UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

Level 7 MA module, HPMS7006 (30 credits)

Semester 2, 2022–23

THOMAS BECKET: ARCHBISHOP, MARTYR, SAINT

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Module aims

The aims of Level 7 modules are:

- to foster an in-depth knowledge of a specific historical topic or topics
- to encourage the independent study of a wide range of secondary materials, with use of primary materials, where appropriate
- to develop the skill of integrating a wide range of secondary literature (research monographs and periodical articles as well as textbooks) into structured, coherent, and substantial written work.

Module objectives

The module deals with the origin of the famous dispute between King Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket, tracks its course, and examines its violent outcome, the murder of the archbishop in his own cathedral church. We ask what gave rise to the differences between the king and his archbishop, why Becket had to go into exile, what led to the martyrdom, and what effect his death had on the relationship, in England, between the church and the state. We then look at the emergence of the cult of St Thomas, the creation of a pilgrimage centre at Canterbury that was to become one of the foremost shrines in medieval Europe, and the production of the lives of St Thomas.

The objectives of the module are to introduce you to the methodologies of studying church-state relations in the Middle Ages and the place of pilgrimage in medieval culture.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, you will:

- Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and critical understanding of the dispute between Henry II and Thomas Becket and of its consequences

- Demonstrate comprehensive knowledge and critical understanding of certain specific themes, problems, developments, and aspects of relations between church and state in England in the 1160s and 1170s

- Show a critical awareness of relevant documentary sources materials, such as the contemporary and later 'lives' of Thomas Becket, and of artistic materials such as manuscripts and stained glass

- Demonstrate a critical awareness of current scholarship and historiographical trends underpinning and shaping our knowledge of the Becket Dispute and the rise of Canterbury as a cult centre

Help and advice

If there are any questions please do not hesitate to ask. My e-mail address is j.burton@uwtsd.ac.uk

If you would like to discuss any aspect of your work with me, I am happy to engage in e-mail correspondence and / or Teams conversations.

On the Moodle site you will find access to a chat room, and I would encourage you to make contact with your fellow students and exchange news and views.

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Reading programme

You will also find these reading materials, with vid-casts and powerpoints, under the individual session tiles on the Moodle page.

Session 1	Introduction to the module
Session 2	Henry II and Chancellor Thomas Becket, 1154–62
Session 3	Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket: the origins of the quarrel, from election (May 1162) to the Council of Westminster (October 1163)
Session 4	The Council of Clarendon, January 1164
Session 5	Exile and return, 1164–1170
Session 6	Martyrdom and its aftermath
Session 7	Pilgrimage in Medieval Europe
Session 8	The Canonization of Becket and the creation of a cult
Session 9	Thomas Becket: the man and the legend

Introductory reading

In all cases you should begin study by looking at the relevant sections of:

John Guy, *Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel, Victim: A 900-Year-Old Story Retold* (London: Viking, 2012), ISBN 0670918466, 9780670918461, is a highly readable account of Thomas's life and the 'Becket dispute'; Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986, repr. Phoenix Press, 2000), ISBN 1 84212 427 7, and D. Knowles, *Thomas Becket* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1970), are classics. The long section in W. L. Warren, *Henry II* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973, repr. in paperback, 1977, repr. Yale University Press, 2000), ISBN 0-300-08474-9 (paperback) is also valuable and places the quarrel with Thomas in the wider context of Henry's long reign. See also Anne Duggan, *Thomas Becket* (London: Arnold, 2004), ISBN 0-340-74138-4.

The relevant source book is: *The Lives of Thomas Becket*, selected sources translated and annotated by Michael Staunton (Manchester Medieval Sources: Manchester University Press, 2001): ISBN 0 7190 5455 9

Weekly seminars on Teams

Seminars will take place on Mondays at 5.00 on Teams, beginning on Monday 30 January 2023. I can be quite flexible and respond to the wishes of the group, but I suggest the following timetable (which corresponds to the reading programme, above):

30 January	A chance to meet and get to know each other, as well as an opportunity for you to ask any questions. I'll then give an introductory lecture to set the context.
6 February	The king's right-hand man: Thomas Becket as chancellor of England
13 February	A bad choice? Archbishop Thomas and the king, to the Council of Westminster
20 February	Change of pace (for us): let's think about how to write a commentary on a visual source
27 February	Was this the last straw? the Council of Clarendon and its significance.
6 March	There will be no meeting this Monday because of the annual Staff/Student Medieval History Colloquium at Gregynog.
13 March	Things go really wrong: Thomas in exile
20 March	Another change of pace: writing a commentary on one of the 'Lives'
27 March	What did pilgrimage mean to medieval people?
3 April	From (dead) archbishop to martyr to saint
10 April	Easter
17 April	no class
24 April	A chance to review the module, raise any questions, or discuss your assessment

For each session there will be a power point on Moodle to help you prepare for the seminar discussion,

Assessment

HPMS7006 is a 30-credit module, and the assessment consists of a portfolio of written work amounting to 7500 words.

It comprises:

1. **a commentary on a visual image (1500 words). This is worth 20% of the final module mark. Please submit this under the 'Visual Image' submission link on Moodle.**

2. **an analysis of one of the authors of the 'Lives' of Thomas (1500 words). This is worth 20% of the final module mark. Please submit this under the 'Lives of Thomas' submission link on Moodle.**

3. **one essay of 4500 words. This is worth 60% of the final module mark. Please submit this under the 'Essay' submission link on Moodle.**

Commentary on a visual image

Write ONE commentary of 1500 words on a visual source. You may select your own image on which to comment but you should ensure that you do not repeat material you may use in your essay. You may wish to choose a manuscript depiction (such as one of the images of the martyrdom, or an image from the Becket Leaves), or one of the Becket windows from Canterbury Cathedral, or an artefact such as a pilgrim badge or a reliquary. Please ask if you need guidance.

Analysis of one of the authors of the 'Lives of Becket'

A good starting point is John Guy, *Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel, Victim: A 900-Year-Old Story Retold* (London: Viking, 2012), pp. xiii–xix; see also Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986, repr. Phoenix Press, 2000), pp. 1–9, and *The Lives of Thomas Becket*, selected sources translated and annotated by Michael Staunton (Manchester Medieval Sources: Manchester University Press, 2001), pp. 4–11. The aim here is to analyse the value and limitations of this author as a historical source. You need to think about who the author was; what (if any) was his relationship to Thomas Becket and / or Henry II; when was he writing? what was his purpose in writing? These questions, WHO, WHEN, WHY?, will help you to assess the value and limitations of the source.

Essay: you should choose one of the following essay titles.

1 How important for understanding the conflict between Henry II and Thomas is the political context of the legacy of the reign of King Stephen?

2 How far, and in what ways, were the rights of the cathedral church of Canterbury factors in the quarrel between Henry II and Archbishop Thomas?

