin family and served, from the spring of 1164, as Henry II's eyes and ears at the Curia.⁴⁷ Through his efforts a majority of the sacred

XIIIth century (Oxford: University Press, 1955), 161-170 has shown that quarrels between patrons and clients were frequent and could be violent. Atkinson's thesis regarding Henry's confiscation of Cistercian estates has been accepted by W. Edwards, *The Early History of the North Riding* (London: A. Brown & Sons, 1924), 184.

⁴⁵ These numbers are approximate, complete attendance is difficult to establish due to the lack of records. Again the precise boundaries of Henry's continental holdings are impossible to ascertain and complicates estimates.

⁴⁶ A statute of the order provided "in generali capitulo, ubi annatim mediante mense septembris apud Cistercium abbates, et etiam episcopi qui assumpti sunt de illo ordine conveniunt..." H. Sejalon, *Nomasticon Cisterciense see antiquiores ordinio Cisterciensis constitutiones* (Solesmes, 1892), 70-71; *Janaushek*, vi; G. Muller, "Studien uber das Generalkapital," *Cisterzienser-chronik*, XIII (1900), 184.

⁴⁷ Both Becket and Salisbury are agreed that William accepted bribes and imply that it was he who liberally scattered royal gold among the cardinals. *Materials*, IV, 55, 132; VI, 146.

college was won over to the view that Becket was the real disturber of the peace and that the king was more sinned against than sinning.⁴⁸ Again, it was William who took the lead in the curial criticism of the Primate when the Constitutions of Clarendon were reviewed.⁴⁹ But it was his attendance at the Rouen conference that marked him out as a king's man. The promise that he was privy to at Rouen and the prestigious position he held among the White monks assured Henry that a fair measure of success would, in the end, attend his plans.

The opposition to Becket's expulsion came mainly from Garin de Garland, Abbot Guichard's successor as head of the community at Pontigny,⁵⁰ Henry, Archbishop of Rheims, King Louis' brother and, Cardinal Henry of Pisa. They were supported by all those fathers who recognized the skirmish between Henry and Thomas for what it actually was: a reflection of the greater contest upon which the General Chapter had already definitely and decisively pronounced. But the appeal for a strong stand against the king of England's badgering did not find sufficient support. Instead, the Abbot of Cîteaux, Cardinal William of Pavia and several others were deputed to go to Pontigny to inform Thomas of their predicament. The community of Pontigny met in Chapter with the Archbishop present and the King's letter was read. After which, the delegates addressed themselves to the prelate and declared:

The Chapter does not drive you out of their house because of this mandate, they only place it before you and your advisors that you may consider and decide what is to be done. Indeed, the entire Chapter is certain, and we are too, that your esteem for the Order is too great to permit any spiritual or temporal disaster to happen to it.⁵¹

The hint could not be ignored and the few words which Becket had with his clerks were enough to maintain the pretense of an unconstrained decision and when he announced his intention to withdraw the monks of Pontigny – those “who had opposed his departure as long as they were able” – wept openly. Through the offices of King Louis a new retreat was found at the monastery of St. Columba outside the walls of Sens. There, beyond the reach of his king, Thomas carried forward his cause for four years more. His

⁴⁸ *Materials*, IV, 168. “Willelmus namque Papiensis, qui unus erat ex majoribus cardinalibus, regi per omnia favebat enterosque cardinales ut regi faverent induxerat, sed non gratis.”

⁴⁹ *Guernes de Pont-Sainte-Maxence: La Vie de Saint Thomas le Martyr*, ed. E. Walberg (Lund: Cleerup, 1922), lines 2355-2365.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3710-3715.

Quant li abes Guarins as cel conseiloi,
K'um voleit l'arcevesque chaciet de Punteigni,
A l'abe de Cistaus fierement respundi:
< Par noz ordres, > fait il, < ne puet pas estre ainsi,
Que nus chacum de nus pur ceo le Deu ami. > 3715

⁵¹ *Materials*, III, 397-404.

departure from the brethren at Pontigny did not, however, signal the end of his contact with friends and opponents in the Order. In one guise or another they continued to influence his activities until the end.

