



Becket session 2

The early years



Family

- 21 Dec ? 1118; Cheapside, London
- Gilbert Becket from Rouen
- Matilda / Roesa from Caen
- **Not an Anglo-Saxon**
- A world of commerce, trade and administration
- At ease with barons and merchants





Education

- Aged 10: Merton Augustinian Priory, founded in 1117 by Henry I
- Aged c. 14: at one of three schools in London, probably St Pauls
- Aged c. 16: Paris – one of the great cathedral schools / emerging universities; celebrated teachers, such as Peter Abelard, Peter Lombard; others there included John of Salisbury



Employment and contacts

- Richer de l'Aigle, lord of Pevensey, a family friend
- Clerical and financial work for Osbert Huitdeniers
- clerk to the sheriff of London – through which he gained financial experience and came into contact with the Exchequer
- London in the 1140s a place of political intrigue



Archbishop's clerk

- Biographers not clear on how Thomas became clerk to Archbishop Theobald of Bec [of Canterbury] – he may have been recommended by friends of his father
- Part of an exciting intellectual circle – and an avenue for promotion
- Other clerks include future (arch)bishops: Roger of York, John of Poitiers, John of Salisbury (Chartres)
- Thomas may have taken minor orders

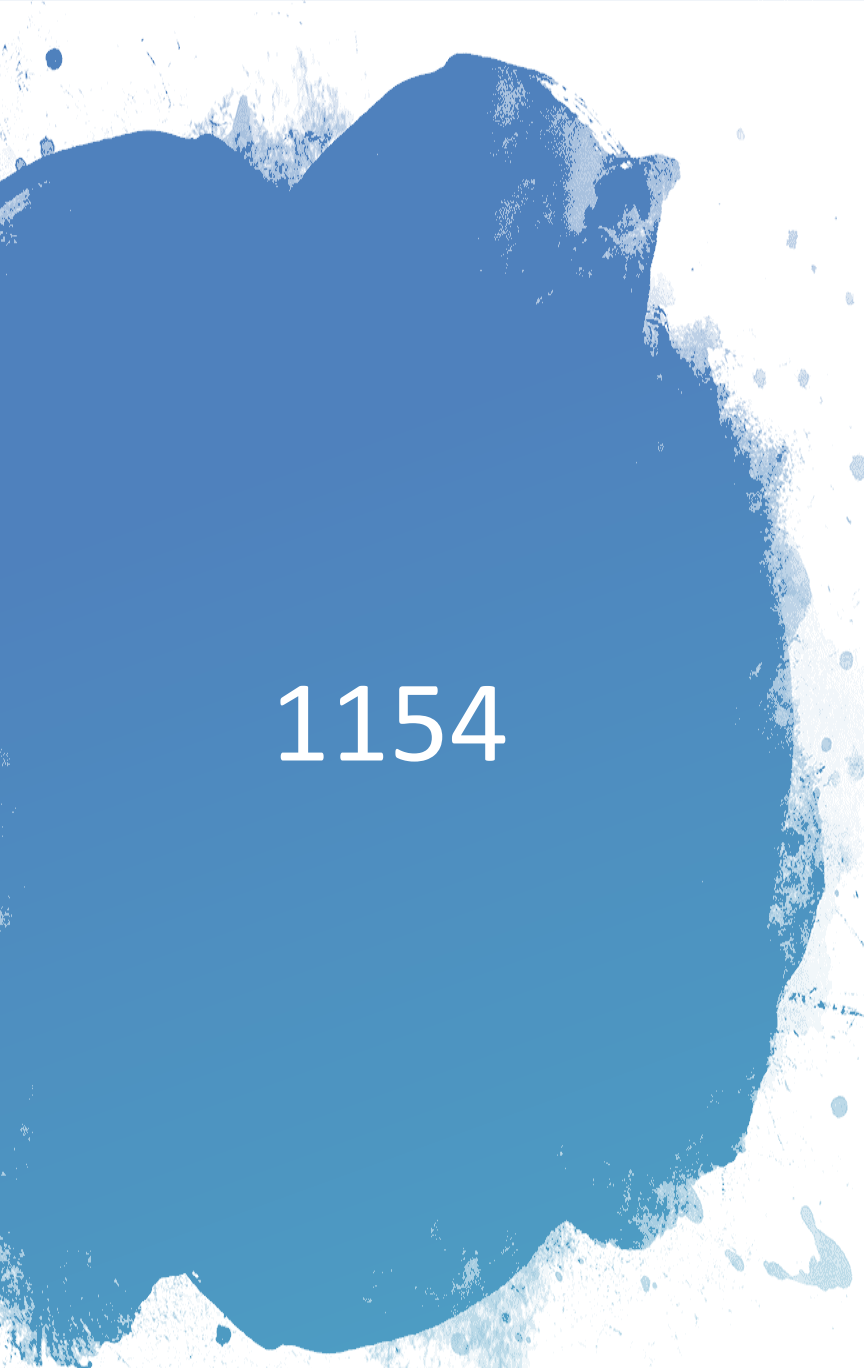


The cathedral community

- Thomas not just a member of Theobald's household
- Canterbury was a monastic cathedral
- Centre of learning with a fine library
- Move from a secular to an ecclesiastical society
- 1148: accompanied Theobald who – against the king's orders – went to the papal council at Reims in 1148

Further activities

- Several visits to Rome: e.g. in 1152/3 in discussion with the pope concerning the request of King Stephen to allow the coronation of his son, Eustace.
- Sent by Theobald to study canon law at Bologna and Auxerre
- *Concordia Discordantium Canonum* – Gratian, c. 1140



