

violently exacted from the churches the due service (*debitum servitium*) which his father had imposed, and the English Church was beset on every side with innumerable troubles. He compelled 80 knights of the abbey of Ely to be provided as due to him in the campaign, without any reduction, 40 of whom, that is to say, being those whom his father had ordered to be kept as a garrison in the isle. And when abbot Simeon heard of this he groaned in spirit, calling upon God to be the judge of those things which were done to him.

Hugh the Chantor, History of the Church of York

Hugh the Chantor became a canon of York perhaps as early as 1100 and was subsequently precentor and archdeacon also, dying in c.1139. His History covers only the years 1066–1127, begins with the coming of king William to England, and proceeds almost at once to the controversial issue of the subjection of York to Canterbury, which was his consuming interest. 'He understood the political significance of events',¹ and the one extract printed here draws attention to a political reality underlying the famous dispute.

Source and translation: *Hugh the Chantor: The History of the Church of York 1066–1127*, ed. and trans. C. Johnson, Nelson's Medieval Texts, 1961.

153 Pp. 1–3 When the duke had conquered England he became king, and was consecrated and crowned by Ealdred the venerable archbishop of York. But the city of York and the whole district round it, in spite of having given hostages to the king for keeping the peace, was disloyal, wickedly and violently hostile, and was on that account destroyed by the Normans (*Francigenis*) with the sword, famine and flames. The metropolitan church of St Peter was also burned, and its ornaments, charters and privileges consumed or lost. Archbishop Ealdred . . . died.

But the king gave the archbishopric to one of his chaplains, Thomas, treasurer of the church of Bayeux, a distinguished and very learned clerk. . . .

The king gave the archbishopric of Canterbury to an elderly man called Lanfranc, famous for his learning and piety, who had been the master of almost everyone in France, Germany or Italy (including Thomas) who then had any considerable reputation as a man of letters . . .

Lanfranc refused to consecrate Thomas without a profession of subjection – [king] William was annoyed at first, and sent him [Thomas] back to the archbishop with orders to consecrate him without insisting on the profession, but still Lanfranc refused. He came to the king, who asked him why he had not consecrated the archbishop-elect of York. He replied that the church of York ought to be subject to the church of Canterbury. . . . Moreover that it was expedient for the union and solidarity of the kingdom that all Britain should be subject to one primate; it might otherwise happen, in the king's time or that of one of his successors, that some one of the Danes, Norwegians, or Scots, who used to sail up to York in their attacks on the realm, might be made king by the archbishop of York

¹ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c.550–c.1307*, p. 124.

and the fickle and treacherous Yorkshiremen, and the kingdom disturbed and divided. Lanfranc's reputation with the Normans was such that whatever he suggested was thought certain to be right. . . .

The Chronicle of Battle Abbey

This text in fact consists of two separate and anonymous chronicles of St Martin's at Battle bound together in the same volume. Both date from the last third of the twelfth century and their principal interest relates to the reign of Henry II. They are represented here by one extract only, because of the obvious connection of Battle Abbey with the Norman Conquest, and because that extract reveals the origin, at the abbey, of what is, alas! the legend of the Conqueror's vow before Hastings to found it. That the victorious king founded Battle Abbey, and did so to alleviate the penances¹ lying upon himself and his vassals for the slaughter and the bloodshed, there is no doubt; but the vow upon the battlefield to do so does not appear before 1155 in a forged Battle charter² and is here elaborated.

Source and translation: *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, ed. and trans. Eleanor Searle, Oxford Medieval Texts, 1980.

154 Pp. 66–7³ In the year 1066, the most noble William, duke of the Normans, sailed with a mighty army against England, so that he might wrest the realm of England, left him by his kinsman king Edward, out of the grasp of the deceitful usurper Harold. . . . When Harold learned of the landing he marched against him with his army. The energetic duke faced him . . . at a place today called Battle. Now when the devout duke was armed in martial array, he called together his barons and knights and roused them all to fight faithfully in the battle, by his exhortation and by their hope in his promises. And in order to strengthen their hearts, he made before them and with the approval of all a vow to God, that if the divine mercy granted him victory over his enemies he would offer up that place to God, as wholly free and quit as he might be able to conquer it for himself. And there he would build a monastery, where servants of God might be brought together for the salvation of all, and especially those who should fall in that battle. It would be a place of sanctuary and help to all, paying back for the blood shed there by an unending chain of good works. His speech made the men more courageous; they entered the fight determinedly, and at last, as God had planned, on 14 October they won the victory: the duke's enemy lay fallen and his army fled. . . .

¹ Cf. 187.

² Eleanor Searle, *Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, p. 21.

³ The second of the two versions is chosen as more straightforward. Cf. therefore *ibid.*, p. 37.