3 How important were the constitutions of Clarendon in the breakdown of the relationship between Henry II and Thomas?

4 What made 'criminous clerks' such a divisive issue between Henry and Thomas?

5 Why throughout Thomas's exile did Thomas and Henry fail to reconcile their differences? Why did they do so at Frétéval?

6 'Thomas had triumphed in death, but had his cause?' (Staunton, *The Lives of Thomas Becket*, p. 33). How would you answer Staunton's question?

Submission dates

There are three submission dates, as follows:

Commentary on a visual image: Friday 17 March 2023, 23.59
Commentary on one of the 'Lives': Friday 7 April 2023, 23.59
Essay: Sunday 7 May 2023, 23.59

These staggered deadlines will enable me to give you feedback as we move through the module.

SESSION 1

Introduction

We begin by thinking about the background to the Becket dispute and by looking at:

(1) Henry II and the political situation in 1154

Henry II came to the throne in 1154 after nineteen years of civil war – sometimes known to historians as 'the Anarchy'. This was the period during which the Empress Matilda, daughter and only surviving legitimate child of Henry I, fought for the crown of England against the man who had seized the throne after Henry's death, King Stephen. Henry succeeded his grandfather and namesake and was faced with a monumental struggle to restore law and order. Internally, structures of government had been weakened, the borders with Wales and Scotland had been threatened – indeed the Scots had overrun and occupied the north west – and private warfare had led to tenurial chaos. All this needed to be sorted out. Moreover, Henry not only brought Normandy back under the control of the English king, but added to his domains the county of Anjou (inherited from his father) and the vast county of Aquitaine in south-west France, which came to him through his wife, Eleanor. The task of governing these vast and diverse lands was immense,

(2) Church and State in England 1066-1154

There had been many changes in the English church since the coming of the Normans. The seats of a number of dioceses had been moved, and their bishops were largely political appointments: bishops were not just senior churchman, but many were active in politics and administration.

<u>English provinces and dioceses</u>

The English church was divided into two provinces. The southern province contained 14 dioceses: Canterbury, Exeter, Bath (later Bath and Wells), Salisbury, Winchester, Chichester, Rochester, London, Lincoln, Worcester, Hereford, Norwich, Ely, Coventry (from Lichfield and then Chester). The northern province comprised the dioceses of York, Durham, and Carlisle (founded in 1133 this diocese was in existence to 1157, and then lapsed until 1203).

It was a feature of the English church that the majority of cathedrals were monastic: Canterbury, Bath, Winchester, Rochester, Worcester, Norwich, Ely, Coventry, Durham, Carlisle (10 out of 19). All but Carlisle (which was served by Augustinian canons) were served by Benedictine monks. This included the cathedral church of Canterbury.

The ecclesiastical geography is important because there was often tension between the archbishops of Canterbury and York, and Canterbury had far more bishops to back him than did his counterpart at York. Additionally, there was often tension between cathedral chapters and bishops, especially when the chapter was monastic and the bishop was not.

Episcopal Careers: Kings and archbishops

The following chart shows the archbishops of Canterbury and York who were appointed under the kings of England from 1066 to 1154:

Kings	Canterbury	York
William I (1066-87)	Stigand (–1070)	Ealdred (–1069)
	Lanfranc (1070–89)	Thomas I (1070–1100)
William II (1087-1100)	Lanfranc	Thomas I
	vacancy 1089–93	Thomas I
	Anselm (1093–1109)	
Henry I (1100-35)	Anselm	Gerard (1100-1108)
	vacancy 1109–1114	Thomas II (1109–1114)
	Ralph d'Escures (1114–22)	Thurstan (1114–1140)
	William of Corbeil (1123–36)	
Stephen (1135-54)	William	Thurstan
	Theobald of Bec (1138–61)	
		William fitz Herbert (1143–47)
		Henry Murdac (1147–53)
		Roger de Pont L'Evêque (1154–81)

We will see that who became a bishop or archbishop, and how they rose to that position, was subject to varying forces, but it was important to the king to get the right man in the right post.

The Papacy and Canon Law

From the last quarter of the twelfth century the papacy had grown as an institution. It initiated reform within the church, attacking abuses such as simony and hereditary benefices. It strove to reduce the power of lay rulers – indeed of the laity in general – within the church in areas such as church appointments. It increased the perception of the clergy as a separate estate, governed by its own rules. In this it was aided by the growth and codification of canon law, notably the *Decretum* of Gratian. This was part of the power struggle between Church and State that dominated the Middle Ages.

The Monastic Order

The eleventh and twelfth centuries saw the growth of the monastic order, not just in terms of the number of new monastic houses that were founded, but also in the growth of new orders and congregations. The most successful of these was the Cistercian Order, which grew from a single foundation at Cîteaux in Burgundy (1098) into a European wide congregation which, by the time Henry came to the throne, numbered around 350 houses. The Cistercians collectively had a powerful voice in twelfth-century Europe.

(3) Problems of interpreting the Becket conflict

The Becket conflict is extremely well documented – there are many primary sources, but they do not all admit of easy interpretation. It is easy to follow the line of seeing this as a story of heroes and villains. For a long time the religious leanings of historians – and others - have affected their interpretations. When Henry VIII suppressed the cult of Thomas Becket he referred to the pope as 'the bishop of Rome', and this gives a snapshot of how some Catholic and Protestant historians may have been moved by their own religious persuasions in their assessment. Both Thomas and Henry claimed to have tradition on their side, but they were pitting two 'traditions' against each other: the traditional royal rights in the realm of England, claimed by Henry, and the rights of the clerical order, as a separate estate, claimed by Thomas.

On the Moodle tile for this session you will find a powerpoint and vidcast which follows up some of these ideas.

Canterbury Cathedral seen from the south-west

SESSION 2

Henry II and Chancellor Thomas Becket, 1154–62

On a superficial level, Thomas's election as archbishop of Canterbury in May 1162 transformed a worldly courtier into a pious churchman. It is important to remember, however, that his election was only one stage in his association with Henry II. In this session we explore the background to the quarrel that developed after Thomas had become archbishop. We look at his experiences in government, his relationship with Henry II as his chancellor, and the nature of his connections and dealings with the church. We look as well at the factors that led to his elevation to the position of the most important churchman in the land.

Points to consider

1 What do we know about Thomas of London, his background and his education?

2 Thomas Becket as chancellor and the king's man: what role did he play in government?

3 What was the significance of the Battle Abbey case, and what does it reveal about Thomas's attitude to the church at this stage in his career?

4 Becket's election as archbishop: what was the motive of the king in appointing Thomas? What was the attitude of the bishops? What was the reaction of the Canterbury monks? Finally, what was the reaction of Thomas Becket?