Thus, at the very time King Henry's agents were operating among the White monks, others in his service were engaging every possible connection at the Roman court for the nomination of a friendly party to the legatine commission which the pontiff had promised to set up that spring.⁵² In spite of Alexander's displeasure at the General Chapter's recent defiance and notwithstanding King Louis' annoyance at its weakness,⁵³ by the beginning of December King Henry had been so far successful that William of Pavia had been appointed to serve with Otto, Cardinal of St. Nicholas and he had procured as well, a suspension of Becket's powers of censure until such time as the legates had rendered their decision.⁵⁴ Although assured by Alexander that the Cardinal of Pavia had promised to work for a settlement favourable to Canterbury, Thomas' anger at the news was not assuaged. In a note to his envoy at the Curia, he rejected William as a mediator because he "thirsts for our blood that he may fill our place: which, as we understand, is promised him in case he rids the king of us." So irate and unwise was he in his replies to Pavia's overtures that John of Salisbury reproached him for language "unfit even to address to a papal messenger."⁵⁵

This mission was the first of three unsuccessful ventures by the pontiff to negotiate an end to the contest. For two years the king and his aides explored every tactic and stratagem that promised either to destroy or neutralize the power of the Primate. Exasperated by all the delays and shifts, Becket finally betook himself to Clairvaux during Passion week 1169 where, on Palm Sunday before the high altar of the abbey church, he pronounced the sentence of excommunication against ten of the king's trustees.⁵⁶ At the time, Henry was busily engaged in Gascony and quite unable to take any immediate action. But by the beginning of September he had returned to Normandy and shortly after gathered around him at Bures a large host of his continental clergy. Conspicuously present were Geoffrey, former abbot of Clairvaux, Geoffrey de la Chaussee, abbot of Mortemer; William, abbot of Beaubec and

⁵² *Ibid.*, VI, 132.

⁵³ *MPL*, CXC, 243, 1212.

⁵⁴ *Materials*, VI, 82, 84, 123, 125-126.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, VI, 154, 203, 219, 226, 229. In one he says, "Non credimus vos ad haec venisse, nee certe vos ad hoc suscipimus, multis ex causis ..." *Ibid.*, VI, 209. In the other "Verum-tamen credimus nos procerto posse, ad quid veneritis, et ad quid debeamus suscipere," *ibid.*, VI, 210.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, 543-557. The sentence was published in London on 29 May and in York on the 31st. *Ibid.*, III., 89-90. The undated letter by Henry abbot of Stratford to Alexander commending Foliot, was most probably written at this time. The passage, "ut quem suo ut credimus non exigentio merito laesum audivimus..." seems to indicate that the sentence (Insum) had just been passed. Several other letters were despatched in his favour at the same time. *Ibid.*, VI, 607-615, 618-635.

Silvain, abbot of Rievaulx.⁵⁷ A conference with the legates, Gratian and Vivian, broke up after two days of desultory and inconclusive talks. Before he moved on to Rouen for a meeting with the Count of Flanders, Henry wrote another letter to the Cistercian General Chapter. The tenor of this communication leads one to suspect that there remained not only a large reservoir of sympathy for the Archbishop among the monks but that a new wave of support was building up for him.⁵⁸ Its purpose, and it is plainly stated, was to clear up the false impressions created among the religious by Becket and to inform them of the proceedings at Bures. After a brief recapitulation of his case against the Primate, the reasons for his rejection of the terms offered by the legates are sketched out. To his Cistercian advisors who had attended the meeting with him, he entrusted the task of recounting in detail the crown's position and of persuading the Chapter fathers to avow to discountenance all reports denigrating the king's dignity. In conclusion, Henry asks that Geoffrey be sent back to him with their reply because "his discretion and prudence is necessary to him."⁵⁹

Within days of his return to court, Geoffrey was sent in the company to Abbot Alexander of Cîteaux (1166-1175) to meet with Thomas with a view to arranging for a personal encounter between the archbishop and the king.⁶⁰ Success attended their efforts although, unfortunately, action which Thomas took a day or two before their arrival cancelled out their work. In a letter addressed to the king, Thomas demanded that peace be made by the feast of the Purification (Feb. 2), or the interdict would be imposed on his lands. Upon receipt of this ultimatum the king revoked the agreements entered into in his name by the monks and crossed over to England. Later, when Geoffrey wrote to Becket to inform him of the king's decision he bemoaned the misunderstandings that seemed to dog all attempts at reconciliation. In his reply Thomas attached no fault to either Geoffrey or Alexander but insisted that the Abbot General be told that the public exposition of his treatment at Henry's hands was meant to dispel any public belief that the cause of Canterbury had been betrayed by the Cistercians. The obvious feeling with which the archbishop expressed the desire to preserve the prestige of the Order from the tongues of the uninformed and the pique naturally felt by Geoffrey

⁵⁷ The presence of the abbot of Rievaulx can be explained on the grounds that he was on his way to the Chapter meeting. L' Huillier, who normally takes great pains in detailing the presence of everyone at such gatherings, strangely mentions Cistercian attendance in a vague and passing way. *Op. cit.*, II, 207 *seq.*; Reuter, *op. cit.*, II, 40, 449-450.