1154

- 10 October: Roger de Pont l'Evêque, fellow clerk of Thomas and archdeacon of Canterbury, promoted to archbishopric of York; Thomas took over as archdeacon
- 25 October: death of King Stephen
- 19 December: accession of Henry of Anjou as Henry II
- Around Christmas: Thomas made chancellor



Thomas as chancellor

General duties: see account by Fitz
Stephen

Also

Assault on adulterine castles

Government geared to re-
establishing royal authority

Diplomatic role

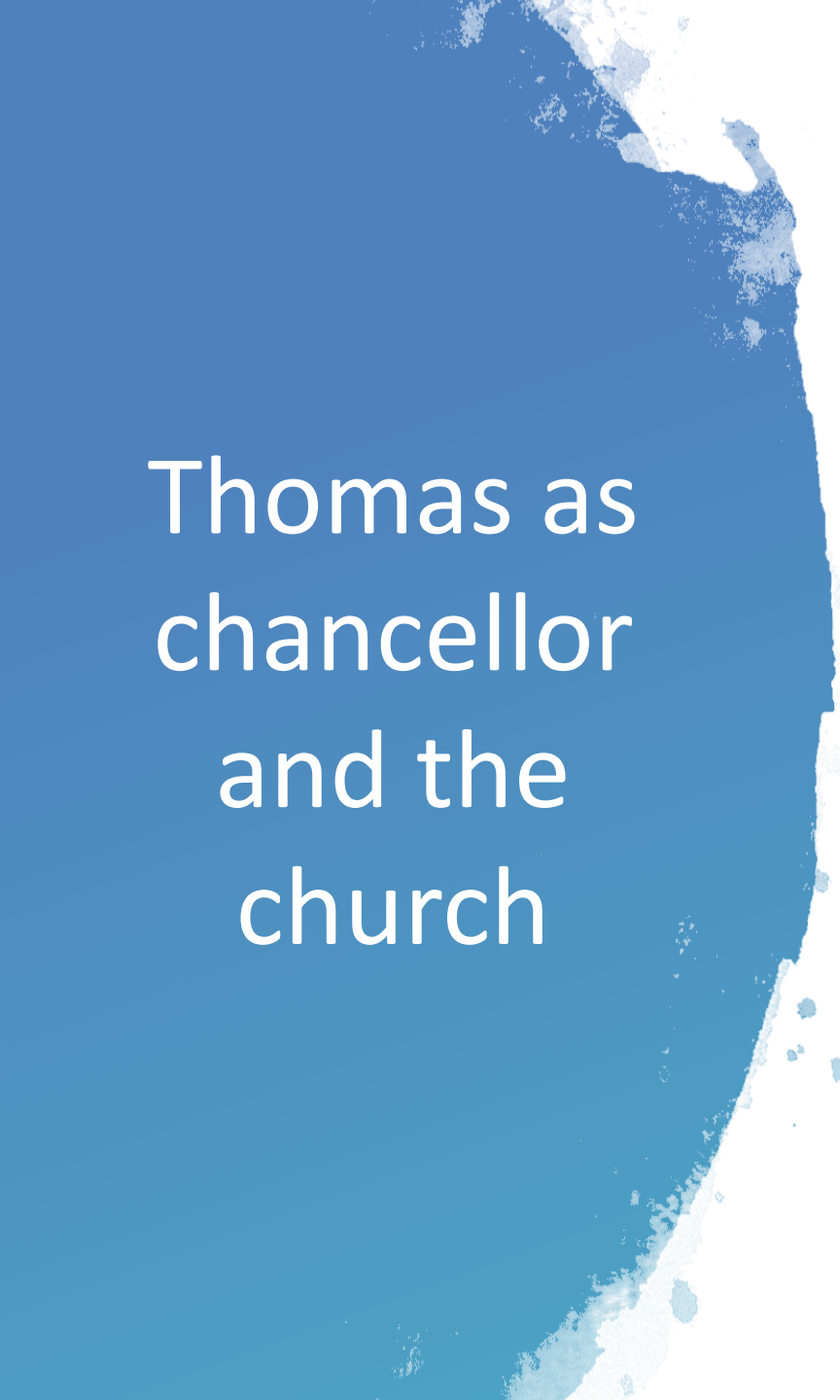
Military role: the Toulouse
campaign



The king's man: Henry II

A lavish lifestyle





Thomas as chancellor and the church

- As chancellor administered vacant abbeys and bishoprics
- As chancellor taxed the church
- The Battle Abbey case: a claim of exemption from the authority of the bishop by Bishop Hilary of Chichester
- Tradition v. innovation
- Thomas supported the king



Thomas elected as archbishop

- April 1161: death of Theobald; Thomas had not obeyed his summons to return
- Year-long vacancy in which Thomas collected the Canterbury revenues
- William of Canterbury claimed Theobald saw Thomas as his successor
- Herbert of Bosham stated that there were rumours
- Thomas warns the king of rift if he is appointed



The cathedral chapter

- Henry orders a free election
- Monks knew Thomas BUT
- He was not a monk
- Might not have seemed 'archbishop material'
- Some resistance but they elected him



The other bishops

- All gave consent except for Gilbert Foliot of Hereford, who in 1166 accused Thomas of
 - Bribing his way into the chancellorship
 - Returning to England as soon as he heard of Theobald's death
 - Persuaded the king to have him elected
 - Being elected under royal pressure

Multiplicem nobis (1166)



Henry's attitude

- May have had in mind the model of Emperor Frederic Barbarossa and Rainald of Dassal, archbishop of Cologne and chancellor
- BUT why did he delay a year?

Thomas

- 'I am not the man I was when I was chancellor'