SOURCES:

The relevant sources are printed in Staunton, *Lives of Becket*, pp. 40–69. The following extracts may also be useful:

From the Lives of Becket:

1 William fitz Stephen describes Becket's appointment as chancellor

After Henry II had been crowned king of the English at the hands of Archbishop Theobald, by the latter's recommendation and through his good offices, and also at the instigation of Henry, bishop of Winchester, Thomas was made the king's chancellor in preference to all others. Being a man of diligence and industry, revolving great matters in his mind and experienced in many and great affairs, he discharged the onerous duties and obligations of his office to the praise of God and the well being of the realm; so much so that it may be doubted whether he served the king with greater distinction and efficiency or to greater advantage in peace or in war.

2 Roger of Pontigny on the same

At that time [1154] various tumults arose in England accompanied by a disposition towards change. In the church of the realm there was no little anxiety, both on account of the king's youth and the marked hostility of his companions towards the rights and liberties of the church. Nor was this anxiety misplaced, as the issue of events proved. The archbishop of Canterbury, therefore, uneasy about the present and apprehensive for the future, sought to find some remedy for the evils he feared to be imminent. It seemed to him that, if he could make Thomas a partner of the king's counsels, there might ensue there from the utmost peace and tranquillity for the English church. For he knew Thomas to be prudent and a man of high character, possessed of zeal for God according to his lights and striving with all his heart to preserve the freedom of the church. He therefore canvassed the opinions of Philip, bishop of Bayeux, and Arnulf, bishop of Lisieux, on whose advice the king chiefly relied in the early years of his reign.

3 Thomas as chancellor

The chancellor of England has so exalted a dignity that he is accounted next after the king in the realm. He has the custody of the royal seal, and seals his own orders with the obverse thereof. He is in charge of the order and arrangement of the royal chapel. He takes into his keeping all vacant archbishoprics, bishoprics, abbeys and baronies that fall into the king's hands. He takes his seat in all the king's councils and may enter there even when not summoned. Everything is signed by his clerk, who bears the royal seal, and everything is ordered by his advice . . .

. . . as I have heard from his confessor, Robert, the venerable canon of Merton, from the time that he became chancellor no excess ever stained his life. This too was a subject on which the king was continually tempting him night and day, but, as a man of prudence and the elect of God he kept his body pure and his loins girded. Like a wise man he was intent on the government of the kingdom and occupied with so many cares, both public and private, that he rarely yielded to such temptations. A modest man, indeed, was the chancellor, loathing all depravity and uncleanness, and when one of his clerks, Richard of Ambly, a man of high birth, had seduced the wife of a friend who had been long overseas, and persuaded her that her husband was dead, he removed him from his house and friendship, and caused him to be held prisoner in the Tower of London, where he remained for a long time in fetters . . .

. . . The chancellor . . . had about two hundred of his own household mounted on horseback, including knights, clerks, stewards, serjeants, squires, and sons of nobles bearing arms in his service, and all in fit array. These and all their train were resplendent in new and festive attire, each according to his rank. He himself had four and twenty changes of raiment . . . many garments of silk – almost all of which were to be given away and left overseas – every kind of fur, miniver, and skins, cloaks and carpets, too, like those which customarily adorn the chamber and bed of a bishop. He had with him hounds and birds of every kind, such as kings and rich men keep. In his equipage he also had eight wagons, each drawn by five horses, in size and strength like chargers. Each horse had its appointed groom, young and strong, girt in a new tunic and walking beside the wagon, and each wagon had its driver and guard. Two wagons bore nothing but beer . . . one wagon was used for the furniture of the chancellor's chapel, one for his

chamber, one for his bursary, and another for his kitchen. Others carried different kinds of meat and drink, others cushions, bags containing nightgowns, bundles of clothes and baggage. Twelve pack horses and eight chests carried the Chancellor's gold and silver plate, his cups, platters, goblets, pitchers, basins, saltcellars, salvers and dishes. Other coffers and packing cases contained his money – more than enough for his daily expenses and presents – his clothes, some books and similar articles. One packhorse, in the van of the others, bore the sacred vessels of the chapel and the ornaments and books of the altar. **[William fitz Stephen]**

The Lives describe how Thomas is chosen as archbishop

4 When news [of Theobald's death] reached the king and the courtiers, straightaway all men indulged in conjecture. Some whispered and others openly affirmed that the chancellor was destined to be the successor of the dead archbishop. But the king wholly dissembled his intention save that the archbishopric was handed over to the care and custody of the chancellor, as was the custom with vacant bishoprics and abbacies. The chancellor however, from certain forebodings and conjectures, already had an inkling of the king's purpose . . . [a year or so later] The king called him aside and spoke to him private, saying, 'You do not fully comprehend the reason for your mission [to England]'. He then added, 'I intend to make you archbishop of Canterbury'. To this the chancellor replied, looking down and pointing with a smile to the gay attire that he was wearing, 'How religious, how saintly is the man you would appoint to that holy see and over so renowned and pious a body of monks. I know of a truth that, if God should so dispose it, you would speedily turn your face away from me, and the love which is now so great between us would be turned to bitter hatred. I know that you would make many demands, for already you presume overmuch in ecclesiastical affairs, and this I cannot bear with equanimity . . .'. **[Herbert of Bosham]**

5 [Thomas] had also learned to know the king's character and the wickedness and pertinacity of his officials, and how effective was the malice of informers at court. From these considerations he rightly drew the conclusion that, if he were to accept the post offered to him, he would lose either the favour of God or that of the king. For he could not cleave to God and at the same time obey the king's will, or give precedence to the laws of the saints without making an enemy of the king. **[John of Salisbury]**

6 The king believed that his design against the church could be most effectively carried out through Thomas, for experience had shown that he was most loyal to him in everything and well disposed to his wishes. [There follows a long description of the election]. Thomas himself from the first moment that his promotion was mooted, opposed the king's design by every means in his power. He knew full well that it was impossible to serve two masters, whose wills were so much at variance, and that whoever was made archbishop of Canterbury would be sure soon to offend either God or the king. **[Roger of Pontigny]**

Reading Guide

You will find all the standard works in the essential reading useful here, but on (3) see Warren, *Henry II*, pp. 429–32, Knowles, 'The Growth of Exemption', and *Thomas Becket*, pp. 44–5, Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, pp. 50–51.

For (4) see Knowles, *Thomas Becket*, pp. 50–58, and Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, pp. 64–73.

On the bishops of the controversy see Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues.*

SESSION 3

Henry II and Archbishop Thomas Becket: the origins of the quarrel, from Thomas's election (May 1162) to the Council of Westminster (October 1163)

It is worthwhile recalling that there was a gap of a year before Thomas was appointed archbishop, and that – even though they were writing with hindsight – the biographers of Thomas portray him as foreseeing trouble. They show him as a reluctant archbishop. In contrast Gilbert Foliot in a letter *Multiplicem nobis* (1166, on which see Guy, *Thomas Becket*, pp. 264-9) accused Thomas of conniving to be archbishop, and that the election was made under pressure – a charge Thomas denied.

