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Translations of Letters One-Hundred Seventy-Six to Two-Hundred Six of John of Salisbury

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TRANSLATIONS OF LETTERS ONE-HUNDRED SEVENTY-SIX
TO TWO-HUNDRED SIX

OF

JOHN OF SALISBURY

by

Casimir P. Kuszyński

* * *

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CHAPTER I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF LETTERS ONE-HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIX TO TWO HUNDRED AND SIX

1. THE PAPAL PROBLEM

While John of Salisbury, styled "le plus savant homme de son siècle,"¹ penned this group of letters in the latter half of the year 1166 and the early part of the following year, the Catholic Church found itself in a chaotic and perilous state. So in his cell in the Abbey of St. Remy, at Rheims, France, where John had found refuge in exile due to the kindness and hospitality of Abbot Peter of Celle, his friend and confidante,² he hoped eagerly for the success of Pope Alexander III in his strife with Frederick Barbarossa, and he worked feverishly for the renewal of peace between Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Henry II, King of England. It was in this two-fold strife, therefore, that ecclesiastical troubles were centered.

Frederick Barbarossa was imbued with the old ideas of absolute imperialism³ and had already encountered some difficulty with Adrian IV, the only son of England ever to grace the pontifical throne of Rome. Upon the death of Adrian in 1159, the cardinals were split into two factions: one party, commanding twenty-three votes, favored Orlando, chancellor of the apostolic see; the other, if it can be called a party with only three

1 Biographie Universelle, (Chez L. G. Michaud, Paris, 1825, vol. 40), art. "Salisbury."

2 Clement C. J. Webb, John of Salisbury, (London, Methuen & Co., 1932, pp. 186), p. 108.

3 John Alsog, D.D., Manual of Universal Church History, (Dublin, Gill & Son, 1884, pp. 393-407), vol. II, p. 393.

votes, upheld Octavian, cardinal-priest of St. Cecily's. Since an agreement could not be reached, both assumed the authority of the papacy: the former, as Alexander III; the latter, as Victor IV. Although Victor IV had so small a minority, he was powerful because he was supported by Frederick Barbarossa, whose designs he regarded with favorable eye.

Consequently the Christian world was divided: Frederick and his empire cast their lot with Victor IV, while England and France, by advice of their bishops, acknowledged the rightful election of Alexander III and promised allegiance to him. But the imperious Barbarossa was adamant. He seized Rome and made Victor IV his puppet, while Alexander was forced to flee for safety to France.⁴ The state of the Church was consequently greatly weakened, and the rightful pope was in no position to settle the trouble in England.

2. BECKET, HENRY, AND THE CUSTOMS

The trouble in England was caused by the unlawful and uncanonical demands of King Henry II. This proud and haughty monarch was also imbued with absolutism.

He wanted to concentrate all power within his own person. He was jealous of every species of authority which did not emanate from himself, and which was not subservient to his will....He was careful that his favorites should owe everything to himself, and gleried in the parade of their power and

⁴ John Lingard, D.D., History of England, (Dublin, P. O'Shea, 1887. Pp. 189-245), vol. II, p. 203.

opulence, because they were of his own creation...His temper could brook no contradiction...His passion was said to be the raving of a madman, the fury of a savage beast...Pride and passion, caution and duplicity formed the distinguishing traits in his character.⁵

King Henry had his chancellor, Thomas Becket, elevated to the primatial see of Canterbury, left vacant by the death of Theobald, Henry's faithful adviser. Thomas Becket had openly expressed his reluctance, but in this too Henry would brook no opposition. So Thomas Becket was ordained priest on May 30, 1162 and consecrated bishop on the following day. This occasioned Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of Hereford, who himself had an eye on Canterbury to remark that "the King had at last wrought a miracle; for he had changed a soldier into a priest, a layman into a bishop."⁶

Little did Foliot realize the truth of his prophetic words. For the change that took place in Thomas Becket was little short of miraculous. He was determined, on the day of his consecration, never to reproach himself on his death-bed as his successor of several centuries later, Cardinal Wolsey, was forced to do. Thomas Becket would never say,

Had I but serv'd my God with half the zeal
I serv'd my King, He would not in mine age
Have left me naked to mine enemies.

The ostentatious parade and worldly pursuits of the chancellor were instantly renounced by the archbishop, who in the fervor of his conversion, prescribed to himself, as a punishment for the luxury and vanity of his former life, a daily course of secret mortification...His time was divided

5 Ibid., pp. 196-197

6 Ibid., p. 208

7 William Shakespeare, King Henry VIII, Act 3, Sc. 2, ll.455-458.

into certain periods allotted to prayer, study, and the episcopal functions. These he found it difficult to unite with those of chancellor; and therefore, as at his consecration he had been declared free from all secular engagements, he resigned that office into the hands of the King.⁸

If Thomas Becket had retained the chancellorship, he would have held the highest place possible of attainment by an English subject. "But God had other work in store for him; the freedom of the Church was in danger, and he was the champion raised up in its defence. His eyes, so clear-sighted naturally, were enlightened by Divine grace; and as he saw his work before him, he set himself manfully, aye and like a saint as he was, to perform it."⁹

He worked first and foremost for the Church. In any conflict of rights between Church and state, he firmly upheld the rights of the former. And this attitude irked King Henry, who, as we mentioned, could brook no opposition. The climax of this growing tension between the spiritual and temporal head of England came at the Council of Clarendon in January, 1164.

It was proposed at this council that all the bishops agree to and, by their own seal, confirm their acquiescence to the constitutions, which, according to King Henry, were supposed to have been immemorial customs enjoyed by his royal ancestry, and consequently belonged to him too.¹⁰ The bishops present inquired what these customs might be, so on the following day they were presented, after being formulated by Richard de Luci

⁸ Lingard, op. cit., vol. II, p. 205

⁹ John Morris, St. Thomas Becket, (London, Burns and Oates, 1885. pp. 632), p. 109

¹⁰ John of Salisbury, Letter 176

and Jocelin de Bailleul.¹¹ The more important of these constitutions were:

1. The revenue of vacant sees must accrue to the treasury of the government, and the successors to these vacancies are to be appointed by order of the King.
2. All cases involving the clergy are to be tried first by the King's justice. It is he who decides whether the culprit must appear in a secular or ecclesiastical court. If the case in question pertains to the ecclesiastical court, a civil officer must be present to report the proceedings; if the case is presented to the secular court, the clerical defendant is deprived of any rights he has as a clergyman.
3. No one belonging to the King's household may be excommunicated without the King's consent, or that of the grand judiciary, in the absence of the King.
4. No archbishop or ecclesiastical dignitary may lawfully go beyond the sea without the King's permission. The purpose of this was to prevent appeals to the papal court.
5. Appeals must proceed from the archdeacon to the bishop, and from there to the archbishop. If the archbishop fails to show justice, the matter is brought before the King. Under no circumstances should an appeal be made to Rome.¹²

¹¹ John Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 108

¹² John Lingard, *op. cit.*, vol. II, pp. 217-219.

At first, almost all the bishops agreed to obey these constitutions, "except when touching their honor or the rights of their order," which was the ordinary form used by bishops at the ceremony of their consecration, when taking an oath of fidelity to the King of England.¹³ But the King would accept nothing but complete allegiance. He threatened them. Finally the pleading of the other bishops prevailed upon Thomas Becket, and he too gave his consent, which he later retracted. He even interdicted himself from the exercise of his functions, wrote a full account of the proceedings of the Council of Clarendon to Alexander III and begged the pontiff to absolve him.¹⁴

King Henry was even more infuriated by Thomas Becket's recantation. So on October 8, 1164, he summoned the Archbishop to the Council of Northampton, to answer charges unjustly brought against him regarding the misappropriation of certain funds entrusted to him, when he acted in the capacity of chancellor. But Thomas Becket did not appear; he was represented by several knights. The enraged King placed numerous unbearable fines upon the Archbishop. They were paid when the Archbishop saw it was useless to remonstrate.

Thomas Becket, several days later, made futile attempts at reconciliation, and then realized it would be best for him to leave England. So in November, 1164, Thomas Becket began his long exile. He visited

¹³ Monsignor Demimuid, St. Thomas a Becket, (London, Duckworth & Co., 1909, p. 205), p.95

¹⁴ John Lingard, *op.cit.*, pp. 222-225.

Pope Alexander at Sens, France, where the Pope was still in exile due to the yet unsettled conditions in Rome. Thomas Becket gave the Pope a full account of the proceedings and offered him his resignation, which was not accepted. Then Alexander III and King Louis of France had arranged for Becket to retire temporarily to the Cistercian Monastery of Pontigny, in Burgundy.¹⁵ This seemed to have been prepared for Thomas Becket by John of Salisbury,¹⁶ who was exiled some months previously by King Henry because he exercised too great an influence upon Thomas Becket.¹⁷

But the King was determined to crush Thomas Becket, and he was goaded on by Gilbert Foliot, John of Oxford, and others who rested their ambitions for the future on King Henry's glorious triumph over Thomas Becket. They led the English bishops in formulating an appeal vindicating King Henry and condemning Thomas for his obstinacy.¹⁸ On Christmas Day of 1164 all the property of Thomas Becket was confiscated and a decree of banishment was promulgated against all his relatives and the friends of his household. It was even enjoined upon the exiles to present themselves in rags and tatters at the feet of Thomas Becket and point out to him their miseries, due to his obstinacy.¹⁹ The revenue of all those too, who followed Thomas Becket into France, was confiscated.

At this point John of Salisbury²⁰ and others looked to Alexander III

15 John Morris, *op.cit.*, p.213.

16 Dr. C. Scharschmidt, Johannes Saresberiensis, (Leipzig, Teubner, 1862. p.359), p.45

17 Webb, *op.cit.*, p. 105.

18 John of Salisbury, Letter 176

19 John Lingard, *op.cit.*, p.230.

20 Cf. Letters 194, 205,

to quell this strife by siding with Thomas Becket against Henry II. But the Pope had to be diplomatic. He himself was in hard straits. Barbarossa had not yet acknowledged him as pope, and Alexander III might be forced to call upon Henry for assistance in his own strife against the "Teutonic Tyrant."²¹ Why, then, should he condemn Henry and deprive himself of a powerful ally?²² On the other hand, Thomas Becket already was Alexander's staunch supporter, and to decide anything against Thomas Becket would be most ungrateful. Yet, he did seem to throw his resources to the side of Thomas Becket, even making him apostolic legate of all England in April of 1166.²³

Hence, on July 22, 1166 the Archbishop of Canterbury used his authority and in the abbatial church of Veselay, solemnly excommunicated John of Oxford for his intrusion into the office of the Deanery of Salisbury and for his intimacy with the German schismatics. He also excommunicated other bishops and lords guilty of collaborating with Henry II, and of spoliation. Thomas Becket likewise threatened King Henry with excommunication if he did not mend his ways.²⁴

While this incensed King Henry all the more, it also frightened him. So an embassy was sent to the Pope to have the excommunication lifted and to present King Henry's viewpoint. An appeal, framed by Gilbert Foliot,

21 Letter 181

22 G. Scharschmidt, op.cit., p.46

23 Jehn Merris, op.cit. p.232.

24 Ibid., pp.235-236.

who still kept his eye on the primatial see of Canterbury which Thomas Becket might vacate, was drawn up justifying King Henry. But Alexander III upheld the excommunications of Thomas Becket, and did not deprive him of the office or authority he enjoyed as apostolic legate of England.

King Henry took new measures against Thomas Becket. He threatened to take vengeance on the Cistercians in England, if those of Pontigny continued to shower their hospitality upon Thomas Becket. So King Louis invited Thomas Becket to Sens, where the oppressed Archbishop found refuge in the Monastery of St. Colombe with the Benedictines until shortly before his martyrdom in 1170.²⁵

3. THE LETTERS OF JOHN OF SALISBURY

Throughout this period of contention between his spiritual and temporal princes, John of Salisbury "most trusted counsellor and chief support (of Thomas Becket)"²⁶ was carrying on a feverish activity in behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury

Seiner Gesinnung treu, führ Johann auch nach seiner Entfernung von Vaterland und Amt fort, der Sache zu dienen, welche er als die Gottes betrachtete. Er widmete ihr eine gross, eingreifende Thätigkeit. Zwar mit Becket im Einzelnen keineswegs immer einverstanden, ehrte er doch in ihm nicht nur den Vorgesetzten, sondern vor allen Dingen den Träger des Principis, mit dem er sich selbst identificirt hatte, und war unermülich thätig, durch eine ausgebreitete wehlerwegene Correspondenz für Becket fördersamst zu wirken und zu werben.²⁷

25 M. Demimuid, op.cit. p.97

26 Webb, op.cit., p. 111.

27 Scharschmidt, op.cit., p.39

And it was especially in this correspondence of his that "he did what he could in the cause of peace without compromising the liberties of the Church."²⁸ The letters of this group, a translation of which is found in Chapter II, date from about the middle of 1166 up to the early spring of the following year. They give us an idea of John's activity over a period of less than nine months. In these letters John gives us a panoramic and yet a detailed view not only of what was happening all about him, but he also takes us behind the scenes.

In the opening letter of this group,²⁹ sent to Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter to whom John was indebted for numerous benefactions, John gives a full account of recent happenings. The English Bishops had formulated a deceitful appeal to Pope Alexander against Thomas Becket, and the King's embassy is already on the way to the Roman curia. Alexander III ordered the restitution of all stolen revenues and benefices to their rightful owners among Thomas Becket's clerics. The Archbishop of Canterbury has excommunicated all those who stand guard at the ports to prevent entrance or exit to those who wish to appeal to the Pope.³⁰ In this letter we can gather a vivid idea of Gilbert Foliot, now Bishop of London with a hankering for Canterbury. He is depicted as a rabble-rouser, the man stirring up the fires of contention. He is very treacherous and deceitful.³¹

²⁸ Deminuid, op.cit. p. 147

²⁹ Letter 176

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Letter 195

The following four letters of this group were sent to Thomas Becket.

John advises the Archbishop to summon the Bishops of England for a conference that some settlement might be made between Henry and the Church. John suggests the possibility of even discussing the matter with the King again, and perhaps, through the intervention of Empress Mathilda, of even having peace restored.³² Thomas Becket is warned of the hypocrisy and deceit of the English bishops making and formulating this appeal. Their intention seems to be to destroy the Church. Thomas Becket, therefore, ought to proceed most cautiously. He must show these bishops that he tried to make peace a number of times, but always fruitlessly.

John frequently warns Thomas Becket not to put too much stock on Rome, because there is too much greed and laxity there,³³ and even the cardinals are inclined to reconsider, before administering justice, who the person involved might be and how much his income amounts to.³⁴ He also urges him most insistently not to put King Henry under the yoke of excommunication or England under interdict, but to continue perseveringly through the Empress Mathilda and the Bishops of Normandy to bring about a settlement of these difficulties. Whatever else might happen, Thomas Becket is admonished not to take the King at his word, but to get written security for his own safety, and above all, not to be satisfied until all the stolen revenues of his clerics had been returned.³⁵

32 Letter 177

33 Letter 178

34 Letter 205

35 Letter 179

When a storm broke out in the royal court because of Thomas Becket's drastic measures, John wrote again to tell the Archbishop that he had consulted with the Archbishop's friends and they all agreed almost verbatim on the advisability of his procedure, but he added again that Thomas should at all times exercise the greatest moderation.³⁶

John Belmeis, Bishop of Poitiers and one of the most loyal and generous of John's benefactors, was the recipient of three letters of this particular group. These letters throw an interesting light on the help John was getting from some loyal supporters³⁷ and show how energetically John worked to influence everyone possible to the side of Thomas Becket in this conflict with Henry. For John even requests that Bishop John Belmeis use pressure upon the Abbot of St. Maixent to pay a lawful debt to a servant of the Archdeacon of Paris.³⁸ The purpose of this letter, perhaps, was to do a favor for the Archdeacon that the Archdeacon in his indebtedness to John would work all the more vigorously for the cause of Thomas Becket.

In so many of his letters John asks for advice from the more influential among the hierarchy.³⁹ In many instances, it seems, it was not the advice that John actually desired, but psychologically he realized that if he requested advice, he might thus interest some of the hierarchy of France and England who were as yet disinterested in the strife. But if they did

36 Letter 180

37 Letters 181, 204

38 Letter 189

39 Letters 183, 188, 198, 199, 204

counsel John, they would be inclined to favor Thomas Becket and would be interested to find out how the case was proceeding. John registers surprise that some are absolutely inactive in the cause.⁴⁰ John makes it a point to incline even entire monasteries to this important cause by requesting their prayers.⁴¹ At all times John is careful not to make any enemies, and strives to clear himself of any charges which might be falsely rumored about him.⁴²

Gerard Pucelle, a learned scholar of that time, who later became Bishop of Coventry, also received several letters from John during this period. These letters deal mostly with conditions in Germany, for Gerard had traveled to Cologne and was censured for this by many, because he thereby communicated with the schismatic Germans. For Cologne was the hotbed of this antipathy toward Alexander III. John, however, while cautioning Gerard, assures him that he can do much to promote the cause of Alexander III and of Thomas Becket by observing conditions with shrewdness and by inducing the more influential to take up the cause of righteousness.⁴³

Anything done for Thomas Becket's and John's cause was appreciated most profusely. Walter de l'Isle, for example, because he did not arrest Thomas Becket's messenger to England, had incurred the King's displeasure. For this John expressed his sympathy and his deepest gratitude.⁴⁴ Others

40 Letter 197

41 Letter 187

42 Letter 185

43 Letters 191, 192, 193, 194

44 Letter 182

too, who had shown kindness to John or his brother Richard, exiled with him, were the recipients of letters of appreciation.⁴⁵ Nor does John hesitate to admonish more or less severely those who neglect to forward due assistance⁴⁶ or neglect to write.⁴⁷

In almost every one of these letters we can feel John's loyalty to Thomas Becket and the Church. He did want to do all in his power to bring about a reconciliation between King Henry and the Archbishop but on honorable terms.⁴⁸ John did want to regain the friendship of the King but also on honorable terms.⁴⁹ He would not compromise with the world to the detriment of his soul.⁵⁰

Very vivid is John's picture of the terrible plight of those who were in exile and whose property had been proscribed. Incessantly does John beg for financial and spiritual assistance for them.⁵¹ Bitter is his denunciation of the papal commission that had been appointed to settle the strife one way or another—men more interested in the king's coffers than in the righteous cause of the Church.⁵² John even speaks very freely and openly to the Pope, almost chiding him for being duped by John of Oxford, who was supposed to have presented the king's and his own case to the Pope and consequently received such power and authority from the Pope that he and the King had almost complete freedom of action in ecclesiastical matters.⁵³

45 Letters 186, 196, 200

46 Letter 201

47 Letter 195

48 Letters 178, 181

49 Letter 199

50 Letter 198

51 Letters 188, 205, 206

52 Letters 204, 206

53 Letter 205

Quite interesting is John's letter to John Sarrasin, one of the few Greek scholars in the West. John Salisbury urges him to complete his translation of the work of pseudo-Dionysius into Latin, and also inquires about the meaning of several Greek words he ran across in reading some works of the Latin Fathers. ⁵⁴

After reading these letters of John of Salisbury, we are forced to agree with the observations made by Scharschmidt, who made a very scholarly study of this twelfth century savant and remarked:

Johann's Briefe, welche grösstentheils dieser Periode seines Lebens angehören, haben daher eine doppelte bedeutung; sie fallen einmal als wirkungsreiche Thatsachen bei diesem Streite ins Gewicht, und sind dann Zweitens historische Zeugnisse desselben Streites, dessen Urheber und Theilnehmer, Begebenheiten und Zwischenfälle sie uns viel ungefarbter, unbefangener, zuverlässiger vorführen als die im Legendstil gehaltenen und demgemäss mit viel fremden Tauschungen Verbrämten Berichte Anderer. ⁵⁵

In their original Latin the letters of John of Salisbury give us the reverential impression of a majestic medieval cathedral. They are solid in structure, with each idea deftly carved out and firmly connected to another by the tenacious lute of Christian philosophy. The exterior is exquisitely adorned with delicate art-work fashioned after the Latin and Greek classicists, and brilliantly embellished with rare and precious stones culled from the Scriptures and from the Fathers. And within one can feel the glowing ardor of a sincere faith, the burning love for divine justice, and the ardent desire of promoting God's cause.

54 Letter 203

55 Scharschmidt, op.cit. pp. 39-40.

John to Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter

SUMMARY: John gives Bishop Bartholomew of Exeter a full account of recent happenings. His brother Richard has rejoined him in exile and he himself has just received letters requesting him to warn the bishop that the king had ordered Jocelin of Balliol and others to regard both the bishops of Exeter and Worcester as public enemies. John sarcastically comments on the appeal of the English bishops, reports that Thomas had been made legate of England, that the king's embassy was on its way to the Roman curia, that the archbishop had excommunicated all the royal officials who were guarding the ports in order to prevent appeals either to the Pope or himself, that the Pope had ordered restitution under anathema of all benefices and confiscated property of Thomas' clerks, that he himself had urged Bartholomew's innocence to the archbishop, and that although the bishop might be summoned to join the archbishop, he was to use his own judgment as to whether it was advisable to go, without fear of losing the archbishop's friendship. From events mentioned in the letter it can be dated July, 1166, shortly after the bishop's appeal of July 6 reached France.

Much, indeed, have I to write, but lack of time and the pressure of urgent duties force me to be brief rather than explain these matters in detail. Not long ago, with the help of God, I was again reunited with my brother, who praised your hospitality and generosity in very many words and made me far more grateful and obligated to you than ever before. Then, too, upon his arrival I received a letter from a certain very intimate friend of ours, who wished to forewarn me and you too, if possible through my instrumentality, that the king, by instigation of Jocelin de Balliol¹ and some other sycophants of his, issued a decree that you and His Lordship of Worcester² should at all times be considered and treated as dangerous

1 Jocelin de Balliol, who was excommunicated at Veselay, June 12, 1166

2 Roger Fitz, Count Bishop of Worcester, 1164-1179

traitors to the government and enemies of the public at large. I wish my fears were groundless! But whatever the bishops might have previously written in their decretals,³ whatever they may preach about his nobility and gentleness, about his justice and charity, about his reverence for the priesthood, there is nothing so irreverent, nothing so rank that the French and the Latins will not more easily believe of him. Hence, thoroughly surprised and shocked is everyone who learns with what conscience, impudence, and effrontery you dared to assert in writing, and to confirm with the seal of episcopal authority the innocence of a man whose acts of injustice are the common talk of all, and of whose hypocrisy and tyranny the world is well aware. How, in the prostitution of justice, did an august body of so many outstanding dignitaries maliciously bear false witness? For these are the words of your writing in defence of the king, whose case your secretary⁴ strives to justify: "The king promises impartial justice, and is prepared to fulfill this promise by deeds;⁵ he even considers it a gracious favor when admonished to make amends for any offence against the Lord; he is prepared not only to make amends, but if need be, even to do more than that." And after a few remarks he adds that the same one "in his opinion does not trifle in matters pertaining to the Church but submits to the yoke of Christ." And a little previously:

3 The English bishops had appealed against Archbishop Thomas, July 6, 1166

4 Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, 1163-1188

5 For this letter cf. Becket Materials 5.412

"That His Majesty the King had never committed a transgression,⁶ we do not claim, but we admit and maintain with confidence that he is always ready to render satisfaction to God." "O! How discreet!" they exclaim, "How inspiring the talk of the English bishops!" What sincere and untarnished testimony for the freedom of the Church! How candid is the statement of priests, who speak aloud what clown and harlequin⁷ would not utter without embarrassment! If your secretary desires the faith which he does not possess, and if some are in accord with him, they must leave the Latin world, lest as often as they preach these things, " 'Look for a stranger,' the neighbors bawl back until they are hoarse."⁸ Not to bear out such severe testimony against the Church, and in behalf of the customs and ancient corrupt practices, that clever and talkative secretary, even after raking up evidence against the people, inserted into your missive: "The king, established by God,⁹ provides, above all, for the peace of his subjects, and to maintain it for the Church and for the people committed to his care, he desires and demands that those privileges be given him which were duly tendered to the kings before him." What was the effect of this on the Church of France? "Yes," she said, "Let God and the words of the Gospel help those by whom and for whom they were written." Perhaps, he does provide for the peace of all, but remotely. Because, at the moment,

6 Ibid., p. 411

7 Policraticus 1.8; 8.12, 13; ed. Webb, 1.46; 2.309, 328

8. Hor., Ep. 1.17.62

9 Becket Materials 5.412

he upsets everything. Bishops say (or perhaps, to speak more accurately—the bishop says) that there is peace.¹⁰ But everyone, on the contrary, cries out there is no peace, but the most bitter bitterness of all.¹¹ But if he exacts only the customs to which he is entitled, as your Demosthenes¹² claims, surely he ought to have been satisfied with those which are not contrary to divine law or sound ethics, which do not degrade the priesthood or endanger souls, which do not destroy the freedom of Mother Church, from whose hand he received the sword to protect her and ward off disaster. But in his promises everything is inconsistent, as proved by his document, which was condemned by the authority of the venerable fathers and by the denunciation of the Supreme Pontiff. This inconsistency, too, is verified by the constant discontent of priests and people. And I fear that even the bishops will be forced to go counter to their writings and to recant what they declaim, to vindicate a cause they now condemn, and to condemn what they vindicate. The testimony, devised and framed in the name of all of them, bears the seal of only three bishops—namely, that of the archisynagogus (ring-leader) of London, that of my superior and friend, the Bishop of Winchester,¹³ whom I exonerate for the time being, and that of a man equally proficient in learning and eloquence—the Bishop of Hereford,¹⁴ a traditional schoolman but a novice bishop. Their prestige

10 Jer. 6.14

11 Is. 38.16

12 Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London

13 Henry of Blois, Bishop of Winchester, 1129-1171

14 Robert de Melun, Bishop of Hereford, 1163-1167, famous philosopher, and one of John's own teachers.

prevailed, if good judgment, swayed by the stamp of documentary insignia, would not succumb to the approval of injustice and to an avowal of evident falsehood. The others, however, whose names are recorded in this affidavit, are censured more kindly, because it is not easy to believe that so many learned men would assemble, and that so many devout men would jointly conspire in the misrepresentation of divine and canon law for the destruction of the Church so that iniquity might thrive and wax strong and justice be throttled. But all, as I understand it, favored that document with their patronage. If they saw it before, it was most ignoble to be involved in such rank injustice; if they did not see it, it was most stupid to add the weight of their authority, with their own official seal, to another's knavery. But why do I prolong the discussion in a matter that is evident, when, of necessity, there are more things to be commented upon. For that brief, although your partisans' efforts are now at a standstill, is carried, even now, by our alert sympathizers to the Roman Pontiff, who because of multiple reports understands the character of the one you justify, and he will easily diagnose the sincerity with which this testimony has been concocted, and what scheme your secretary planned, when unable to be the Archbishop of Canterbury—a position he coveted but God ruled otherwise—he was made the archisynagogus in the Church of England by the assent, intrigue, and prestige of those who persecuted Christ. Recently His Majesty the King wrote to him through the person of Ralph of Diss,¹⁵ his Archdeacon, that he was intrusting himself, his kingdom

