Thomas Becket, William Warham and the Crisis of the Early Tudor Church

Abstract

This article offers a new perspective on the implementation of Henry VIII's break with Rome by examining attitudes to St Thomas of Canterbury over the immediately preceding decades. Although the first Tudor monarchs were formally devoted to the saint's cult, Thomas was widely remembered as a champion of law and custom, and an opponent of untrammelled royal power. Among the clergy, devotion to him as a martyr for ecclesiastical 'liberties' was particularly strong, suggesting that the pre-Reformation Church was considerably less 'monarchical' than is sometimes supposed. As a powerful symbol of resistance to royal supremacy, St Thomas deserves to be taken seriously. But the fact that he could be portrayed as a patron of the sectional interests of the clergy helps to explain how opposition was weakened and divided.

Historians remain unsure of when exactly the English Reformation 'began', and even struggle to identify a date for Henry VIII's break with Rome becoming final and irrevocable.[1] One plausible, if rarely invoked, suggestion with regard to the latter is 17 December 1538, the day Paul III finally published the bull of excommunication that had been lying suspended, in hope of Henry's amendment, since August 1535.

There was good reason why the pope was at last taking strong action. The bull noted how Henry

> not contented with the cruel slaughter of living priests and prelates.... has not been afraid to exert his savagery also upon the dead, even upon saints whom the universal church has revered for many centuries; for whereas the bones of St Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, because of the innumerable miracles wrought at them by Almighty God, were kept with the utmost reverence in the said realm of England in the city of Canterbury... he has commanded these bones to be exhumed and burned, and the ashes scattered to the wind; thus surpassing the ferocity of any heathen people'.[2]

Among all the misdeeds of Henry VIII, wife-slayer and cardinal-killer, his treatment of the Canterbury shrine of St Thomas was especially shocking to European opinion.[3] The shrine was dismantled over several days at the end of the first week of September, 1538. A rumour that twenty carts were needed to carry away the confiscated treasure was probably exaggerated, but there was profit enough to justify the cynicism of a Welsh soldier-chronicler in the Calais garrison: if Thomas 'was a traitor to other kings, it is certain that he is a loyal treasurer to today's king'.[4] What happened to the shrine's real treasures, the relics, was a cause of controversy at the time, and remains contested.[5] Another contemporary chronicler, Charles Wriothesley, reported that the archbishop's bones were burned on the orders of

Thomas Cromwell, and further alleged that the monks had been exhibiting a bogus skull, encased in silver, for the people to offer to. A draft propaganda treatise of 1539, intended for circulation abroad, and to a large extent the work of Cromwell himself, conceded this fake skull may have been burned, but denied the actual relics were.[6] In other cases of shrines dismantled during the dissolution of the monasteries, relics were quietly reburied rather than burned, but this was not a normal case. Pope Paul's bull contained the remarkable allegation that a formal trial and condemnation took place in Canterbury – possibly a confused reference to a performance there before the king of a now-lost play, 'On the Treasons of Becket', by the radical ex-friar, John Bale.[7]

News that the pope was preparing a formal condemnation prompted Henry to take pre-emptive retaliatory action, in the form of last-minute additions to an otherwise religiously conservative royal proclamation of 16 November 1538. In its final section, the proclamation excoriated Thomas, striking his name from the liturgical calendar and all service books, insisting on the removal of depictions of him from churches, and serving up a slice of revisionist history to demonstrate there was nothing in the archbishop's record 'whereby he should be called a saint, but rather esteemed to have been a rebel and traitor'.[8] In the words of Margaret Aston, author of the best modern study of the elimination of the cult, 'what is particularly striking about the attack on St Thomas is its iconoclastic extremity: it was exceptional in its aims and range'. Through the late 1530s and beyond, numerous churches were re-dedicated, statues and paintings were defaced and destroyed, and priests and laymen were punished for praising St Thomas, observing his feast day, or allowing his name to remain in books.[9]

It is hard to think of another episode more emblematic of the English Reformation as a process of sudden rupture and repudiation. Cardinal Pole scarcely exaggerated when he complained in his *Apologia ad Carolum Quintum* that Henry was inventing a new history.[10]

In relation to Thomas of Canterbury, the argument of the 1538 proclamation, and of other pro-government writings, could fairly be summed up as 'everything you thought you knew is wrong'. Thomas was not a saint, but a traitor; not an innocent victim, but a dangerous and violent schemer. Central to the strategy was what has proved to be a highly successful insistence on re-naming. Before the 1530s, the man whose bones lay interred in the shrine was invariably referred to as St Thomas of Canterbury, or as St Thomas the Martyr. From 1538, he was plain Thomas Becket.[11]

The suppression of the cult of St Thomas has been much studied, but its apparent suddenness and vehemence has never perhaps been fully or adequately explained. The aim of this article is to shed additional light on that problem, and also, through the lens of St Thomas of Canterbury, to encourage a fresh look at some of the dynamics of the break with Rome itself. I will argue that in the early decades of the sixteenth century the long-ago martyred archbishop was not simply an emblematic 'saint of the English', whose problematic character – with respect to royal authority – was belatedly recognised by the crown in the wake of its assertion of spiritual supremacy. On the contrary, there is considerable evidence to suggest that St Thomas had already emerged as a key player in debates about royal prerogatives and clerical liberties; debates culminating in the early 1530s, but erupting periodically and sometimes passionately over the preceding decades.

This has implications for our understanding of 'church-state relations' in the early Tudor period, and consequently for an assessment of the true magnitude of the task Henry VIII set himself in seeking to sever the English Church from its Roman moorings. 'Henry may have turned against Thomas in the later 1530s', writes Richard Rex, 'but there is no sign in the first part of his reign of anything other than filial loyalty to the premier English saint.'[12] Yet, as I will demonstrate, long before 1538 English churchmen were regularly invoking Becket as a formidable 'opponent' of policies to which the crown was favourably inclined.

This might make us want to think again about the extent to which the English Church of the early Tudor decades had really become, as George Bernard has argued, a 'monarchical church', one which 'in the final analysis was always the king's to command and control'.[13]

At the centre of this discussion stands a figure overshadowed in his own day and often overlooked in ours. William Warham (c. 1450-1532) was archbishop of Canterbury for over twenty-eight years, though for much of that period greater power in the Church was widely seen to lie with Henry's ecclesiastical favourite, Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey.[14] Warham, however, can claim to be more representative of episcopal and upper clerical attitudes and priorities, and with Wolsey's demise he assumed a position of leadership, and resistance, at a critical juncture of the Reformation. William Warham did not become the Tudor Thomas Becket, yet such an outcome is far from inconceivable. The potential, and the limitations, of St Thomas of Canterbury as a symbol of political dissidence, so I will argue, offers important clues about the extent of opposition to Henry VIII's assertion of royal supremacy, and about the king's ultimate ability to overcome that opposition.

The first part of this article assesses the role of St Thomas of Canterbury in English religious culture around the turn of the sixteenth century. It finds that there is much evidence of genuine devotion to the saint at all levels of society, but that such devotion carried with it into the early Tudor period a distinct social and political charge. The second part of the article tracks the contexts and connotations of the saint with respect to clerical disquiet about the fiscal and jurisdictional policies of Henry VII and Henry VIII. Finally, the article turns to examine the growing politicization of St Thomas of Canterbury, and its significance, in the crucible years of the early Reformation.