There have been many interpretations of what happened after Thomas Becket became archbishop. Did Becket go out of his way to provoke a dispute with the king? If so, why? Why did the king's man become the champion of the church? For many historians this has been the crux of the problem of interpretation. Did Becket really change, or had he always been a 'saint' in disguise? Was he, as Z. N. Brooke interpreted it, a consummate actor who merely played every part he was assigned to the full? Or, as David Knowles would have it, did his election as archbishop release his true self that had been submerged beneath the worldly courtier? What were the real issues at stake?

Points to consider

1 What actions did Becket perform immediately after his consecration that might have provoked the king? What prompted them?

2 What issues were raised at the council of Woodstock in July 1163 and why were they significant?

3 At the Council of Westminster in October 1163 Henry raised the issue of criminous clerks. What was his concern? (Look, for instance, at the case of Philip de Broi).

4 Why was the case of Osbert de Bayeux significant?

Reading Guide

The relevant sources are printed in Staunton, *Lives of Becket*, pp. 70–91. The following extract may be useful.

William Fitz Stephen describes Becket's 'conversion'

In his consecration he was anointed with the visible unction of God's mercy. Putting off the

secular man, he now put on Jesus Christ. He vacated the secular duties of the chancellorship and was at pains to fulfil the functions of a good archbishop. To this end he kept a strict watch over his mind. His speech was grave and to the edification of his hearers. His works were those of mercy and piety, his decisions in conformity with justice and equity. Clad in a hair shirt of the roughest kind which reached to his knees and swarmed with vermin, he mortified his flesh with the sparest diet, and his accustomed drink was water used for the cooking of hay. He was always, however, the first to taste the wine before giving it to those who sat at table with him. He would eat some of the meat placed before him, but fed chiefly on bread. Yet all things are pure to the pure, and it is the appetite not the food which is to blame. Frequently he exposed his naked back to the lash of discipline. Immediately over his hair shirt he wore the habit of a monk, as being abbot of the monks of Canterbury. Above this he wore the garb of a canon, in order to conform to the custom of clerks. But the stole, the emblem of the sweetest yoke of Christ, was ever day and night around his neck. . . . His predecessor, Theobald, had doubled the regular alms of the bishops who had gone before him. And now Thomas, in a spirit of pious rivalry, resolved that all Theobald's donations should be doubled. . . . In his private cell everyday he washed the feet of thirteen beggars, kneeling on his knees in memory of Christ. … Furthermore he entertained in his house the outcast and the needy, and clothed many against the severity of the Winter. At Canterbury he received many of them in person, sitting in the cloisters like one of the monks, studying from some large volume. Afterwards he would go and visit the monks who were sick in order to learn their wants and fulfil their desires …The glorious archbishop Thomas, contrary to the expectation of the king and everyone else, so utterly abandoned the world and experienced that conversion, which is God's handiwork, that all men marvelled.

Herbert of Bosham's account of the Council of Westminster

Having explained the cause of the summons, the king instantly demanded that clerks seized or convicted of great crimes should be deprived of the protection of the church, and handed over to his officers, adding that they would be more prone to do evil unless after spiritual penalty they were subjected to corporal punishment, and that those who were not restrained from such outrages by the thought of their sacred orders would trouble little at the loss of them. Moreover the more worthy they were than others of the privilege of clergy, so much the greater was their guilt; wherefore they should be coerced by sterner penalties whenever they were detected in crime. Accordingly the king, relying on the advice of certain individuals who made a show of learning and skill in both branches of the law [i.e. canon and civil law] incontinently demanded that such guilty clerks should speedily be deprived of their orders and handed over to the civil court; which procedure was sanctioned not only by human law but also by the canonical authority of the divine law; wherefore also, concerning such, it is frequently found in the canons: 'Let him be handed over to the court'. From this, those who were apparently prepared to put their learning at the king's service in order to curry favour with him, argued that such clerks should in no wise be exiled or sent into a monastery, but rather, as the canons ordain, they ought 'to be handed over to the court', and this they interpreted to mean to be delivered to the secular arm to be punished.

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On points (1), (2) and (3) see the accounts by William fitz Stephen, Edward Grim, Herbert of Bosham. Consider how these might reflect the viewpoint of Becket's supporters. Try to analyse

what Becket seems to be have been hoping to achieve in these confrontations with the king.

On (3) see Cheney, 'Punishment of Felonious Clerks'; Duggan, 'The Becket Dispute and the Criminous Clerks'; Gabel, *Benefit of Clergy*. When considering the issue of 'criminous clerks' (that is, the issue of how to deal with clerics alleged to have committed a crime), you might find the following useful.

William I's writ concerning the hearing of ecclesiastical pleas. This was issued sometime between 1072 and 1076, probably in April 1072.

> No bishop or archdeacon shall henceforth hold pleas relating to episcopal laws in the hundred court, nor shall they bring to the judgement of secular men any matter that pertains to the judgement of souls, but anyone cited according to episcopal laws shall answer at the place the bishop shall appoint and name and there shall plead his case or answer for his crime. He shall not be tried according to the law of the hundred court, but he shall submit to the justice of God and his bishop in accordance with the canons and the episcopal laws.

How far is this an important stage in the development of the idea of *privilegium fori*, that is, benefit of clergy? Note that it reserves for the judgement of the bishop certain types of pleas or cases (those relating to spiritual matters); it does not reserve for his judgement the crimes of a certain class of people, that is, clerics.

Leges Henrici Primi (early 12th century)

> . . . The bishop should have jurisdiction of all accusations, whether major or minor, made against those in holy orders . . .

Thomas Becket writes to the Pope:

> . . . The clergy were hitherto *by special privilege* entirely exempt from lay jurisdiction.

He may be referring to part of the Coronation Charter of King Stephen (1135)

> . . . I allow and concede that jurisdiction and authority over all ecclesiastical persons and over all clerks, and their property, together with the disposal of ecclesiastical estates, shall lie in the hands of the bishops . . .

Thomas Becket's view of the clerical estate

> The clergy by reason of their orders and distinctive office have Christ alone as king. And since they are not under secular kings but under their own king . . . they should be ruled by their own law which has its own means of coercion.
>
> God does not judge twice for the same offence.

SESSION 4

The Council of Clarendon, January 1164

At the end of the Council of Westminster the king demanded that the bishops agree to uphold royal custom. Thomas and the bishops agreed to do so *salvo ordine suo*, saving their order, that is, insofar as it was lawful for a clerk to do so. Bishop Hilary of Chichester was the only one to use the alternative phrase 'in good faith'. The king was not satisfied – he wanted a plain 'yes'. He left the council, and the following day confiscated Thomas Becket's castles and estates, and withdrew his son, Henry, from Becket's care. The bishops started to blame Thomas for the deteriorating relations with the king. Attempts at reconciliation – such as that at Northampton, described by Roger of Pontigny – failed. However, the pope and some of the English bishops urged Becket to give in to the king's demand for the surrender of criminous clerks, and Becket agreed. Soon after the king summoned another council, the Council of Clarendon, which was to witness a head-on clash between the king and his archbishop, as Henry demanded assent to the written customs of the realm.