¹⁵ Archdeacon of Middlesex, and later Dean of London

and the case, involving him and the Church, into his hands, since he was his most faithful friend and almost like a father. Likewise, he ordered his administrators to be scrupulously obedient to him in all matters. If any occasion presents itself to you, your Church, or the Lord Bishop of Worcester that you must call him to assembly for your own sakes and for the sake of the Church of God to warn the king who (as he testified in his impressive letter, which has already been promulgated throughout the provinces and the kingdoms) "deems it a gracious favor when warned¹⁶ to make amends for his offences against God." For who sins against his neighbor, sins also against God; and he disgraces Christ the bridegroom, whoever dishonors the Church, His bride. For they are one body, in fact, even one spirit, and what is more, they are by the conferring of grace, in a certain sense, one God, while in a wondrous fellowship the things, which are of the flesh by reason of primitive nature, it shares with God, that from Him it may receive the fullness of divine nature and by virtue of this special participation may superabundantly teem with the oil of gladness,¹⁷ flowing in full measure from Him. I would call it primitive nature that it might not be misconstrued as the deep-seated habit of sin, according to which we are, by nature, all children of wrath;¹⁸ not because we were created in it, but because we have fallen into it. For, as the Orator says, "Wont maketh a sort of second nature, from which it

¹⁶ Becket Materials 5.412

¹⁷ Heb. 1.9

¹⁸ Eph. 2.3

is most difficult to veer."¹⁹ Yet, I do not feel that the archisynagogus should be invited for this reason that I entertain a cherished hope that you could profit by his prestige, but that the light of truth might radiate more, and in lying words,²⁰ which the Holy Ghost forbids through the prophet, no one will evermore trust. To summarize my opinion briefly: either Holy Scripture, which cannot be broken,²¹ is false and deceitful, and the truth of God disappears of itself; or in their own snares will the unjust be caught,²² and whoever prepares a pit for his brother, will fall into it first.²³ O Christ, 'Tis Thee I invoke, to Thee I appeal, Thou Who art truth unfading, Who wilt in the final day of reckoning, if circumstances warrant it, expose the untruth against Thee, unless with what judgment one judge, he will be judged, and with what measure one metes, it shall be measured to him again.²⁴ Verily it is the Spirit of Wisdom who says "that by what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented."²⁵ Cain, the first murderer, was murdered;²⁶ Pharaoh, striving to drown the enemy, was himself drowned;²⁷ Adonibezech experienced this law of retaliation;²⁸ Cham, while striving to impose slavery on others, was himself doomed to perpetual servitude;²⁹ so in every nation and every period, if one should glance over the history of the divine dispensation,

19 Cicero, De Inventione 1.2. 3; De Fin. 5.25. 74

20 Jer. 7.4

21 John 10.35

22 Prov. 11.6

23 Eccles. 10.8

24 Matt. 7.2

25 Wisdom 11.17

26 See note to Letter 174, line 91

27 Ex. 15.4

28 Judges 1.6

29 Gen. 9.25

he will clearly realize that there is always a definite conformity between the crime and the punishment thereof. Even we experience what I mean. Realizing our faults, we acknowledge adequate punishment, half expecting but not wishing that the next time the rod of reproach will be turned upon our tormentors and upon our enemies. For we would prefer that they return as sons rather than be chastized as slaves, which lies in store for them. For that clique is not reformed except by physical punishment. Ezechiel writes, and true it is, that the iniquity of the prophet is as that of the one who consults him.³⁰ And from the face of the Lord the lying spirit goes forth to be in the mouth of all the prophets of Achab and similar kings.³¹ So, too, the King of England, as say those who heard the appellatory decrees of the archisynagogus, has bishops like unto himself, who (as has been written of others) taught their tongues to speak lies, and they have laboured to commit iniquity.³² He allures others, and others allure him to destruction. You can imagine what a magnificent letter, how catholic in tone and devout, he recently wrote to the schismatic Bishop of Cologne,³³ taken from a rescript of that which is being sent to you, so that everyone will clearly see how true is all this presumptuous claptrap about the integrity and justice of your king. Lately, he also had some visitors from the faction of His Lordship of Montferrat³⁴ —pompous fakes—

30 Ezech. 14.10

31 3 Kings 22.22; 2 Par. 18.21

32 Jer. 9.5

33 Archbishop Rainold of Cologne, cf. Becket Materials 5.428

34 Marquis William of Montferrat whose wife was aunt both to Frederick Barbarossa and Leopold of Austria. Montferrat was an important fief in the kingdom of Italy.

namely, the Abbot of Cluses³⁵ and the Bishop-elect of Ivrea,³⁶ requesting one of the King's daughters for the son of the marquis,³⁷ and most resolutely promising in return that they will have the Archbishop of Canterbury deposed, if they can have the daughter they desire.³⁸ The king, with this in view, bade his agents go along with them—namely, John Gumin,³⁹ Ralph of Tameworth, and John of Oxford, against whom a decree of deposition from deanery was issued, confirmed by authority from the Supreme Pontiff and by rescript.⁴⁰ The rescript⁴¹ is, in fact, in the possession of the Archbishop, Primate of England and Legate Apostolic, whose decree aimed against the vandals of the Church of Canterbury and against the king's counsellors, His Holiness the Pope ratified and confirmed, even ordering its observance by the bishops in England and on the continent. For he was endowed with the office⁴² of apostolic legate, and was constituted the Primate of all England. He wrote regarding this matter to London and to all of you, and I believe that London has already received the letter.⁴³

35 Benedict, Abbot of Cluses, in Faucigny

36 Germanus, Bishop of Ivrea (Italy) 1158-1179

37 Conrad

38 Either Eleanor or Jane. Of the three daughters of Henry and Eleanor, Matilda married Duke Henry of Saxony in 1168; Eleanor married King Alphonse of Castile in 1169, and Jane, King William II of Sicily.

39 Archdeacon of Bath, and later Archbishop of Dublin, 1182-1212. For an account of John and the embassy cf. Somerset Essays, p. 90, by J. Armitage Robinson

40 Becket Materials 5.375. The sentence of deposition was confirmed by Pope Alexander on June 8, 1166

41 For this letter cf. Becket Materials 5.392

42 The letter was dated April 24, 1166. cf. Becket Materials 5.328

43 The sentence was announced to Foliot at St. Paul's on June 30, 1166. Cf. Becket Materials 5.417; but cf. Norgate (England under the Angevin Kings, 2.68) who argues that the date was January 25, 1167

relative to the appointment of a legate, and he will bring it to your attention. Furthermore, the aforementioned archbishop and legate by apostolic appointment has excommunicated and has ordered the excommunication of all those who stand guard at the ports to prevent admittance to anyone bound for the threshold of the Apostles out of mere devotion, or to anyone wishing to appeal to or having been summoned to the pope or his duly appointed substitute. He even enjoined upon all the bishops to have this condemnation promulgated throughout their dioceses. Although he attached no importance to the bishops' pronouncement against him, yet those who thought it carried some weight—as, the king, the bishops, and the nobles—making flesh their arm,⁴⁴ deemed it advisable to leave everything belonging to the archbishop intact, because no change should be made,⁴⁵ while the appeal is pending. But later, by order of the king, William,⁴⁶ the chaplain, and other clerics (to say nothing of the laymen) were apprehended and treated atrociously, while the church property was confiscated. Then the Archbishop denounced⁴⁷ even the king to His Holiness the Pope, charging him with having infringed upon the canons and with having incurred excommunication by his deed, unless, perchance, the Apostolic See should consider ecclesiastical laws comparable to civil laws, which, according to Anacharsis, the Scythian,⁴⁸ are likened to spider webs: they hold the fly captive, but larger winged prey they let loose. His Holiness, however,

44 Jer. 17.5

45 Justinian, Digest 49.7

46 William de Ver, Archbishop Thomas' chaplain

47 For this letter cf. Becket Materials 6.47

48 Val. Max. 7.2, ext. 14; cf. Plutarch, "Solon" 5

had prescribed⁴⁹ that the Archbishops of Bourges,⁵⁰ of Rouen,⁵¹ of Tours,⁵² of Bordeaux,⁵³ and of York⁵⁴ observe, and in their provinces insist on the observance of the condemnation passed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, legate of the Apostolic See, against the vandals of the Church of Canterbury and their accomplices. Yet, he appended to that letter⁵⁵ that he was not issuing an order for the excommunication of the king personally, nor did he forbid it, because he ought not deprive him of his authority, especially since the king repeatedly overtaxed the endurance of the Church. Even under pain of excommunication he ordered that all who, by the king's command, acquired the revenue and property of the archbishop's clerks, should make full restoration of everything to those who were robbed, for a king engaged in piracy can concede such right to no one. I used pressure enough to prevent the Archbishop of Canterbury from issuing that decree, but the suggestion of the others prevailed. They urged him to make use of the rights and the privilege bestowed upon him, while the pope was still living and especially since the king's fierceness and brutality irked his patience all the more, for it was a known fact that the king looked forward to the pope's death. On the other hand, if these mandates should come to you, you should fear no danger because of the transfer of those things which are taken from us and deposited with you; because whatever will happen to our

49 For this letter cf. Becket Materials 5.352

50 Pierre de la Chastre, Archbishop of Bourges, 1141-1171

51 Rotrou de Beaumont, Archbishop of Rouen, 1165-1183

52 Jédec, Archbishop of Tours, 1157-1173

53 Bertrand du Montault, Archbishop of Bordeaux, 1162-1173

54 Roger de Pont l'Eveque, Archbishop of York, 1154-1181

55 Becket Materials 5.316-318, 343

possessions according to your good pleasure, we shall deem it acceptable and providential. Retaining my personal belongings and rights, I consider the loss of the chattel of little consequence, as it may be of use to you. We have pleaded your innocence before His Lordship of Canterbury, and it is satisfactorily established, so you need not worry about anyone forcing a contrary issue. He apprehends and trembles at the dangers that are yours, and prefers that you, in the company of the others, rejoice in the Lord rather than be needlessly and shamefully crushed by the world. Consider both sides. Reflect on his advice and ours and comply with the better—that is, if it should become manifest to you, which would be more pleasing to God. But if that, too, is indefinite or vague, faith must be followed, because what is not of faith is sin.⁵⁶ He sends you, therefore, by apostolic authority a summons, binding by virtue of obedience and of jeopardy to your rank, to appear before him within forty days from receipt of same, setting aside every other engagement and postponement. There you will hear the decision of His Holiness the Pope, and will discuss the needs of the Church. But you will, of course, use this mandate, if you should deem it expedient; if not, you may, with the consent of the one issuing it, disregard the mandate. For we have not baited a trap for you, as others have for one of their own by their careless attention. But we entrusted the letter to a messenger to forward it to Master Baldwin,⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Rom. 14.23

⁵⁷ Archdeacon of Totnes; later successively Abbot of Ford, Bishop of Worcester, Archbishop of Canterbury

the Archdeacon, or to Robert,⁵⁸ Giles' son and my brother, and if you should care to obtain or peruse the letter later, let it be as you wish. But be assured that, unless the king surrenders William, the chaplain, a sentence of excommunication will be issued against him. Nor will he henceforth receive any consideration at all, if he should presume to attempt any such things.

58 John's half-brother

John to Archbishop Thomas Becket

SUMMARY: John advises Thomas to summon some of his suffragans from England for a conference on the condition of the Church, and relates the news of the siege of Fougères. From events narrated in the letter it is evident that it was written near the end of July, 1166.

Although it is obvious that bishops, ¹ inclined to disobedience and shepherds feeding themselves, ¹ motivated by love of ease and comfort, and the fear of losing their temporal goods, are irreligious and in wicked spirit decline to admit their lack of faith; ² although at every transgression of the law and every encroachment upon the Church, they exclaim, "Bravo! Bravo!" ³ and in other respects they harbor a design of shielding themselves, under guise of an appeal they display, against all your decrees and even against apostolic prescriptions, in so far as they annoy them, nevertheless, as attested in the case of your own suffragans, I think you should call some of them, if possible, to hear the demands of the pope, to confer with you on the state of the Church in Canterbury, or for any other reason you might deem more appropriate. For, since they might have already made their appeal, ⁴ which has, perhaps, now already been brought to the attention of His Holiness, and since they may show allegiance to their king in all matters, regardless, I do not see why you should shun a discussion with them, or even with the king. For I believe that for fear of the labor

1 Ezech. 34.2, 8

2 Ibid., 33.8

3 Ps. 34.21, 25; 34.16; 69.4; Ezech. 25.3

4 After the censures of Vezelay on June 12, 1166, Henry had ordered the bishops of England to appeal to the Pope, and in June they met in London and decided to hold a council of all the bishops and abbots at Northampton on July 6; here they decided to appeal to the Pope.

and expense entailed, the imminent dangers involved, and the uncertain outcome of the issue, they will devote themselves more energetically for the peace and reconciliation of the Church, because everyone of them, in my opinion, is loathe to undergo the ordeal of so many irksome discomforts. And if they should cross the channel, peace⁴ may again be restored to the Church, perhaps, by the mediation of the Empress,⁵ or with God's help, your case will be left in a better position. For, as they say, the time is at hand when the Eagle of the broken pact, according to the prophecy of Merlin,⁶ will gild the bridle which is given to its bear or is now being made in the heart of Britain. Because, as I learned for certain after I had written the letter, in the campaign of the Fougères faction⁷ he suffered a severe blow, which is deplored even to this day by the French sympathizers in our midst, some of whom have been apprehended and others wounded, while in their thirst for filthy lucre, they strove to appear animated above all the others. I had heard this once before in the palace of most devout King of the French, when at Laon I had been nobly and respectfully entertained by him. But not readily do I put my trust in newsmongers, although some credence might be given to the fact that Count

5 Matilda, the mother of Henry II

6 Geoffrey of Monmouth, Hist. Reg. Brit. 7.3: "apri igitur dentibus accinctus cacumina montium transcendet...Dabitur maxillis eius fraenum, quod in Americo sinu fabricabitur. Deaurabit illud aquila rupti foederis, et tertia nidificatione gaudebit."

7 In the summer of 1166 Henry conducted a campaign against Ralf of Fougères and other discontented Breton barons. Cf. R. Diceto (Stubbs) 1.329. On June 28, Henry was near Fougères. Cf. Becket Materials 5.421, and on July 13-14 he was besieging Fougères itself. Cf. Eyton, Itin. Hen. II, 2.96. The revolt was finally crushed with the capture of Ralf and Hugh of Chester at Dol on August 26, 1173. Cf. Norgate, The Angevin Kings 2.148

Robert⁸ had been unable to conceal the anxiety he felt. It is even asserted that the hungry besiege the gluttonous; and the needy attack those who have their fill of all possessions, and that the position of those beset is more secure than that of the aggressor. Ralph,⁹ as they remonstrate, for example, reinforced his fort most effectively, and laid waste whatever provisions he found round about. Nor may one without abundant supplies proceed to the more remote parts to seek subsistence, because the aforementioned Ralph had a group of most select troops, hindered their inroads with most annoying barriers, and with spurs he goaded their horses to throw their riders. Against their troops, they say, he skirmished frequently. They add that he was allied by mutual pact with the most powerful nobles of Brittany excepting Count Eudo.¹⁰ Should it not have been possible to check and restrain this exceptionally wild boar¹¹ or what is the next thing to one, who feeds and treads upon the vineyard of the Lord? I interpret that prophecy in this way, of course, waiting for the eagle to gild those adversities with some kind of adornment; unless perchance, our Alexander,¹² who is related to Merlin and is a more far-sighted diviner of his oracles, should hold some other opinion. So much for this. As for the rest, you would do me a great favor if you extend my

8 Count Robert of Dreux, brother of Louis VII

9 Ralf of Fougères

10 Of Perhoët

11 Ps. 79.14

12 Alexander the Welshman. Cf. Herbert Bosham's "Catalogus Eruditorum,"
Becket Materials 3.528

best wishes to His Lordship of Lyons,¹³ who I understand is living with you.¹⁴ I am very anxious to see him. I would likewise be grateful to you, if you should write me in detail about all that goes on about you.

13 Guichard, Archbishop of Lyons, 1165-1180, formerly Abbot of Pontigny

14 I.e. Pontigny, where Thomas was living with the Cistercians; Guichard was unable to take possession of his see until November 11, 1167. Cf. letter 231, line 128.

John to Archbishop Thomas Becket

SUMMARY: John writes his opinion of the letter which the English clergy had sent to Archbishop Thomas and advises Thomas how to deal with the bishops. He adds that there can be but little hope of help from the French king and the Roman curia. The letter may be placed in the latter part of July, 1166, for the bishops had appealed against their archbishop at a meeting held at Northampton July 6.

I re-read more carefully the letter¹ sent you recently by your brothers and colleagues in the episcopacy. They addressed it as sons of the Church of Canterbury, writing to comfort their father after the long and weary exile imposed upon you and your household, and to relieve the tension in the Church. From a careful study of the letter I am quite convinced that it had been composed by the counsel of an Achitophel,² having perhaps returned from hell to destroy the faithful, and through the instrumentality of a Doeg,³ who still thirsts for the blood of priests, still pursues and persecutes the soul of Christ, living in the faith and charity of His elect. For they twist everything in such a way that it is evident to anyone, even an imbecile, that the sentiments of the letter are far from popular opinion and even farther from the truth. For all this flattery and colorful painting seek to justify, under pretext of appeal, the destruction of Nobe, the city of priests (which means barking and signifies the careful watchfulness of the shepherds of the Church)⁴ so that after this conspiracy of theirs no

1 For this letter of the clergy cf. Becket Materials 5.408

2 2 Kings 15, 16, 17

3 1 Kings 22

4 Jerome, De Nominibus Hebraeorum, Migne, 23.795

one in the Lord's flock might dare to be watchful and repulse the fury of approaching wolves by his preaching. Solomon says in the proverbs that "Better is the end of a speech than the beginning."⁵ But actually the end of this one is worse than the beginning. Indeed, at the outset they tender you their good wishes and promise you obedience and do it sincerely, so that contrary to God's commandment they do not speak good with their neighbor and evil is in their heart;⁶ but immediately after they weave such unpleasant but (Thank God!) untrue tales, which the pirates' prisoner has been forced "to hasten to with his neck sticking out."⁷ With these they condone the cause of the rogue, calling good evil and evil good,⁸ and then by way of a conclusion, they seem to make the inference that "One who opposes Caesar is guilty of death."⁹ Did not Judas, the traitor, prefigured by Achitophel, leave an example of treacherous parricide to the Jews who took part in the death of Christ and, likewise, to our own scribes and Pharisees? Did he not with humble greeting thus approach Christ, honoring the Lord and Master, saying, "Hail Rabbi"¹⁰ to the One Whom he betrayed by a word and a kiss? And thereupon with the swords and clubs¹¹ of the soldiers, on which they relied, when the disciples had fled and were dispersed, Judas dragged Him to the chief priests that He might there be accused and convicted by false witnesses that Christ abrogated the laws

5 Eccles. 7.9

6 Ps. 27.5

7 Hor., Sat. 1.3. 89

8 Is. 5.20

9 John 19.12

10 Matt. 24.49

11 Ibid., 47

of their fathers and forefathers, opposed the laws of Caesar, because He taught that worship must be rendered to God without deference to Caesar,¹² and that He appeared guilty of sacrilege because He spoke, railed, and even fought against iniquity. For they say (but with what sort of conscience God will discern and pass judgment), "we do not claim that His Majesty has never committed any transgressions, but we confidently assert and state that he is always prepared to make amends."¹³ Is not their face that of a harlot, harder than stone¹⁴ when they insist unblushingly and even with confidence (as they say) on the innocence of a man, whose malicious knavery is known, proclaimed, and hated by the Christian world? He was summoned, it is said, by the Bishop of London¹⁵ and the Bishop of Hereford,¹⁶ to whom he made the pledge of rendering adequate justice (as they claim). Is not the Bishop of London the one who first disrupted the unity of the Church in England? Everyone is aware of that. And allured by the ambition of becoming the archbishop, which very many suspected, was he not the prime instigator and the one who threw fuel on these fires of discord? Does not the very style prove that Achitophel and Doeg, with whose spirit he was imbued, formulated this letter, after he had inserted what was prompted by his spirit? And from our knowledge of the situation his spirit is evidently not inferior to either one of them in such matters. For even his language betrays him.¹⁷ Nor do I give heed to the lies which he dared disseminate

12 Matt. 22.21

13 Becket Materials 5.411

14 Jer. 3.3

15 Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, 1163-1188

16 Robert de Melun, Bishop of Hereford, 1163-1167

17 Matt. 26.75

regarding your advancement, for I was present: I heard and detested them. He was the only one who was not pleased with the news of your election, because before all else (as is and may be proved from manifold testimony) he aspired for your place; though not for long did he dare grumble, since the others chided him for his ambition and arrogance. Whatever his intention might have been, on whose conscience may God pass judgment, very conspicuous was he among the electors, and after the final ballot he applauded more than almost everyone else. What may I say about the Bishop of Hereford, except that at one time "the mere shadow of not too mighty name he stood,"¹⁸ before his real worth was recognized. But now under guise of his personality, because he is looked upon as a learned man by those who are ignorant of the meaning of learning or know not the man, the rogues hope to gloss over their own evil designs, so that whatever this savant and venerable bishop approves might seem justifiable. Therefore, to answer both of them or to assent to their opinion is equivalent to conforming to the viewpoint of the Bishop of London, as if abiding by the decision of Caesar and Bibulus. You remember the words of the Moral

Philosopher;

In Caesar's year, not Bibulus', an act
took place of late;
For naught do I remember done in Bibulus'
consulate.¹⁹

But with what effrontery they spoke, and that their words might not go to

18 Lucan, Phar. l.135

19 Suetonius, "Caesar" 20

the wind, and even wrote what was known to everyone to be manifestly untrue, that the king, whom everyone understands to be most impulsive, "was quite satisfied when censured, and even deemed it a gracious favor, when admonished to make amends for any offence he might have committed against God!"²⁰ "Might have committed," they say, as if there were any doubt about the transgressions against God committed by a man, who attacks the freedom of the Church, puts his ancestral perversities before the Gospel of Christ and the commendations of the fathers and (not to mention you and the clerks whom he banished unjustly) who, not by ruthless legislation but by his frenzy, sent into exile young women, infants in their cradle, and harmless individuals devoid of all comforts; who enkindled and fanned anew the fury of a schism, at this time almost dormant, and having revived a tempest, which had for the most part already subsided, he floundered the apostolic ship with Christ, as far as it was in his power, and even now persists in doing so. What, I ask, do they consider criminal, who point with pride to the guiltlessness in this case? Or what need of proof for these things, of which the world is well aware, which the Church in her ordeals and afflictions suffers unremittingly, which from our routine experience of this state of affairs is clearer than day? But if "to be censured he considers as a gracious favor," it is evident that they are more treacherous, who plighting body and soul to His Majesty's service, allow him to stray so grossly from his course. Surely there is fulfilled in them this

day that foreboding saying: "Thy prophets, O Israel, were like foxes in the deserts."²¹ For those who hold the place of the prophets in the Church are constructing innumerable snares of their own deceit for the destruction of that Church. First they despatch their honeyed phrases regarding your health, professing their loyal fealty, promising assistance and consideration, so that through these meshes of sophistry and misuse of legal phrases for circumventing the law they may finally conclude, "He is guilty of death, crucify, crucify him, and do not save this one for us but Barabbas!"²² Lo! How solicitous they are for their Father's welfare! With what religious devotion they pledge the fealty due Him! With what anxiety they yearn for the restoration of peace between priest and principality! That all these angles have been frequently mentioned to you and to everyone acquainted with the cause and the story of our banishment, I do not doubt; but reflecting upon the enormity of their faithlessness and trickery, of their effrontery and duplicity, really I could restrain neither my impulse nor my pen. For even

Though nature say me nay, indignation will prompt
my verse ²³

against the craftiness and boldness of those, whose

all vice is at its acme ²⁴

so that one can add or conceive of hardly anything to augment their

21 Ezech. 13.4

22 Luke 23.21

23 Juvenal 1.79

24 Ibid., 1.149

atrocities, however cunning and adept posterity has been in devising new methods of perpetrating evil. But why tarry on this subject? Let God give them their just due, and surely, He will repay in full measure those who perpetrate or espouse such an outrage, unless truth itself changes into falsehood (which is impossible). But, as it seemed to me, you very discreetly and very elegantly replied²⁵ to their letter and to their malicious designs, and with very forceful arguments you broke down, as you would a cob-web, the cunning logic which they had long schemed and evolved. And although a letter, which deals only with essentials, be well developed, yet one point, which is both true and well known, I would wish to impress more particularly upon you—namely, that you make it clear that the patience you exercised in silence all this time and the great precautions you took to attain peace were rejected. Ever so often in deep humility you invited the king by correspondence and by the pope's legates, or by your own emissaries. Or you made use of his own mother, who should have been trusted, or the bishops on the continent or those in England, the Knights of Templars and the Knights Hospitaller; you even tried it through the instrumentality of the king and the nobility of France, and finally, you went in person to confer with him—and all to no avail. Furthermore, since your bishops write and confidently assert that he "is prepared to render complete justice and to make due satisfaction, and is even willing

25 For the archbishop's letter cf. Becket Materials 5.490; also, 459 and 478

to do more, if it be necessary,²⁶ it seems advisable to me and to some other friends of yours that you summon the bishops, both the ones who personally signed the letter and the Bishop of Salisbury,²⁷ who complains of an unjustified suspension, and the Bishop of Worcester,²⁸ who is the first product of your episcopal activity, and also any others whose presence you might deem useful, and then verify the truth of their testimony, of their claims, and of their writings. But if they are summoned by virtue of obedience, perhaps they will not appear, although no appeal ever sanctions disobedience. But your case will be more evident, if their deceit and malicious designs should be uncovered. Nevertheless, I do not think that all the bishops, just as not all the pastors lawfully established in the dioceses and included in the fictitious preface,²⁹ assented to this atrocity, since it is certain or at least seems to be probable that in so vast a Church there are found eighteen bishoprics or at least those ten, in consideration for whom God, for the time being, shows mercy to this island, that it might not be utterly annihilated like its sisters,³⁰ whose loose morality and irreligion it imitates. For even though some quite rightly might keep silent, and for some particular reason disguise their true intentions, yet, I believe that some of the bishops and many

26 Becket Materials 5.412

27 Jocelin de Balliol, 1142-1184

28 Roger Fitz, Count Bishop of Worcester, 1164-1179. He was the first bishop consecrated by Archbishop Thomas. Cf. Becket Materials 3.259

29 Venerabili patri et domino Thomae, Deo gratia Cantuariensi archiepiscopo, suffraganei eiusdem ecclesiae episcopi, et personae per eorundem dioceses locis variis constitutae, debitam subiectionem et obedientiam.