I

Thomas of Canterbury died for defying a king, but by the later fifteenth century the English monarchy seemed to have long since made its peace with the martyr. Indeed, the aura of the saint had been consciously co-opted by the crown. A pious legend, sponsored by the monarchy since the reign of Edward II, maintained that the oil of chrism, used to anoint English rulers at their coronation, was a supernatural gift from the saint himself. This was probably an attempt to keep up with royal neighbours in France, who at their coronations used oil from the *Sainte Ampoule*, a vessel delivered from heaven by an angel during the baptism of Clovis, founder of the Merovingian dynasty.[15] A manuscript dating from the early fifteenth century purports to supply a first-hand account by St Thomas himself. One night during his exile, praying in the church at Sens, the Virgin Mary appeared to him in a vision, and presented him with a small phial, saying 'This is the oil with which the kings of England must be anointed, but not those wicked ones who now reign'. Instead, 'kings of the English shall arise who will be good and champions of the Church. They will recover the lands lost by their forefathers'.[16]

This, needless to say, was transparent propaganda for the Lancastrian usurpation of Henry IV, and for the ambitions in France of his son, the warrior king Henry V. It was to the Lancastrians that the Tudors had anchored their own claim to the English throne, and Henry V, victor of Agincourt, was the predecessor whom Henry VIII most wished to emulate. Noting this web of connections, Henry VIII's biographer, David Starkey, asks rhetorically how the young king could ever have envisaged failure, armed 'with the magic of the oil and the patronage of Becket'?[17]

A notion of St Thomas as heavenly advocate for the new dynasty underlies one of the provisions in the will of Henry VII in 1509. He wanted there to be a silver and gilt image of

himself, kneeling, with the inscription 'Sancte Thoma, intercede pro me', to be set up in Canterbury Cathedral 'as nighe to the shrine of Saint Thomas as may be'.[18] The young Henry VIII similarly gave signs of devotion to St Thomas, with a strong admixture of prestige and image-making. When the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V undertook a journey to England in 1520, its centrepiece was an entry into Canterbury, where the two monarchs knelt and prayed together at St Thomas's tomb. There was a repeat performance for a second state visit in 1522.[19] Henry himself made offerings to the shrine on trips to Canterbury in 1513 and 1514, and a regular annual payment was delivered on the king's behalf for St Thomas's Feast Day.[20] An impression of the king as in some sense the chief custodian of the memory of the saint is conveyed by a letter of 1515 from Christina, Queen of Denmark, urgently requesting him to send her a relic of St Thomas of Canterbury.[21]

Yet the monarchy's cop-option of St Thomas was never complete, unequivocal or uncontested. An intriguing set of connections links one notorious murder – that of Thomas Becket in 1170 – with another: that of Henry Percy, fourth earl of Northumberland, in April 1489. Henry VII's demands for taxation to fund his military intervention in France sparked serious protests in the north of England. When Northumberland went on the king's behalf to negotiate with the malcontents he was ignominiously slain by them near the Yorkshire market town of Thirsk.[22] The Paston family correspondence contains a copy of the proclamation produced by the rebels, 'in the name of Mayster Hobbe Hyrst, Robyn Godfelaws brodyr'. It called on people in 'all the north partes of England' to assemble in arms 'for to geynstonde suche persons as is abowtward for to dystroy oure suffereyn Lorde the Kynge and the Comowns of Engelond, for such unlawful poyntes as Seynt Thomas of Caunterbery dyed for'.[23]

Claims to be acting to protect the king from the influence of malign counsellors were a cliché of late medieval popular protest, but the invocation of St Thomas as a symbol of law

and custom stands out here. The leading mid-twentieth-century historian of Henry VII's government, Kenneth Pickthorn, was lightly dismissive of the common people's understanding of the points for which St Thomas of Canterbury died: 'perhaps few of them could have explained what those points were, yet at least there was a popular recollection that they were good cards to play.'[24]

There may be more to say about that. In some respects, St Thomas of Canterbury was a 'typical', if unusually prominent, late medieval saint, with some eighty parish churches dedicated to his memory across England and Wales – a remarkably high number given that most churches already had patrons at the time of his death.[25] While there is some evidence that sums offered at the Canterbury shrine may have fluctuated and fallen in the course of the fifteenth century, pilgrims still trooped there in considerable numbers, in hopes of miraculous cures, or other favours and blessings.[26] His sanctity was inextricably related to his martyrdom: depictions of St Thomas in English parish churches usually depicted the moment of his death.[27] Martyrdom was of course a thoroughly conventional route to sainthood. But Becket's death was different. He was a saint, in the words of one fifteenth-century sermon collection, 'martired of cristene pepl'.[28] That in itself did not make him entirely unique: the 'political martyrs' Thomas, earl of Lancaster (d.1322), Richard Scrope, archbishop of York (d. 1405), and Henry VI (d. 1471) were all hailed for sanctity after being done to death by their enemies.[29] But Thomas's case was rather different. He had been formally canonised by the pope, and his cult was diffused and institutionalised, nationally and internationally, to a much greater extent than these others. St Thomas's death demanded a level of explanation beyond the hatred for the faith which ancient pagan persecutors could safely be assumed to have held.

There are in fact no strong grounds for believing that devotees were blissfully unaware of the causes for which St Thomas died, and good reasons to think the contrary. One

source of popular information was the so-called 'pardon of St Thomas', an indulgence

available to pilgrims visiting the shrine at Canterbury, and in a plenary version during the

jubilees held every fifty years from 1220 to commemorate the martyred archbishop. During

the jubilee of 1420, a preacher explaining the meaning of the jubilee to pilgrims was required

to repeat his sermon three times because of the size of the crowds eager to hear it.[30] The

spiritual benefits of the indulgence were further advertised by roving pardoners, figures

satirised by Chaucer, Heywood and other contemporaries, but partially rehabilitated in Robert

Swanson's meticulous study of their activities.[31] Our best knowledge of the content and

promulgation of the St Thomas pardon comes from a pair of reports on the activities of

pardoners, sent to Thomas Cromwell by evangelical sympathisers in the early 1530s. In the

autumn of 1532, William Umpton, formerly a groom of the King's Hall, found himself in hot

water after tangling with a pardoner of St Thomas's Hospital, Woodstock, who had preached

'that Sent Thomas of Cant[erbury] died for lii pointes conc[er]ning the comenwelth'. Umpton

challenged him on this, claiming the only cause for which Thomas died was that of the

clergy, and derisively suggesting 'the said lii pointes were a daunce called robyn hoode' – a

clumsy witticism which led to accusations of heresy.[32]

      In the spring of 1535, another complaint landed on Cromwell's desk. It was sent by a

renegade Dominican, Robert Ward, and inspired by a recent visit to the church of St Thomas

of Acres, where Ward was shocked to discover 'serteyn wyndowes wherein ys pykturyd y^e

lyfe off Seynt Thomas', with 'a superstycious & popysh remembrans in ye absolucyo[n] of y^e

king y^t was in that tyme.' The imagery depicted monks with rods in their hands, and the king

kneeling naked before them, 'as he shulde be betyn at ye shryne off Seynt Thomas.' Ward

had seen similar depictions elsewhere (a rare survival of the genre is a fifteenth-century

stained-glass panel in Oxford's Bodleian Library). In the aftermath of the break with Rome,

the incongruity, not to say unacceptability, of such iconography was evident, and it prompted

Ward to declare further how in various places he had 'hard p[ar]doners set forth (in the declaracyo[n] off yᵉ p[ar]don off Seynt Thomas) dyv[er]se poyntes wherefore he was slayne in yᵗ he dyd resyste the kyng at yᵗ tyme'. These included the archbishop's refusal to agree to a tribute being levied on anyone who sent his child to school, and on poor men for eating certain types of meat. In addition, the pardoners reminded everyone that Becket denied 'prystes or clarkes shuld be juggyd of any ley man'.[33]