The precise sequence of events at this series of meetings is not clear – and you may consider why the biographers of Becket are unclear – reticent perhaps – on this crucial episode. The king seems to have demanded verbal assent to the customs of the realm, and Thomas after some prevarication, agreed. However, the king then produced a written statement of the customs, and the sixteen clauses of the Constitutions of Clarendon came to be the focus around which the dispute revolved. Thomas, as you will see from Herbert of Bosham's account, was more reluctant to accept this written statement. He put forward reasons why his should not yet append his seal, and, taking his copy of the constitutions, he left Clarendon. Later, according to Alan of Tewkesbury, he regretted his acceptance.

For this session you should look carefully at the Constitutions, and ask:

1 What were Henry's demands?

2 What influenced Becket's response?

3 Were Henry's demands 'novel', or could he claim to have 'tradition' on his side?

Reading:

The Constitutions of Clarendon

From the year of our Lord's incarnation 1164, the fourth year of the papacy of Alexander, the tenth of the most illustrious Henry, king of the English, in the presence of the same king, was made this remembrance or recognition of a certain part of the customs, liberties, and dignities of his predecessors, that is to say of King Henry his grandfather and others, which ought to be observed and held in the kingdom. And because of dissensions and discords which had arisen between the clergy and the lord king's justices and the barons of the kingdom concerning the

customs and dignities, this recognition has been made before the archbishops and bishops and clergy, and the earls and barons and great men of the kingdom. And these same customs declared by the archbishops, bishops, earls, and barons, and by the nobler and older men of the kingdom, Thomas archbishop of Canterbury and Roger archbishop of York and Gilbert bishop of Hereford and David bishop of St David's and Roger elect of Worcester conceded and on the word of truth firmly promised by word of mouth should be held and observed for the lord king and his heirs in good faith and without subtlety, these being present: Robert earl of Leicester, Reginald earl of Cornwall, Conan earl of Brittany, John earl of Eu, Roger earl of Clare, earl Geoffrey de Mandeville, Hugh earl of Chester, William earl of Arundel, earl Patrick, William earl of Ferrers, Richard de Luci, Reginald de Mowbray, Simon de Beauchamp, Humphrey de Bohun, Matthew de Hereford, Walter de Mayenne, Manser Biset the steward, William Malet, William de Courcy, Robert de Dunstaville, Jocelin de Baillol, William de Lanvallei, William de Caisnet, Geoffrey de Vere, William de Hastings, Hugh de Moreville, Alan de Neville, Simon Fitz Peter, William Maudit the chamberlain, John Maudit, John Marshall, Peter de Mara, and many other great men and nobles of the kingdom both clergy and laymen.

A certain part of the customs and dignities which were recognized is contained in the present writing. Of which part these are the articles:

1. If a controversy arise between laymen, or between laymen and clerks, or between clerks, concerning patronage and presentation of churches, it shall be treated or concluded in the court of the lord king.

2. Churches within the lord king's fee cannot be permanently bestowed without his consent and grant.

3. Clerks charged and accused of any matter, summoned by the king's justice, shall come into his court to answer there to whatever it shall seem to the king's court should be answered there; and in the church court to what it seems should be answered there; however the king's justice shall send into the court of holy Church for the purpose of seeing how the matter shall be treated there. And if the clerk be convicted or confess, the church ought not to protect him further.

4. It is not lawful for archbishops, bishops, and beneficed clergy of the kingdom to leave the kingdom without the lord king's permission. And if they do leave they are to give security, if the lord king please, that they will seek no evil or damage to king or kingdom in going, in making their stay, or in returning.

5. Excommunicate persons ought not to give security for an indefinite time, or give an oath, but only security and pledge for submitting to the judgment of the church in order that they may be absolved.

6. Laymen ought not to be accused save by dependable and lawful accusers and witnesses in the presence of the bishop, yet so that the archdeacon lose not his right or anything which he ought to have thence. And if there should be those who are deemed culpable, but whom no one wishes or dares to accuse, the sheriff, upon the bishop's request, shall cause twelve lawful men of the neighborhood or the vill to take oath before the bishop that they will show the truth of the matter according to their conscience.

7. No one who holds of the king in chief or any of the officials of his demesne is to be excommunicated or his lands placed under interdict unless the lord king, if he be in the land, or his justiciar, if he be outside the kingdom, first gives his consent, that he may do for him what is right: yet so that what pertains to the royal court be concluded there, and what looks to the church court be sent thither to be concluded there.

8. As to appeals which may arise, they should pass from the archdeacon to the bishop, and from the bishop to the archbishop. And if the archbishop fail in furnishing justice, the matter must finally be brought to the lord king, so that at his command the litigation be concluded in the archbishop's court; and so because it should not pass further without the lord king's consent.

9. If litigation arise between a clerk and a layman concerning any holding which the clerk wants to treat as free alms but the layman as lay fee, it shall be determined on the decision of the king's chief justice by the recognition of twelve lawful men in the presence of the king's justice himself whether the holding pertain to free alms or to lay fee. And if it is judged to pertain to free alms, the plea shall be heard in the church court, but if to the lay fee, it shall be heard in the king's court. But if both plead concerning that fief under the same bishop or baron, it shall be litigated in his court; yet so that he who was first seised lose not his seisin on account of the recognition that was made, until the matter be determined by the plea.

10. If any one who is of a city, castle, borough, or demesne manor of the king shall be cited by archdeacon or bishop for any offence for which he ought to be held answerable to them and despite their summonses he refuse to do what is right, it is fully permissible to place him under interdict, but he ought not to be excommunicated before the king's chief official of that vill shall agree, in order that he may authoritatively constrain him to come to his trial. But if the king's official fail in this, he himself shall be in the lord king's mercy; and then the bishop shall be able to coerce the accused man by ecclesiastical authority.

11. Archbishops, bishops, and all ecclesiastics of the kingdom who hold of the king in chief have their possessions of the lord king as barony and answer for them to the king's justices and ministers and follow and do all royal rights and customs; and they ought, just like other barons, to be present at the judgments of the lord king's court along with the barons, until it come in judgment to loss of limbs or death.

12. When an archbishopric or bishopric, or an abbey or priory of the king's demesne shall be vacant, it ought to be in his hands, and he shall assume its revenues and expenses as pertaining to his demesne. And when the time comes to provide fro the church, the lord king should notify the more important clergy of the church, and the election should be held in the lord king's own chapel with the assent of the lord king and on the advice of the clergy of the realm whom he has summoned for the purpose. And there, before he be consecrated, let the elect perform homage and fealty to the lord king as his liege lord for life, limbs, and earthly honor, saving his order.

13. If any of the magnates of the kingdom should forcibly prevent an archbishop, bishop, or archdeacon from administering justice in which he or his men were concerned, then the lord king ought to bring such an one to justice. And if it should happen that any one dispossess the

lord king of his right, archbishops, bishops, and archdeacons ought to bring him to justice so that he make satisfaction to the lord king.