30 Sodom and Gomorrha, cf. Gen. 18-19

of the pastors, in the sincerity of faith and their belief in good works, hope and wait for the kingdom of God. For example, Joseph was found faithful in the house of Pharaoh,³¹ Lot remained righteous in Sodom,³² Chusai was usefully employed in the schemes of Absalom,³³ Daniel virtuously ruled in Babylon,³⁴ and Abdias in union with Achab and Jezabel concealed with anguish what he could not change.³⁵ The prophets of the Lord hidden in caves he supplied with healthful nourishment, and merited the mercy of God and the grace of prophecy because of his extensive patience. Hence, if the chaos³⁶ between us and our country should permit it, I consider it advantageous for you to send this letter of yours to the individual bishops and to the larger churches so that you might strengthen the faith of the wavering and stimulate the good-will of everyone. Even repeatedly with messages in the spirit of gentleness and compassion you may induce individual bishops to a change of heart and mindfulness of their position. And in everything be careful that nothing on your part may offer any semblance of arrogance or despotism. Regarding this latter point, I learned from those who claim they know the Bishop of Hereford more intimately that during his student days³⁷ he was a glutton for praise and that he loved glory as much as he seemed to despise wealth. Hence, it is their opinion that nothing could influence him more than having the school

31 Gen. 39

32 Ibid., 19

33 2 Kings 15-17

34 Dan. 5

35 3 Kings 18

36 Luke 16.26

37 Metalog. 2.10 ed. Webb, pp. 78-79

masters and the religious, such as the Prier of St. Victor³⁸ and other acquaintances he had in France, write to him. In this way they might prompt and stir up the lethargy of the one they thought would redeem Israel,³⁹ so that now he might prove himself to be the kind of bishop he was wont to imagine himself in his school days, and that casting aside the vices he reprimands in others, he might regain the reputation he had lost. The same advice holds true for the Bishop of Worcester. Yet, I do not place much stock in them or in the King of France, for as with other matters mentioned in confidence, when it came to the point of greatest importance, I presumed too much. Nor do I have much confidence in the Church at Rome, of whose habits and requirements we are aware. Surely, His Holiness is a saintly and conscientious man, and has as his imitator His Lordship Albert,⁴⁰ as we are told by many; but so numerous and dire are his obligations and so sordid the greed and laxity of the Romans, that at times he makes use of the freedom of his authority to concede by dispensation what is considered expedient for the state, even though it might be disadvantageous to religion. Therefore, I am wary about waiting for the day of the appeal, and when it does come, I fear that those who love bribes will not run after rewards.⁴¹ For I am considering the short span of time and comparing our resources with theirs. As far as we are concerned, the

38 Richard; For his letter to the bishop of. Rerum Gall. et Franc.
SS. 16.264

39 Luke 24.21

40 Cardinal of St. Laurence in Lucina, afterwards Pope Gregory VIII,
1187 .

41 Is. 1.23

enemies of Christ and the Church have decided to smite us and bury us with our spoils; as far as they are concerned, if for the time being vexation be given them for their consideration,⁴² perhaps because of the trouble and expense entailed, they will be more inclined to renew peace between themselves and us. For what increases⁴ their ire and effrontery is the fact that while we are working single handed they continue to loll in the lap of luxury and ease. And since we lack human assistance, let us strain every nerve to seek refuge in God that He might ward off from us the evils which beset and threaten us, and that His truth might compass us with the shield of its mercy.⁴³

42 Ibid., 28.19

43 Ps. 90.5

John to Archbishop Thomas Becket

SUMMARY: In response to Thomas' appeal for counsel John advises him not to invoke ecclesiastical censures against Henry and his realm, but to work for a reconciliation through the Empress Matilda and the bishops of Normandy. He also advises the archbishop how to treat with the English bishops who had appealed against him to Rome. The letter was written late in July, for the bishops had appealed on July 6 and John promises to visit Thomas at Pontigny after the first of August, 1166.

John of Salisbury to Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, Health and Strength in Him who bringeth to nought the counsels of nations,¹ quasheth the ventures of the wicked, and overthroweth the powers:

A short time ago I received your fatherly letter, in which you urge me to send back to you my opinion, after examining the letters² of the Bishop of Salisbury,³ of John of Oxford,⁴ of Master Hervey,⁵ and of Lord Nicholas.⁶ The messenger, however, handed me neither John's nor Hervey's letter, which I am most anxious to see, but it is easy enough to gather John's attitude from your letter and from that of the Bishop of Salisbury and his chapter.⁷ But what was indicated to you by the bishop-elect of Chartres⁸ I do not know, because in his letter nothing more is mentioned

1 Ps. 32.10

2 For the letters of Bishop Jocelin of Salisbury and Nicholas cf. Becket Materials 5.413, 418

3 Jocelin de Balliol, 1142-1184

4 Dean of Salisbury and later Bishop of Norwich, 1175-1200

5 A cleric of Becket. He acted as a messenger for Becket and died while on a mission to the papal court, but the date is unknown.

6 Guest master of the monastery of Mont St. Jacques, near Rouen

7 For the Chapter's letter cf. Becket Materials 5.416

8 William of Champagne, Bishop of Chartres, 1165-1176, Archbishop of Sens, 1168-1176 and Archbishop of Rheims, 1176-1202. John succeeded him as Bishop of Chartres, 1176-1180.

than that you have confidence in Vincent. Therefore, I lack, in my understanding of the situation, facts which I desire most and which are most worth knowing—namely, how your transaction turned out with Master Hervey, and what assistance will be offered us by the Apostolic See, for whose sake we are undergoing these afflictions. For, according to that will it be necessary to pattern the security of our plan, so that according to the parable⁹ in the Gospel, whoever intends to build a tower, first sits down and makes a reckoning, and if he is about to enter war with a king sums up the number of troops at his disposal, lest the hasty and thoughtless grandeur of their magnificent enterprise and pomp make them a laughing stock and subject them to disgrace and bankruptcy. Nor would I say this because I am of the opinion that the Church of Rome will serve as the pillar of our hope; on the contrary, He alone is the pillar, upon Whom even the Church is established, and in Whom every endeavor which is faithfully rooted blossoms into fruit and culminates in glory. Let Him be the support of our conscience, and man will not overwhelm us; nor need we fear the threats of oppressors, the snares of those wise according to the flesh, the perfidy of traitors, the vacillation of a judge, the avarice and inconstancy of those who in everything belong to them seek the things of the flesh not the things of Christ.¹⁰ For, as the Scriptures most faithfully teach us "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the just

⁹ Luke 14.28

¹⁰ Phili. 2.21

trusts in it, and is delivered from every anguish."¹¹ Therefore, since you request counsel from me, insignificant though I be, I give you now the same advice as ever: that we place our hope, wholly and entirely, upon Him, Who can deliver us from the "troubles which have found us exceedingly."¹² As He rightfully and mercifully wishes, according to the admonition of Aggeus, let us "set our hearts to consider our ways,"¹³ and bringing forth fruit worthy of penance,¹⁴ let us in joy take a drink of this salutary bitterness from the Hand of the Lord, Whose bounty we have abused and have so often to our own destruction delighted in the deadly sweetness of the prosperous. For this is a grace¹⁵ from One, Who thus knows how to sanctify His friends, that after they have been tested by numerous tribulations, He leads them into the Kingdom,¹⁶ more purified, more glorious, and more strengthened. Should we glance through the course of all ages, who of the elect, from the beginning, do we find flitted about from one pleasure to another? Who, do we read, basked in the sunshine of the world and gambled about freely in it and now glories in the fullness of fruit and reigns with Christ? When the spirit has in this way been aggravated by penance, strengthened by patience, mellowed and lifted up by hope and prayer, I believe that nothing is more advisable, according to the way the situation stands, than to follow the suggestion of Nicholas, who, I am confident, has

11 Prov. 18.10

12 Ps. 45.2

13 Aggeus 1.5

14 Matt. 3.8; Luke 3.8

15 1 Peter 2.19

16 Acts 14.21

the spirit of God. Write to the Empress,¹⁷ to the archbishop,¹⁸ and to the bishops of Normandy, telling them that you always had been and are ready to relax the canon law regarding censures, to return to your see, and to retrieve your possessions and those of your clerks, provided that safety be assured you and them and that the Church be put back in the same state of freedom she had before the storm of this atrocity shook it. I feel that you must use all the more moderation in writing and in demanding your terms, as I am convinced the minds of the adversaries of the Church have been so hardened that they will admit of absolutely no terms except those which would spell destruction for the freedom of the Church and the degradation of your reputation and that of all of us. Yet, the letter will be valuable to you in this way, that it may serve as testimony for you against the bishops who malign you and your lenient measures¹⁹ will be broadcast to everyone, which is most helpful to our cause. If they present this letter to the king—I hope not—and he consents to all the terms, even to the clause assuring our safety, I hardly think you should rely too much on his word, unless the Empress and the Archbishop intervene and the king, by public pronouncement and open letter, orders your protection and that of the clerks. For what if God has decided to trouble you with this anxiety of living in the midst of caitiffs and of being oppressed by those who seek your life to take it away?²⁰ Did not the

17 Matilda

18 Retrou de Beaumont, Archbishop of Rouen, 1165-1183

19 Phili, 4.5

20 2 Kings 19.10, 14

prophet Gad,²¹ for like reason, admonish David to return when he fled from the face of Saul? Did he not direct him to Juda that the snares of his enemies might avail him in the practice of virtue, and that the traits of his excellence might thus shine forth more resplendently? But, perhaps, someone will frown upon the rashness of this counsel, exposing, as it does, your head to the sword of your enemy. Perhaps, he will say that it would be better and more prudent to wait until you have done penance, because you are as yet unprepared for martyrdom because of the consciousness of your sins. To which I retort; no one is unfit for martyrdom except he who is unwilling to suffer for the faith and for the works of faith; whether he be young or old, Jew or Gentile, Christian or infidel, man or woman—no discrimination is made; for, whoever undergoes persecution for justice is a martyr—that is, he is a witness to justice, and advocate to the cause of Christ. But where does this lead? I am inclined to believe and have a presentiment that the king will not progress so far that there will be any need of discussing our security. And since that stalwart pillar of the Church²² claims that whatever you do oozes with arrogance and anger, you must disprove this contention by a display of equanimity in word and deed as well as in your attitude and your bearing, though this is not worth much in the sight of God, unless the equanimity proceeds from the sanctuary of a good conscience. Anent the Salisbury affair, I remember what I heard in regard to the bishop and his Church concerning the illegal admission of

21 1 Kings 22.5

22 Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, 1163-1188

the dean,²³ when I was with you and the assembly of bishops. They charged the bishop and his church with violation of the apostolic mandate because of their scheme. If, as provided by law, deceit finds no protectors amongst men, much less will it find protection with God, Who "will destroy deceitful tongues"²⁴ and "the prudence of the prudent He will reject."²⁵ And as it has been brought to my attention from the city and I remember having written to you His Holiness has already approved of your decree,²⁶ and has, in fact, justified his grievance. I shall not refrain from expressing my opinion concerning the bishops' appeal: since they do not care to be free, I fear their serfdom will last forever; and rightly so, because when the year of remission²⁷ was at hand—namely, the year of grace inviting the Church to her freedom—after six years of confinement to clay and brick,²⁸ they prefer, because some of them had married wives and are constrained by their love for them,²⁹ others had joint-tenancy over very many yoke of oxen; others store away their money,³⁰ but do not know for whom it is being gathered; some have given themselves up to one pleasure and others to another, with variety in abundance, and yet, with

23 John of Oxford had been irregularly elected to the deanery of Salisbury; Thomas had excommunicated him. Cf. letter 174

24 Ps. 11.4

25 I Cor. 1.19

26 Thomas' excommunication of John of Oxford

27 Duet. 15.2, 9

28 Judith 5.10

29 Luke 14.15

30 Ps. 38.7

the yoke of their own particular vices choking them, they still preferred, I repeat, to be kept in their old slavery and have their ears perforated with the awl of eternal subservience,³¹ whereby they admit their allegiance to the enslaving habits of the depraved customs, rather than to wish to escape into the open air of liberty. Do you not recall that two tribes and a half,³² because they had many flocks of cattle and very great possessions, did not allot their inheritance among the brothers, that is, collectively in the land of promise, but not yet having crossed the Jordan, they tarried in the territory of the Amorrites? Does not the kindly Jesus interpret this in the Gospel, affirming by figure of speech that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven?"³³ Of course, these who were loathe to cross the Jordan, later built an altar of contradiction and scandal,³⁴ just as our bishops who, under pretext of the law, seek to evade the formality and force of justice. But these, too, Jesus, Who triumphed over the nations through the instrumentality of the bard He had sent out, will recall to unity and to the practise of virtue, to the observance of the law and to a respect for justice, so that they might feel, say, and do what is right before God, and armed with the exhortation of Moses, that is, his divine law, they may precede their brethren until the inheritance belonging to

31 Deut. 15.17; Exod. 21.6

32 Num. 32.33; 34.14

33 Matt. 19.24

34 Josue 22.9 ff.

Christ—namely, His Church, be delivered from the hands of the enemy, and after glorious conquests over sin, be firmly established on earth. Meanwhile, if you are called an agitator in the Church by the Bishop of Hereford,³⁵ who according to some was destined to deliver Israel³⁶ in contempt for the world and skill of letters,³⁷ which should be his in abundance as claimed by those who know not letters or the man, he and his accomplices can be retorted with the words of Elias chided in like manner, saying to Achab: "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house, who have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and have followed Baalim."³⁷ Since I urge you to lenient measures, I would not wish this retort to be made to the bishops by your own lips, but by one of his own sympathizers or by some religious. He could reproach the bishops with the fact that they are worshipers of Jezabel, which is interpreted to mean a consort,³⁸ which is the term for a harlot, or fruitless bauble, because after the fashion of harlots, who attend orgies and frequent inns, they expose themselves first to sensuality and later to every kind of depravity, and they gain nothing but baubles, with which the bishops themselves are thoroughly covered, so that in the twinkling of an eye they, likewise, disappear with all their vanities. What, therefore, could you reply to those cynics, or I might say, to those calumniators of yours? I would

35 Robert of Melun, 1163-1167

36 Luke 24.21

37 3 Kings 28.18

38 For these interpretations cf. Jerome, De Nominibus Hebraeorum Migne 23.821

suggest just what that very saintly and most gentle David hurled at the carelessness of Abner (which translated means father's lamp), when a drowsy guard left Saul, who was sleeping in the camp,³⁹ open to his enemies, that in reproach to his sloth they took the spear of the king and the cup of water which was at his head and carried them away. Therefore, let the Bishop of Hereford be told that he is the keeper of his Saul,⁴⁰ as they say, and the Bishop of London⁴¹ too, who is known to have accepted this sentry-post, when he moved from his see to the other; I say, let both of them be told: "Art thou not a man? And who is like thee in Israel? Why hast thou not kept thy lord the king As the Lord liveth, you are the sons of death, you have not kept your master, the Lord's anointed."⁴² For where was the "king's spear" (meaning the straightening of justice) and the "cup of water" (namely, a vessel of law undefiled) "which was at his head" for cooling his body and refreshing him in his thirst? But they, too, in the words of Abner, will incessantly reply to your anxiety and reproach, saying, "Who art thou, that criest, and disturbest the king,"⁴³ as if saying, "Grant that the king with us sleep in contempt of the commandments and in the persecution of the saints, that we might show him forth resting thus in disdain of the divine law, and that we may lead him to a sleep of death." But you, who are mindful of the Lord, be not

39 1 Kings 26

40 l.e. Henry II

41 Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, 1163-1188 and former Bishop of Hereford, 1148-1163

42 1 Kings 26.15-16

43 Ibid., 26.14

silent⁴⁴ and grant them not a lull, but pursue them, as the Apostle says, "Reprove, entreat, rebuke, in season and out of season"⁴⁵—that is, if the matter be serviceable, even out of season. Yet, under guise of an appeal, moreover, all will defend themselves, ready to concur in any kind of defiance, waiting meanwhile for either the pope's death, which they yearn for, or yours, or some other casualty which might promote their malicious designs. For, has the king ever kept aloof of anyone excommunicated? Have not the prelates and almost all the clergy sided with him against the Lord and His anointed one?⁴⁶ Yet, I believe that there are some in the hierarchy, who steadfastly persevere with you, I should say, with God and the Church, in their prayers and supplications, even though with the opponents and oppressors of the Church they may keep in personal and verbal contact in many matters. So Jonathan⁴⁷ actually dwelt with his father Saul, but in all sincerity of spirit he lived in exile with David; so, too, when Chusai,⁴⁸ the Arachite, was hurrying along into the wilderness, David sent him back into the company of his son, intent on killing his father, choosing that together with his friends Sadoc and Abiathar, the priests, Chusai might with profit intermingle among the foe, rather than uselessly remain with David in the desert. I do not doubt that some of the bishops and a very large number of the clergy stand for divine

44 Is. 62, 7

45 2 Tim. 4.2

46 Ps. 2.2

47 1 Kings 20

48 2 Kings 15.33

righteousness and side with you, but they hide their true colors, either of necessity or because of their lack of courage. For, who would suppose that all the stars fall from heaven at the same time? Refraining from anything else and admitting that the counsel you seek exceeds the powers of my meagre mental endowment, I urgently press upon you this warning that you pass no sentence of excommunication against His Majesty the King, nor an interdict against those in the kingdom who are not to blame. I have already determined upon that which I suggested to you in confidence at Chateau-Thierry, and I do not retract my statement. You can remember what it is, because you held the same point of view. Nevertheless, I make this addition that regarding these matters and others which sprang up later, confer with the Bishop of Poitiers,⁴⁹ investigate the viewpoint of other shrewd men, and obtain the suggestions of Hervey,⁵⁰ if meanwhile the Lord should bring him back. But above all, rely on prayer and other exercises of Christian discipline, commending your strife to our Lord through the medium of the saints. And thus go ahead with that, whatever it may be, which the Holy Ghost prompts through His instruments, the men of faith and of wisdom, and whatever the Holy Ghost might require in your case. I am convinced that you also have the spirit of God, because we must believe that He, who has expended His energy without recompense, will grant counsel to the deserving in the moment of need. Hence, I do not urge you, as our

49 John Belmeis, 1162-1181

50 Cf. footnote 5, p.45

mutual father-superior⁵¹ had been wont to say, that you should put away in a shoe whatever advice our Lord inspires in your heart and that you should prefer the opinions of others less concerned about your case. I am planning, with the help of God, to visit you immediately after the feast of Saint Peter,⁵² and then in a heart-to-heart discussion we can clarify for one another many things, which cannot be done on a sheet of paper. Of what you did at Vezelay,⁵³ the Archbishop⁵⁴ and the church of Rheims have been informed many days ago, and I do not consider it worthwhile to mention the reports that have gone around. If he is disliked by the Knights Templars, I think some artful dodging should be done, because he has been wont to rush into some blunder as easily as he conceived it; and since you are in no way indebted to him thus far, I do not suggest that you make yourself obnoxious to him in such matters. In a matter of this kind, it will aggravate the harm done, if one should try to make amends; but if it is covered over, even if some harm was already inflicted, by a ruse it can be suppressed. But the road to reconciliation will be so very simple that he might be thrown off his guard by some little gift. Yet, I notice that the Knights Templars are warmly received in his palace, and their transactions are taken care of to their advantage. But he himself has set out for Clairvaux, summoned, as they say, by a majority from the monastery to seal the doom of the abbot,⁵⁵ Fromond,⁵⁶ who

51 Archbishop Theobald of Canterbury

52 The feast of St. Peter ad Vincula, August 1

53 Where Thomas pronounced the censures on June 12, 1166

54 Henry of France, Archbishop of Rheims, 1162-1175

55 Geoffrey

56 A monk of Clairvaux

arranged this trip for him, died on the fourteenth of July, and was buried in the monastery of St. Remy.⁵⁷

57 The Cluniac monastery at Rheims where John made his home with the abbot, Peter of Celle, during his exile.

John to Archbishop Thomas Becket

SUMMARY: John informs Archbishop Thomas that he and his friends have approved the advice offered to Thomas by the Pope and Nicholas, the guest master of Mont St. Jacques. He advises him to attend the conference of King Henry and to wait on the Empress Matilda if she summons him. The letter seems to have been written in the summer of 1166 after the storm evoked by the censures of Vezelay had placed the archbishop in sore need of counsel.

Almost all those things which Your Grace brought to my attention I had heard from rumors which circulated roundabout, but your confirmation of them gave me greater assurance. Hence, in my letter to the Bishop of Poitiers¹ I mentioned them not as certain but as hearsay. I included what I had heard about the condition of England, requesting quite urgently that he advise you in this matter. But when I received the assurance in your letter, with the help of Master Philip,² I promptly conferred about your problem with those friends of yours, whose sincerity I do not question, but I showed no one a copy of the letter you had sent me. And although I came in contact individually, as you charged me, with your supporters—namely, the Abbot of Saint Remy,³ Master Fulk,⁴ and Master Ralph,⁵ yet everyone gave not only the same opinion, but used almost the same words. As a whole, therefore, no one was found to withstand the counsel of the pope, and all in unison approve of the plan given you by Nicholas,⁶ the guest-master of Rouen, even though they heard nothing of his letter or of

1 John Belmeis, 1162-1181

2 Philip of Calne, Manciple of Archbishop Thomas Becket

3 Peter of Celle

4 Dean of Rheims

5 Ralph of Sarr who succeeded Fulk as Dean of Rheims in 1176

6 Guest-master of Mont St. Jacques, near Rouen

his solution. We must carefully weigh the opportune time, the state of the Church in Rome, the needs of the Kingdom of England, and the peril not only to your see but to the churches and souls intrusted to your care. If you could either meet or help these souls, you ought hardly esteem your life so highly that for the salvation of your own soul and for the freedom of the floundering Church you would not enter into a discussion with the oppressors and find out what the kindly Jesus deigns to produce through your humiliation. As discovered in genuine letters,⁷ Jesus, after the glory of the Ascension, bore witness that He was yet ready to undergo the ignominy of the crucifixion and to die for the lowly. Especially now ought you enter into conference with them, when those who have oppressed you and Christ in you, are said to have fallen somewhat into disfavor with the king, and are in such a condition that they are weary of living. Whether it is true, I knew not, but the rumor is current amongst us. But whether it be true or not, beyond a shadow of a doubt Christ will triumph and will render to each one not only according to his works, but will bestow a crown upon the one whose will is brought to highest perfection by reason of his deed. The advice of your staunchest friends, with whom Master Philip and I are in accord, is that you go complacently with the Archbishop of Rouen⁸ to the Empress,⁹ if she should summon you. If you should hear something beneficial there, thank God. Proceed likewise in everything that your gentle-

7 Ambrose, Sermo de basilicis tradendis, c. 13; Migne P.L., 16.1011

8 Rotrou de Beaumont, 1165-1183

9 Matilda.

ness may be recognized.¹⁰ But if it happens otherwise, (God forbid) with the aforementioned archbishop bringing you back, you will return into the land of your exile¹¹ with honor and safety. With regard to taking along the clerics, however, they warn you not to bring a large assembly but only a few prudent and discreet ones, if you have² such, upon whose counsel you can rely in case of necessity. Then, too, with apology for those who might be absent, you can conveniently request a postponement, if there be any need of one. But I do not thrust myself into this affair; however, neither do I shrink from it, if you should decide to have me accompany you on your journey and to share your troublesome fate. For, with God's help, I am prepared for any emergency of this kind for the good of the Church and for your sake. Nevertheless, if you want me to meet you, give me sufficient time to arrive conveniently at the time and the place designated by you.

For

.... with me there shall be no delay¹² even though here at home for the time being, I have many urgent duties pressed upon me by my abbot, and by Gerard, the Archdeacon,¹³ whose wishes, like yours, I cannot neglect.

10 Phili 4.5

11 Pontigny

12 Vergil, Ecl. 3.52

13 Archdeacon of Paris

John to Bishop John Belmeis of Poitiers

SUMMARY: John gives his opinion of the worth of the bishop's reconciliation with Henry II and of the communications of the king with Frederick Barbarossa, and states that he himself is anxious for a reconciliation on honorable terms. From the mention of Henry's letter to Archbishop Rainold of Cologne which seems to have been written in the summer of 1166 after the appeal of the bishops on June 24, this letter can be placed in the late summer of 1166.