⁵⁸ Knowles, *Episcopal colleagues*, 131 contends that the consequences which Foliot's excommunication had on public opinion caused Henry to suspect that "the tide of papal favour had turned against him," and that he shortly expected excommunication and interdict.

⁵⁹ *Materials*, VII, 92. "Necessariamenimmihi eius intelligo discretionem et prudentiam, ut mihi praesens adsit, et aliquamdiu propinqua mihi eius sit conversatio."

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, VII, 231 *seq.*

and Alexander at Henry's repudiation of their services in his behalf may well explain the absence of all Cistercian activity in the negotiations carried on during the following spring and summer. Not until the end of the year when at last the struggle with Becket was solved once and for all time, would the White monks again become involved.⁶¹

A peace of sorts was concluded between Becket and the king at Freteval on 22nd of August and, one hundred days later on Tuesday, 1st of December, the Archbishop returned to his See. The story of his last days need not detain us here; David Knowles has reconstructed that story and recounted it with incomparable verve and brilliance. It is enough to say that on the day of his death and during the first days of the year 1171 he was attended by at least one Cistercian, the abbot of Boxley. This religious is mentioned first on the morrow of the Archbishop's martyrdom when one of the king's minions sent a messenger to the Canterbury monks threatening to heave the traitor's body to the pigs and dogs. It was he who advised that the corpse be removed from the transept to the dark recesses of the cathedral crypt and who supervised preparations for interment.⁶² The murder in the cathedral did not close out the intimate association which existed between the Order and the other players in the drama. The pontiff's gratitude was expressed in different ways; through the elevation of Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux to the altars of the church and by the promotion of Guarin of Pontigny to the metropolitan See of Bourges. Nor were the English affiliates forgotten. Throughout the great struggle relations between them and the Papacy had been maintained. Pontifical letters and charters of protection and confirmation were issued to several petitioners although it is true that these were more frequent after Avranches than after Clarendon.⁶³

Equally noteworthy is Henry's interest. At his request an old friend and counsellor, Geoffrey, formerly abbot of Clairvaux and since 1170 abbot of Fossa Nova, was elected to replace Abbot Henry de Marcy at Hautecombe. In the following year he extended important privileges to the Order's establishments within his territories, defrayed the cost of a lead roof for the conventual church at Clairvaux and, in the years that remained to him, issued charters of protection and confirmation to various houses. As a final token of his favour, or, in compensation for the trouble he had caused within the

⁶¹ This directive was shortly followed by a papal one. *J-L*, 11710. *Materials*, VII, 225.

⁶² *Materials*, VII, 403; *Gervase*, I, 222; *Diceto*, I, 339. *Ibid.*, II, 441-442; III, 146-149, 519-521.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 12330. *CSHR*, IV, 266; *CC*, II, 55-56. B. Cams, *Series Episcoporum, Ecclesie Catholice* (Ratisbon: 1873). Five letters were despatched between September 1164 and November 1169. *PUE*, I, Nos. 102-107. Of the thirty issued between 1164 and 1187 Rievaulx and Furness account for one half of them. *Ibid.*, I, nos. 115-116, 122, 139, 148, 157, 158, 160-161, 170, 175-176, 182, 188, 191-192, 194-195, 223-224, 231, 234, 236, 238-239.

Cistercian family, he bequeathed the sum of 2,000 marks.⁶⁴ For all the favours and advantages showered upon the Order by Pope and Prince it suffered severely for its participation in the struggle. The old unity so obvious when Cîteaux spoke to the world through Bernard of Clairvaux was lost forever. And that very fact adds yet another weapon to the arsenal of those who claim that the abbot of Clairvaux's death heralds the beginning of a long recession from the earliest ideals. At the same time, however, the contest did not in any way transform the special connection which Thomas Becket had established with the community at Pontigny. Indeed, after the martyrdom, two of his successors at Canterbury would have recourse, in times of crisis, to the quiet of the cloister on the banks of the river Serein and so bear out in a new way St. Bernard's observation that Cistercian monasteries were the *urbes refugii*.

⁶⁴ A. A. King, *Cîteaux and her elder Daughters* (London: Burns & Oates, 1954), 254, n. 5. *C.Ch.R.* (1326-1341) 46-47; *Monasticon*, V, 404-405, 487-588, 604, 625, 633, 662; *Cart. Thame*, No. 176. *Fædera*, I, 147.