14. Chattels which have been forfeited to the king are not to be held in churches or cemeteries against the king's justice, because they belong to the king whether they be found inside churches or outside.

15. Pleas concerning debts, which are owed on the basis of an oath or in connection with which no oath has been taken, are in the king's justice.

16. Sons of villeins should not be ordained without the consent of the lord on whose land it is ascertained they were born.

The declaration of the above-mentioned royal customs and dignities has been made by the archbishops, bishops, earls, barons, and the nobler and older men of the kingdom, at Clarendon on the fourth day before the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, lord Henry being present there with the lord king his father. There are, indeed, many other great customs and dignities of holy mother church and of the lord king and barons of the kingdom, which are not included in this writing, but which are to be preserved to holy church and to the lord king and his heirs and the barons of the kingdom, and are to be kept inviolate for ever.

note

translated in Albert Beebe White and Wallce Notestein, eds., *Source Problems in English History* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1915).

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The 'Constitutions' are not easy reading!!

It may be helpful for you to consider them under the following headings:

- what we might call feudal matters (relating to the services which the king might expect from the possession of lands and estates); see clauses 2, 11, 12, 16.
- communication with Rome; see clauses 4, 8.
- the boundaries of judicial authorities; see clauses 1, 3, 9, 10, 13, 15.
- the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction; see clauses 5, 6, 7.

Remember that not all these were controversial, and there are grounds for suggesting that six clauses (1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12) were the problems. Why?

SESSION 5

Exile and return, 1164–1170

Frank Barlow and others see the Council of Clarendon as the point of no return for both Henry II and Becket. The two men met on formal occasions but continued to provoke each other. Thomas attempted to leave England without Henry's permission, thus threatening to violate one of the 'customs' but it was not on this charge that Henry had Becket arraigned and on which he appeared at Northampton in October 1164.

Until 1164 the quarrel between Thomas Becket and Henry II had been – in global terms – a minor affair. However, Thomas's flight and self-imposed exile involved a number of European powers: the king of England, the king of France, the pope, the emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa). The affair became entangled in two major European struggles: the Empire against the Papacy; and the Angevins against France.

Points to consider:

1 During the course of Becket's exile what was the attitude of the papacy, and what factors governed that attitude?

2 What conditions were considered for settlement of the dispute at Montmirail (January 1169) and Montmartre (November 1169)?

3 What was the significance of the coronation of the young king?

4 Why was it possible for reach an accord at Frétéval in July 1170?

Reading Guide

The primary sources are printed in Staunton, *Lives of Becket*, pp. 100–181.

SESSION 6

Martyrdom and its aftermath

The agreement allowed Thomas to return to England, which he did in December 1170. He left Sens and made a showy return to the coast. Ahead of him he sent letters suspending the archbishop of York and excommunicating the bishops of Salisbury and London. He landed in Sandwich and was greeted by crowds asking his blessing (a scene nicely illustrated in the *Becket Leaves*). Incidentally, he brought back with him a substantial library that after his death went to Canterbury Cathedral Priory.

Within a month of his return Becket lay dead on the floor of his cathedral, murdered by four knights who claimed to be acting on the words of the king. For this session you should consider the reasons why the affair ended in violence and death, and at what, if anything, had changed as a result of the years of dispute and exile. We look at the Compromise of Avranches of 1172 by which terms were agreed between Henry II and the papacy.

The agreement reached at Frétéval did not last. Why? In other words .... why did Becket die? You may conclude that Thomas back from exile formed a more potent political threat to Henry than he had done in exile, and you should look particularly at the political and diplomatic context in which the reconciliation and return took place. Thomas had received a tumultuous welcome. Could this have highlighted to Henry the extent to which Thomas might have become a focus of discontent? Or was he perhaps aware – in view of Thomas's provocative behaviour – that nothing had changed? Did Thomas court death and martyrdom?

- Who had "won"?
- Did Becket's death affect royal authority in England?
- Did Becket's death affect papal authority in England?

Reading Guide
There are numerous accounts of the death of Thomas, and extracts are printed in Staunton, *Thomas Becket*, pp. 192–205. One account, by an eye-witness, is given below.

Edward Grim:
The Murder of Thomas Becket

After the monks took [Thomas] through the doors of the church, the four aforementioned knights followed behind with a rapid pace. A certain subdeacon, Hugh the Evil-clerk, named for his wicked offence and armed with their malice, went with them – showing no reverence for either God or the saints because by following them he condoned their deed. When the holy archbishop entered the cathedral the monks who were glorifying God abandoned vespers – which they had begun to celebrate for God – and ran to their father whom they had heard

was dead but they saw alive and unharmed. They hastened to close the doors of the church in order to bar the enemies from slaughtering the bishop, but the wondrous athlete turned toward them and ordered that the doors be opened. 'It is not proper', he said, 'that a house of prayer, a church of Christ, be made a fortress since although it is not shut up, it serves as a fortification for his people; we will triumph over the enemy through suffering rather than by fighting – and we come to suffer, not to resist'. Without delay the sacrilegious men entered the house of peace and reconciliation with swords drawn; indeed the sight alone as well as the rattle of arms inflicted not a small amount of horror on those who watched. And those knights who approached the confused and disordered people who had been observing vespers but, by now, had run toward the lethal spectacle exclaimed in a rage: 'Where is Thomas Becket, traitor of the king and kingdom?' No one responded and instantly they cried out more loudly, 'Where is the archbishop?' Unshaken he replied to this voice as it is written, 'The righteous will be like a bold lion and free from fear'; he descended from the steps to which he had been taken by the monks who were fearful of the knights and said in an adequately audible voice, 'Here I am, not a traitor of the king but a priest; why do you seek me?' And [Thomas], who had previously told them that he had no fear of them added, 'Here I am ready to suffer in the name of He who redeemed me with His blood; God forbid that I should flee on account of your swords or that I should depart from righteousness'. With these words – at the foot of a pillar – he turned to the right. On one side was the altar of the blessed mother of God, on the other the altar of the holy confessor Benedict – through whose example and prayers he had been crucified to the world and his lusts; he endured whatever the murderers did to him with such constancy of the soul that he seemed as if he were not of flesh. The murderers pursued him and asked, 'Absolve and restore to communion those you have excommunicated and return to office those who have been suspended'. To these words [Thomas] replied, 'No penance has been made, so I will not absolve them'. 'Then you', they said, 'will now die and will suffer what you have earned'. 'And I', he said, 'am prepared to die for my Lord, so that in my blood the church will attain liberty and peace; but in the name of Almighty God I forbid that you hurt my men, either cleric or layman, in any way'. The glorious martyr acted conscientiously with foresight for his men and prudently on his own behalf, so that no one near him would be hurt as he hastened toward Christ. It was fitting that the soldier of the Lord and the martyr of the Savior adhered to His words when he was sought by the impious, 'If it is me you seek, let them leave'.