The Yorkshire rebels seem, then, to have been articulating a widespread perception that St Thomas of Canterbury defied the king over the fiscal exploitation of the poor. But it seems improbable that Becket's status as a symbol of social or economic justice was not intimately tied to his prominence as a champion of the Church.[34] Ward worried deeply about the potential of 'thes wordys (wᵗ dyv[er]se other) remeynyng in yᵉ pepyls heads (wch they call yᵉ artykles off Seynt Thomas & lybertys off yᵉ Chyrche off yngland)'.[35]

Further evidence supports the contention that Thomas of Canterbury was widely seen in pre-Reformation England as a martyr for rights and liberties, rather than just a worker of saintly wonders. Unsurprisingly perhaps, the idea was conspicuous in offices for the saint contained in late medieval Sarum and York breviaries.[36] Yet it was also a principal theme of several fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century vernacular carols composed in St Thomas's honour. One of these concluded that he 'was martyred for the right of Englond'; another that he died 'else the Cherch had ben forlorne'. Three of the texts make mention the fifty-two (or fifty) points for which St Thomas supposedly gave his life, and which so exasperated William Umpton.[37]

Sermons expounded the theme at greater length. An account of St Thomas was included in the most influential collection of medieval hagiography, source-book for countless homilists, the *Golden Legend*. Caxton printed an English translation in 1483, with a greatly expanded treatment of St Thomas, and reprinted it in 1487.[38] His successor Wynkyn

de Worde produced new editions in 1493, 1498, 1507, 1521 and 1527.[39] A free-standing life of St Thomas, extracted from Caxton's *Golden Legend*, was printed by Richard Pynson in 1520.[40]

The emphasis in Caxton's *Life* is not principally on miracles the saint performed after his death, but on the causes for which he died, and the political drama of set-piece confrontations with Henry II at Woodstock, Clarendon and Northampton in 1163-4. The running refrain is of a man compelled by conscience to defend the rights, liberties and franchises of 'our moder holy chirche'. Henry II is shown as grimly determined that 'if a clerke were a theef, he shold be Iuged & executed by the kynges lawe, & by no spiritual lawe'. But Thomas responds he is 'redy to suffer deth, rather than I shold consente to lese the right of holy chirche'. Claims to the moral high ground are underscored by a reminder he is the king's ghostly father, 'and it was never gods lawe that the sone shold destroy his father'. In words that only a few years after the 1520 reprinting would ring very strangely indeed, the archbishop tells the king, 'I am heed of the chyrche of englond'. The account concludes by instructing readers how 'Saynt Thomas suffred deth in hys owen chyrche / for the right of all holly chyrche'.[41]

A preacher's manual even more popular in England than the *Golden Legend* was a work partly based on it, the *Festial* of John Mirk. This was likewise printed by Caxton in 1483, and by various publishers in at least eighteen editions between 1486 and 1532.[42] Mirk's sermon for the Feast of St Thomas described Henry II's condemnation as a 'cursed lawe', and stressed how the archbishop's murderers all came to shameful and untimely deaths. In a revealing conjunction, it wanted people to understand he was a saint 'that was slayne for the righte of hooly churche and the lawe of this londe'. St Thomas was obliged to defy the king when the latter 'began to make lawes to ouer sette hooly churche and soche law is as wolde haue destroid the londe.'[43]

II

All this was not just ancient history. Around the turn of the sixteenth century, talk about the over-setting of Holy Church, and the undermining of law and custom, began to feel distinctly relevant again. Clergymen and ecclesiastical institutions were prime targets for the notorious fiscalism of Henry VII. Of course, earlier kings had taxed the Church heavily, but to contemporaries Henry's hand felt ominously heavy, particularly after the relatively light touch accompanying the fifteenth-century dynastic upheavals. As Steven Gunn has demonstrated, between 1504 and 1508, Henry's chief enforcer Edmund Dudley managed to extract in excess of £38,000 from English churchmen.[44] Some clerics felt provoked beyond endurance. Robert Freeman, prior of Shouldham in Norfolk, punned angrily in 1505: 'I had liefer than we should be thus polled that yon gentleman beyond the sea, Edmund de la Pole, should come in again'. Edmund was the exiled Yorkist claimant to the throne, a nephew of Edward IV and Richard III.[45]

This was straight-out treason. But even instinctively loyal churchmen might feel that the government had turned cruelly against them. Christopher Urswick, a scholarly protégé of Henry VII's mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, helped plot Henry's seizure of the throne in 1485 and was subsequently appointed dean of York, dean of Windsor and royal almoner.[46] Yet Urswick's bitterness bleeds through an undated letter to Thomas Goldstone, Benedictine prior of Canterbury, complaining of anticlerical attacks on the dignity of the clergy, and of a 'detestable rapacity, nay rather sacrilege' depriving the church of accustomed gifts and benefactions – most likely, an allusion to stringent enforcement of mortmain legislation. Urswick forwarded a manuscript copy of a work Goldstone had long desired to read, written in 1471 by the eminent Veronese churchman Celso Maffei. The *Dissuasoria, ne Christiani Principes ecclesiasticos usurpent census* (a dissuasion for Christian princes to usurp the

wealth of the Church) was a polemic seeking to persuade the Venetian government that ecclesiastical properties were inviolable, and suggesting that defeats at the hands of the Turks were a divine punishment for such appropriations. Urswick commissioned a manuscript copy from a renowned Flemish scribe, and may have been the moving force behind a printing of the text by Richard Pynson in 1505. In offering it to Goldstone as a 'shield' against sacrilegious enemies, he reminded the prior of how he occupied a place of honour 'in that very church wherein the pontiff, the divine Thomas, preferred to lay down his life' rather than surrender ecclesiastical liberties.[47]

It is sometimes tempting to regard the bishops and higher clergy of the early Tudor Church as fixtures of the establishment: secure, comfortable and complacent. Yet their collective identification with the martyred Archbishop Thomas Becket was an important element of their corporate persona, an identification producing surprisingly regular pronouncements that martyrdom in the here and now was a prospect to be seriously contemplated.

In 1497, for example, John Alcock, bishop of Ely, preached at St Paul's Cross. Alcock was an even more favoured political insider than Urswick, serving as Henry VII's first Lord Chancellor after Bosworth, and performing the baptismal rites for Henry's eldest son, Arthur. Yet in a fiery and emotive sermon, printed by Wynkyn de Worde, Alcock inveighed against malicious and dangerous enemies: 'it is to presume brethern y^t yf Saynt Thomas of Caunterbury were now lyuynge / they whiche dyrectely now doo agaynst the lybertees of the chirche / wolde put hym to deth agayne'.[48] This imagined re-martyring was linked to a reappearance of the principal point at issue between Archbishop Becket and Henry II: the status of criminous clerks and the 'benefit of clergy' which entitled convicted clerics to be removed for punishment from secular courts to ecclesiastical ones. A parliamentary act in 1489 restricted full benefit to those in major or minor orders; literate laymen could henceforth

claim it once, and were to be branded to prevent second attempts. A second act in 1497 removed benefit of clergy entirely from laymen deserting the royal army, or convicted of murdering master or employer.[49]

These relatively minor curtailments inspired Bishop Alcock to declare any churchmen supporting the measure had effectively excommunicated themselves. The extreme defensiveness reflects the extent to which some clerics saw a co-ordinated campaign being waged against them. It involved aggressive pursuit by common lawyers in the king's council, particularly the attorney general Sir James Hobart, of cases involving praemunire – a loose category of offence designating over-reach by ecclesiastical courts. Hobart actively encouraged private praemunire actions, and co-ordinated presentments in the court of King's Bench. A particular target was the irascible bishop of Norwich, Richard Nykke, who in a letter of 1504 described the attorney general as 'the enemy of God and his Church', and threatened to excommunicate promoters of praemunire suits as heretics.[50]