To the Father of Mercy, Who has raised you from a serious illness unto His glorification, for the service of the Church, and for our comfort in this disaster, I render whole-hearted and profuse appreciation; secondly, I render thanks to Your Grace, who constantly and effectively bore my burdens, and with your consoling letters alleviated the distressful anxiety brought upon me by the news of your illness. But because I was not later informed of your complete recovery, or of the peace which had been promised and for which I had hoped, I thought I should send the bearer of this letter to you. With all the ardor of my soul do I beg you to relate ever so carefully to me, through the medium of this messenger, all those matters which you are so adept at resolving. It is, of course, your peace I desire most of all, but I do not see what means you can employ in your case¹ to regain and to preserve the rights of your Church except those which the Church itself and her sons might have granted you, or those which the rest of the churches enjoy by general law, especially since a stranger, reared and educated amongst foreign peoples, is unqualified to expound upon the

¹ In a letter to Thomas (cf. Rer. Gall. et Franc. Script. 16.215) Bishop John had complained that the ministers of Henry II had curtailed his judicial powers.

particular customs of the Aquitanians, and upon rights never heard of before. Hence, since you would not and do not neglect anything that happens, when the cause of the Church is endangered, while her sons play the hypocrite or pervert the truth, there is nothing to be charged against your negligence. Who, therefore, but a man¹ somewhat mentally deranged and impulsive, or an antagonist, will advise you, alone as you are and devoid of consultation and resources, to strike out those arms of yours vainly against a torrent² which drags and upsets everything behind it? For, the outline of this peace is favorable and offers a semblance of justice, and in truth, if the transaction is carried out by both parties completely and in faithful sincerity, it does embody a distinct equitableness, unless, perhaps, some other custom, contrary to God, might have been assumed by your predecessors in a time of peace. For what is knowingly assumed in defiance of God's commandments, no duration of time or whim of contracting parties will ever warrant that it may be done licitly, or righteously, or I might even say, sinlessly. Moreover, I hear of the faithlessness of your people, but I question it; I question, too, the frightful and crafty might of the opposing party, experienced by many, so that I do not easily believe anyone would dare oppose its whims. And, perhaps, it has vented its rage upon your archdeacon,³ whose zeal it feared and whose intimacy with you it held in suspicion, so that he would not dare growl against

2. Juvenal 4,90

3 Richard of Ilchester

the party any more, once he has been reconciled to it; but not so the others, whom the opposing party frightened by making an example of him, and even more of us; but most of all because it poses as though it wished to seem without fear of God or regard for man. But God is capable of lifting up and directing your cause; in fact, it is His cause, but in your hands. And He Who conferred upon the Israelites power over their enemies, as they hurried to the Land of Promise according to God's command, will likewise be able to appease or completely overwhelm your Egyptians. One thing I do know—that "The just will finally be delivered out of distress, and the wicked shall be given up for him."⁴ Moreover I rejoice that his peace and good-will have been fully restored to you. But, I fear (which heaven forbid) that in his way of dealing as is known to everyone, this restoration of peace and good-will may be a feigned and temporary arrangement, and of course, all the more so, as it is proclaimed by all that he relies upon the counsel of locusts, whose power is only in their mouths and in their tails.⁵ But if it should be a temporary arrangement, it would be certain that it was faked principally for the purpose of at least extorting the obligation of faithfulness; and if I am not mistaken, there is something supposedly connected with it to which a Christian may not obligate himself by reason of his faith—namely, to refuse henceforth, the courtesy of due charity to those whom he has decided to regard with

4 Prov. 11.8

5 Apoc. 9.19

contempt, and to assail, at least by word of counsel, everyone he has termed his enemy. If you should be at odds with him because the Christian religion urges something other than he does, he will try to brand you with the mark of broken fidelity for all nations to know, as he was wont to reward his former friends. By his locusts,⁴ too, there will be raised a shout of approval in him, and in the mire he cultivates frogs⁶ which daub all the sincerity of their croaking with clear mud, and by every kind of quibbling in their oaths "they turn black into white."⁷ They are members of his flesh, cleaving to one another,⁸ as fish-scale adheres to fish-scale so that not even a breath of air may penetrate them. But let them think whatever they wish, and that those who are in filth may thrive some more in it, let them expose the impurity of their mind by the scurrility of their gestures and the foulness of their lips. For in an avowal of loyalty in a matter where charity is exposed to danger, nothing is permissible to a Christian, much less to a priest. Charity is the life of faith, and is made manifest by a proof of works; for "faith without works is dead."⁹ Nevertheless, from the letter¹⁰ of the Teutonic tyrant which had been sent to Count Henry¹¹ and which I would have forwarded to you had it not been misplaced after I sent it to the Archbishop of Canterbury, it is evident how much he esteemed that expression by which he desired to safeguard

6 Ibid., 16.13

7 Juvenal 3.30

8 Job 41.14

9 James 2.20

10 Cf. letter 213, Becket Materials 5.428

11 Of Champagne

himself and his heirs. For when John of Oxford, in the king's name, was about to join a conspiracy with the Teutonic tyrant and promised on oath a wealth of assistance and counsel against all men, except the King of France alone, the Teuton through an interpreter said, as verified by many great and religious natives (I speak of the province of Rheims) who were present: "Roland,¹² an enemy of the Church and the state, is, indeed, a man and mortal too, and so also all his cardinals, and not one of them is the King of France; hence, none of them do I consider or wish to be considered exempt in this alliance of mine with the King of England. If you hold the same opinion, or some other, profess it openly." To whom John replied: "His Majesty, our King, and I think the same as you, and with this understanding I offer my oath in the King's stead." What need of more? From that time on they advanced in their alliance against God and the Church, which you will find more fully developed in a letter sent me recently from Cologne, a copy of which I am sending you. In this letter the king requests safe conduct to Rome for his envoys who are about to go there on a mission against the Church of Canterbury, and with what regard for the Church of Rome will be easily discerned from the letter. But in their own snares will the unjust be caught,¹³ and whoever prepares a pit for his brother will fall into it first.¹⁴ Yet, happy is the one who despite such alluring snares

12 Cardinal Roland Bandinelli (Pope Alexander III)

13 Eccli. 27,29

14 Eccles. 10.8

of the great harlot¹⁵ and despite the attack of the beast can safeguard his conscience and his reputation—the one for God, the other for his neighbor, and both for himself. For whoever for just reason is convinced that he must sacrifice one or the other, I positively do not see where he might get any consolation unless by his courage he redeems what he has lost. Hence, it is in reply to the last point of your letter I entreat you ever so earnestly through the unspeakable love of God, if you decide to take steps for my peace either through the archdeacon or through someone else (which I wish indeed), obtain it for me in such a form that it cannot bring upon me a loss of reputation, or, even more, a loss of conscience which keeps a reputation intact. For what would it profit to gain the whole world, and risk the loss of these things?¹⁶ If you should see me inclined to any kind of immorality (God forbid), please let your right hand raise me up. That does happen to others like myself, and is often due to weakness but invariably it is due to their own fault. By the word 'immorality' I understand anything that is done intentionally against God. Although financial distress and the frigid attitude of friends ever so bitterly seem to sting my brother,¹⁷ who of necessity is living with me in exile, and me, yet God is merciful,

I will not yield to illis, but shall go forth¹⁸
to face them more boldly than my fortune shall
allow.

15 Apoc. 17.1-6

16 Matt. 26.16

17 Richard

18 Vergil, Aeneid 6.95

But I know that in your suggestions I shall receive no hint of anything that might even resemble dishonor. God will meanwhile provide for my needs as He has done thus far. In the matter of what is given me and what I receive I am obligated to very few—only you and my abbot,¹⁹ and these are about all.

¹⁹ Peter of Celle, Abbot of St. Remy, Rheims

John to Walter de l'Isle

SUMMARY: John consoles Walter de l'Isle who has incurred King Henry's displeasure for his failure to arrest Archbishop Thomas' messenger to England, and praises him for his courage and charity. Walter had been sent to England by Henry with the report of the conference held at Chinon on June 1, 1166 (cf. Letter 174). For other details of this letter cf. Becket Materials 6,77. The letter may be placed in the summer of 1166. The Rerum Gall. et Franc. Script. identifies Walter with the Walterus de Constantiis, who later became Bishop of Lincoln and Archbishop of Rouen. Cf. op.cit., 16.537.

The ardor of your charity for your fellow men and your demonstration of a very ready generosity had deservedly compelled me to grasp with joy every chance of showing my appreciation to you and yours. If, in no other way, I might at least by an expression of good wishes prove the sincerity of my esteem for you. When I ponder quite carefully all the circumstances involved, I find there is not one of our compatriots to whom I am more obligated than to you. Hence, my reticence would rightly have to be censured, if it were not backed up by the assurance of many probable arguments. These, of course, I would rightly offer the plaintiff, if too great a chaos between you and us¹ were not manifestly fixed, thus making it impossible for us and difficult for you to come in contact with friends. "An enemy hath done this"² and in Idumaea he does not cease scattering the seed of cockle, and works with continuous perseverance to pull down from God's esteem the angels who preside over the Churches.³

1 Luke 16.26
 2 Matt. 13.28
 3 Apoc. 1.20

"Like foxes in the desert are his prophets"⁴ who follow their own spirit and see nothing. These are the ones who sought to destroy their most sympathetic master, a great prince, inflaming his meekness with the gall of wickedness and dimming the keenness of his intellect with poisonous counsels. May the Lord snatch him from their hands and prompt him to submission that his reign may be pleasing to God, peaceful and agreeable to the ruler, and that it may be fruitful and prosperous for the people and the churches whose patron he is. I do know, indeed, that, if he will undergo a change of heart,⁵ he will be reconciled by fitting reparation to his Lord, the Spouse of the Church, and he will restrain his mighty sword from spilling the blood of the innocent in order that God might look kindly upon him and not exact their blood from him and his household. If he holds in contempt God's exiles and outcasts because they are poor, he should be mindful that of such is Christ the protector. To avenge the blood of poor Naboth,⁶ God destroyed the house of Achab and Jesabel. Heeding the counsel of Doeg, the Edomite, the keeper of the asses, and using him as his instrument, Saul attacked the priests with the sword of sovereignty, which had been intrusted to him for the protection of the priesthood, and he destroyed their village.⁷ For this Saul brought down upon himself the sword of God with which both he and his household were hopelessly slaughtered through the agency of the Philistines. Thus, he left to his son-in-law

4 Ezech. 13.4

5 Is. 46.8

6 2 Kings 9

7 1 Kings 22

full claim of inheritance, whereby Saul himself may be said to have been nailed to the gibbet at the request of the Gabaonites, whose tribal priests Doeg crucified in fulfillment of Saul's kingly scorn.⁸ And still, God has regard for the prayer of the humble and despises not their petition.⁹ Buoyed up by such hope the banished poor do pray, and with the help of God for Whom they bear their afflictions, they will pray unceasingly that His Majesty the King, in very quiet peace of mind, may bring forth fruit worthy of penance¹⁰ and may avert the anger hanging over him. In the meanwhile, we calmly endure the dispensations of Providence, assured that nothing will be able to harm us, if we be zealots for good,¹¹ that is, for the divine law. For, as is well known by everyone except by these who strive not to savor the things that are of God,¹² we do not suffer as criminals, but are afflicted as Christians.¹³ In this affliction we are happy to have you too, as an associate, O most esteemed Sir, not taunting you, indeed, for your loss of position (which would be wrong), but complimenting you on your courage. For you have given assurance of your loyalty, and have showed your contempt for the forfeiture of worldly gain, when you heeded the voice of righteousness and fulfilled the precept of charity. But why, esteemed Sir, do you stand stunned? Why are you silent? Why try to hide your light? Your offence is made known to the world, and all have

8 2 Kings 21

9 Ps. 101.18

10 Luke 3.7, 8

11 I Peter, 3.13

12 Matt. 16.23, Mark 8.33

13 I Peter 4.15

the same opinion of you. (Not to detain you longer), I wish to say that you have proven yourself a man who abides by the Gospel, laying down, as you did, your life for your brother,¹⁴ because you preferred, for the sake of justice, to be convicted yourself rather than have another blamed, whose virtue of obedience ought to have been reckoned as criminal, if the truth were acknowledged. But neither he (as is commonly admitted) dared to profess his loyalty and allegiance, nor did you deign to deny your claim to loyalty and allegiance, which I am happy to hear. Since you were needlessly punished for your loyalty, or rather, since you were put to test in it by man, is it not true that the trickery of hypocrites and the deceitfulness of slanderers will be condemned in the sight of God? God is my witness that I grieve with you the forfeiture of the king's seal,¹⁵ but before the tribunal of God, too, I admit that I would rather have you stay in that state than buy your way back into his good graces by double-dealing or any kind of shameful action. O God's friend and my friend, too, these many days, may the testimony of a clear conscience be your comfort, as it has been mine and theirs who are in banishment with me. For, nothing in life can be more gratifying. Verily,

...no guilty man is acquitted at the bar of his own conscience,¹⁶

which brings forth, or I might more accurately say, perpetually quickens

14 John 15.13

15 Walter was custodian of the king's seal

16 Juvenal 13.3

the undying worm¹⁷ or stirs the embers of unquenchable fire. For that is the product not of conscience but of guilt, and may God always keep it from you. As far as I am concerned, my correspondence keeps me in good health and out of mischief. I await the mercy of God in an abundance of those things which are required by my constitution or by the habits of those living with me. My brother¹⁸ is with me in exile, and like me, is ever ready in the Lord to do your bidding. Since for the time being anything else is impossible, we present you with our esteem and good wishes. Through you we extend our greetings to those you might be able to reach, also particularly to the clerics of the court who have not been personally excommunicated, nor are in the company of those excommunicated.

17 Mark 9.43

18 Richard, who rejoined John in exile probably in July 1166

John to Master Ralph Niger

SUMMARY: John answers a letter of Ralph Niger, who is proposing to visit King Henry's court, and had queried about John's failure to secure a reconciliation at Angers, and about the appeal of the bishops and the consequent disregard of the Vezelay censures. The letter may be placed in the summer of 1166 shortly after the events which are mentioned.

The excuse, with which you eagerly tried to cover up your long silence, I regard just as sound and as satisfactory, as it is likely. I know it was surely not a matter of choice on your part that opportunity did not present itself, but eager as you were, you did not get the chance. Your earnestness is all the more evident from the fact that after the long, and to me, hateful delay, by the ardor of your charity you assembled according to my instructions all those points which in your opinion can harm or help us. Although some of them I knew beforehand from others, yet, no one arranged them all so systematically as you did. Should all those things you heard be true, (although I do not doubt that quite a few are not) what else can I do without loss of salvation, than precisely that which reason prescribes on the testimony of a good conscience, and what the inevitable obligation of my duty imposes? When I had gone to the palace of His Majesty the King¹ offering in all humility whatever satisfaction the laws would allow or his will would appoint for me, saving my honor, was I not excluded from the kiss of peace, which at that time had been offered and imparted to Master Philip?² What more was I to do? Were not the possessions, which were mine

¹ Angers, May 1, 1166 cf. Letter 168

² Philip of Calne, Manciple of Archbishop Thomas

by God's law, taken from me by force without regard for mercy (this I safely attest before God, Who, whether the world wills it or not, will judge that cause) and did they not have to be redeemed in so shameful a manner that I swore to abide by the customs which the law of God condemns, and I renounced all obedience to my archbishop? These would be enough to destroy my faith; but yet they went further into those matters which even the opponents would have been more honorable to hush up rather than expose in public. Of course, it is not against the king that I cast those aspersions, but against those who claimed they understood his mind more fully and were (as they boasted) interpreters of his will. For, in my presence he did not say anything that might be degrading to my honor or his; only for this can I reproach him that when I complained about my loss of property and of time, and when I earnestly begged for an answer, he thus twisted his words to the effect that it would be absolutely useless both as far as his Majesty and Honor were concerned and my needs, too. So, with understanding and foresight, I withdrew from his presence immediately in order to care for my integrity, my poverty, and my due sense of respect for self, and above all, to review God's cause. But with the help of God I shall return, if and when (I hope) a righteous road to peace, with security of conscience and reputation, will be open for me. Otherwise, may the holy Jesus afflict me with a timely death before I knowingly offend Him for the sake of regaining peace or the good will of men. But you bring up many difficulties. First, that the Church of England, turned into a crooked

now,³ lifts its heel against the Lord,⁴ and the bishops under pretext of an appeal⁵ strive to disguise their evil intent and to annul the condemnation which has been issued under advisement of the Apostolic See. But really, if God is with us, in fact because by His mercy He is with us who suffer for His sake in exile, because we have⁶ in conscience pledged to be united with Him in that cause even unto death, there are more with us than with them.⁶ And from now on it is certain that strife and anguish hang over the heads of the bishops, if they do not agree on a more serviceable plan and strive more quickly to restore the peace of the Church, which they undertook to guard and not to surrender. The king has confidence in the emperor and in the capture of his Lordship the Pope. This prophecy is made to him by the prophets of Baal, who see what is stupid and untrue, because they speak not by the spirit of the Lord. You will remember that Achab⁷ was thus deceived, and while he was hoping for victory, he was crushed by the swords of the enemy. Meanwhile, let the wise man hear the words of Cato:

Place not your hope in the death of another⁸ especially of one guiltless and a lord. To anticipate his day even in desire is equivalent to parricide. But with God's help, His Holiness the Pope is succeeding, and after the recent capture of Albano, as is most certain, his progress

3 Ps. 77.57

4 John 13.18

5 The bishops of England appealed against the censures of Vezelay (June 12 1166) at Northampton July 6

6 4 Kings 6.16

7 3 Kings 22

8 Dion. Cato, Dist. 1.19

becomes greater, since each day God strews with thorns the paths⁹ of the Teutonic tyrant¹⁰ and his heresiarch,¹¹ and, a thing they cannot deny, weakens their might, and takes away their power. What you heard about the Sicilian,¹² the soldiers of Rheims claim is very untrue. And they were his stipendiaries for a whole year and returned the other day. The fact that they are not being shunned whom His Lordship of Canterbury declared excommunicated does not harm him as much as those who mingle with them. Let them take note with what sort of conscience they do intermingle; and let those excommunicated take note with what guiltlessness they either deny or excuse the offences which are being imputed to them. I know that I had no part in the passing of the condemnation, nor was it executed on any advice or knowledge on my part; and, may God be my witness, some of those who were mentioned I neither knew nor saw, as I remember. I shall try, indeed, as you suggest, to turn the archbishop in favor of the Archdeacon of Poitiers,¹³ if you should still think that my endeavors might be able to help in promoting the peace of the Church; otherwise, it would be shameful and disgraceful to circumvent our father and lord. But you know that when we did this a year ago, not once did the archdeacon reply even a word. About your journey, however, I do not know what advice to give you; but the journey I would absolutely prescribe except that I do

9 Osee 2.6

10 Frederick Barbarossa

11 Rainold of Dassel, Archbishop of Cologne, 1159-1167

12 King William I of Sicily, who died May 7, 1166

13 Richard of Ilchester

not see how you can avoid mingling with the excommunicated; for to you it is clear to some extent what condemnation they have deserved, but to them it is quite evident on the testimony of their own conscience. Him that soweth discord among the brethren the soul of God detesteth;¹⁴ what about the one, who with the help of the Edomite,¹⁵ persecutes the priests, sets ablaze the city of the Lord's tabernacle, and with the sword of a prince rages against the order of Levi. On this matter, therefore, examine your conscience and make use of some religious and of some discreet advisor; and when you will have poured out your heart in his presence, follow what the Lord will inspire. But if, at the suggestion of friends, you happen to venture forth to the court, induce the archdeacon, whom you cherish and whom I respect and admire wholeheartedly as much as a sincere love permits, induce him, in accord with the warning of the prophet, to cast the eyes of his mind down upon his own ways and the ways of His Lord and to set his heart upon them,¹⁶ and henceforth, not to subject his heart to frailty, placing his hope in the uncertainty of wealth and in the varied allurements of seductive fortune; let him remember, too, that the speedy fall no eminence can escape¹⁷ and before the fall the heart is raised on high.¹⁸ For, however much he may conceal it, he knows that the condemnation of the shepherd, be it just or not, must be feared. Why go on endlessly? If you

14 Prov. 6.16, 19

15 1 Kings 22.9

16 Aggaeus 1.5

17 Lucan, Phars. 1.70

18 Prov. 24.17

can be Lot in Sodom,¹⁹ Joseph in the court of Pharaoh,²⁰ Chusai in the conferences of Absalom,²¹ Abdias in the service of Achab and fellowship of Jezabel,²² if you can be Daniel in Babylon,²³ you will proceed there with safety to yourself and to them, whom you will urge to "keep innocence and behold justice, for these are remnants for the peaceable man."²⁴ And as soon as the unjust are dispersed, the salvation of the just is expected from the Lord, Who is faithful to His promises and does not suffer His chosen ones to be tempted above that which they are able,²⁵ but to them all things work together unto good.²⁶ May God guide your journey and your accomplishments.

19 Gen. 19

20 Ibid., 39 ff

21 3 Kings 15-17

22 Ibid., 18

23 Dan. 5 ff.

24 Ps. 36.37-39

25 1 Cor. 10.13

26 Rom. 8.28

John to Master Ralph Niger

SUMMARY: John praises Ralph Niger for refusing to associate with the excommunicated Archdeacon Richard of Poitiers, but points out that it may be permissible under certain conditions. This letter was probably written shortly after the preceding letter.

The fidelity of your devotion, which consists not in the noise of words but shines forth in a manifestation of good works, has a greater testimony than that of John.¹ For even Jesus the Truth² (would that we may emulate this truth just as we profess to do) prefers the testimony of good works to the testimony of John. He did not, of course, condemn the latter as spurious, but he adjudged the former to be preferable, as it was more cogent for establishing a knowledge of Himself. Hence, the good works of a person give testimony of him;³ even a tree is judged not by its height and strength, not by the beauty of its branches or of their great number, not by the richness or thickness of its leaves, but by the usefulness of its fruit. Therefore, since you were in nowise remiss in the things that happened, and since the fruit of your fidelity and devotion, though not of your own volition but evidently because of the times, went before you and is being hoped for, why does your prayer proceed to prove the need of building up charity? If you want it recommended to the faithful, you are doing what has been done; if to the faithless, you are wasting your time. There is one, a special one, to whom I want it to be recommended, but not so much in the adornment of statements and in flights of

1 John 5.36

2 Ibid., 14.6

3 Ibid., 5.36

fancy as in the sincerity of charity, of purity of life and in the immediate need of fervent prayer. And I surmise that from these passages it has, of course, occurred to you to give our friend Hugo that answer which, even though it may seem to bring about a loss of possessions to the unwary, yet undoubtedly, effects the salvation of one's conscience and one's soul. Hence, also for your studies I commend you. For by definite indications I am aware that in a boisterous and noisy city⁴ (as it was called by an agreement of the students) you are not searching for passages which deal with useless sophistry, but for passages which treat of the virtues; for one, who relies on a multiplicity of passages and sources for sophistry with utter disregard for the virtues, can surely become talkative and proud, but hardly a dialectician or even a philosopher. But to pass from generalities to particulars; because you refuse to associate with the Archdeacon of Poitiers⁵ as long as he is excommunicated, no matter what may be offered you, I commend you for putting God before man, things eternal before material things. But without detracting from the condemnation, which is really genuine, and with due regard for the canons, I am convinced that we must admit of a distinction in the matter of mingling with the excommunicated; for one who takes part in their evil designs, also chains himself with the censure of an anathema. On the other hand, we must note a multiple difference (I think) of persons and things in these

4 Poitiers cf. Entheticus in Policraticum, line 16, ed. Webb, l.1

5 Richard of Ilchester

four matters, which seem to call for a special precaution—namely, the kiss, the table, prayer, and a greeting. For these matters are avoided in one way by those who have professed to follow perfection; and in another way, by those who have not; they are avoided in one way by those who are forced into these circumstances, and in another way by those who are free. Now, one who professes perfection never mingles at all with anyone excommunicated, even in verbal contact, without reproaching him for the fault for which he must be shunned. How much more true is this at table, in Church, and in other similar situations? Thus, Eliseus, when approached by Joram, King of Israel, whom he knew to be an idolater, and by the King of Juda regarding the outcome of the expedition, replied: "As the Lord liveth, in whose sight I stand, if I did not reverence the face of Josaphat, King of Juda, I would not have hearkened to thee, nor looked on thee."⁶ Lo! a prophet established in perfection, because of his reverence for the other, did disclose a hidden design of the divine will, as requested, although only after reproaching the idolater for his fault, as was necessary. Although, Naaman, the Syrian,⁷ it is true was cured of leprosy, acknowledged and professed his belief in the true God, and even though he attained no degree of perfection, while taking with him two mules' burden of holy earth, he received permission from this same Eliseus to assist in the prayers of his master without losing God's grace, because

6 4 Kings 3.14

7 Ibid., 5

he was obligated to it by virtue of his office, for he said: "When my master goeth into the temple of Remmon, to worship, and he leaneth upon my arm: if I bow down with him in the same place, I pray thee, that the Lord pardon me thy servant for this thing."⁸ And Eliseus said, "Go in peace." Hence, it is evident to what extent reverence for public authority sometimes makes a demand upon the imperfect. From the things I dared suggest to you I presume that, if the aforementioned archdeacon desires your company you will go to him and find out how you can be of assistance to him, and as faith demands, you will with friendliness and in private admonish him to remember that he is a Christian and to stand in dread of the condemnation in which he has been entangled and to fear before all mortals That One Who can plunge both body and soul into hell.⁹ I wish there were with the king, as well as with that associate of yours and with the others who are excommunicated, some God-fearing men, who on an intimate and friendly basis would straighten them out, and call them back from their lack of principles. But if because you are a Christian, he should cease calling upon you, Christ, Whom he hates in you, will very easily and very satisfactorily make up for this loss, unless your merits be entangled. For the salvation of the just is from the Lord,¹⁰ Who protects them in the time of tribulation.

8 4 Kings 5.18

9 Matt. 10.28

10 Ps. 36.39

John to Master Geoffrey of St. Edmunds

SUMMARY: John requests his kinsman Geoffrey, a monk of St. Edmunds, to clear him of the charge that he had written derogatory letters to Benedict of Bedingham about the Bishop of Norwich and Master Nicholas. The letter was written in the late summer of 1166 for John mentions that he had now been in exile for two and a half years. Cf. letters 149, 150 where John had requested the Bishop and Nicholas to transfer his revenues to his brother Richard.

I beseech you, O most devoted friend, to lend me assistance in proving my innocence against or among those¹ in whose company my innocence is being unduly jeopardized, God being my witness. I did entertain the hope of being able to establish a very effective defence among them myself, and I still do not despair of doing so. Yet, if only my friends and the lords would become aware of the truth! But the case is this: it has been suggested to His Lordship of Norwich¹ and to Master Nicholas² that I had written a letter from Sens to Benedict of Bedingham³ attacking their honor, service, peace, and their security. Surely, I would not be able to write such a letter without degrading my conscience and without being branded with the mark of a traitor. My brother⁴ sent me a copy of the letter, and I am forwarding it to you. I call upon God to bear witness and to pass judgment against my soul that I neither wrote that letter, nor know in conscience who did. On the force of that same oath, I claim moreover, that the letter was conceived or written by no order of mine,

1 William Turbe, Bishop of Norwich, 1146-1175

2 A cleric of Norwich

3 Near Bungay, Suffolk

4 Richard, who was living at Exeter

nor with any knowledge, intention, or approbation on my part. I will make still a further claim; thus may God bring me back to the land of my birth and grant me the joy of seeing you and my other friends and of talking with you, so never in my life—that I might speak with a most positive conscience—have I sent that or any other letter, as I remember, to the aforesaid Benedict. In addition, I maintain that when I could, I opposed Benedict with all my might for the sake of Nicholas. But, perhaps, Benedict himself recommended me as the author of the letter. Must credence be given to the word of one who, when I was his opponent, tried to deprive me of the good will of my friends just as he desired to divert from them the allegiance I owed them? Quite cleverly did he trick his gullible foes into shunning the spurious author of the letter and heedlessly letting the real one strike more effectively without suspicion. Yet, if Benedict, my defamer, or anyone else wants to make an accusation against me, let him come forth and make it openly, and if I will not have vindicated my innocence, I admit without qualification that I should be punished with the penalty of a traitor. But if my innocence should be proved, I request that my old acquaintances and the lords take not from an innocent man the good will which is his due. But if my accuser should prefer to undermine my character in secret rather than reproach me in public, I ask that, after my lords have received the proof they might desire, I be considered absolved. Nor would I say this with the hope of obtaining a pecuniary recompense from them. For the generosity of Christ, Who feeds the birds

of the air and clothes the lilies of the field,⁵ has sufficiently provided for me these two and a half years,⁶ while I led the life of an exile. You ask, therefore: "What do you seek?" Surely, that which is more beneficial to them than to me—their old and deserving charity in the Lord; for I shall love them, with the help of Christ, as long as I live, whether they want it or not. But if they do not care to love one who loves them, "my justice shall answer for me tomorrow";⁷ since "in the mountain the Lord will see."⁸ But my friend Nicholas says, as I am given to understand, that the style is mine. I certainly do not believe that it is, and God is my witness that I am more grieved at the fact that with his firmness of character he easily succumbed to a suspicion of such gross misrepresentation than I am at the privation I have suffered these many days. For it was not a matter easily reconcilable that he should turn from a friend, especially at that time. When the Judge of hearts gives me my liberty,⁹ I shall escape with ease. And I hope that he, for the levity of his judgment against an innocent friend, will not be easily branded with the stigma of ill repute.