With rapid motion they laid sacrilegious hands on him, handling and dragging him roughly outside of the walls of the church so that there they would slay him or carry him from there as a prisoner, as they later confessed. But when it was not possible to easily move him from the column, he bravely pushed one [of the knights] who was pursuing and drawing near to him; he called him a panderer saying, 'Don't touch me, Rainaldus, you who owe me faith and obedience, you who foolishly follow your accomplices'. On account of the rebuff the knight was suddenly set on fire with a terrible rage and, wielding a sword against the sacred crown said, 'I don't owe faith or obedience to you that is in opposition to the fealty I owe my lord king'. The invincible martyr – seeing that the hour which would bring the end to his miserable mortal life was at hand and already promised by God to be the next to receive the crown of immortality – with his neck bent as if he were in prayer and with his joined hands elevated above – commended himself and the cause of the Church to God, St Mary, and the blessed martyr St Denis.

He had barely finished speaking when the impious knight, fearing that [Thomas] would be saved by the people and escape alive, suddenly set upon him and, shaving off the summit of his crown which the sacred chrism consecrated to God, he wounded the sacrificial lamb of God in the head; the lower arm of the writer was cut by the same blow. Indeed [the writer] stood firmly with the holy archbishop, holding him in his arms – while all the clerics and monks fled – until the one he had raised in opposition to the blow was severed. Behold the simplicity of the dove, behold the wisdom of the serpent in this martyr who presented his body to the killers so that he might keep his head, in other words his soul and the church, safe; nor would he devise a trick or a snare against the slayers of the flesh so that he might preserve himself because it was better that he be free from this nature! O worthy shepherd who so boldly set himself against the attacks of wolves so that the sheep might not be torn to pieces! and because he abandoned the world, the world – wanting to overpower him – unknowingly elevated him. Then, with another blow received on the head, he remained firm. But with the third the stricken martyr bent his knees and elbows, offering himself as a living sacrifice, saying in a low voice, 'For the name of Jesus and the protection of the church I am ready to embrace death'. But the third knight inflicted a grave wound on the fallen one; with this blow he shattered the sword on the stone and his crown, which was large, separated from his head so that the blood turned white from the brain yet no less did the brain turn red from the blood; it purpled the appearance of the church with the colours of the lily and the rose, the colours of the Virgin and Mother and the life and death of the confessor and martyr. The fourth knight drove away those who were gathering so that the others could finish the murder more freely and boldly. The fifth – not a knight but a cleric who entered with the knights – so that a fifth blow might not be spared him who had imitated Christ in other things, placed his foot on the neck of the holy priest and precious martyr and (it is horrible to say) scattered the brains with the blood across the floor, exclaiming to the rest, 'We can leave this place, knights, he will not get up again'.

But during all these incredible things the martyr displayed the virtue of perseverance. Neither his hand nor clothes indicated that he had opposed a murderer – as is often the case in human weakness; nor when stricken did he utter a word, nor did he let out a cry or a sigh, or a sign signalling any kind of pain; instead he held still the head that he had bent toward the unsheathed swords. As his body – which had been mingled with blood and brain – laid on the ground as if in prayer, he placed his soul in Abraham's bosom. Having risen above himself, without doubt, out of love for the Creator and wholly striving for celestial sweetness, he easily received whatever pain, whatever malice, the bloody murderer was able to inflict. And how intrepidly – how devotedly and courageously – he offered himself for the murder when it was made clear that for his salvation and faith this martyr should fight for the protection of others so that the affairs of the church might be managed according to its paternal traditions and decrees.

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SESSION 7

Pilgrimage in Medieval Europe

The shrine of Thomas of Canterbury became the foremost pilgrimage centre in medieval England and third in Christendom after Rome and Compostela. In this session we think generally about pilgrimage and its significance as a religious practice in the medieval west.

- What made a saint?

- What made a pilgrimage shrine? In other words, what gave rise to pilgrimage centres – Jerusalem – Rome – Compostela?

  We take as an example the cult of St Foi of Conques, and various maps and illustrations appear on the powerpoint.

- Why did medieval people go on pilgrimage?

SESSION 8

The Canonization of Becket and the creation of a cult

In this unit we look at the processes that made Thomas Becket a saint and his burial place a shrine. What forces transformed the archbishop and martyr into a saint? And why did Becket's cult become so popular and widespread?

Reading Guide

The readings provided for this session comprise: Benedict of Peterborough's description of the aftermath of the murder of Becket, and the bull of Alexander III (12 March 1173) canonizing Thomas of Canterbury, and the account of Henry's penance (*EHD* II, 770–6).

See also the texts in Staunton, *Lives of Becket*, pp.205–19.

BENEDICT of PETERBOROUGH
Description of the scene after the murder of Thomas Becket (29 December 1170)

Source: *English Historical Documents, volume II: 1042-1189*. Edited by David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway. London and New York: Oxford, 1981; pp. 820-21.

While the body still lay on the pavement, some of them [the townsfolk of Canterbury] smeared their eyes with blood. Others brought bottles and carried off secretly as much of it as they could. Others cut off shreds of clothing and dipped them in the blood. At a later time no one was thought happy who had not carried off something from the precious treasure of the martyr's body. And indeed with everything in such a state of confusion and tumult, each man could do as he pleased. Some of the blood left over was carefully and cleanly collected and poured into a clean vessel and treasured up in the church. The archbishop's pallium and outer vesture, stained with blood, were with indiscreet piety given to the poor to pray for his soul, and happy would it have been for them, if they had not with inconsiderate haste sold them for a paltry sum of money.

Thus the night passed in lamentation and mourning, groans and sighs; not a ray of gladness shed its light upon the sad scene, and when the day dawned it brought with it the prospect of yet greater evil. . . . The monks, fearing lest the corpse should be shamefully abused and so precious a treasure be taken from them, prepared to bury it with all speed. They therefore had no time to wash and embalm the body, according to the custom of the church of Canterbury. And this, we believe, was occasioned not so much by the malice of men as by the providence of God. For what need had he of less precious perfumes whom the Lord had caused to be anointed with his own blood?

They therefore stripped him of his outer garments to put on him his pontifical vestments; in so doing they discovered that the body was covered in a hair-shirt, no less painful from its

stiffness than from other causes and - a circumstance of which we have neither read nor heard of an example in the case of any other saint - they found the body covered in sackcloth, even from the thighs down to the knees, beneath the cowl and robe of the Cistercian habit. At this sight the monks gazed at one another, astounded at this proof of a hidden piety greater than might have been credited to the archbishop, and at this second cause of sorrow, they multiplied their tears. How could such a man have been suspected of covetousness or treachery? Could he ever have set his thoughts upon an earthly kingdom, who had thus preferred sackcloth above all worldly pleasures? Was he not betrayed by his king rather than a traitor who would neither yield to his betrayers, those sons of perdition, nor, as he could have done, resist them? . . .