The praemunire statutes post-dated St Thomas of Canterbury's clashes with Henry II. But to some churchmen, they were the very kind of infringement on ecclesiastical rights the martyr could never have countenanced. In the fifteenth century, Martin V wrote reproachfully about the matter to the young Henry VI: 'You honour St Thomas, the martyr who died to defend the liberty of the Church. Why do you persecute and impugn that liberty?'[51] Henry VI and his successors did indeed publicly honour St Thomas, but one suspects there were times when they tired of hearing his name. It may be significant that in 1494, as the pace of these disputes was quickening, Henry VII petitioned Alexander VI to commission an investigation into the life and miracles of Becket's predecessor, Anselm of Canterbury. Anselm too had been an opponent of royal interference with the Church, but, unlike Becket, his exile ended with peaceful negotiation, perhaps explaining why his memory, at Canterbury and elsewhere, was comprehensively overshadowed by that of his martyred successor. Anselm, so John A. F.

Thomson plausibly suggested, might be 'speciously depicted as an archbishop who was ultimately prepared to co-operate with the royal power'.[52]

Another candidate for sainthood implicitly challenged the moral supremacy of St Thomas. The campaign for the canonization of Henry VI, ultimately derailed by the Reformation, was gathering traction around the turn of the sixteenth century. Promoted by Henry VIII as well as by Henry VII, it has rightly been seen as a means of legitimating Tudor dynastic claims through sacralisation of the Lancastrian rootstock.[53] But an additional inducement may have been the prospect of a truly national saint, endowed with the aura of martyrdom, who raised no uncomfortable questions about the crown's relationship with the Church.

Certainly, by the end of the fifteenth century, as a pilgrim destination, Henry VI's tomb at Windsor was rivalling, and perhaps eclipsing, Becket's shrine at Canterbury. A considerably larger number of pilgrim badges survive for the Windsor than for the Canterbury shrine, though the former was in existence for a much shorter period. At a popular level, the cult of Henry VI was built on an attested ability to provide favours for devotees. A list of miracles was compiled in 1500, probably at the instigation of the dean of Windsor, John Morgan. In one of these tales, an infant in London is choking to death after swallowing a small object, all attempts to remove the item from its windpipe having failed. At last, the baby's father and other bystanders appeal to Henry VI, and the offending article is successfully coughed up. It turns out to be a badge with 'an engraved figure of that most worthy martyr St Thomas of Canterbury', such as 'are often taken home by those who visit his holy resting-place, as a sign of their pilgrimage'. The badge was subsequently carried by the child's parents to Windsor, where it was put on display at Henry VI's tomb as a token of parental gratitude, and a trophy of inter-saintly supremacy.[54] It would be a distinct exaggeration to say that the Tudor monarchy itself was choking on the memory of Thomas

Becket at the start of the sixteenth century. Nonetheless, there is something in this little incident, with its pattern of impediment, obstruction and resolution, which seems portentous of events to follow.

English churchmen welcomed the accession of Henry VIII in 1509. Under the first Tudor, in the words of a London chronicler, 'bysshoppis & many othyr of the Spirituelte were alsoo vexid ffull uncharytably & ffull grevously', and they hoped for better things from his son.[55] The young Henry VIII was crowned by the archbishop of Canterbury, William Warham, whose rise under Henry VII was late and sudden, rather than steady and slow. In 1502, having previously held no high office, Warham was consecrated bishop of London. At the start of 1504 he became both lord chancellor and archbishop of Canterbury, later that year presiding over a meeting of convocation heavy with complaints about threats to the liberties of the church.[56]

Warham was, at least in institutional respects, a serious and committed reformer. At subsequent convocations, particularly that of 1510, he sponsored measures to regulate clerical behaviour, and crack down on corrupt sale of office. He was also an ardent devotee of St Thomas of Canterbury, whose martyrdom adorned his episcopal seal. For a politically active archbishop, Warham seems to have made real efforts to be present in his cathedral on St Thomas's feast day, and the feast of the Translation of his relics. As early as 1507, he made formal arrangements for his own place of burial in the cathedral, 'close to the spot where the holy Thomas suffered martyrdom'. In 1511, two chaplains were licenced to officiate in the archbishop's chantry chapel in the part of the cathedral known as 'The Martyrdom'.[57]

Warham revered Thomas as a universal martyr of the faith, but he also regarded him as the particular patron of his own cathedral church. In 1512, a long-running dispute between Canterbury and other bishoprics of the province ignited with particular heat. It concerned the right to grant probate to wills leaving property in more than one diocese (and thus receive the

fees). Other southern bishops, particularly Richard Fox of Winchester, thought Warham was exceeding his powers, and registered a protest in convocation. Warham referred the matter to royal arbitration, hopeful that Henry would stand indifferent between them, 'the rather for the devocion and love that hys Grace and hys noble progenitowrs have borne to the holy Martyr Sancte Thomas of Canterbury'. Yet the compromise Henry's councillors suggested – for the archbishop's court to have jurisdiction over testaments leaving goods worth more than £10 in a second diocese – was one Warham was deeply unwilling to accept. In a letter to Henry of early 1513, he pleaded for the case, as a spiritual matter, to be determined 'a fore the Hedde of the spirituall Court yn Rome.' And at a time when Henry was embarking on military action in France, he added what sounded like a distinctly conditional form of blessing. If the king permitted such referral, then 'I thynke that God, at the intercession of Saint Thomas and al the patrons of my Church, shall the better eide and succur yowr Grace, and Graunte yow victory'. In a subsequent letter, Warham reiterated how, considering 'the great devocion that yowr Grace beryth to that holy Martyr Saincte Thomas, which suffered deth for the defence of the ryghts of the Church', he could not believe Henry would force him to give over Canterbury's rightful revenues, 'and for suche your gracious assistance I trust that God and Saincte Thomas... shall rewarde yowr Grace... and sende yow victory of al yowr enemies'. It is notable that the king's letters, flatly commanding the archbishop to accept the proffered settlement, contain no evocations of St Thomas, or any acknowledgement of the devotion felt by Henry and all his progenitors.[58]

Meanwhile, the vexed question of benefit of clergy was back on the political agenda. The parliament of 1512 passed a new act, adding several further offences for which only actual clergymen could claim exemption. In its original form, the act proposed to restrict pleading of clergy for these crimes to those in the major orders of sub-deacon, deacon and priest, denying it to men in the preliminary minor orders, some of whom, MPs perhaps

suspected, were career criminals taking minor orders as insurance against the hazards of the

1489 statute. Most likely due to furious opposition from bishops and abbots in the Lords, the

stipulation was dropped, though the act's final version hazily offered continued benefit to

'such as be within holy orders', raising the question of whether minor orders were 'holy' or

not. It also declared the provisions were to be in force only until the next parliament, when

the act was to be renewed or reviewed.[59]

Two developments added fuel to the fire. One was a decree of the Fifth Lateran

Council, passed in May 1514, proposing various clerical reforms, but also emphatically

affirming that 'human and divine law give laymen no control over ecclesiastical persons'.

The established procedure in England was for benefit of clergy to be claimed at the point of

sentencing. In Rome's view, clerics ought not to appear in front of secular courts in the first

place. The other was the arrest for heresy, and death in suspicious circumstances, of the

merchant Richard Hunne, whom many Londoners suspected of having been victimised by the

clergy for instigating a praemunire action.[60]

Passions were running high as parliament reassembled in February 1515 to review the

law. In a 1514 speech to convocation, the royal chaplain John Taylor conceded that misdeeds

of the clergy had led to the 1512 act, and he demanded urgent reform to avoid the spectacle

of priests being 'sold publically in fetters by the secular power, like condemned criminals'.