5 Matt. 6.26; Luke 12.27

6 John left England early in 1164; hence, it must now be the middle of 1166

7 Gen. 30.33

8 Ibid., 22.14

9 Prov. 24.12

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John to Master Nicholas of Norwich

SUMMARY: John thanks Nicholas for his kindness to him and his brother and comments on the appeal of the English clergy against Archbishop Thomas. The letter may be placed in July, 1166, for John's brother, Richard, has just rejoined him in exile. Cf. letter 176.

The fact that I write to you more rarely¹ is due to various reasons, which it is best not to mention, for quite a few of them are known to you, and the others, it is better not to advertise. But this time I could restrain neither my enthusiasm nor my pen from writing, when I learned on the arrival of my brother what high regard you have for me and mine. This he found out from your display of hospitality. It is you and your esteem I thank as much as is in my power for the kindness tendered my brother by the hand of R. of Limesay,¹ and sometime, with the help of the Lord, I hope to be able to reciprocate fully. Highly, indeed, do I regard what you have done, and even more so, as it is evident according to the prophecy of the Gospel² that faith in men is now becoming more rare, especially since we have been brought up in that period and among those people, where hardly anyone makes an avowal of his faith without losing his faith. For the most assuring argument for faith is a faith that is scorned: and one who, at the whim of worldly authority, does not make void the faith he promised to God, is charged with infidelity. If you do not believe me, have faith at least in my works,³ which, as says Jesus Whom they crucify

1 Probably Roger of Limesay, a Canon of Exeter. Cf. letter 132

2 Luke 18

3 John 10.38

anew, reveal by their moral tenure a testimony more assuring and greater than that of John.⁴ Yet, things are going well with our fellow countrymen, and Jesus is treated more mildly there, if the testimony is true, which in their appellatory decree (as they call it) the chief priests have recently published. They preach, write, and, for the sake of adding greater authority to their statement, they sign the open letter together with numerous seals, to the effect that His Majesty the King "deems it a gracious favor, when admonished to make amends for any offence against God"⁵ and that he will most obligingly make satisfaction in accord with justice. "Any offence," say they, unacquainted as they are with evil, and as yet uncertain that he did commit any offence against the Lord, or that he atoned for his crime by proper satisfaction. It is going well with them, I say, if their preaching and their testimony are based on truth. But what if at the same time, lies, as His Lordship the Pope claims and the Church of Rome knows, are found in that missive which has been sent there. It is not about anything else, O esteemed friend, that they complain, because by this gracious favor of an admonition, which they preach about, they will be able to obtain from the king whatever might be just and good. It is not about anything else, for which one must have compassion upon those, who with such ease can change any kind of hurricane into a breeze. But we who from experience know otherwise are of an altogether different

⁴ Ibid., 5.36

⁵ Becket Materials 5.412

opinion. I wish their preaching would be fulfilled in our regard and in theirs! In the meanwhile, we have decided to bear in patience the confiscation of our goods,⁶ and to await the One Who taketh away iniquity from Jacob and ungodliness from Israel,⁷ rather than to share in the iniquity of those who have assembled against the Lord,⁸⁺ and who have united against His Church and in preference to the divine law to choose the bed of roses proffered by the possession of earthly goods. But let the conclusion of this page and of these remarks be that wherever I may be, you will know that I am your friend. Farewell!

6 Heb. 10.34

7 Rom. 11.26; Zach. 3.9

8 Ps. 2.2

187

John to Abbot Hugh of St. Edmunds

SUMMARY: A friendly letter to the abbot requesting the prayers of the monks for the exiles and their cause. It may have been sent with letter 185, which was sent in the summer of 1166.

Hugh was the Abbot of the great Benedictine Abbey of St. Edmund at Bury St. Edmunds in Suffolk. He became Abbot in 1157 and died November 15, 1180.

Regarding your status, which may God crown with success, I ought not be indifferent, always bearing in mind the excellence of your sincerity. Since charity does not slip away because of negligence, nor is removed by stealth, nor is driven out with violence, for the simple reason that in the minds of the elect it is more securely established by Christ and in Christ. The evil conditions prevalent today prevent me from manifesting my esteem for you, but no man can snatch away my good will; in this matter no force at all will avail anything, and to attempt any kind of deception will prove worthless, since He in His mercy grants success, Who freely of His bounty gave charity its beginning. So it will be the obligation of Your Grace to help the Church in her state of shipwreck, and to relieve the anxieties and burdens of Christ's exiles by your prayers and the prayers of the holy men with you, that He Who has left us open to this trial and has granted us the enthusiasm of suffering for Him, may bestow His perseverance upon our suffering. "For this is thankworthy,"¹ as Peter says, that at least to some degree we may share in the sufferings of Christ and the saints, assured that those who suffer together will reign together.

1 1 Pet. 2.20

For has the clergy been established to eat and drink and snore until death, and then feed the flames of hell with a variety of luxurious faggots? The prudence of the flesh laughs at this, and in the words of the treacherous Jews mocks and reviles one who hangs on the cross with Christ. But meanwhile, according to the prophecy of Debbora, "the Lord arranges new wars, and He Himself will overthrow the enemies."²

² Judges 5.8 (which has "...subvertit").

John to Prior Engelbert of Val St. Pierre

SUMMARY: John explains the reason for his exile, reveals the plight of his fellow exiles and requests the help and prayers of the monks. The letter may have been sent in the late autumn of 1166 for Richard has rejoined John in exile and the exiles were in sore straits.

Engelbert was the Prior of Val St. Pierre, a Carthusian monastery in the diocese of Laon. With Simon, the Prior of Mon Dieu, a Carthusian monastery in the diocese of Rheims, and Bernard de la Coudre, he formed the Pope's commission which was appointed in May, 1168, to mediate between Henry and the Archbishop.

I think that from the story of the Prior of Monte Dei and from my account of it, you are acquainted with the cause of my banishment; but that you may see it in a clearer light, I shall briefly explain it. I helped as much as I could His Lordship and the Church of Canterbury, and yet, I did not intentionally nor unjustly offend His Majesty, the King of England, (which, with my conscience as witness, I dare to assert without fear). But he banished both my brother and me, and confiscated our possessions, and I languish in exile. Of course, I do not possess the resources, the backers, or the weapons to enable me to attack so powerful a prince, or to ward off the blows which he fancies to inflict upon me and mine. Hence, I am forced to fly to your patronage and to that of the other holy men that by your prayerful intercession, God might remove that scourge from his Church and from us or turn it to use for our salvation, and not allow us in the commotion of this revolution to do anything against Him but to guide our steps according to His good pleasure.¹ We were waiting for peace, but behold the

¹ Ps. 39.3

Church is troubled by a more serious upheaval, so great, in fact, that the efforts of man to come to her aid seem futile. So, having cast myself at the feet of your holiness and at the feet of your brethren with all the ardor of my soul, I beg you ever so fervently to have pity on us,² at least you, O friends of God and of the Church of Canterbury, and by your prayers ease my exile, my brother's, and that of those banished with us; for we have already despaired of any human support. This, too, do I ever so earnestly request of you that you intercede to the Lord for the King of England, so that God may recall him from this oppression of the Church, and that in His mercy, the Lord, Who alone can stop this plague, might convert the oppressors of the Church or crush them.

² Job 19.21

189

John to Bishop John Belmeis of Poitiers

SUMMARY: John asks the Bishop of Poitiers to induce the Abbot of St. Maixent to pay a debt owed to the servant of the Archdeacon of Paris. The letter may have been written in the summer of 1166 when the archdeacon was visiting John at Rheims. Cf. letter 180, line 58.

I think that it has been brought to your attention that Gerard, Archdeacon of Paris, is a very close and personal friend of mine, both by virtue of his own excellence and that of his household. He hopefully requests that I take up with you the cause of one of his servants whose name is Jordan. The Abbot of Saint Maixent,¹ as he claims, owes him money, and is not on such friendly terms with him, so that he has no confidence in the abbot's credit, unless you, in your paternal way, force him to make good, unwilling as he may be. I beseech you, therefore, in all earnestness, to obtain justice for the servant, and make the aforementioned archdeacon, in whose regard I make this appeal, obligated to you and your household, and let his servant, through your careful intervention, if possible, get what is evidently due him without difficulty and further delay.

1 A Benedictine Abbey in the diocese of Poitiers.

190

John to the Treasurer of Rheims

SUMMARY: John warns the treasurer of Rheims of the danger of having a relative of the Archbishop of Rheims as sub-treasurer.

If it could be done conveniently for both of us, I would prefer the enjoyment of a longed-for discussion with you rather than put down on paper the things it behooved us to say and which would greatly help you. A sheet of paper expresses only what is written thereon and does not adequately enlarge upon those matters which might advantageously be brought up among friends in a mutual discussion. But the pressure of many inevitable obligations and a slight bodily ailment thwarted this desire of mine, so that it is necessary to write the things which might be better expressed orally. And so, let my Lord and friend remember that, as the Orator puts it, "To be fooled once is unfortunate; to be fooled the second time is stupid; and to be fooled the third time is disgraceful."¹ Grieved, indeed, am I at the incident (which I must recall to your memory) when you for the first time happened to be fooled, by your own misfortune, in the position of the keeper of the public records; the second time, to your own delusion, in the matter of giving up the prebend of Paris; as for the future, do not give in to every spirit,² that you might not be shamefully duped into disposing of the office of sub-treasurer. An upright man, however, is Lawrence, your fellow canon, on whom the Lord Archbishop³ is arranging to bestow it, and worthy of a greater honor, if he were called by the Lord

1 Cicero, De Inventione 1.39. 71

2 1 John 4.1

3 Henry of France, Archbishop of Rheims, 1162-1175

and cleansed of his faulty ambition. But surely, it is not conducive to you and your honor to select your lord's relative as your helper; in fact, you would not allow him to be intruded into office so that he might be indebted not so much to you as to some other for his position? But do you want to descend from treasurer to sub-treasurer? Is it not more proper that you be the overseer of your officials rather than have another overseer appointed over yourself and over them to your detriment? In the future, be careful what you do. In view of the respect and regard I have for you and in view of the esteem we have for our venerable and saintly father, the Blessed Samson,⁴ I propose these matters to you, seeing how much you are burdened, that you be mindful of yourself and of us, who have always remained faithful to you, lest perhaps, it might be said, which God forbid, that you suffered from the vice of ingratitude. But when you return, it will not irk us if you conduct your ministration in a way befitting your position and not unbecoming to us. For in these matters which are conducive to your honor, you will have us at your beck and call, as far as we are able to be of service. To this you are prompted by fidelity, urged by good will, and forced by that illustrious Samson, whose memory is held in benediction.⁵

4 Samson de Mauvoisin, Archbishop of Rheims, 1140-1161

5 Eccli. 45.1

John to Master Gerard Pucelle

SUMMARY: John informs Gerard Pucelle of the various opinions regarding his visit to Cologne, but suggests that his stay among the schismatics may be turned to very useful account by laboring strenuously for a reconciliation between Barbarossa and the Church on the one hand and between King Henry and the archbishop on the other hand. He also informs him of the proposed papal commission, and of the archbishop's present position. The letter is dated October 1, 1166, the feast of St. Remy.

Gerard Pucelle was one of the "learned friends of St. Thomas," cf. Becket Materials 3.523, and later became Bishop of Coventry, 1183-1184.

This quite belated reply and my rather infrequent correspondence with Your Excellency (for I have already received word from you for the second time) are occasioned by the scarcity of wayfarers, by the distance, and by the difficulty of traveling on roads unfamiliar to our country-men. But, all the more does my affection for you burn within me, and all the more unbearably is my tongue silenced, as my inflamed love is not permitted to come forth publicly in an expression of my esteem for you, and has been refused the right to exchange with you in a verbal discussion our hearty and mutual sentiments in a way customary and enjoyable for friends. Surely, in this inconvenience there is some advantage, whilst the union of souls grows stronger because of the absence of individuals, and the strained tension of love aggravating the mind by a display of its own anguish helps toward the attainment of virtue by the use of its own self-restraint, and by habitual trials it is strengthened to endure hardships. Even though it may be profitable, I would prefer to be relieved of this valuable restraint, provided that we could get together, be refreshed by mutual discussion.

edified by mutual counsel, and by our obligations of assisting one another to be fortified and made firm against every adversity. But since God in His designs has deemed it otherwise, let us with eager devotion obey His will. For although we might be able to avoid the condemnation,¹ we cannot change His plan,² whereby to them that love Him He works all things together unto good³ and in His benign dispensation He causes all things to accrue to the wise man's advantage. You have revealed your problems to me; I do thank you and most appreciatively, too. You have requested my counsel for the ministry of Master Ralph;⁴ my reply is that I desire and hope in the mercy of the Lord that even without my endeavors God will provide you with a safe way out; and would that by my instrumentality, lowly as I am, it might be granted you in your brotherly love to attain that which would add to your prestige, would help extricate you from obstacles to prove your usefulness, and would be beneficial to your salvation. I shall say, therefore, what I feel, without in any way conscientiously minimizing the truth, co-operating with you with that loyalty and devotion with which I learned a friend must be treated, and with which I have been wont to satisfy my lords. So, you might know that there were many conflicting opinions regarding your departure; many censured the trip you made and some few justified it. For the generality did not know what purpose you had in

1 Greg. Mor. 16.10 which Abelard cites, Eth. c. 14, ed. Cousin, 2.617;
Greg. Mor. 16.12; 12.2, Migne P.L. 75.1127

2 Aug. Conf. 1.4; De Civ. 10.12

3 Rom. 8.28

4 Ralph of Sarr in Thanet, another of the "learned friends." Cf. Becket Materials 3.526. He was later Dean of Rheims, 1176-1194

mind, what pressing needs prompted you, to what extent the Roman Pontiff regarded you, and what advantage could come to the Church from the execution of this plan of yours. They regard it as dangerous to live among the excommunicated even for a just reason; and when they see anyone entangled in transactions with the condemned, they suppose that one also gives assent to their error. I, who am acquainted with your cause and with your disposition more intimately than certain others, partly agree with the generality, but to a great extent disagree with them. For regarding the condemnation of the schism they have the correct idea, because from the beginning of legislation the gravity of this sin is evident, since Holy Scripture points out that Chore, Dathan, and Abiron⁵ and their followers were the first ones annihilated by this unusual death; and familiarity with them is very dangerous unless it be manifest by one's life and one's words that there is no acquiescence in their crime. Hence, in the Book of Numbers (for I speak to one who knows and teaches the Law) Moses separated the Dathanites and Abironites from the assembly of the faithful and said: "Depart from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest you be involved in their sins."⁶ But the guilt of such is not washed away even by sacrifices. This is evident from that chapter of the Law, where Chore, as censer-bearer, was destroyed by the flame of divine fire. Moreover, society does not afflict with loss of bodily safety those who

5 Num. 16

6 Ibid., 16.26

disagree with the irreligious on the matter of religion and disprove the errors of others by the contrast of their own actions as well as by verbal rebuke. Thus, in the Fourth Book of Kings, Eliseus shows his contempt for the idolatry of the King of Israel, yet does not deny him the prophetic declaration, but he tells him openly what sort of person he is and what sufferings he will deservedly undergo, and he does not mince his words. Thus, he does show his deference to a magistrate, thus, he makes answer to the one because of his respect for the other that religion might not suffer but zeal might make an expression of charity. For he said: "What have I to do with thee? Go to the prophets of thy father and thy mother As the Lord liveth, in whose sight I stand, if I did not reverence the face of Josaphat king of Juda, I would not have hearkened to thee, nor looked on thee."⁷ Of course, participation in their sacrifices is fraught with the greatest dangers and not without loss of salvation. This is ever so clear from the reading of the canons, as you know. For, even Naaman, the Syrian, cured of leprosy by the ministry of Eliseus, dared not take part in the public prayers of his master, the King of Syria, unless he obtained permission, unless he might carry away into the temple some holy earth—two mules' burden on which he may stand and sit, and unless by the prayers of the prophet he might be absolved of this shortcoming, saying: "When my master goeth into the temple of Rammon to worship

7 4 Kings 3,13-14; king of Juda—not capitalized in the Bible

subtlety of their words. Their own conscience chides them, your conscience wrongly tells you about them; I do not refer to your dispensation, but to their rashness. Their land cries against them,¹⁹ and it is expected that the heavens will reveal their iniquity very soon.²⁰ Although it may not be completely revealed just now, yet their power is already beginning to wane and disappear, and their arrogance is vanishing into smoke. For, who among the sons of men²¹ was like Frederick before he was transformed from prince to tyrant, from a Catholic emperor into a schismatic and heretical one? I do not mean that he fell into error in matters of faith and held to some heretical belief, but that he did not permit the truth to advance in sincerity of ecclesiastical rank. He divided the priesthood against the Lord, and from the Lord he realized a split in his kingdom. So also the King of England, who had struck terror into his neighboring princes because he lifted his heel²² against the Church and tried to subject it to slavery, is being assailed by defenceless men²³ so that he is forced to seek the help of his neighboring nations, and while venting his rage against the Lord, he realized suddenly the evident waning of his own forces and of theirs. He is still contriving very many schemes, as you have written; but surely, either the Holy Ghost is false and deceitful (which even a black-guard does not maintain) or "his sorrow shall be turned on

19 Job 31.27

20 Ibid., 20.27

21 Ps. 88.7

22 John 13, 18; Ps. 60.10

23 Letters 144, 174, 177

his own head; and his iniquity shall come down upon his crown."²⁴ For, the unjust are caught in their own snares,²⁵ and "who prepares a pit for his brother, falls into it first."²⁶ Do you not remember Scripture saying that "An evil man always seeketh quarrels: but a cruel angel shall be sent against him?"²⁷ I forwarded your letter to His Lordship of Canterbury, but because I could not detain your messenger beyond the feast of Saint Remy,²⁸ I had not yet received his reply. It is, indeed, certain that he is most grateful to you for your willingness to serve him, and he will, at the opportune time and with God's help, express his appreciation. Regarding his position this much is doubtlessly evident to you that what he has gained in virtue and in letters surpasses what has been extorted from him by the knavery of the king and of his fellow oppressors. His primacy has been established anew, and the Archbishop of York²⁹ has been enjoined to recognize him as primate by a manifestation of obedience. He is also the legate of all England, excepting the diocese of York, which for the time being is free of this jurisdiction of ours, because the Archbishop of York is the legate of Scotland, and the Church of Rome is not wont to subject the Church of any legate to the legatine jurisdiction of another legate during the granted term of office; but, of course, it does not exempt that Church, if it is subject by another right. Our king requests that William

24 Ps. 7.17

25 Prov. 11.6

26 Eccles. 10.8

27 Proverbs 17.11

28 October 1

29 Roger de Pont l'Eveque, 1154-1181

of Pavia³⁰ and another cardinal³¹ be sent as legates, hoping that they solve this case in accord with his wishes. But he thwarted his own designs because of his great crimes and acts of brigandage. Hence, it would seem to me to be serviceable for you, if possible, to induce the Archbishop of Cologne to withstand the king to his face under guise of suggestion and charity and point out the difficulties of the case. For by what right, reason, law, or canon will the Archbishop of Canterbury be compelled to enter the case, since he has been robbed of his possessions after the appeal? Should not everything be restored to him beforehand and complete peace be made? Should not the rest of the matters be tended to which are prescribed by those who have ever so carefully investigated the canons in this regard? Surely, more than ten thousand marks were subsequently stolen from him and his household, and without restitution of these by no law can he be forced to appear even if anything should belong to those who prosecute him. The scope of this request is ever so wide for the use of your discretion (you are better acquainted with the reasons) to persuade him, if it can be done, through the Archbishop of Cologne to cease from wreaking havoc and from his acts of brigandage, and not to increase the restrictions of his efforts for the advantages of the opponents. The Bishop of Chichester³² recently attacked this very thing, intimating to

30 Cardinal of St. Peter ad Vincula

31 Cardinal Henry of Pisa; but the one who actually was sent was Otho, Cardinal of St. Nicholas, in carcere Tulliano

32 Hilary, 1147-1169

the king that he might help the Archbishop of Canterbury more than any man. When he asked him how, he answered: "Because by the same repeated acts of violence, numerous and great as they were, which you justified, you strangled his cause and your own justice as well, if there had been any. You even give him advice and help—you force him to take into exile with him either the better clerics or some of the better ones, and you do not allow them to return." The king was moved by this and with sighs he protested his solicitude for them, but the vehemence of the indignation he felt did not permit him to grasp the situation. Regarding these things, because at one time you esteemed the King of France as a friend, and because you know not what the day to come may bring forth,³³ I would advise you to pacify him with something, if he took offence at your departure, or lure him on more with little gifts, if he had remained true in a lasting friendship. But there is nothing so capable of reconciling him, the entire Church of France, and even the Church of Rome with yourself than if they heard that you give testimony to the truth as you ought (which is in keeping with a philosopher, especially a Christian one versed in both laws), and that you prefer to honor neither the wealth of Croesus nor any kind of allurements. For if a moral philosopher, and a pagan at that, said in his praiseworthy commendation of literature that

Seldom is a poet's heart set on gain,³⁴

³³ Prov. 27.1

³⁴ Hor. Ep. 1.1.119-120

will it not be shameful for a philosopher, an advocate of righteousness, a herald of the Gospel to be obsessed by the goods of the world which a pagan poet holds in contempt? But I place my hope in the Lord, that to you, in your devotion, He will grant the opportunity that either by way of suggestion, or inquiry, or any other way, according as He knows how to help us, you might be able without detriment to yourself whisper a word into the ears of the princes, for the sake of truth, for your own safety and that of the others, and the spirit of your Father will help it advance. May it not hinder you, if you see anything blameworthy in the Church of Rome. You remember in the Gospel that the faithful were commanded not to imitate the works of those sitting in the seat of Moses, but to fulfill their teaching in their own works.³⁵ Farewell! And remember me, who am always mindful of you as befits a friend.

35 Matt. 23.2

SUMMARY: John asks Gerard Pucelle for the latest news from Cologne about Frederick Barbarossa's expedition to Italy (October 1166), and inquires for information about the oracles and visions of St. Hildegard, for he is curious to know whether anything had been revealed to her touching the duration of the present schism. This letter may be dated about the middle of October 1166. John mentions that he had but lately written to Gerard, and the letter referred to may be letter 191, which is dated October 1, 1166.

Although I wrote to you recently about the matters that seemed important at the time, yet I think that after the manner of a languid friendship correspondence does come to a stop, especially when on any occasion whatsoever, the opportunity for conversation presents itself. Since, indeed, there is the well known adage, "Lovers have no scarcity of words; and slavish souls, no shortage of complaints." But as much as silence is recommended as profitable for those in religious profession to cultivate righteousness, so much, indeed, is it blamed for producing and bringing about the death of love. Since from on high I have been granted the advantage of a messenger, the stimulus of love urges me, therefore, to inquire by mail whether your status has been changed again one way or another, and whether you later received any positive news about the emperor's expedition,¹ and about your friend, the Archbishop of Cologne.² May God convert them, if they have been predestined,³ and after they have

1 Frederick Barbarossa's expedition to Italy which set out in October 1166 to subdue Italy and to place the anti-Pope Paschal III on the chair of Peter

2 Rainold of Dassel

3 Rom. 8.13

been established in oneness with the Church by suitable fruits of penance,⁴ may He grant them pardon. And after they have been cleansed, may He lead them to life and through life. Otherwise, let the Most High and the merciful and gracious Lord⁵ break the rod of His anger,⁶ lashing the people in indignation, reproving the Church with bitter chastisement. About my own status I can write nothing new, because in my regard no change has been made. But the friend I was to you at your departure, with the help of God, I shall remain, wherever I may be and wherever you may live. Nor have I any doubt that you, in your ardor, will be ready to work for my advantage too, if the occasion arises. Moreover, we shall be able to assist one another more effectively, if we take care to be guided more carefully by philosophy, to the study of which we have devoted quite considerable time, namely, to put orders into effect rather than juggle around meaningless terms. For philosophical truth seeks after, tends to, and follows up real things, not words; and for a long time you were aware that I was never satisfied with the opinion that it deals merely with terminology. Not the hearers of words,⁷ nor the heralds, but the doers are just in the sight of God. And it is the most positive proof of a sound philosophy, when a person checks the stimuli of the flesh and thwarts the attack of every fortune with the weapon of virtue. Friend, we are in the fining-pot of

4 Luke 3.8

5 Ps. 110.4

6 Is. 10.5

7 James 1.22

the Lord;⁸ with His help, let us be wise in patience, for "the learning of a man is known by patience."⁹ In the future, if you please, inform me of anything new you find in the plundered treasure-chests; if nothing else which our country-men lack turns up, at least the visions and prophecies of that famous and renowned Saint Hildegard¹⁰, are in your possession. She stands high in my estimation and I revere her, because His Lordship Eugene¹¹ was quite closely united to her by a special bond of charity. Make a more careful investigation and write back whether she had any revelation about the end of this schism. For in the days of the saintly Eugene she foretold that he would not have any peace or good will in the city until in his last days. But I beseech you ardently to guard the affairs of Saint Remy¹² as you would guard my soul.

8 Prov. 27.21

9 Ibid., 19.11

10 (1179) Abbess of the monastery of St. Rupert, Bingen. Cf. letter 144, note to line 52.

11 Pope Eugene III, 1145-1153

12 The Abbey of St. Remy at Rheims, where John lived during his exile.

193

John to Master Gerard Pucelle

SUMMARY: John acknowledges Gerard Pucelle's letter, warns him of the dangers of consorting with the Cologne schismatics, begs him to do all in his power to end the schism, and assures him that Archbishop Thomas is not responsible for enkindling the king of France's indignation against him. The letter was written some time toward the end of 1166, for John mentions Frederick Barbarossa's expedition against Italy, which began in October 1166.

I recently received from you a letter bubbling over with piety and learning. The more attentively I re-read it, the more bitterly I grieve that the comfort of your company has been taken away from us. Moreover, while the whole letter is most praiseworthy because of its own elegance as well as the esteem and reverence of your name, that is especially gratifying what you wisely and (I hope) truthfully inserted at the bottom of the letter—that after carefully considering the contents of my letter, you said, did, and wrote whatever ought to be said, done and written. I, however, could never be convinced that in such a critical moment for your safety you would omit any of the things that happened, and by receiving the filthy exchange of fleeting riches for your soul, that you would wish to lose not only the name of philosopher but (what is far more deadly) to toss aside the convictions of a Christian. Far be this, O esteemed Sir, far be this from your judiciousness and integrity that for the sake of temporal gain you would place your lot with the schismatics, and ever so rashly and shamelessly take away some of the condemnation of Jericho,¹ which may turn unto destruction and death for the camp of the Lord of hosts.