Such was the passion of God's doughty champion, Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury, primate of all England and legate of the apostolic see, which took place in the year of our Lord's Incarnation 1170 and the fifty-third of his age, on Tuesday, 29 December, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, so that on the fifth day after the Lord's Nativity in this world of woe his servant might be born to glory and stand in the presence of the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit be honour, glory, virtue, power and dominion, world without end. Amen.

POPE ALEXANDER III
Bull of 12 March 1173, announcing the canonization of St Thomas on 21 February 1173

Source: *English Historical Documents, volume II: 1042-1189*. Edited by David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway. London and New York: Oxford, 1981; p. 827.

Alexander, the bishop, servant of the servants of God, to his beloved sons, the prior and monks of the church of Canterbury, greeting and apostolic benediction. The whole body of the faithful should rejoice at the marvels wrought by that saintly and reverend man, Thomas, your archbishop. But still greater joy and exultation should fill the hearts of you, who have again and again witnessed his miracles, and whose church is especially honoured by the presence of his most sacred body. Having therefore duly considered the glorious merits by which his life was so highly distinguished, the public fame of his miracles and the testimony given to them by our beloved sons, Albert, cardinal-priest of St Laurence, and Theodwin, cardinal-priest of St Vitalis, legates of the apostolic see, and by many other persons; having, moreover, full confidence in that testimony, and having also taken counsel with our brethren in the presence of a large number of clergy and laity, we have on Ash Wednesday lasts solemnly canonised the aforesaid archbishop and ordained that he should be numbered in the roll of saintly martyrs. We command you and the whole body of the faithful in England by our apostolic authority to observe his feast every year on the day on which he ended his life by his glorious passion with due reverence. Since therefore it is fitting and highly expedient for you that his sacred body should be buried with the reverence and honour due to it, we command you by this our apostolic rescript to hold a solemn procession on some high feast-day when the clergy and people are met together, to inter his body devoutly and reverently behind the altar, or to place it in a chest, elevated above the altar, whichever be more

convenient, and by devout supplication to God to obtain his intercession for the salvation of the faithful and the peace of the universal Church. Given at Segni, 12 March.

Canterbury Cathedral: the east end and the Trinity chapel

Canterbury Cathedral: The crypt, where Becket was first buried

Canterbury Cathedral: The Trinity Chapel, with the site of the shrine of Thomas Becket

SESSION 9

Becket in literature: the man and the legend

In the fifteen years or so after his death no fewer than eleven lives of Becket were composed. And the written tradition grew with works such as the Icelandic saga, *Thomas Saga Erkibyskups*, probably written between 1200 and 1250. Thomas Becket the archbishop and martyr now became Thomas Becket the legend. For this session you should consider the value of the contemporary lives as historical evidence and at how the writings of those who know Becket personally developed as his cult spread. Think about the bias or positioning of those who wrote, and how this affected their portrayal of the man and the issues.

Reading Guide

Essential for this is Barlow, *Thomas Becket*, and especially the brief but valuable account of the Lives and their authorship on pp. 1–9. Guy, *Thomas Becket*, pp. xiii-xix, is also useful, See also Duggan, *Thomas Becket,* pp. 224–52. Extracts from the early lives have been included in the readings for various units. There is a modern translation of Guernes (Garnier) in Shirley. *Garnier's Becket* (1975).

Rather later accounts, which contributed to the development of the legend, are to be found in Jacobus a Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, written *c.* 1260 (text from Grainger, *The Golden Legend*, 59–62).

In visual arts, there is a fragment of an illuminated life of Becket (see Backhouse and De Hamel, *The Becket Leaves*), and the stained glass of Canterbury is described by Caviness.

In summary you should look for additions to contemporary accounts of Becket; these include: incidents from Becket's childhood, such as the escape from drowning; additional miracles (the mending of the hair shirt); visions (such as the martyrdom); legends of the murderers.

The most startling addition is the Saracen mother of Becket, which appears within 100 years of Becket's death, and is depicted visually in the Queen Mary's Psalter.

Consider as well the way in which Thomas appears as the 'champion of the masses', as depicted in the Becket leaves.

Trinity Chapel: The Becket windows

Trinity Chapel: one of the miracles at Becket's tomb

SELECT BOOKLIST

I Context: the English Church in the twelfth century

Barlow, Frank, *The English Church 1066–1154* (London: Longman, 1979)

Brooke, C. N. L., *The Investiture Disputes* (Historical Association pamphlet, 1969)

Brooke, Z. N., *The English Church and the Papacy* (Cambridge, 1931, repr, 1952, 1969, paperback edn, 1989). ISBN 0-521-36645-3 (36687-9)

Saltman, A., *Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1956; New York: Greenwood Press, 1969.

II Lives and Biographies of Becket

Contemporary or near contemporary

The Lives of Thomas Becket, selected sources translated and annotated by Michael Swanton (Manchester Medieval Sources: Manchester University Press, 2001): ISBN 0 7190 5455 9

Translations and extracts of contemporary or near contemporary lives are to be found in *English Historical Documents*, II, ed. D. C. Douglas and G. W. Greenway (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1953), 702–80.

Greenway, G. W., ed., *The Life and Death of Thomas Becket ... based on the account of William FitzStephen ... with additions from other contemporary sources* (London: Folio Society, 1961).

Garnier's Becket, translated from the 12th-century French *Vie de Saint Thomas le martyr de Cantorberie*, by Janet Shirley (Phillimore, 1975; repr. Felinfach: Llanerch, nd).

For comments see (as well as the main texts, given in the following section):

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Gransden, A., *Historical Writing in England c. 550 – c. 1307* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974).

Biographies and studies

Barlow, Frank, *Thomas Becket* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986; rpt, Phoenix, 2000

----------, *Thomas Becket and his Clerks* (Friends of Canterbury Cathedral, 1987)

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Guy, John, *Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel, Victim: A 900-Year-Old Story Retold* (London: Viking, 2012)

Knowles, David, 'Archbishop Thomas Becket: a character study', in *The Historian and Character* (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 98–128

----------, *Thomas Becket* (London: Adam and Charles, 1970)

Staunton, Michael, 'Thomas Becket's conversion', *Anglo-Norman Studies* XXI (1999), 193–211

Urry, William, *Thomas Becket: his last days* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999)

Winston, Richard, *Thomas Becket* (London: Constable, 1968)

Woodgate, M. V., *Thomas Becket 1118–1170* (London: St Paul's Publications, 1971)

III The Becket Controversy and its aftermath

Alexander, J. W., 'The Becket Controversy in recent historiography', *Journal of British Studies* IX (1970), 1–26

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IV The Cult of St Thomas of Canterbury

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V Web Sites

There are some useful websites contained medieval materials and sources. In general you will find www.fordham.edu/halsall/source helpful, and easy to navigate.

Other websites are noted under individual sessions.