Yet Taylor was no self-loathing anticlerical. He warned his audience that 'little by little the

laity were encroaching, serpent-like, upon ecclesiastical dominion'. He urged them to follow

the example of predecessors who stood by their rights in the face of exile, mockery and

hatred, 'the parade of death before their eyes'.[61] The shade of St Thomas Becket hovered

over his words.

Another leading cleric went further. In early 1515, Richard Kidderminster, abbot of

Winchcombe, preached at Paul's Cross on Psalm 105, 'Touch not mine Anointed'. Echoing

the ruling of Lateran V, Kidderminster insisted all orders were 'holy', and no cleric should be convened before a secular court. The 1512 act was contrary to God's Word; those voting for it deserved excommunication. Unsurprisingly, parliamentarians took exception, and petitioned the king for a conference to review the points at issue. At Blackfriars in February 1515, Kidderminster inconclusively debated Henry Standish, Warden of the London Franciscans, but a spokesman for the position of the 'temporalty' and the established legal practice. When, in the aftermath of the conference, the Church leadership instigated heresy charges against Standish, for seeming to question the status of minor orders and denying benefit of clergy to be divine law, Henry decided to intervene, and in November summoned the leading actors to a meeting at Baynard's Castle. Wolsey, revealing himself to be a churchman as much as a king's man, voiced his opinion that summoning clerks before secular judges 'seems contrary to the laws of God and the liberties of the Holy Church' and asked for the matter to be referred to Rome. Warham echoed the request, predictably invoking the authority of St Thomas: 'in ancient times divers holy fathers of the Church had withstood the usage of the law of the land on this point and some had suffered martyrdom in that quarrel.'[62] Henry's retort is justly famous:

> By the ordinance and sufferance of God, we are King of England, and the Kings of England in time past have never had any superior but God alone. Wherefore know you well that we will maintain the right of our Crown and of our temporal jurisdiction, as well in this point as in all others, in as ample a wise as any of our progenitors have done before us.

It was a calculated humiliation for the clerical party. Proceedings at Baynard's Castle began with Wolsey, on his knees, protesting that neither he, nor any of the clergy, 'ever meant to do anything in derogation of the king's prerogative, and for his own part he owed his whole advancement solely to our lord the king; whereof... he would assent to nothing that would

tend to annul or derogate from his royal authority for all the world'.[63] Is it too fanciful to discern here an inverted re-run of that long-ago day in 1174, when Henry II knelt before bishops and monks at the tomb of St Thomas, humbly admitting his fault and begging pardon for it?

<div align="center">III</div>

The furore of 1515 was no starting-pistol for the English Reformation. In the following years, Henry VIII remained in outward, and presumably some inward, respects a pious Catholic monarch, eager to curry favour with Rome – most famously with his 1521 condemnation of Martin Luther, earning him the long-coveted title, 'defender of the faith'. Legal issues were cleverly fudged in the aftermath of the crisis. The act of 1512 was not renewed, but in 1516 Wolsey persuaded Leo X to issue a bull declaring that for the next five years no one was to be ordained in England without taking all five orders up to subdeacon simultaneously. Wolsey and Warham remained in royal favour, as well as on reasonably good terms with each other. In April 1521, Warham thanked the cardinal for sending a costly jewel to adorn the shrine of St Thomas, and in 1526 he assured Wolsey that 'God and Sancte Thomas of Canterbury wil everlastingly reward your grace', for compensating him over dissolved religious houses in his diocese.[64]

By invoking the martyred St Thomas in defence of Church liberties in 1514-15, the forces of high clericalism had arguably both played their trump card, and had their bluff called. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to see the clergy as beaten and subdued in the two decades immediately preceding the break with Rome. To a considerable extent, they sublimated their frustrations in renewed emphasis on the one area no one denied to be their proper preserve, the policing of orthodoxy. It is no accident that controversies over benefit of clergy coincided with a concerted episcopal drive to root out the stubborn heresy of the

Lollards; nor perhaps that Lollards were renowned for a particular animus against St Thomas of Canterbury.[65] In November 1515, at the height of the Standish affair, the bishops in convocation formally certified an immutable principle: 'any question concernyng the suspition of heresy apperteyneth only to them'. By laws of God and solemn oaths they were bound 'to inquire dilygently of al heretikes and heresys and if they have any such detected to them then they be not only bounden to punishe them but also to p[er]secute the same to the best of there powers'. This was a sacred trust the bishops would persist in, 'though they them selfes shulde suffer p[er]section or deth for the same'.[66] To the modern mind-set, there is something incongruous, if not distasteful, about powerful churchmen putting humble people on trial for their lives while imagining themselves as the courageous potential victims. But it is an indication of how deeply the template of St Thomas's martyrdom was stamped onto the self-perception of the English prelates of Warham's generation.

The pace of heresy prosecution quickened after the mid-1520s, as the ideas of Luther and other European reformers found followers in England. Unsurprisingly, St Thomas was a figure of detestation among anticlerical evangelicals. To William Tyndale, he was a violent man of war, who had 'come hot from blood-shedding to a bishoprick'. Quoting from an unnamed chronicle about how St Thomas 'was a blessed and an holy man; for he died for the liberties and privileges of the church', Tyndale added in sarcastic parenthesis, 'to do all mischief unpunished'.[67] William Barlow, recanting in 1533, admitted to composing 'a convicyous dialogue... inveyng specially against Saynt Thomas of Canterberye'. James Bainham, a lawyer who went to the stake the previous year, regarded Becket as 'rather a deuill in hell, then a saynt in heauen'.[68] Around the same time, we learn from a passing reference of Sir Thomas More, some heretics 'pulled down of late upon London brydge thinmage of the blessed martyr saint Thomas'.[69]

More, a fellow Londoner who may have been named for St Thomas of Canterbury, shared the reverence for him felt by leading churchmen. In due course, he would rejoice when he learned he was to die on 6 July, eve of the Feast of the Translation of St Thomas. He was profoundly angered by the evangelical George Joye's inclusion of an entry for 'Seinte Thomas mar[tyr]' in a calendar attached to his *Ortulus Anime* of 1530. This was a reference to the priest Thomas Hitton, recently burned for heresy in the Kentish town of Maidstone. For More, Hitton was a grotesque parody of the real St Thomas of Kent, nothing more than 'the dyuyls stynkyng martyr'.[70]

Yet in works produced during his lord chancellorship (1529-32), when he was both the pre-eminent official hunting heretics, and the leading polemicist writing against them, More was remarkably circumspect about invoking Thomas's memory. The saint is a conspicuous absence from More's most lively and effective polemical text, the *Dialogue Concerning Heresies* of 1529. The work is a comprehensive defence of pilgrimage, shrines, and other traditions against the accusations and sneers of the gospellers. Yet it maintains a curious silence about England's most renowned saint and shrine – other than an allusive comment placed in the mouth of More's representative evangelical, the Messenger, who sees no reason why people should reckon themselves 'to be better herde with our lorde in Kent than at Cambrydge'.[71]

With Henry's divorce campaign in full swing, More was perhaps uncomfortably aware of the parallels with that earlier lord chancellor, king's friend turned dissident. The sensitivity was heightened in 1532-3 as More was drawn into a literary debate with the anticlerical common lawyer Christopher St German, centring precisely on questions of the privileges of the clergy and the status of canon law. St German's *Additions of Salem and Byzance* (1534) included a guileful chapter, 'Of Dyvers thyngs concernynge saint Thomas of Canterbury'. Picking his words with some care, St German professed himself in no doubt that

Thomas 'was and is a holy man... a blessed saynt in heuen', yet 'happely some wyl say, that he dyd more ageinst the kynges prerogatiue, than he ought to haue done'.