¹ Josue 6.26

And, of course, to side with your point of view, and, in fact, with the authority of the Catholic Church while grain is mixed with chaff and the good with the bad, and Jesus strives for the fulfillment of the commandments of Moses and for the furthering of the distribution of predetermining grace, there is an anathema² in the midst of Israel, on account of which many are perishing; and those who have been pre-ordained are crowned more gloriously after their victories. Hence, even the ship of Peter is often lashed by all kinds of billows, while the Lord sleeps,³ as it were; but because it has confidence in Christ, its Pilot, it always sails to a port of safety. Nor are you unaware that even in your midst, I refer to the Church of Cologne, there not only lurks an anathema, having, as it were, some reverence for God and regard for man, but it even rages and vents its fury against God and against the unity of the Church, especially when almost the whole world is aware of how maliciously the Archbishop of Cologne⁴ always despised the Church, how he enkindled and fomented the schism as far as it lay in his power—that one who usurped the Church of Cologne, the greatest among the locusts of the beast, whose power is on their tongues and in their tails.⁵ For the schism had ended, and your

2 Ibid., 7.13

3 Matt. 8.24

4 Rainold. If it had not been for his implacable enmity towards Alexander III the schism would have ended with the death of the anti-pope Victor IV at Lucca in April 1164. But he immediately secured the election of another anti-Pope, Cardinal Guy of Crema, who took the name of Paschal III.

5 Apoc. 9.10, 19; "Beast" here refers to Frederick Barbarossa

tyrant had intended to grant peace to the Church, if the Archbishop of Cologne did not still goad him on against the Church, so that by mutual vow they are trying to snuff out not only the life of the Supreme Pontiff but even to blot out the dignity of Peter, saying: "Let us bind the just one, because he is not for our turn;⁶ we want no knowledge of the ways of God, for we recognize no king but Caesar."⁷ With that in mind (as they say) they set out for Italy⁸ to intrude the heresiarch of Crema into the chair of Peter, and to imprison, depose, or murder the vicar of Christ. But prayer is made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him,⁹ so that he need have no excessive fear of the "two tails of the smoking firebrands,"¹⁰ Frederick and Rainold, who making flesh their arm,¹¹ cease not from blaspheming holy Israel. Surely, where human help is lacking, the divine comes to the assistance of the Church in her needs. Let no one guard his error by an apology worded deceitfully, and let no one approve of his own excesses, because God is not mocked.¹² He does not judge according to the sight of the eyes nor act according to the hearing of the ears,¹³ but in justice does he judge the world.¹⁴ And in behalf of the meek he condemns the wicked,¹⁵ punishes the more powerful with greater might¹⁶ and with the

6 Wisdom 2.12

7 John 19.15

8 This was in October, 1166.

9 Acts 12.5

10 Is. 7.4

11 Jer. 17.5

12 Gal. 6.7

13 Is. 11.3

14 Ps. 9.9; 95.14

15 Is. 11.4

16 Wisdom 6.7

perverse perverts them.¹⁷ This is the reason why I beg you ever so ardently to act more pressingly in the things you are doing, by saying, writing, doing what, through the wisdom given you by the Lord, you have learned to be of importance for the closing of this schism, so that your conscience may rest more easy in the sight of God and your reputation may grow to its fullest strength in the sight of your neighbor. As for the rest, (that I may speak from my own knowledge) you have conceived an unjust suspicion about the Archbishop of Canterbury and his household, because (and I weighed the matter as carefully as possible) you ought in charity to have complete confidence in him and in them. Do not impute the indignation of the King of France to them but to yourself. For without his knowledge you departed, as he complains, while he was only two leagues away from you. He is all the more provoked, because while he has esteemed you as a very close friend of his, you passed him by as if on the way to the rivals of the King of France, particularly on the way to the schismatic Archbishop of Cologne, who not only persecutes the Church of God, but was even wont to address this very one in impudent, jeering terms as a kinglet¹⁸ (as he heard). But since you took it to heart, I have no doubt that this most Christian prince in his kindness will make peace with you.

17 Ps. 17.27

18 The kings of France were styled: "Rex regum et regum terrarum altissimus et ditissimus."

Gerard Pucelle to Archbishop Thomas Becket

SUMMARY: This letter was probably written by Gerard Pucelle, for it was sent from Cologne. In it the writer expresses his approval of Archbishop Thomas' answers to the letters of appeal from the English clergy and King Henry, warns the archbishop about the two cardinals who were to form the papal commission, and gives him the latest news from Germany. The letter can be placed in November 1166, for Gerard writes that illness had prevented Archbishop Rainold of Cologne from joining Frederick Barbarossa's expedition against Italy, and that he would be unable to join it before winter set in.

I had planned not to write to your Paternity, because the interchange of your letters has been denied me. But considering your prudent foresight, I approve the zeal of your consideration in not writing more than I would any certain, friendly though it be, condescension in writing. For sons must be induced to serve their fathers more by deed than by invitation, more by facts than by words, more by kindness than by honeyed phrases; so, indeed, according to the laws of the world, sons must be drawn on by obedience to their fathers, not forced by obligatory contracts. But after seeing the letter¹ you sent to the King of England and the one sent to your suffragans, I rejoiced with exceeding joy for the fervor and righteous zeal with which you are inflamed for the Church of God; because at least in this dangerous period there is someone who, for the damage done the Church, for the members of Christ, which He Himself redeemed with His own glorious Blood, does not hesitate to draw his sword with blessed Peter²

1 For Thomas' letter to the English clergy cf. Becket Materials 5.490

2 Matt. 26.51; Luke 22.38

for Christ's name against the servants of iniquity, the enemies of truth, and the persecutors of the Christian name. I do praise your zeal and your plan; I praise the strictness of your severity and constancy exercised against the disreputable customs. But I do heed what has been written:

When the head becomes wan, the rest of the members become weak.³

I call attention to your suffragans, who deserted on the day of the war, in fact, they lifted their disobedient necks and considered themselves your opponents. What, therefore, will anyone do alone, if he has no one to help him or work with him? But if the Lord be for us,⁴ no one will gain ground against us. For He will reject the devices and unjust schemes of the bishops of England, and He will bring to nought the counsels of the prince.⁵ The King of England, however, wrote to His Lordship of Cologne⁶ that Henry of Pisa⁷ and William of Pavia⁸ would come to France to make new demands so that from everywhere they may scrape and collect together the wherewithal to maintain Pope Alexander in the city. As you know, the one is fickle and inconstant; the other, tricky and deceitful; and both of them are greedy and avaricious; and so bribes will easily blind them, and they will be inclined to all kinds of injustice. When I heard of their detesta-

3 Joseph Morawski, Proverbes francais anterieurs au XVe siecle, no. 191: "Cui li chies dieut, tui li membre li falent."

4 Rom. 8.31

5 Ps. 32.10

6 Rainold of Dassel, 1159-1167

7 Cardinal of SS Nereus et Achilleus. He did not make the journey; Cardinal Otho of St. Nicholas in carcere Tulliano was chosen instead.

8 Cardinal of St. Peter ad Vincula

ble arrival, I immediately began to grow terribly afraid that their presence would greatly harm our cause, and that they would not blush to regain the good-will of the King of England at the price of your blood and that of your followers. So, I suggest that matters be so handled through the King of France and the Cistercians, that even if they wish, they will be unable to act perversely in this regard. Nevertheless, have confidence in the justice that is yours, and may a solid faith based on a positive hope bolster you up. For Pope Alexander will doubtlessly hold sway; for the son of the Sicilian⁹ having been established in the kingdom of his father, will help him in his every wish; and the evident protecting rod of God rages furiously in the midst of the princes of Germany. Many of the princes have now entered an alliance against the Duke of Saxony;¹⁰ but the emperor is trying to quell this. The Archbishop of Cologne has even gone to the side of the opponents, breaking off the association he had with the Duke. But even the Archbishop of Cologne, after assembling his soldiers and being prepared to drive into Italy,¹¹ was seized with a double tertian fever and is so sick that it is quite certain he cannot go before winter sets in. But he promised me in this illness of his that, if he will not go to Italy, whether the emperor goes or not, he will submit to the counsel of the Cistercians and of the King of France and your counsel, too,

9 King William II of Sicily who succeeded to the throne in 1166 after the death of his father, William I, on May 7, 1165. His mother, the Regent, maintained friendly relations with Alexander III and was antagonistic toward Frederick Barbarossa.

10 Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony and Bavaria.

11 October 1166. Rainold afterwards joined the expedition and commanded a portion of the army that attacked Rome. The city was captured but a plague devastated Frederick's forces and Rainold was among the victims, dying on August 13, 1167.

regarding the making of peace with Pope Alexander; and he proposes to arrange it in such a way that he might in some way be forced to do it by his clergy. I write this to you as to a father and superior in confession that it might be a secret with you until we see if the matter will have some effect. If I shall be free of my obligations, I shall return even if I am not summoned by you. But in the meanwhile, if I am given to understand that you need me for something, I shall always be ready to return. Farewell!

John to Archdeacon Baldwin of Exeter

SUMMARY: After expressing his disappointment at receiving no letters from Baldwin, the Archdeacon of Totnes, John writes a bitter attack against the English bishops, and especially against their leader, Bishop Gilbert Foliot of London, who is credited with composing the letter of appeal against Archbishop Thomas. Cf. Becket Materials 5.408. He also answers the charges which were brought against Thomas by Gilbert Foliot in his letter to the Archbishop. Cf. Becket Materials 5.512. The letter may be placed late in 1166, for John mentions that it is now two years since Thomas was forced to appeal to the Pope. This was done at Sens in November 1164. In manuscripts A and Q the letter is addressed to Baldwin's Bishop, Bartholomew of Exeter.

After being kept in anxious and interminable suspense, and burning with feverish impatience, we looked forward to the arrival of our messenger, hoping that on his return we would be cheered by the solicitude of our friends at least by a comforting letter; but, of course, it happened otherwise, since he did not bring back a jot or a tittle.¹ We do not say this to reproach our friends with a lack of charity or with negligence. For we conclude that they are being oppressed so much the more bitterly that they are the more wary of bewailing their hardships. For they are being flogged like boys, whom the severe taskmasters force to make their tears return behind their eyelids and to the hidden source of their flow, after these tears had been brought on by a fit of pain and squeezed out by a lashing. Furthermore, we did take into consideration the hazards of our position, the evils of the times, the weakness of the Church, and the fury of the persecutor; but, on the other hand, we had hopes because iniquity which adheres to the talent of lead² cannot stand at the peak for a long time,³

1 Matt. 5.18

2 Zach. 5.7-8

3 Lucan, Phars. 1.70

and the Amorrhite⁴ is more speedily and forcefully being smitten and thrown to the depths of the earth, when the ripened malice breaks forth. We, therefore, sympathize with our friends and deplore the desolation of the Church in the kingdom of England; and we wonder where the zeal of so many religious and learned men has disappeared⁵, since no watchman steps forward in accord with the prophetic warning and dares to denounce to the wicked man his wickedness from the mouth of the Lord.⁵ The wicked, therefore, before the face of the watchmen go down alive into hell,⁶ so that their blood may justly and rightly be requited of the watchmen, because they kept silent.⁷ But why do we claim that they must be punished because of their silence? Surely, it is because some of them saw the thief and ran along with him,⁸ in fact, they ran ahead of him, acting as leaders and teachers and plunged him headlong into robbery and plunder, and they place their lot with the wicked in any sort of iniquitous creed. Of these, your archisynagogus⁹ and those, who seemed clothed in the best gold¹⁰ and appeared as pillars of the Church, were the first to embrace the dung.¹¹ The Lord had given them silver and gold,¹² and as He himself laments through the prophet, "From it they formed Baal, since they revere man more than God,

4 Josue 24.18

5 Ezech. 33

6 Num. 16.30

7 Ezech., 33.6

8 Ps. 49.18

9 Gilbert Foliot, Bishop of London, 1163-1188

10 Lam. 4.2

11 Ibid., 4.5

12 Osee 2.8

worship and serve a creature rather than the Creator."¹³ This, as the holy Apostle teaches,¹⁴ is the most accurate and certain definition of idolatry. For what each one worships before all else constitutes for him a god, so that the one who is enslaved to lust shows his preference for Venus, while another in quest of gifts and bribes thrusts himself into trickery and brigandage and shows his veneration for Laverna,¹⁵ a third blown up with wind inhabits the land of Mercoz¹⁶ on the summit of Babylon, and still another, groveling after gluttony, appears as a hog of Epicurus.¹⁷ What is written of such, "that their God is their belly and their glory is in their shame,"¹⁸ perhaps by an extended application is referred to the other vices too. Thus, even in the Gospel, the Truth teaches that one cannot serve God and mammon at the same time,¹⁹ and that whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. The doctor of the Gentiles proclaims and says that "if I wished to please men, I should not be the servant of Christ,"²⁰ and "those who please men have been confounded, because God hath despised them."²¹ But very different is the opinion of the archisynagogus and his accomplices. By a tricky interpretation of the words they twist the law to suit their own whims, not to correspond with the intention of the law-maker; they do not wish their understanding of it to agree with his, but in every way possible they try to make what suits

13 Is. 44.15

14 Rom. 1.25

15 HOR. Ep. 1.16.60

16 Judges 5.23

17 HOR. Ep. 1.4.16

18 Phil. 3.19

19 Matt. 6.24

20 Gal. 1.10

21 Ps. 52.6

them seem to harmonize also with the divine law. He claims there is no need of fighting for the freedom of the Church. But O false and deceitful hypocrisy, whither art you tending? For what purpose do you instigate heresies and schisms? Were not the people invited to the freedom of God from the very birth of legislation? And was not Egypt more unbearably oppressed by plagues,²² because she presumed to keep the Church in slavery by reason of an ancient custom which came down from her ancestors and held sway for almost three hundred years? Did not the Machabees meritoriously and devoutly lay down their most holy lives as martyrs for the freedom of their brethren? Did not David prostrate the Philistine with the stones he had gathered up from the brook and put into his shepherd's script,²³ so that he might free the forces of the armies of the Lord from the yoke of unjust slavery and from disgrace to religion? But why cite a few meagre examples? Almost all Scripture, which is arranged into stories, is filled with such records of illustrious heroes. Indeed, there are two causes which men protect most passionately and hold close to their hearts—the one is the cause of liberty, and the other is the cause of religious faith. Yet the cause of faith is considered the more excellent and undoubtedly the more righteous, so much so, in fact, that even men of pagan religion deem this as the most steadfast. For even Achab, who evidently was wicked, when the King of Syria wanted to subject him to slavery, unhesitatingly offered the king

22 Ex. 7-12

23 1 Kings 17.40

silver and gold, his slaves and handmaids, all kinds of goods, his wife, his own sons and daughters, and at last even himself. And for the sake of the divine law alone was he unafraid to enter into a conflict. For when the king desired to search the house to tear asunder the law, Achab withstood him and he gained a victory, because, even though otherwise wicked, at least in this matter he honored the Lord.²⁴ For what cause, therefore, is there a religious conflict, if not to preserve the law of God? This, namely, forbids iniquity and enjoins upon all the shepherds of the Church to punish all disobedience. But perhaps the archisynagogus knows of some iniquity which God does not forbid, or which He might not want censured by the shepherds of the Church, and if possible, intrusted to the rod of punishment. Of this kind of iniquity, of course, Moses and the Doctor of Gentiles were unaware. But he offers as an excuse that John rebuked Herod in a spirit of gentleness, declaring that it was unlawful for him to misuse his living brother's wife.²⁵ In this assertion, of course, he seeks consolation not so much for his ignorance as for his cowardice, since it is evident that there John did not play the part of a pontiff, on whom rests the obligation of correcting transgressions, but the part of a herald with tidings, whose only task was to announce the things which must be done and to reprove vice. Heli, it is true, reprov'd his sons,²⁶ but with the kindness and mildness of a father rather than with the austerity and juris-

24 3 Kings 20

25 Matt. 14.4

26 1 Kings 2

diction of a pontiff. Therefore, for every point of the divine law we must fight, and we must rise up against the powers, and we must overwhelm with all our strength whatever is opposed to charity, which is the fulfillment of the law.²⁷ But evidently to prefigure the priesthood God decreed that the tribe of Levi was free of public functions and subject to the designs of the High Priest alone, as we read in the Book of Numbers.²⁸ Also Abiathar, who had resisted the Holy Spirit in the designs of David, after being removed from the priesthood, escaped the sentence of death for the reason that he had carried the ark, and because of the privilege of his previous office in safety, he awaited the day of his death.²⁹ But if the clergy succeeds not the Tribe of Levi in its privileges, then the Apostle is untrustworthy,³⁰ and all the scriptural exegetes are liars. From this it ought to be clear to everyone that most righteous is the cause of those who fight for the freedom of the Church, and regard the law of God as more precious than wealth, in fact, even more precious than their own lives. But perhaps someone will say: "What about the case of your own Archbishop of Canterbury who was delinquent in the cause of the Church at Clarendon³¹ and when

27 Rom. 13.10

28 Num. 3-4

29 3 Kings 1, 2.26

30 Heb. 7

31 The Council held at Clarendon, a royal hunting lodge near Salisbury, January 13-28, 1164. The Archbishop Thomas first agreed to obey the Constitutions, but later refused his seal to the document.

summoned to the trial involving money matters?³² Fully aware of the injustice in the matter of rights and distrustful of their deceitful tricks, to some extent by rash and shameless subterfuge he admitted, then he fully approved of their injustice, and justified the opposite side." Yes, let the fact stand that he was delinquent." May God be kind to those bishops who goaded him on to this, and to those cheats who lured him into it since it was a rightful and abiding fear and one that might come upon the staunchest of men. His letter is being sent to you; in it he redeems himself in part. His transgression grieved him, he confessed and merited absolution from His Holiness the Pope, who understood the case, and he

32 This was at the Council of Northampton, October 8-13, 1164, whither Thomas had been summoned by Henry to answer charges brought against him by John Fitz Gilbert, marshal to the Empress Matilda. John had brought an action in the archbishop's court concerning the manor of Pageham, Sussex, the property of the archbishop, and when the suit seemed to be going against him, he appealed to Henry. Ordered to appear at Westminster, Thomas pleaded illness, but sent his representatives. The enraged Henry then cited him at Northampton, and the case assumed the light of lese majeste. During the course of the trial its complexion changed entirely when Henry suddenly demanded of Thomas three hundred pounds received by the archbishop from the wardenship of Eye and Berkhamstead, five hundred which he said had been lent to him during the Toulouse war (1159), five hundred more which he claimed had been borrowed from the Jews on the royal security, and more still; in all, 44,000 Marks of silver were demanded (cf. Becket Materials 6.271), and this in spite of the quit-tance Thomas had received when he was made archbishop. Some of the bishops went security for Thomas, but after fruitless negotiations he realised that there was no appeasing the king, and he fled to Flanders on November 2, 1164, appearing before the Pope at Sens shortly afterwards.

requested that the Pope free the Church of England from these unlawful and extorted obligations, therefore, those who followed him, as they say, in his fault, why do they not imitate him in his penance, his admission of guilt, and his atonement? Do they prefer to remain in their filth rather than arise from it, be cleansed, and restored to their former rank? But he feared the case involving money (as they object). This is, indeed, untrue. But he feared rather the lawlessness of the judges, who condemned him unjustly, ever ready to render justice in accord with the tyrant's whims; and in this did God spare our generation shame that there were more things the tyrant was ashamed to decree than they were to execute.³³ They were all Balaamites,³⁴ scheming how they would revile and doom the cause which the Lord blessed. They urged that evil be done so good might come of it,³⁵ and that destructive measures against property and divine law be permitted for the sake of mitigating the madness of the oppressor. What was held as certain was now called into doubt, so that in everyone's mind bounced around that quip, "I know, I don't know."³⁶ For who was unaware that the king set his chancellor free of all administrative responsibility that he might rule over the Church of Canterbury? Who was unaware with what insistence he entreated the apostolic see for the pallium for him? Most everyone knows what he later promised so that the customs

33 Lucan, Phars. 3.111-112: "quod Caesar plura iubere erubuit quam Roma pati."

34 2 Peter 2.15

35 Rom. 3.8

36 Ter. Eun. 818

(which he calls immemorial, but in reality are immoral) be accepted. The archbishop, nevertheless, because of malice of the calumniator, due to the lawlessness, simplicity, or designs of the judges (since he had not appeared when called) was forced to appear in court and make satisfaction (since he was the owner of a very vast estate) so that he could hardly obtain a one-day truce for deliberation because of a very severe illness. But they condemned him beforehand with an unjust verdict, which the apostolic see revoked, when the case was studied, and we have in our possession the privilege of this revocation. So could he not and should he not have regarded these judges with suspicion? But perhaps the claim will be made that they should have passed sentence not in accord with their feeling but according to pleas of the parties; because even the Lord did not condemn Judas, whom He knew to be a traitor, and He forgave the woman taken in adultery, when no one came forward to accuse her.³⁷ Thus, also to illustrate our point there is a saying, "As I hear, so I judge."³⁸ But actually the word hear is put there for the word understand, so that according to the way reasons sway his mind a judge may make a decision, sometimes using facts, sometimes suppositions that a just and innocent man may never be condemned by feeling, even though a multitude may seem to favor the opposite side. For it has been written, "The innocent and just man thou shalt not put to death: because I abhor the wicked,"³⁹ and

³⁷ John 8.10

³⁸ Ibid., 5.30

³⁹ Ex. 23.7

elsewhere "Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou yield in judgment to the opinion of the most part, to stray from the path."⁴⁰ If he should pass sentence contrary to conscience, especially when it is to the detriment of an innocent man, he sins most gravely, because the Apostle says, "All that is not of faith is sin."⁴¹ Solomon in the case of the harlots, using an argument of probability, condemned the one who lied;⁴² and Daniel in freeing Susanna, revealed the maliciousness of the priests by means of suppositions.⁴³ But if the judges had the required ardor in the cause of the Archbishop of Canterbury, if they had exercised the diligence prescribed by law, if in their verdict they had consulted the Scriptures, if they had not shown partiality beyond measure and righteousness to the king he who rejected their judgment, could perhaps be fittingly arraigned. But where madness holds sway over all things, what room could there be for reason and for right? The anointed of the Lord was led before the ruler, and the chiefs, scribes, and pharisees had assembled against him;⁴⁴ and surely, that ruler was more cruel than the governor by whom Christ was condemned. For Pilate went through the case looking carefully for some pretext whereby the accused Christ might be set free; but this one was anxious and careful that the anointed one, though innocent, be found guilty and condemned. Pilate, not to have Christ punished by any verdict of his, sent Him off to Herod, where He was an

40 Ibid., 23.2

41 Rom. 14.23

42 3 Kings 3.16

43 Dan. 13

44 Matt. 26.57; 27

object of scorn, dressed in a white garment, and sent back again. But here everything possible was done that the anointed one might in no way go free. Let a man say, who loves truth and who dares to say it before God, to Whom in a severe judgment he will render an account of his testimony, yes, let him say, if he dares, that the archbishop at that trial was not treated with malice as far as his calumniator and his accomplices were concerned; that he was not treated deceitfully and unjustly by the judges; that he was not treated shamefully and disgracefully as far as the honor of the Church was concerned, and he will return to the trial, after receiving fitting security. Therefore, let an upright and prudent man say this, and he will easily have his suggestion heeded. It is not believable that even that archisynagogus of yours holds any different opinion, even though he is not ashamed to preach the contrary; but let him and all his associates rejoice with such steadfast ill will as their conscience tells them that there the archbishop was treated justly and in accord with the dignity of the Church of God, and let all those, who agree with the archisynagogus, be afflicted by the same plight. Therefore, because the archbishop had once obtained an unjust condemnation, and saw a worse one hanging over him because of the viciousness of the prosecutor and the instability of the judges, he refused their verdict, transferring his case to the one who by God was constituted the judge of all the faithful, and he visited the place which was specially designated for settling all cases of priests. This designation was not made by imperial or canon law, but by the authority of God Himself, saying through Moses: "If thou perceive that there be

among you a hard and doubtful matter in judgment between blood and blood, cause and cause, leprosy and non-leprosy, go up to the place which the Lord shall choose, to the priests of the Levitical race and to the judge that shall preside at that time, and thou shalt do whatever he shall say to you and thou shalt follow the sentence of the priests. But he that will be proud and refuse to obey the commandment of the priest and the decree of the judge who ministereth at that time to the Lord, that man shall die, and thou shalt take away the evil from Israel."⁴⁵ Note that he excepts neither any case or any person from the judgment of the priests, although the priests make their decision in one way by themselves and in another way through the instrumentality of their ministers who take the place of the Church. Was the statement not made to Jeremias in the person of the priesthood just as the doctors of the Church faithfully teach: "Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations and over kingdoms, to root up and to waste and to destroy, and to build up and to plant?"⁴⁶ What transgression, therefore, did His Lordship of Canterbury commit, if he did appeal, if he made provisions for himself, if he forgave the bishops who again had to pass a faulty judgment resulting in his condemnation and disgrace, or suffer the blow of the king's indignation? The Lord knows and let Him pass judgment on how the opposing party, who started the appeal themselves,⁴⁷

45 Deut. 17.8-12

46 Jer. 1.10

47 The English clergy had appealed against the Archbishop at Northampton on July 6, 1166

prosecuted the case, what moderation and sincerity they assumed toward the Church and their opponent. You cannot be unaware of this either. Anyone can fool himself and can construct devices against his own soul, but surely "God is not mocked."⁴⁸ Two years have already elapsed⁴⁹ —time, namely, helpful to those who make the appeal,⁴⁹ and after that lapse of time sentence has been passed favorable to the faction of His Lordship of Canterbury, even though the execution of this sentence is delayed due to the handling of certain matters. But already everyone who fears God is convinced that the archbishop and his party have been banished unjustly. For by what right was the revenue of the clerics confiscated?⁵⁰ And what patience was displayed by the bishops of the Church when the furnishings of the altar of Christ were freely exposed to the vandals of the Church? What sort of justice sent innocent victims into exile regardless of their rank or profession, their age or their sex? Who ever tore asunder those in wedlock with such utter heartlessness? And yet the bishops bear testimony to the guiltlessness and righteousness of a man who does these things, so that to their own shame and destruction they do not blush in saying and writing that the "king deems it a gracious favor, when admonished to amend any offence against God."⁵¹ Therefore, either in their opinion he is not committing anything wrong, or they disloyally deny him the homage

48 Gal. 6.7

49 Two years from Thomas' appeal to the Pope at Sens would date this letter November, 1166. Cf. Becket Materials 3.340 ff

50 At Marlborough on December 26, 1164, Henry had ordered the banishment of all of Thomas' relatives and the confiscation of all benefices and properties of the archbishop's clerks. Cf. Becket Materials 3.75