The most St German could say in Becket's defence was that 'if he thought in his conscience, that rightwisenes and truthe bounde hym to do that he dyd, as I suppose verily it dyd, it suffised to hym.' One thing above all, however, diminished the saint's honour, and 'hath caused some laye menne to haue lesse deuocion to hym'. This was the way 'some pristes exalt saint Thomas so high aboue other sayntes, & procure honour to him more then commonly is done to any of the apostels'. They did this to 'secretely stele the honour to them selfe'. To St German, it seemed perverse that in Canterbury province there should be more lavish commemoration of St Thomas than of St Augustine, who brought the faith to the English, or that the feast of Thomas's Translation should be a grander occasion than the depositions of St Edward the Confessor or St Ethelbert – two conspicuously royal English saints. St German's suggested remedy was for the depositions of St Ethelbert and St Edward and the Translation of St Thomas all to be observed together, on the feast of the deposition of St Augustine. The Translation of St Thomas would cease to be a holy day on which lay people were obliged to attend church; instead 'priestes only should saye the seruyce'. This 'wold right highly plese saint Thomas, and cause many persons also to haue hym more in honour then they haue nowe'. The message here was fairly easy to decode: Thomas of Canterbury was not really the national saint of the English, he was the sectional saint of the clergy; and they, and he, needed to be knocked down to size.[72]

By the time St German published his *Additions*, that project was in full swing. The pope's unwillingness to grant Henry his divorce produced growing pressure on the clergy in England. In 1531, the entire body was charged with praemunire, for the crime of having recognised Wolsey's legatine authority. Pardon was granted in return for a fine of £100,000, and an agreement to recognise the king as 'sole protector and supreme head' of the English

Church, something convocation agreed to with addition of the cleverly subversive qualification, 'as far as the law of Christ allows'. Any suggestion that the clerical leadership, with the sole and noble exception of Bishop John Fisher of Rochester, simply rolled over in the face of Henry's demands has little to recommend it. In 1531, convocation demanded guarantees of immunity and confirmation of ancient liberties. In 1532, it responded to an anticlerical 'Supplication' of the commons with robust reassertion of the clergy's independent jurisdiction. Archbishop Warham, unchallenged, after the fall of Wolsey, in his position as England's senior churchman, spoke forcefully in the Lords against the act restricting payment of the papal tax known as annates. His speeches reportedly made Henry so angry that he swore, 'were it not for his age, he would make him repent'.[73]

In February 1532, Warham took a truly remarkable step. He formally documented refusal of consent to all laws passed in parliament since 1529, or to be passed in the future, which threatened the authority of the pope or the liberties of the Church. The government retaliated by bringing a praemunire charge, on the thin grounds that fourteen years earlier he had consecrated a bishop before the nominee had done homage to the king for the temporal properties of his see. Ironically, the bishop in question was Henry Standish of St Asaph, Warham's antagonist at the 1515 Blackfriars debate.

The result was one of the great undelivered speeches of English history, a written apologia seemingly intended for delivery in the House of Lords, and shot-through with references to the witness of St Thomas of Canterbury. Warham refused to accept that his action in consecrating Standish constituted a legal or moral offence. Indeed, to accept that archbishops of Canterbury, current or future, could only consecrate bishops at the king's say-so would bring the Church of Christ into a 'perpetual bondage'. Magna Carta, which declared *Anglicana Ecclesia* should be free, was contradicted 'when the Churche hath not his libertie to consecrate busshopes but at Princes pleasures'.

It seemed to Warham that the very case 'we be in nowe, was one of the articles that King Henry the seconde wold have had Sancte Thomas and other busshopes to consent unto'. For Warham to acquiesce would mean 'that I shuld dampe my soule for where Sancte Thomas saved his'. And as to peril of souls, Warham sternly warned that anyone laying violent hands on or imprisoning a bishop was ipso facto excommunicate, with a papal interdict likely to follow. Furthermore, he invited auditors to consider the fates of kings who acted 'against the Churche and the liberties of the same', and in consequence were 'punisshed by the hande of God': Henry II, abandoned by his servants to a shameful, naked death; Edward III, dying in poverty, hated by his subjects; Richard II, starved or murdered in prison; Henry IV, stricken down with leprosy.

Martyrdom, 'the best death that can be', preoccupied Warham as he wrote. It was 'the example and comforte of other to speke and to doo for the defense of the liberties of Goddes Church'. He hoped that the Lords to whom he imagined himself speaking would not draw their swords 'to hewe me to small peces', as Henry II's knights had drawn theirs to cut down St Thomas. And yet, 'I thynke it were better for me to suffer the same than ayenst my conscience to confesse this article to be a praemunire'.[74]

William Warham was not martyred in the spring of 1532. In May, under intense government pressure, he subscribed to the so-called Submission of the Clergy, cancelling convocation's right to enact canons without explicit royal consent. He was one of only three bishops to do so unconditionally. Historians have sometimes been puzzled by Warham's apparent collapse of nerve.[75] But we cannot be sure that was what it was. The senior clergy had been fighting rear-guard actions, and making tactical retreats and advances, since at least 1529. It was still not inconceivable that some compromise with the papacy would be found. Warham had no way of knowing it was now fast approaching the last act, for the English Church's relationship with Rome, and for himself. He died in Kent on 22 August 1532, and

was buried in his long-prepared chantry chapel in the north transept of Canterbury Cathedral, near to the spot where Becket fell. His replacement was not, as most people expected, the clever and ambitious bishop of Winchester, Stephen Gardiner, who four months earlier had penned convocation's imperious reply to the Commons' Supplication against abuses of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. Rather, it was the Cambridge don, and Lutheran sympathiser, Thomas Cranmer. There would be no more talk about the liberties of the Church from Becket's successor at Canterbury.

IV

If the heavenly oversight of St Thomas of Canterbury ever held much sway with Henry VIII, it was rapidly dispelled in the early 1530s. Henry visited Canterbury in 1533 without paying respects at the shrine.[76] It cannot have helped that St Thomas featured in the visions and revelations of Elizabeth Barton, the dissident nun who, backed by a clique of Canterbury monks, was emerging as the King's most dangerous public critic. She had seen Archbishop Warham ascend into heaven, and St Thomas there to welcome him.[77] The emperor's ambassador, Eustace Chapuys, seems to have believed he was making an emotionally and politically effective argument when he met with Henry in February 1534 to demand better treatment for Catherine of Aragon's daughter, Mary. There was a danger people wishing her harm might feel emboldened by the king's current displeasure, 'and he should take example by Henry II, who, though one of the most triumphant kings of England, underwent a grievous public penance by command of the Apostolic legates... because by his lack of reverence for St. Thomas of Canterbury he had encouraged his murderers.' Henry responded coldly that his daughter was well and in a good place, and that 'he might dispose of her as he wished, without anyone laying down the law to him'. He had already told Chapuys some months

earlier that he did not mean to repeat the error of Henry II and King John. By this he did not mean their defiance of papal authority, but their eventual surrender to it.[78]

It has been the argument of this article that Henry VIII's assault on the shrine, relics, veneration and memory of St Thomas of Canterbury was considerably more than a sudden act of personal vindictiveness. In some ways, what is surprising is that the final attack was held off for as long as it was – a testimony to the depth and vigour of the cult at all levels of English society. St Thomas was a uniquely potent symbol of resistance to the political aspirations of the English crown, not only at the break with Rome, but during the several decades preceding it. Warham's overt enlistment of his martyred predecessor as an ally in the manoeuvrings of the early 1530s was likely the final straw, and helps explain why Becket was to be singled out for exemplary posthumous punishment. At the same time, attention to how St Thomas was perceived in early Tudor society should heighten our appreciation of how great a cultural revolution the severance from Rome actually was, and of the magnitude of the task Henry and his supporters faced in committing themselves to bring it about.