51 Cf. The bishops' letter of appeal, Becket Materials 5.412

he enjoys and to which he is entitled, or they openly lie against their own heads;⁵² because "The mouth that believeth killeth the soul."⁵³ There is no one who dares tell him what is expedient for the listener as well as for the one speaking. There is no one who with Moses would say: "Let the Lord's people go with everything they possess that they might sacrifice to Him in the desert."⁵⁴ There is no one who would request a respite for a three-day journey for the clergy carrying on under Moses and Aaron, that is, engaged in worship of the law and in the ceremonies of divine sacrifice. And it is indeed believable that if Moses and Aaron were present here at the gate of the one whose innocence is being broadcast, either entrance would be absolutely closed to them, or they would be denied admittance, or (a thing they did not find there) they would be afflicted with physical punishment or surely be made the object of scorn. Not even a Jannes and Mambres are missing, to resist the Holy Ghost;⁵⁵ Achitophel left many heirs in possession of his recommendations,⁵⁶ who infatuate the souls of the princes, and bring out and insist upon a counsel poisoned against God. For what else do they find to prosecute against the Archbishop of Canterbury except the fact that he dared bear witness to the justice of God in the presence of the kings, and dared safeguard the law and the liberty of the Church? Surely when he was a magnificent trifler at the court, when he seemed to disregard the law and hold the clergy in contempt, when he chased after

52 Daniel 13.59

53 Wisdom 1.11

54 Ex. 5.1

55 2 Tim. 3.8

56 2 Kings 15.31

facetious frivolity with the more influential nobles, he was held in high esteem, was brilliant, and was the favorite of everyone, and he was the only one acclaimed by one and all as most deserving of the supreme office of bishop. But from the time that he was elevated to the episcopacy, mindful of his state and of his profession, and he wanted to be a model priest and preferred the guidance of the word of God to that of the people, he lost favor with them for telling the truth and for amending his life. Would that these too might fill up the measure of their fathers,⁵⁷ who for like reason oppressed the prophets and the apostles, and some of them still persecute those who are martyrs for Christ, that is, those who bear witness to justice and truth. What was there in Elias that Achab and Jezabel persecuted?⁵⁸ Namely, his religious prophetic declarations, his defense of the faith, his stand for righteousness, his destruction of idolatry, his cures for wickedness and his abolishment of crimes. Paul and Peter would have escaped the sword of Nero, in fact, they would not have even incurred his displeasure, if they had not preached against the licentiousness and errors of men. For no one persecuted in another the fact that he was or was called Elias; no one inflicted punishment upon another because he would be Peter or Paul; and John would be safe in the sight of Herod, if he did not say, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife."⁵⁹ For no one has ever turned out to be such a tyrant

57 Matt. 23.32

58 3 Kings 19

59 Mark 6.18

that he would oppress nature. But by repeated and numerous examples it has become universally true that "Truthfulness is the mother of unpopularity."⁶⁰ Those, therefore, who in this cause persecute the Archbishop of Canterbury, persecute not the fact that he is Thomas, or that he is a Londoner by birth, or a cleric by profession,⁶¹ or that he is vested with priestly rank or episcopal dignity, but because he points out to the people of God their wickedness⁶¹ and tells them that the princes of Sodom and the people of Gomorrha should hear and heed the law of God.⁶² What is it, therefore, that they persecute? It is evidently the spirit of the apostles and of the prophets, the spirit of justice and truth, the spirit of the Father and of the Son, undoubtedly it is the Holy Spirit, for they detest, abhor, and afflict what the Holy Spirit has taught through the prophets and the apostles. And if Paul himself, or John, as I have written, were to teach here in the flesh, he would either be racked with pain or at least be told: "Depart from us. We desire not the knowledge of your ways,⁶³ because you are opposed to us." God has spoken once,⁶⁴ and He does not repeat the same thing for the second time; nor does He raise the dead to life as a lesson for the living,⁶⁵ since in the Church Moses and the prophets are at hand to teach the people and be heard. And in order that the faction, which by the word of the Lord is condemned in accord with the

60 Ter., Andr. 68

61 Is. 58.1

62 Is. 1.10

63 Job. 21.14

64 Ps. 61.12

65 Luke 16.27-31

judgment of Moses and the prophets, may concede the victory to the other faction, let the ephod be brought hither⁶⁶ in which truth and judgment are made manifest, and let each one receive his reply according to his works. From this plan the Archbishop of Canterbury does not turn aside, nor his party; in fact, they hope and pray that from the face of the word of God, that is, of divine law their decision might come forth, and that in the Lord's eyes justice might become manifest. If it exacts what is contrary to God's law, if the customs which are being sought in opposition to the Church rest on the word of God, he will willingly yield and will gladly render satisfaction for the opposition and consternation caused the opposing faction; but if his case rests on God's word, if the apostles and prophets side with him, by God's grace no one will turn him or his friends away from their conviction. For this is to a Christian a most just cause of exile, for which he ought to lay down not only his possessions but also his life. For now only the injustice of the customs and the justice of the divine law are in conflict one with the other, and no mention is made of the case involving payment, which, of course, was only a ruse and not based on any truth. Against these depravity is at work in the clothing of a sly fox, inventing and plotting its many schemes: but iniquity lieth to itself,⁶⁷ not heeding or disguising how sweet to a man is the bread of lying, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.⁶⁸ But surely

66 1 Kings 30.7

67 Ps. 26.12

68 Prov. 20.17

there is one thing which must surprise and afflict everyone, namely, that those men revile the Canterbury exiles, for whose freedom the people of Canterbury have vowed to undergo every adversity. For the sake of a common freedom they dwell in a wine press,⁶⁹ and who came to their assistance? They endeavor to free the Lord's portion from slavery, and they who had been on the verge of being restored to freedom, with longing rush back to the flesh-pots and the garlic of the Egyptians.⁷⁰ They are, indeed, more wretched than all peoples, if they are being held here in exile, oppressed, and classed among the ignoble; if they await no solace from the Lord, if, while they are in banishment, their conscience promises them no reward, and if in their persecutions they regard not Christ as their motive. The wisdom of the flesh,⁷¹ which balances compensation with the result achieved, laughs them to scorn; but God comforts them in their tribulation,⁷² and in the end He will repay those who pander to the world and put pillows under the heads of every age and cushions under every elbow,⁷³ mingling with the excommunicated, holding in ridicule the keys of the Church, and regarding the law of God as nothing more than twaddle. We, however, offer thanks to God for all His gifts, and especially because He has deigned to reckon us in the number of those who suffer persecution for justice' sake.⁷⁴ From the Hand of the Lord we have received sweetness, which we have often mis-

69 Is. 63.3

70 Num. 11.5

71 Rom. 8.6

72 2 Cor. 1.4

73 Ezec. 13.18

74 Matt. 5.10

used for our own destruction; so why shall we not calmly accept the bitterness as medicine for the assurance of our salvation? Whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's,⁷⁵ so that it rests upon our friends to alleviate the hardship of our banishment by their prayers that our faith fail not⁷⁶ but from our affliction⁷⁶ might mercifully work unto our salvation and unto the peace and freedom of the Church.

75 Rom. 14. 8

76 Luke 22. 32

John to Nicholas, Guest Master of MontSt. Jacques, Rouen

SUMMARY: John expresses his gratitude to Nicholas, the guest master of Mont St. Jacques, near Rouen, for repeated kindnesses. He mentions that, according to some, the prospects for reconciliation are very bright, a circumstance which might help to place the letter late in 1166, before the return of Henry's embassy from Rome and the advent of the papal commissioners. After these events John was not of that opinion.

Justly branded with the stigma of ingratitude is one who is not aroused to appreciation for charity and kindness by mindfulness of his benefits. And, of course, his appreciation ought to be so much the more profuse, when acts of kindness have been flowing so much the more abundantly and unremittingly solely from a rich vein of inborn generosity to one who neither earned nor deserves them. But, O esteemed Sir, whom I have every right and obligation to cherish, how am I to repay your bounty by a reciprocal exchange of generosity? I am in exile, my goods have been confiscated, I am in the throes of poverty, I am oppressed more by the hardships of my fellow exiles than by my own sufferings, and to the things the Church of God suffers in her afflictions "I hold that I am in no way a stranger."¹ But I feel that in all these things God is kind to me, as it is my privilege to undergo banishment willingly for the sake of justice, to accept, for the sake of faith, if necessary, the confiscation of my property, and not to fear the hardships or be ashamed of the disgrace of poverty, being a disciple and follower of the impoverished Christ, and assured by

¹ Ter. Heauton. Timorum. 77

the declaration of truth itself that "our sorrow shall be turned into joy."² For He is faithful, and He will not suffer His weak and little ones to be tempted above that which they are able,³ but unto His own glory will make the trial of the humble turn to their advantage. But how am I, in the meantime, going to repay you for your generosity, O most gracious of friends? For I cannot keep secret that generosity I speak of, having experienced it so many times myself, and whose benefits my relatives have realized as often as they were given the opportunity of enjoying the comforts of your charity. So, because I am at present in a position to thank you, I do earnestly express my deepest appreciation, and unhesitatingly look to Him "in plentiful mercy"⁴ to reward you for your compassion, to Whom you gave gifts of money for our use. For this is the only honorable kind of profit, and one which the page of truth, while it condemns money made on loans and avarice as a whole, not only forgives but even repays a hundred-fold.⁵ For Solomon bears witness to this also in his proverbs, saying: "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord; and He will repay him,"⁶ in this life, of course, in so far as it will be expedient, but in life eternal He will repay with complete retribution. But if divine esteem gratified my longing to the extent that by His authority and through my ministry God would allow me to reciprocate to my benefactors, it would

2 John 16.20

3 1 Cor. 10.13

4 P.s. 91.11

5 Matt. 19.29

6 Prov. 19.17

seem to me that I have almost completely attained the sum-total of my earthly desires. But I do not clearly perceive what I should think about our peace, since some claim that it is quite hopelessly out of reach, because His Majesty the King is succeeding in his ways, while others on the contrary maintain that he would not be dissatisfied, if an honorable form of reconciliation were proposed. And this I would more quickly believe, because a prudent man ought to regard this ease and abundance of his successes as suspicious, and mindful of his ways, he could not feel secure, if he should make God his enemy by wreaking havoc against the Church and Christ's poor. But with the help of God he will not do anything that will necessarily dim the lustre of his reign, nor will he dare any venture against God in the facility or rather falsity of his successes, being mindful that "Vain is the horse for safety."⁷ Asael surpassed the deer in speed, as history tells us, and because of his fleetness in running he flew ahead of the roes, but because he indulged in his fleetness too much when pursuing a fleeing enemy, his speed forced the one, who had intended to escape his fate by fleeing, to inflict a fatal wound upon Asael as he ran close upon his heels.⁸ At times Christ flees from the face of a persecutor, but woe to the impenitent one upon whom He casts a stern eye in exasperation. Give my regards to our friends at the palace, who have not been excommunicated.

7 Ps. 32.17

8 2 Kings 2.18

197

John to Walter de l'Isle

SUMMARY: John expresses to Walter de l'Isle his hope and confidence that the conflict between the archbishop and the king will soon be over, but states that he is astonished at the conduct of Geoffrey Ridel, the Archdeacon of Canterbury. This letter probably belongs to the same time as letter 196, late in 1166.

My protracted silence would rightly seem to be indicative of an indolent friend or of remissness, if this kind of suspicion were not wiped away by plausible reasons, which I leave to God to brush aside. It is not expedient to mention them for the present, because they are just as important to me as they are evident to you and manifest to the world. Would that the chaos which has become so deeply grounded amongst us¹ be dissolved, and peace be re-established between the kingdom and the clergy so that, if the opportunity of visiting one another be afforded, we might be able to manifest to one another the amenities of that charity which is ours in the Lord. For it has not slipped my memory that, on the score of merits, I am obligated to you as to a teacher and a master; and you, although not indebted to me, are obliged to hold me in regard as a Christian and as a friend. Yet I would not rashly claim that he² is lacking in substantial worth, whose ardent affection is enslaved to love, and whose will, ever ready to serve, longs for nothing more avidly than that an opportunity be prepared for him by the Lord of gratifying the desires and habits of his friend; for even God accepts a sincere intention in place of

1 Luke 16.26

2 John here refers to himself and to his desire of doing good, although he is impeded in his desire.

the fulfilled accomplishment, and rewards each one according to the intensity and the extent of his affection. I look to God and have confidence in Him that an opportunity will be given me in my sincerity, and our tempest, with God's assistance, will soon change into a gentle breeze more smoothly and successfully than we might believe. Yet let these things which I have said be taken on the strength of faith rather than of science, because we know that God is faithful to His promises and only then lends assistance to those ever so gloriously suffering for His cause when human aid has failed completely. In the meantime, the Lord tests our love for Him, and if He should take His time, we must put up with it patiently, because whichever way we regard it, without doubt "He will come and will not delay."³ Hence, with assurance I maintain that He will soon come to our aid, since I know for certain that in human affairs there is nothing except what is of a fleeting nature, and that the glory of the world vanishes as smoke, and the climax of the ungodly lies in fire and worms.⁴ Indeed, "the remnants of the wicked shall perish" and the salvation of the just must be expected from the Lord.⁵ For even though the wicked one be lifted up above the cedars of Lebanon, if you should pass along the way a little, you will clearly perceive that even when he seemed to flourish, he was no more, and his place will be no longer.⁶ The wisdom of the flesh⁷

³ Heb. 10.37

⁴ Eccli. 7.19

⁵ Ps. 36.38-39

⁶ Ibid., 36.35-36

⁷ Rom. 8.6

scoffs at these things, but surely God is not mocked,⁸ Who meanwhile, according to Solomon,⁹ prepares a scourge for those who mock, and mighty bludgeons for the backs and the necks of those who hold him in contempt. Furthermore, as far as human opinion is concerned, it is ever so simple and clear to you in what state we find ourselves, and what we have to fear or hope for in the decision of the members of the court. But we shall have confidence, for we are prepared for every humiliation wherein our conscience remains unharmed, provided we do not dishonor the divine law or our own integrity, for when this is lost, it is better to die than continue to live. We spurn no condition of peace, for we are assured that it is better to fall into the hands of men¹⁰ than to turn our back to the law of God or incur the blot of wickedness. Yet, mindful of our frailty, we do not presume to swear on the Gospels, that it may be evident how rash it is to swear by the depraved customs. But I am exceedingly amazed at the fact that the Archdeacon of Canterbury¹¹ is not working for peace himself or through anyone else, since it is evident to him that he cannot serve God and mammon at the same time.¹² Farewell! My brother Richard and I send our regards to you and your household. We convey our best wishes to the clerics of the chapel who were not excommunicated specifically or because of their participation with the others. Remember us in your prayers; we are mindful of you.

8 Gal. 6.7

9 Prov. 19.29

10 2 Kings 24.14

11 Geoffrey Ridel who succeeded Thomas as Archdeacon of Canterbury and was afterwards Bishop of Ely, 1174-1189.

12 Matt. 6.24

John to Master Humphrey Bos

SUMMARY: John writes to Humphrey Bos that all is well with him, and complains about the embarrassing solicitude of indiscreet friends. He protests that he wishes to become reconciled with King Henry, but only on honorable terms; and requests Humphrey to solicit the advice of Bishop Henry of Bayeux and other friends about the matter of reconciliation. The letter may have been written late in 1166 when the prospects of a reconciliation seemed bright.

There is no plea that I can make, O friend, for the betterment of my status, because the compassion of God works ¹ unto my good all the machinations of men. For from a financial standpoint almost everything is going along well, and there is hope that this very thing, which seems to be troublesome, will bring about the attainment of true salvation just as it disturbs the mind. Yet to a certain extent it is disturbing that some of my friends are over-zealously perturbed about my condition. In a way customary with men, who have carnal love that is rash rather than prudent and true, they are almost always staggered by some silly terror and often fear "dangers graver than the real."² Paying little heed to what is really beneficial or harmful, they tremble where there is no fear.³ They do not minutely consider a loss of conscience or of reputation at all, and while in the opinion of men there is evident a shadow of virtue and they avoid calumniators who talk nonsense, they are little concerned what might be each one's due in the light of sound reason. Very many such deem it

¹ Rom. 8.28

² Ovid, Heroides 1.11

³ Ps. 13.5; 52.6

more highly to appear than be good, others complain that they have been robbed of the temporal assistance given them by the Lord through my instrumentality. But to the request of both sound reason replies that neither loss of property nor a father's burial⁴ calls back one who begins to follow Christ in a contest of the Church. I have⁴ definitely determined, with the help of God, to pursue the principle of honor to whatever extent God has established it, and not to jeopardize the salvation of my soul in compromising with the world for any temporal advantage whatsoever. Let Him show me the way, and lead me through the path of virtue, and bring me into the company of those who suffer for justice's sake.⁵ Yet, if it can be accomplished without sacrificing my honor, I do wish to be reconciled, and to administer to God's glory and my friends' comfort in the churches⁶ to which I have been assigned. Hence, I entreat Your Grace, if it might not inconvenience you, to make an investigation with the help of His Lordship of Bayeux⁷ and your other friends on what might be expedient and proper, and then if it should be safe, give me your advice. For this advice belongs to the category of things which on the basis of sincere fellowship ought be refused to no one, they are of no avail, when stifled; they show

4 Matt. 8.21; Luke 9.59

5 Ibid., 5.10

6 John had benefices in the dioceses of Norwich (cf. letter 149,) Exeter (for he held a canonry there), Salisbury and London (cf. letter 144) and undoubtedly Canterbury.

7 Bishop Henry of Bayeux, 1164-1205. Together with Bishop Gilbert Foliot of London he had been assigned John's revenues by King Henry.

no increase, when kept under close guard, and no decrease when disbursed freely, but they do take on a greater brilliancy the more they are brought to light.

199

John to Bishop Henry of Bayeux

SUMMARY: John congratulates Bishop Henry of Bayeux on the good repute in which he is held, and because he has obtained the favor of King Henry, and asks his assistance in order that he may obtain that favor. This letter may have been sent with letter 198, late in 1166. Henry II wished Bishop Henry to succeed Becket as Archbishop on account of his more conciliatory temper. Cf. Gallia Christiana, XI, 364.

I hear and I rejoice, O Father, that everything is deservedly going well for you, and that you, who brought glory to the dignity and rank of deans¹ as long as you were in office, are now by the splendor of your virtues adding lustre to the office of the episcopacy in a strange country, even to the envy of many individuals. This, of course, gives so much more assurance to your conscience, and adds so much more renown to your name, as it is quite rare to find a shepherd or anyone in the Church of God eager to bring glory to his ministry in such a great and proud assemblage of priests illustrious as far as their name is concerned. For now, as God complained of old through the prophet: "The priests did not say: 'Where is the Lord?' and they that held the law knew not justice."² Hence, it is proper that your eminence be held in honor and esteem even by those, who in consideration of our merits, seem to hold the priesthood of the present day in disdain, and who strive to do away with the law of God, which cannot be broken.³ For even though the Egyptians have shepherds in abomination,⁴

¹ Bishop Henry had been Dean of Salisbury before his election to the see of Bayeux in 1164. Cf. letters 139, 140.

² Jer. 2.8

³ John 10.35

⁴ Gen. 46.34

and the Samaritans of our time do not associate with those who profess the word of God in public,⁵ yet Joseph found favor in Egypt,⁶ and Daniel became famous among the Assyrians,⁷ and, while the demand for merit still held sway, Achab regarded Elias with awe.⁸ There is no wonder, then, that with the Christian prince⁹ and his officials, virtue found its place, and that he who is evidently imbued with divine grace is held in esteem by men. Thus, the precious ointment ran down from Christ the Head upon the beard of the Church, and flows thence down the skirt of its garment,¹⁰ that in accord with the decree of the divine dispensation and in proportion to one's meritorious graces it might bedew each of the elect. My most esteemed Lord, would that we too might share in some of this fullness of yours, and would that because you have found favor in the sight of His Majesty the King, it might avail the Church in Her sufferings. To disclose the condition of my state is not expedient, since you are quite fully aware of our case and the unjust penalty; but it is important and necessary to ask you for advice that is wholesome and honorable. For even though I have, with the help of God, financial assistance not only for my needs but even to live quite respectably, yet in as far as I may, without impairing my conscience or my reputation, I am ready to gain the good graces of His Majesty the King in accord with your suggestions. For I do not pledge myself to anything offensive to God, and if I shall ever try it, may His sanctity cut short my endeavors. Farewell!

5 John 4.9

6 Gen. 41.41

7 Dan. 5

8 3 Kings 18

9 Henry II

10 Ps. 132.2 ff.

John to Abbot Hugh of St. Edmunds

SUMMARY: John thanks the Abbot Hugh of St. Edmunds for his kindness, but complains that the intended assistance had been withheld by Master Geoffrey. He rejoices to hear that the abbot had not joined the bishops of England in their appeal against the archbishop. The letter was written some time in 1167, for John remarks that it is now the fourth year of his exile.

Hugh was the Abbot of the Benedictine abbey of St. Edmunds at Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk. He became abbot in 1157 and died November 15, 1180.

Master Geoffrey, John's kinsman, was a monk of St. Edmunds. Cf. Letters 106, 185.

I recall that Cicero in his letter to Marcellus wrote that, in the judgment of a wise man, it makes considerable difference to whom a person is indebted,¹ and the mind of an honest man is troubled whenever a problem of property or a matter of time makes him indebted to a person, whom we refrain from loving or respecting because of his outlook on honesty and his qualities of character. And, of course, in my opinion, this is stated truthfully and with elegance; if faithfully heeded, this neither breaks the tie of love towards those associated with us by nature, nor does it, by a consideration of natural fellowship, unite also in common bonds of vice those who differ in character. Well off, therefore, are they who in the matter of favors received are obligated only to honest individuals. I can say in conscience that I am one of these, whom divine esteem, in the daily turmoil of this tempest which rises against the Church from the north,²

1 Cicero, Ep. ad Fam. 15.11: "Magni interest cui debeas."

2 England

did not permit to become indebted to many because of the generosity shown to me and mine, while I, nevertheless, previously conciliated many with favors and acts of kindness. So I am already going into my fourth year of exile and my third year of proscription,³ and I cannot, except for the loyalty of a few friends, call to mind even the least or smallest tokens of recognition; for very many seem to have incurred the condemnation of Pothinus, who said:

We praise loyalty, but it pays the price when it supports those whom fortune crushes. Take the side of destiny and heaven, and court the prosperous, but shun the afflicted. Expediency is as far from the right as the stars from the earth or fire from water....⁴ Loyalty never chose for its friends those in distress.⁵

This is, indeed, the prudence of the flesh, doubtlessly hostile to God, deceitful, filled with depravity, the mother and nurse-maid of vice. Philosophy,⁶ the sustaining parent of virtues and the governess of the duties of both the faithful and of the pagans, for the most assuring and obvious reasons denounces it and regards it with contempt. For it insists that the expedient and the honorable contain one another by mutual predication so that the name of the one admits nothing that is not demanded by the essence of the other. The account of both Testaments affirms this; unsharply the doctors of our mother the Church claim that things that are dishonest and base surely bring about the loss of salvation and under no

³ John went into exile early in 1164, and his revenues were confiscated in 1165.

⁴ Lucan, Phars. 8.485-488

⁵ Ibid., 8.535; cf. Eur. Electra 1311

⁶ Macrobius, Sat. 7.1.6

circumstances can be expedient, "For what will it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and search for things harmful to his soul?"⁷ But this warning is not heeded by ordinary friends, who wish to be obligated by acts of kindness rather than oblige others, who lay aside their shady loyalty (for real loyalty they possess not) "at the whim of fortune, and who for the purpose of living any way at all, toss aside the reasons for living,"⁸ which reasons are based on virtue alone. I say this from experience, as I am also indebted to a few, to whom I am obligated, of course, by so much stronger a tie, that the sincerity of their allegiance shines forth more gloriously in manifestations that are crystal clear. But foremost of these kind deeds have given you the place of prominence, and if those acts of kindness be considered in their true light, I should rightly and properly say that they have given you the first place. For they are plentiful, worthwhile, and what gives them a greater lustre is the fact that they are things I often need, so that the things I use frequently and even every day force me to increase my constant appreciation toward their donor. Nothing escapes my memory; I thank you for each and everything, and even those things I consider as bestowed upon me through your generosity, which you wanted and ordered to be given me for my use, as I gather from my messenger's account and from the testimony of your letter. For I do not understand by what arrangement or secret scheme my friend and associate, Master Geoffrey, did not heed your command, but

7 Matt. 16.26; Mark 8.36

8 Juvenal 8.84

refused or put aside the help that Your Grace had decided should be tendered me in my need and in that of my associates. For I would not readily believe that aside from my merits and contrary to the opinion of everyone he would do this to harm me, but by some arrangement, the reason for which I do not comprehend, he held back your gift. But no one will hold back the sentiments of my love for you and my appreciation. But I am happy that, when the bishops, under guise of an appeal, were anxious to prolong the sick condition of the Church, which with God's help will soon be restored to its full vigor, you, I hear brushed aside their snares by an elegant compendium of truth and justice, so that you neither placed your lot with the malefactors in their wickedness, nor committed yourself to anything that might be justly charged against you in the presence of the Prefects of the province. They wrote and they claim that the "king deems it a gracious favor when admonished to amend any transgressions against God."⁹ Are they so blinded that they harbor any doubts about his transgressions in the matter of persecuting the Church, and in the matter of banishing innocent women and children (not to mention the others?) Or are they so debased that they are unwilling to advise His Lordship, who waits patiently and even with kindness listen to and regards with favor those who reprove him? Are they unwilling to give His Lordship the advice he desires, namely, to render satisfaction to God? Let not the soul of a just

⁹ Becket Materials 5.412.

man go into their counsel, whose fury is cursed, because it is stubborn,
and their wrath, because it is cruel.¹⁰ They ask only to be permitted
longer to continue to do with impunity what they have for a long time been
doing with malice. But he who hopes in the Lord will not be put to
confusion¹¹ and, those, who will fear Him before the powers of the world,
will not be in need of anything good. Farewell!

10 Gen. 49.6-7

11 Ps. 30.2; 70.1

201

John to Master Geoffrey of St. Edmunds,a Kinsman

SUMMARY: John inquires of Master Geoffrey why he has deferred sending the assistance which the Abbot of St. Edmunds has provided. This letter was probably sent along with letter 200 q.v.

Upon the arrival of my courier I was expecting to be buoyed up by a comforting letter from you, awaiting suggestions and aid against the outrages of ravaging fortune. But it is not clear why you, against your own principles and contrary to my expectations, were averse to sending a letter to a friend long exiled and proscribed for the cause of faith. Nor can I be readily convinced that you refrained from writing or withheld the Lord Abbot's¹ commission to cause me inconvenience. I was aware of the Lord Abbot's commission from his letter to you. You must have done this because of some urgency or arrangement which casts no reflection upon your loyalty nor mars the obligation of our friendship. Far be it from me to misjudge a friend on the spur of the moment. But one thing I hear is that you are again occupied with so many important matters advantageous to yourself and your associates that not only are you unable to write to your friends, but you cannot readily read or listen to their letters. Hence, I am writing but a few words, and if you feel like it, you can answer this letter briefly. Although you write absolutely nothing, just as Cicero in his letter to Tiro² writes about a friend, everywhere and in everything I hold you

¹ Abbot Hugo of St. Edmunds

² Cicero, Ep. ad Fam. 16.15

excused. For I gather that it is not your intention that is wanting, if you fail in your obligation, but that the opportunity has not presented itself. But this is something you could easily do, since, with God's help, the chance will not be denied to one who has the will to do it. Give my regards to your entire household. If, perhaps you should inquire about what is happening in France, be assured that His Lordship³ is treated graciously there. To the present time he is alive, has not taken upon himself the garb of a monk, nor has he renounced his possessions so that he might have the wherewithal to look after his exiles. If you inquire about my lot, in a few words I reply that

I have a goodly supply of books and of food
(with God's help) to last the year.⁴

The rest will be given by the Lord, Who does not forsake those who hope in Him,⁵ but He will not reserve anything good for those who abandon their faith and feign their loyalty, and for His persecutors He treasures up wrath unto the day of His fury.⁶

3 Archbishop Thomas Becket

4 Hor., Ep. 1.18.109

5 Judith 13.17.

6 Rom. 2.5

John to Osbert of Faversham

SUMMARY: John requests Osbert of Faversham to lend assistance to the needy young scholar Adam, Osbert's nephew. For a further development of this case cf. Letter 255.