Nonetheless, in refracting the crisis of the early Tudor Church through the prism of Thomas Becket, this article may have helped cast some additional light on why, in the end, the resistance faltered and failed. There was something astute in Paul III's comment, on hearing of the execution of John Fisher in July 1535, that he had died defending the truth of the universal Church, 'not the rights of a particular church, as St Thomas of Canterbury'.[79] What animated many of the most ardent and articulate devotees of St Thomas, Archbishop Warham foremost among them, was not so much a fear that the ancient Catholic culture of England was at imminent risk of extinction, as a continuing concern with the rights, liberties and privileges of the Church in a more narrowly institutional, and explicitly clerical, sense. It was a concern that, understandably and fatefully, many who otherwise considered themselves good Catholics ultimately did not share.

[1] For perceptive discussion of this issue, see A. Ryrie, 'Prologue: When did the English Reformation happen? A historiographical curiosity and its interpretative consequences', *Études Épistémè* xxxii (2017), online at https://journals.openedition.org/episteme/1845.

[2] D. Wilkins, *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae*, London 1737, iii. 840-1; extract in translation in A.J. Mason, *What became of the bones of St Thomas?,* Cambridge, 1920, 132-3.

[3] T. F. Mayer, 'Becket's bones burnt! Cardinal Pole and the invention and dissemination of an atrocity', in T. S. Freeman and T. F. Mayer (eds), *Martyrs and martyrdom in England, c. 1400-1700*, Woodbridge 2007, 126-43.

[4] P. Roberts, 'Politics, drama and the cult of Thomas Becket in the sixteenth century', in C. Morris and P. Roberts (eds), *Pilgrimage: the English experience from Becket to Bunyan*, Cambridge 2002, 220-1

[5] In addition to Mason, *What became of the bones*, see J. Butler, *The quest for Becket's bones*, New Haven-London, 1995.

[6] C. Wriothesley, *A chronicle of England*, ed. W. D. Hamilton (Camden Society, new ser., 11, 20, 1875–77), i. 86–7; *The National Archives* [TNA], SP 1/143, fos. 204r–205r (*Letters and papers, foreign and domestic, of the reign of Henry VIII*, ed. J. S. Brewer, J. Gairdner and R. H. Brodie, London 1862-1932 [*LP*], xiv (1). 402). For Cromwell's involvement, see D. MacCulloch, *Thomas Cromwell: A Life*, London 2018, 487-8.

[7] Mason, *What became of the bones*, 133; Roberts, 'Cult of Thomas Becket', 221-4.

[8] *Tudor Royal Proclamations*, ed. P. L. Hughes and J. F. Larkin, New Haven-London, 1964–9, i. 275-6.

[9] M. Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation*, Cambridge 2016, 361-401 (quotation at 365). See also Roberts, 'Cult of Thomas Becket', 199-237; R. E. Scully, 'The Unmaking of a Saint: Thomas Becket and the English Reformation', *The Catholic Historical Review* lxxxvi (2000), 579-602. Disciplinary action: *LP* xii (2). 231, 537; xiii (1). 1043; xiii (2). 101; xiv (1). 47, 76, 245,444, 1053; xvi. 340.

[10] 'Num novam aliquam historiam condet? Sic sane fecit': *Epistolarum Reginaldi Poli*, ed. A. M. Querini, Brescia 1744-57, i. 105.

[11] R. Rex, *Henry VIII and the English Reformation*, 2nd ed., Basingstoke 2006, 18-19, 154-5; H. Parish, *Monks, miracles and magic: Reformation representations of the medieval church*, London 2005, 92-105

[12] R. Rex, 'The religion of Henry VIII', *Historical Journal* lvii (2014), 11.

[13] G. Bernard, *The late medieval English Church: vitality and vulnerability before the break with Rome*, New Haven-London 2012, 17-48 (quotation at 48).

[14] There is no published biographical study of Warham, though an excellent point of orientation is supplied by J. J. Scarisbrick, 'Warham, William (1450?-1532), *ODNB*. See also M. H. Lewis, 'William Warham, patron of Erasmus', unpubl. PhD diss. McGill University 1997; M. J. Kelly, 'Canterbury jurisdiction and influence during the episcopate of William Warham, 1503–1532', unpubl. PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1965.

[15] See W. Ullman, 'Thomas Becket's miraculous oil', *Journal of Theological Studies* viii (1957), 129-33; T. A. Sandquist, 'The Holy Oil of St Thomas of Canterbury', in T. A. Sandquist and M. R. Powick (eds), *Essays in medieval history presented to Bertie Wilkinson*, Toronto 1969, 330-44; C. Wilson, 'The tomb of Henry IV and the Holy Oil of St Thomas of Canterbury', in E. Fernie and P. Crossley (eds), *Medieval architecture and its intellectual context*, London 1990, 182-190.

[16] L. G. Wickham Legg (ed.), *English coronation records*, London 1901, 170-1.

[17] D. Starkey*, Henry: virtuous prince*, London 2008, 292.

[18] T. Astle (ed.), *The Will of King Henry VII*, London 1775, 37.

[19] Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1116, fo. 100r-v (transcribed in J. G. Russell, *The Field of the Cloth of Gold*, London 1969, 209-10); 'The Visit of the Emperor Charles V to England, A.D. 1522', in W. Jerdan (ed.), *Rutland Papers. Original documents illustrative of the courts and times of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (Camden Society xxi, 1842), 80-1.

[20] G. Bernard, 'The piety of Henry VIII', in N. S. Amos, A. Pettegree and H. van Nierop (eds.), *The education of a Christian society: humanism and reformation in Britain and the Netherlands*, Aldershot 1999, 74-5.

[21] *LP* ii. 290.

[22] A. Fletcher and D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Rebellions*, 6th edn, Abingdon 2016, 18-19.

[23] *The Paston Letters*, ed. J. Gairdner, London 1904, vi. 129-31. 'Unlawful' may be a loyalist interpolation on the part of William Paston, as suggested by Fletcher and MacCulloch, *Rebellions*, 18, though an alternative reading is that the measures against which St Thomas protested were themselves unlawful.

[24] Kenneth Pickthorn, *Early Tudor government: Henry VIII*, Cambridge 1951, 106-7.

[25] F. Bond, *Dedications and patron saints of English churches*, London 1914, 17; N. Orme, *English church dedications: with a survey of Cornwall and Devon*, Exeter 1996, 49.

[26] A. Duggan, 'Canterbury: the Becket effect', in C. Ryer-Hemet (ed.), *Canterbury: a medieval city*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2010, 85-8.

[27] D. Webb, *Pilgrimage in medieval England*, London 2000, 45-61; R. Rosewell, *Medieval wall paintings*, Oxford 2014, 38.

[28] *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. E. H. Weatherley (Early English Text Society cc, 1936), 15.

[29] See D. Piroyansky, *Martyrs in the making: political martyrdom in late medieval England*, Basingstoke 2008.

[30] P. Webster, 'Crown versus Church after Becket: King John, St Thomas and the Interdict' in P. Webster and M-P. Gelin (eds), *The cult of St Thomas Becket in the Plantagenet world, c.1170-c.1220*, Woodbridge 2016, 169; R. N. Swanson, *Indulgences in late medieval England: passports to paradise?*, Cambridge 2007, 52, 315-16; B. Nilson, 'The medieval experience at the shrine', in J. Stopford (ed.), *Pilgrimage Explored*, Woodbridge 1999, 113.

[31] Swanson, *Indulgences*, 179-223.

[32] TNA, SP 1/71, fo.2r (*LP* v. 1371).

[33] TNA, SP 1/192, fo. 208r (*LP* viii. 626).

[34] In noting the rebel article, M. L Bush, 'Tax reform and rebellion in early Tudor England', *History* lxxvi (1991), 394-5 is arguably too inclined to insist on the primacy of 'fiscal grievances'. Elsewhere, in a distinguished body of work, Bush emphasises how early Tudor notions of 'commonweal' encompassed both economic and spiritual values: eg, *The Pilgrim's complaint: a study of popular thought in the early Tudor North*, Farnham, 2009, 1-43.

[35] TNA, SP 1/192, fo. 208r (*LP* viii. 626).

[36] See K. B. Slocum, *Liturgies in honour of Thomas Becket*, Toronto 2004.

[37] *The Early English Carols*, ed. R. L. Greene, Oxford 1935, 71-4. I have not been able to trace the derivation of this idea; it may represent a variant listing of the Constitutions of Clarendon, though it is difficult to see how these could be subdivided so as to arrive near this number.

[38] *Revised short title catalogue* [*RSTC*], online at http://eebo.chadwyck.com/home, 24873-4. Cf Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: readings on the saints*, ed. W. G. Ryan, Princeton 1993, i. 59-62.

[39] *RSTC*, 24876-24880.

[40] *Here begynneth the lyfe of the blessed martyr Saynte Thomas*, ?London, 1520.

[41] (W. Caxton), *Legenda aurea sanctorum*, London 1483, fos 105v- 108r.

[42] *RSTC*, 17958-17975.

[43] J. Mirk, *Liber festivalis*, London 1486, sigs N8v, M3r-v.

[44] S. Gunn, 'Edmund Dudley and the Church', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* li (2000), 517-18.

[45] *The Tudor Constitution*, ed. G. R. Elton, Cambridge 1960, 62-3.

[46] J. B. Trapp, 'Urswick, Christopher (1448?-1522), *Oxford dictionary of national biography* [*ODNB*], online edn.

[47] *Records of the family of Urswyk*, ed. W. Urswick, St Albans 1893, 120-22; J. B. Trapp, 'Christopher Urswick and his books: the reading of Henry VII's almoner', *Renaissance Studies* i (1987), 48-70; P. I. Kaufman, *The 'Polytyque Churche': religion and early Tudor political culture, 1485-1516*, Macon, GA, 1986, 27-9.

[48] J. Alcock, *[Sermon on Luke VIII]*, Westminster 1497, sig. C5v.

[49] P. Marshall, *Heretics and believers: a history of the English Reformation*, New Haven-London 2017, 85-6.

[50] P. R. Cavill, '"The enemy of God and His Church": James Hobart, praemunire, and the clergy of Norwich diocese', *The Journal of Legal History* xxxii (2011), 127-150.

[51] J. Gairdner, *Lollardy and the Reformation in England*, London 1908-13, i. 138.

[52] J. A. F. Thomson, *The early Tudor Church and society*, London 1993, 36-7.

[53] B. P. Wolffe, *Henry VI*, new edn, New Haven-London 2001, 3-12.

[54] J. M. Theilman, 'The miracles of King Henry VI of England', *The Historian* xlii (1980), 456-71; E. Duffy, *The stripping of the altars: traditional religion in England, c.1400-c.1580*, 2nd edn, New Haven-London 2005, 195; R. Knox and S. Leslie (eds), *The miracles of King Henry VI*, Cambridge 1923, 164-7.

[55] *The Great Chronicle of London*, ed. A.H. Thomas and I.D. Thornley, London 1938, 335.

[56] Scarisbrick, 'Warham'; Marshall, *Heretics and believers*, 42.

[57] Lewis, 'William Warham', 184-5; *LP* iii. 2647; iv. 470; i. 731 (40); C. Eveleigh Woodruff and W. Danks, *Memorials of the cathedral and priory of Christ in Canterbury*, New York 1912, 214-15.

[58] *Literae Cantuarienses: the letter books of the monastery of Christ Church, Canterbury*, ed. J. Brigstocke Sheppard, London 1889, iii. 416-40 (quotations at 425, 432, 437); *LP* i. 1780, 1941, 2163.

[59] P. R. Cavill, 'A perspective on the Church–state confrontation of 1515: the passage of 4 Henry VIII, c. 2', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* lxiii, 655-70.

[60] J. C. Olin (ed.), *The Catholic Reformation: Savonarola to Ignatius Loyola*, 2nd ed., New York 1992, 56-64 (quotation at 64). The best discussion of the Hunne case is Bernard, *Late Medieval Church*, ch. 1.

[61] P. Gwyn, *The king's cardinal: the rise and fall of Thomas Wolsey*, London 1990, 45-6.

[62] Marshall, *Heretics and believers*, 93-4; R. Keilway, *Reports d'ascuns cases qui ont evenus aux temps du Roy Henry le septiême*, London 1688, 185 (my translation).

[63] Gwyn, *Wolsey*, 49-50.

[64] Marshall, *Heretics and believers*, 94-5; *LP* iii. 1218; TNA, SP 1/40, fo. 1r (*LP* iv. 2622).

[65] J. F. Davis, 'Lollards, reformers and St Thomas of Canterbury', *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* ix (1963), 1-15.

[66] TNA, SP 1/12, fos. 17v-18r (*LP* ii. 1314).

[67] W. Tyndale, *Expositions and notes… together with the practice of prelates*, ed. H. Walter, Cambridge 1849, 273-4, 292-3; *An answer to Sir Thomas More's dialogue*, ed. H. Walter, Cambridge 1850, 12.

[68] *Three chapters of letters relating to the suppression of monasteries*, ed. T. Wright (Camden Society, old ser. 26, 1843), 6; J. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, London 1583, Bk. 8, 1053.

[69] T. More, *The debellacyon of Salem and Bizance*, London 1533, fo. 18v.

[70] *The correspondence of Sir Thomas More*, ed. E. F. Rogers, Princeton 1947, 564; T. More, *The Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, ed. L. A. Schuster et al, New Haven-London 1973, i. 13, 17.

[71] T. More, *A Dialogue Concerning Heresies*, ed. T. M. C. Lawler et al, New Haven-London, 1981, 52.

[72] C. St German, *The addicions of Salem and Byzance*, London 1534, fos 53v-61v (quotations at 53v, 54r, 55v).

[73] Marshall, *Heretics and believers*, 183-5, 194-5.

[74] J. Moyes, 'Warham, an English primate on the eve of the Reformation', *The Dublin Review* cxiv (1894), 390-420 (at 401-14 transcribing TNA, 1/70, fos 209r-215v; *LP* v. 1247), quotations at 407, 409, 410, 412.

[75] Scarisbrick, 'Warham'; G. Bernard, *The king's Reformation: Henry VIII and the Remaking of the English Church*, New Haven-London 2005, 177-8.

[76] Roberts, 'Cult of Becket', 204-5.

[77] *LP* vi. 1466; Wright, *Three chapters of letters*, 16-17.

[78] *LP* vii. 232; vi. 235.

[79] *LP*, viii. 1117.