It is folly not charity to be concerned only with oneself and one's own affairs with utter disregard for the problems of others. In the words of the writer of comedy, charity regards what affects others as affecting itself too,¹ and is ever at hand to felicitate those who are succeeding well and to sympathize with those who are oppressed by misfortune. Yet, it dispenses its affections in a most orderly and sensible way that they might all be founded on the Lord, and it fulfills its obligations toward fellow men more or less according to the law of nature and in the manner of illuminating grace. And while it offers to everyone the benefits of its graciousness in a wide sense, yet it is extended especially to those who are of the household of the faith.² And according to its judgment in these matters, he has denied his faith and is worse than an infidel,³ who has no concern for his own and especially for those of his house who are bound to him by natural affection and committed to his noble nature by the common bonds of faith. That this condemnation applies to you I do not doubt at all, so with confidence I intercede for your nephew Adam, who in his quest for learning, in a manner customary with students, lives in suffering and want. I feel assured that as you admit the righteousness of your obligation and by your

1 Ter., Heauton Timorum.25

2 Gal. 6.10

3 1 Tim. 5.8

ingratitude will not be unmindful of his father's kindness to you,⁴ you will not delay to render him timely and deserved aid in his needs. But if my plea can add any weight to the aforementioned reasons, which you are surely considering with discretion, I soar to the very heights of prayer and I feel its efficacy after prostrating myself at your feet with complete devotion. If you should be concerned about me, I wish to say that I joyously regard my lot as a gift of divine grace, for I frequently ponder on how suspicious to all right-thinking men continual worldly success should be, and how certain is the proof of the love of sinful sons, when their sins are scourged and chastized.⁴

⁴ Heb. 12.6

John to John Sarrazin

SUMMARY: John requests Sarrazin to finish the translation of a work of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, and consults him on the meaning of certain Greek words which he had encountered in his reading of the Latin Fathers. The letter may be dated early in 1167 for John mentions that he is now in the fourth year of his exile. Cf. Letters 142, 219, 232, 233.

Your Grace's letter, for which I shall have to entertain and express my thanks as long as I live, savors of a philosopher and a Christian. It teems with clear-cut indications that it came from a store-house overflowing with piety and learning. And in its structure and composition there was no lack of the orator to bring out most effectively what philosophy and the Christian religion had to offer. For by its grace of diction it flowed along vigorously with conviction, and to such a degree did it take hold of me and influence me that in the future I shall be reluctant to mention the bitterness of my exile, if by chance in a moment of weakness the subject might come up, and I shall be ashamed of having brought it up at all. For even though I am going into my fourth year of exile¹ and my third year of proscription,² I am already less distressed every day by my whirlwind of fortune or affected by my losses. For I know, of course, that in the matter of my property there was never anything that the enemy extorted so easily. And perhaps I should quite properly call him a friend who opened my eyes, which had been blinded by the fantastic frivolities of fortune, and who,

1 John went into exile early in 1164

2 At Marlborough on December 26, 1164, Henry had forbade that any of the archbishop's clerks should receive any benefice or money and that anyone who appealed to Rome should be imprisoned. Cf. Becket Materials 3.75

after driving away courtly trifles and seductive pleasures, induced me to walk the path of virtue, and put me into the company of savants. Therefore, far more carefree than when burdened by worldly goods and by the wealth that comes with chance, in my truly happy state, not to call it poverty, as Philosophy forbids, I feel that "every land is to the brave his country"³ to arouse his enthusiasm in adversities. And to a Christian the whole world is an exile, while he is absent from the Lord,⁴ so that he is never exalted among the prosperous. Therefore, as for the rest, let bickerings about the whims of fortune come to a stop, while we should not refrain from philosophical inquisition, as long as the opportunity is offered us. Let us be kind to our persecutors, who perhaps do not know what they are doing,⁵ and to the prelates of the churches (I refer not to your country-men but to ours,) who, as Cicero taunts Gaius Cassius in a letter to this same person, long ago sent a notice of divorce to virtue and duty not to comply with them, after being bewitched by wealth and by the blandishments of pleasure.⁶ I am waiting for the rest of the translation of the Hierarchy⁷ from your Grace, so that by your act of kindness Saint Dionysius might become better

3 Ovid, Fasti 1.493

4 2 Cor. 5.6

5 Luke 23.34

6 Cicero, Ep. ad Fam. 15.16

7 Sarrazin dedicated his translations of the Celestial and Ecclesiastical Hierarchies to John. Cf. letters 142, 233. John is here asking for the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy.

known to his French people⁸ for your own eternal glory. Would that I might be given a place at your feet that, as Mary sat at the feet of Christ,⁹ Who, I am assured, dwells in your heart, I might receive from your lips the words of the heavenly oracle and the truths of sound philosophy. But the ire of the King of England stands in the way of my desire.¹⁰ May He Who rules the hearts of kings grant him, in His good pleasure, the understanding to appreciate the things of God.¹¹ In the meanwhile, as is in my power, prostrate at the feet of Your Grace with prayers and letters I humbly urge that in your ardor you deign to hear me in the matter of completing the translation of Saint Dionysius. Regarding this, I recently found a difficulty in St. Ambrose's book, De Incarnatione Verbi, which none of our professors is capable of solving because they are unfamiliar with Greek. These are the words of Ambrose in question:¹² "Latin interprets ousia to mean substance. But when we speak of the ousia of God, what else does it mean except that God always is? The letters themselves reveal this, because divine power, ousa ai (aita ai),¹³ that is, since it always is, is called ousia, after changing the position of one letter for the sake of sound and the fitting beauty of the word. Therefore, ousia, which is everlasting, means God." This, of course, is Ambrose's conclusion, but the reason for his conclusion is clearer to you and to the Greeks, but to me and those in

8 St. Denys was a Patron of France

9 Luke 10.39

10 Because Sarrazin was living at Poitiers (cf. letter 171) in Henry's dominions.

11 Matt. 16.23; Mark 8.33

12 Migne P.L. 16. col. 842

13 These words are meaningless, and do not seem to occur in any other manuscripts of Ambrose's work. It has been thought best to bracket them in the text.

my class it is quite hazy. But Hilary in his book De Synodis reasons about essence in the same way that Ambrose does about ousia, perhaps because essence is the same as ousia. Hilary's words¹⁴ run as follows: "Essence is either the thing which is or that of which it consists; it subsists in the fact that it is enduring. But essence and nature could be called the genus and substance of everything. But it is therefore properly called essence, because it always is. Hence, it is also a substance, because a thing which is, necessarily subsists in itself. But whatever subsists, doubtlessly remains in the genus, or in the nature, or in the substance. Therefore, when we say that essence means nature, or genus, or substance, we understand the nature, genus, or substance of that thing which consists in always being in all these things." Speculation on these words of Hilary is very subtle and it is difficult to understand, but I suppose that to those versed in Greek they are more intelligible. For regarding Saint Hilary the most Holy Father and the very learned Doctor Jerome say: "Because of his French literary majesty he is exalted, and he is adorned by the flowers of Greece, and he is too deep to be read by the simple brethren."¹⁵ But in another passage Jerome insists that "Hilary and Athanasius may be studied without hindrance."¹⁶ But if among the Greeks the words—essence, nature, genus, and substance, which are so frequently inserted here—have a marked difference, I think it is of

14 Op. cit., 10. col. 466-467

15 Ibid., 22.326; Metalogicon 4.33, ed. Webb. p. 202

16 Ibid., 22.688

very great importance to everyone to explain this difference. So I do not doubt that it will add to your merit and glory, and will be profitable for your eternal salvation, if you would open the door of the Scriptures to the one knocking thereon,¹⁷ and if you would break for the benefit of the multitude the bread intrusted to you by Christ¹⁸ that by your kindness the throngs might be refreshed, upon whom the good Jesus has such compassion along the road of this sojourn that He wishes every day to give Himself to them as Food.¹⁹ Will not the doctors be rebuked because "The little ones have asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them?"²⁰

17 Matt. 7.7; Luke 11.9

18 Matt. 14.19; Mark 6.41; Luke 9.16

19 Matt. 15.32; 14.14; 9.36; 20.34; Mark 6.34; 8.2

20 Lam. 4.4

John to Bishop John Belmeis of Poitiers

SUMMARY: John thanks Bishop John Belmeis of Poitiers for his frequent acts of kindness, solicitously inquires about him, asks his advice on how to conduct himself amid the shifting fortunes of the peace negotiations, and expresses but little confidence in the papal legates. The appointment of the papal legates was announced in December 1166 and from a passing reference to Christmas in the letter, it may be dated early in 1167.

Not by frequent but by constant and perpetual acts of kindness does the earnestness of your generosity deserve that I be compelled to express my thanks to you not often but always. Compelled, indeed, I am and always shall be, and the more I repay you in sincere affection (which is all I can do for the present,) the more closely and intimately I realize I am bound to you. For it undoubtedly enters into a contract of charity, and it is especially true that when one possesses charity he returns it, and that, if he does not return it, he does not possess it at all. But how much is this that I admit is indebted to you in its entirety—I, a man, small¹ in name, less in ability, and least of all in merit. For all of that is little in comparison to my obligation to you. But when in your religious devotion you made a transaction with me by reason of the kindness bestowed upon me, the charity you manifested toward me, and the generosity you showered upon me, you put under complete obligation to you also Him Who will pour into your bosom good measure and shaken together and running over with reward a hundred-fold.² Completely, I say, and with confidence

1 From this statement of John it has been generally surmised that he bore the surname of "Little" or "Short." Cf. also his frequent use of the expression "parvitas mea."

2 Luke 6.38

I should say completely, since to no one He yields only in part, but to each of His elect He bestows the special advantages of His graces; yet by a complete gift of Himself, not apportioned or divided in part, because He is entirely present in each one, or entirely estranged from each one. He surely puts Himself completely in debt for me and He will without doubt pay the entire debt, because He is faithful to His promise and most generous in His retribution. You have and are following His faith so that He will remember to abide by His command and His promise, especially since He gave the workers of mercy the public defence of His Gospel, which He deigned to confirm with the mark of His cross and to seal with His own Blood. This, therefore, will be the generous compensation for your compassion; this will be the divine recompense for the charity you manifested, the eternal gain for your temporal loss. And I do, indeed, as is fitting, highly esteem your gifts of a temporal nature; but more valuable are the comforts of a proper counsel, which I receive from you incessantly, and which I should call the aids to true life and the suggestions and instruments of wisdom. My reason, therefore, for writing to you is two-fold: first, to inquire about your condition, which I fear is endangered, and thus satisfy my anxiety; secondly, that by your prudent guidance I might be instructed on how I ought to fortify myself against the shifty turns of fortune. Accordingly, may it please your Grace to write back how you fared with His Majesty the King in the matter of the peace, and what went on at the Court of Poitiers, where, I believe, the foxes had found their

holes and the birds of the air their nests,³ and the Little One, whose birthday⁴ was being celebrated, was almost in need of a resting place. The spirit of Ralf of Faye⁵ was supposed to have had the upper hand there, so that the prophets and the heralds of the palace were inebriated by his treachery and boldness. It is, indeed, an old proverb and one which Vespasian Augustus in patience heard said about himself, "The fox can change his fur, not his nature."⁶ Even those who wrote about the nature of animals tell us that this type of beast never becomes domesticated at all.⁷ And Offellus⁸ says: "Who plows with the fox, must change furrows." But I trust that grace has kept you unharmed even though it has not kept you unperturbed, because "A net is spread in vain before the eyes of them that have wings."⁹ I beg you also, after examining the things the envoys of His Majesty the King of England are said to have obtained from the apostolic see, to write back what attitude His Lordship of Canterbury and I should assume toward Canterbury and toward the King or the legates; for if we must believe the rumors and the braggadocio of the opponents, there were more things the king feared and was ashamed to ask than Rome was ashamed to allow.¹⁰ Yet I do hope that His Holiness the Pope kept some encouragement in reserve for our faction; in fact, it is his faction and

3 Matt. 8.20

4 Christmas 1166

5 A Baron of Poitou and uncle of Queen Eleanor

6 Suetonius, "Vespasian" 16

7 Anon.

8 Hor., Sat. 2.2.2.

9 Prov. 1.17

10 Lucan, Phars. 3.111-112

the faction of the Church. Otherwise, "Why cumbereth it the ground?"¹¹
 But far be it from us to believe of him such sinister and perverse designs
 as our opponents gloat over. But if the legates come with such powerful
 authority that we cannot appeal higher, what do you suggest? For thus far
 in this case the Pavian¹² has held before his eyes the king's wealth, not
 the fear of God or the honor of the Church; as where one's love is centered,
 there too is his eye.¹³ The other, it is true, has a good reputation, but
 he is a Roman and a cardinal.¹⁴ But if we should reject their investigation,
 we will have to fear that our aspect of the case will suffer in the eyes of
 the king and of the Church of France; if we accept it, even though we regard
 them with suspicion, we will have the fear that they will overturn the
 tables of justice against us. They will dispense with us to compensate the
 loss to the Church by their pocket-books; for they will attribute to their
 own claims and triumphs whatever peace they might seem to have made. There
 should be due us first the restitution of revenues stolen and of sees, and
 the restoration of peace. But perhaps they will order us to be satisfied
 only with securities until the ultimate decision of the trial; this condi-
 tion no one will admit for litigation, unless he were insane. However, I
 thought I would ask this at the end, that you might remember it better.

11 Luke 13.7

12 Cardinal William of Pavia

13 "ubi amor ibi oculus, ubi dolor ibi digitus" cf. letter 113

14 Otho of Ostia, Cardinal of St. Nicholas, in carcere Tulliano

John to Pope Alexander III

SUMMARY: John writes to Alexander III of the sufferings of the exiles and protests against the favor which the Pope has shown to John of Oxford and King Henry's legation, a favor which was being used as a weapon against Archbishop Thomas. The letter may be placed in February 1167, shortly after a letter written by Bishop John Belmeis of Poitiers in which the bishop narrates that he had met the returning legation at Tours on February 2, and from them had heard the story of their successes at the papal court. Cf. Becket Materials 6.146. For Henry's legation to the Pope cf. letter 176.

If we bewail of our exile to a father, in whose behalf we are continuously crying to the Lord, for Whose faith and honor we always have complained against the persecutors of the Church, and always shall, with the help of God, as long as we live, your paternity ought not be surprised when the violence of our pain and bitterness of disagreeable and most distressing need compel us to cry out against an unexpected turn of affairs. We do cry, therefore, to the successor of Peter, the vicar of the Crucified One, and would that our cry might come to your attention too, so that the father might be internally moved to compassion over the Church's disaster and the oppression and lamentations of Her sons. And although our miseries have been multiplied beyond number and have increased beyond measure due to the recent affliction, yet, with God as our witness, we do grieve more bitterly and lament more because of the lessening of your glory and because of the defamation of the Church of Rome than because of our sufferings, insults, and afflictions. It is right, O Father, it is right "to utter words"¹ of truth, especially in the presence of him who is the lover and

1 Vergil, Aen. 2.280

patron of truth, and by whose ministry the Holy Ghost condemns the fabrications of all lying. The prophet excused the widow who complained quite impatiently because her soul was in anguish due to the recent death of her son.² But what is there that we can complain of in patience in the midst of so much death, imprisonment, chains, scourges, insults, fears, in the midst of so many hardships of hunger, thirst, nakedness and calamity of all sorts? If, therefore, just anguish must be pardoned, whose complaint must be heard with more forbearance, whose laments are more to be pitied, whose prayers are to be more kindly heeded by the Roman Pontiff than the prayers of the exiles of Canterbury? It is known that they have been proscribed for guarding the freedom of the Church and for standing up for the privileges of the apostolic see. I wish your ears were close to the lips of the king and the nobles of France. I wish you would hear how the opponents of the Church taunt us and how almost all of them calumniate us. And if the things preached on the cross-roads are true, I do not see how Your Majesty can reasonably be excused. I pass over the fact that that distinguished oath-taker³ by a master-stroke, as it were, received from your own hand the deanery⁴ and the charge over many souls—a man of sound

² 4 Kings 4.27

³ John of Oxford, Dean of Salisbury, called iurator because he had assured Alexander III that he had not taken the alleged oath to the anti-Pope Paschal III on behalf of the English king and barons, at the Council at Wurzburg on Whit Sunday 1165.

⁴ John of Oxford had been deposed from the Deanship of Salisbury by Archbishop Thomas because of the irregularity of the election. Cf. Becket Materials 5.397-400.

religion and of cheery repute, who learned no ecclesiastical rite even in a month. But did he have to be exempt from the jurisdiction of all bishops that (as his partisans boast) by apostolic authority he might be permitted to vent his rage upon his subjects without their having any right to a further appeal? Did he have to be endowed with such extraordinary privileges that he enjoined the bishops and clergy of England assembled in his home by your authority not to obey the Archbishop of Canterbury or even to call on him, when summoned? And did he have to be endowed with such extraordinary power that those who have been justly excommunicated may be absolved without any reparation or warning to persist in their sacrileges? I do not presume to lift my voice against heaven. I do admit, and it is true that the Roman Pontiff is permitted to do everything; but only those things which have been granted to his ecclesiastical jurisdiction by Divine Right. Let him have the right of establishing new laws⁵ and abrogating the old, provided, however, that he cannot change those which by God's word hold perpetual sway in the Gospel or in the law. I would dare claim that even Peter himself could not absolve anyone who persisted in sin and in the intention of sinning; nor did he receive the keys to open the gates of the kingdom to the impenitent. Whence, therefore, was this power given to that man? Regarding this matter it is being broadcast that the King of England by a new grant has been freed from the jurisdiction of all the bishops. If he did really receive it, lo, upon him has

⁵ Ovid, Rem. Amor. 465

been conferred the power of making anything licit according to his whims. But I would not readily believe that all these things have been so easily granted against God's Church. But with confidence I would say that before these things had become known among us, we sailed into port from our usual run of disasters, and those who returned in triumph from the apostolic see tossed us from that port back unto the high seas. Nor is it at all convincing that the legates⁶ who are said to be on their way to obtain the desires of His Majesty the King, can bring us back into that state in which we were when this news crushed the hearts of all. But it is doubtful whether they have any such intention; if it really is doubtful, since we heard from many that the other⁷ of the legates has agreed with His Majesty the King on our annihilation, or rather on the failure and shame of the Church, and has devoted himself, as far as possible, to our destruction. Sending him, therefore, as our opponents boast, is nothing more than administering to us the chalice of suffering and death. If he does offer it to us, May God hedge his way with thorns,⁸ when he proves himself and comes along, so that they may fall headlong into the pit which they prepared for the innocent.⁹ Those who boast in defiance of us and even more in defiance of you add to our troubles the fact that you have prolonged our exile a year so that in the meantime the King of England formed an alliance with you. But you remember the alliance of Benadab,¹⁰ which proved a

6 Cardinals Otho and William of Pavia, who left Rome on January 1, 1167.
Cf. Becket Materials 6.147

7 William of Pavia

8 Osee 2.6

9 Eccli. 27.29

10 3 Kings 20.34-42

stumbling-block to the King of Israel and spelled destruction for the people, because he did not wish to inflict upon an enemy of the people's religion a punishment which he had procured from on high. Undoubtedly, if you had stood a little aloof, that one too would have already been compelled to surrender and give himself into your hands, and the Church would enjoy its due liberty under him. But who can feel safe for yet another year? Did you not know that those who despise the freedom of the Church or have formed an alliance with the schismatic emperor¹¹ long for the end of your life? (May God prolong it for a long, long time!) So it is evident how dangerous your delay is, for because of it their boldness grows even more insolent and they ever so spitefully hope that the condition of the Church will be more pitiful and more difficult. Evil must not be done that good may come of it,¹² nor will any dispensation prove salutary, if by it the sacrilegious are allowed to continue their audacity. I have overstepped my bounds, and I have paid less attention to the one whom I was addressing; but I could not restrain at all the urge of an aggravated mind, seeing at the time of this writing that our opponents, in fact yours, are becoming more hardened, and the generosity of our benefactors is growing cold or completely extinct, except for the King of France and a few others, who do, indeed, sympathize with us more, and, what causes us most grief, they complain about you. Thus may it please

11 Frederick Barbarossa

12 Rom. 3,8

your clemency to bestow some comfort on your sons of Canterbury,* and to regain the glory of your name by stopping the enemies of the Church and by repaying your circumventors as they deserve. Know one thing for certain that if the king once suffers the rejection of any of his requests, the fruit of all your kindness will be gone, as far as he is concerned. But it is necessary that he suffer this refusal, for he knows no moderation in his requests.

John to Cardinal Walter, Bishop of Albano

SUMMARY: John writes to Walter, the Cardinal Bishop of Albano, 1154-1178, urging the cause of the exiles and deploring the favor which the papal court had recently shown to their adversaries. He also recommends the candidacy of Ralph of Sarr for the Deanery of Rheims. The letter may be placed in February-March, 1167, for the reference to the impoenitens grimosus who had returned from his successful mission to Rome early in February 1167. Cf. letter 205.

I venture into your presence with great confidence, because he, whose memory is held in benediction,¹ Adrian,² the most saintly father of both of us, who established you as a very sturdy pillar (as is hoped) in the holy Roman Church, loved me with a special kind of predilection before the rest of his country-men³ and judged that the vicissitudes of my fortune be reckoned on a par with the results of his lot. This affection of his for me was known to both of us and for a time to a few others; but if the fates had not snatched him too quickly from our midst (which the Christian world now laments), it would have already become known to the world. Hence, I feel quite safe in presuming upon your Grace and more so upon Christ, for I believe that just as the very saintly man chose you to be the successor of his dignity, so, in fact he desired even more that you be the heir to his charity. Therefore, with the same confidence I used to speak to him I address you too, because just as I had promised him my obedience with complete and sincere affection, so too, ready as my obedience is, I am

1 Eccli. 45.1

2 Pope Adrian IV, 1154-1159

3 Policraticus 6.24, ed. Webb. 2.67

prepared to work for your honor and glory. But I do not see how your or the honor of the Roman Church can remain intact and the unity of the body of Christ be preserved, if you are acceptors of persons⁴ and receive bribes, if by your decisions an innocent man is brought to ruin, and, a thing that France saw done recently and lamented, an impenitent sinner is absolved; if the Church of God is left open to be robbed and trampled upon by tyrants, if iniquity, strong and free, triumphs over evident justice in your consistory, if to those who cater to you or disguise their real intentions the clerics are given over as lambs for the slaughter,⁵ if the assumed depraved customs because of your reticence and inactivity obtain the force of binding laws. For this is the reason why the miserable victims of Canterbury live in exile and have been proscribed, because they dared speak out for the freedom of the Church, because they bear witness to the prerogatives of the apostolic see, because they teach that the canonical sanctions of the venerable fathers must be given preference over the traditions of the perverse. Read over, if you please, the booklet of detestable abominations,⁶ and you will clearly see that our opponents, in fact, your opponents and those of the entire Church of God turn their back to the sanctuary of the Lord, and they scheme not to defile the law but to destroy it. If you judge that they must be forgiven because they are powerful and we are weak, they are wealthy and we are poor; if you take into consideration the perilous times, if you stand in fear of evil days

4 2 Par. 19.7; Rom. 2.11; Eph. 6.9; Coloss. 3.25

5 Is. 53.7

6 The Constitutions of Clarendon

that you judge you must decide against justice for the sake of evil, do you believe that in this way you can please God to grant us better times, to enrich and strengthen us and to impoverish and waken your enemy? Is this the way of the Lord? Where is the Law? Where are the prophets? Where is the Gospel of Christ? Where are the decrees and examples of the saints? The Law is, indeed, eternal and cannot be broken,⁷ because "with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged,"⁸ and "by what things a man sinneth, by the same also is he punished."⁹ But perhaps little men seem unworthy of having such powerful princes disturbed on their account, and the force of justice must be exercised in behalf of others equally as powerful. But this is not the distinction of the apostle but of the disproved philosopher Thrasymachus¹⁰ defining justice as consisting in the fact that it is most advantageous for him who is most powerful. On the other hand, approved philosophers would define it as a virtue which is most helpful to him who is least powerful; for it frees the pauper from the mighty and decides upon its rewards according to merits not persons.¹¹ If the king is believed free because his crimes were executed through the instrumentality of others, although by his authority, then David cannot be charged with the blood of Urias, because Urias was killed not by David's

7 John 10.35

8 Matt. 7.2

9 Wis. 11.17

10 Plato, Rep. 1.12-14 John took this reference from Chalcidius' Comm.
in Timaeum, 5

11 Ps. 71.12

own sword but by the sword of the sons of Ammon.¹² Also, Achab and Jezebel will not expiate the blood of the innocent Naboth,¹³ because he is said to have been killed because of a fraud in the verdict; but from both of the kings the blood of the poor and of the innocent is also requited, and they are not charged with the battles undertaken by right of law. Is not that settled in your consistories which is regularly brought in, because ratification is compared to a command? Do we not make ourselves responsible for all those things to which we grant our authority? Basing my inference, thus, on your law, I gather that if you should apply authority, if you should ratify what by a ruse of injustice was presumed against the Church, before God and man you do incur the guilt of this entire malice. Therefore, I did believe that, as a father and a lord, these things should have been brought more closely to your attention that you might not give consent to iniquity, but may keep your soul free in the sight of God and man. Furthermore, because the Church of Rheims is said to be on the way to the palace, I beg that you obtain the Deanery of Canterbury from the archbishop and the canons through the instrumentality of His Majesty the Pope and others for Master Ralf.¹⁴ We did speak about this choice before; and I do not believe that there will be any among you more learned, more upright, or more generous toward Christ's poor. Farewell!

12 2 Kings 11

13 3 Kings 21

14 Ralph of Sarr. Ralph did not obtain the deanery on this occasion, but succeeded the successful candidate Fulk in 1176.

CHAPTER III

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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Rev. Casimir F. Kuszynski has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Classics.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

June 1, 1944
Date

W. J. Miller Jr.
Signature of Adviser