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God's City: 'civic humanism' and the self-construction of the *ecclesia* in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century England*

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I. The Colour Purple

At some point in 1459 or 1460, the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury addressed as their 'most singular benefactor' a noble who in the following years was to become notorious as the bully-boy for the Yorkist regime. It was John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester who, at the time of the letter in question, was at a studious distance from the internecine conflict in England. The monks had last seen him when he set out on pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and described him now as a 'very devout pilgrim of Christ':

Serenissimo domino atque singularissimo huius sacrosancte Cantuariensis Ecclesie benefactori, Domino Johanni comiti Wigorniensis, devotissimo Christi peregrino, Pattavii nunc moram trahenti, ubi purpura eloquii cuiuscunque excellentis inaurat materie maiestatem ... Ut eadem felix Cantuariensis ecclesia, cuius aram suo purpuravit sanguine nobilis ille pastor et martyr Thomas, in maius augmentum glorie omni fulgeat auctoritate per omnem quinquagesimum annum passionis ipsius martyris qui et iubileus sacris litteris nominatur ... consequatur potestatem plenarie indulgentie per integrum illum annum ... Intelleximus vestram affectuosissimam dominacionem, ob amorem et singularem devocionem erga patronum nostrum — ymmo et vestrum — specialem, sanctum Thomam martirem, iam in hac sacra peregrinatione vestra, annis quatuor, summo ingenio ista elaborasse...¹

The monks had clearly received word that he had returned from Jerusalem to western Christendom and was now staying (*moram trahens*) in Padua — and they considered his presence in Italy was to their priory's advantage. The epistle makes it clear that the earl had been assisting the monks in seeking new privileges for the cult of the saint who had been killed within their cathedral, 'this happy church of Canterbury, whose altar the noble shepherd and martyr Thomas Becket turned purple with his own blood'.²

That was not the only occasion in this letter that the imperial colour was mentioned. The monks were well-appraised of the earl's purpose in basing himself in the university city of

¹ The letter appears at Canterbury: Cathedral Archives, CCA-DCC-Register/N, fol. 186-87. It is printed in J. Brigstocke Sheppard ed., *Litterae Cantuarienses*, 3 vols [Roll Series, lxxxv], London, 1887-1889, iii, pp. 215-217; the editor gives a tentative date of '1454' while W. A. Pantin, *Canterbury College, Oxford*, 4 vols, Oxford, 1947-85, iv (1985), p. 104 suggests 1459, but both are too early, given that Tiptoft left England in 1458, returning in 1461, and this letter talks of him having been away for four years. R. J. Mitchell, *John Tiptoft (1427-1470)*, London, 1938 remains the standard biography.

² Following Register N's *aram* rather than Brigstocke Sheppard's hypercorrection of *aream*.

Padua: as they put it, it was ‘where you enrich the majesty of any outstanding matter with the purple of eloquence’— it was there, in other words, that Tiptoft could learn to express himself in purple prose. Plentiful evidence exists to demonstrate the earl’s interest in humanist Latin and in his desire that his countrymen should adopt it.³ The author of the priory’s letter patently had not mastered that idiom, but the wording shows an acknowledgement of the value of the pursuit of eloquence. Indeed, it does something more than that: we may wish to dismiss the repetition of *purpura* as a case of clumsy drafting but it unavoidably creates a parallel between the sanctifying blood of the martyr and the ennobling power of rhetoric. They take on the same hue. It is not only through this one word that an association is made between Tiptoft’s time in Italy perfecting his knowledge of the pagan classics and his pious voyage to Jerusalem. We tend to assume these activities were intellectually divorced but this letter joins them together as one enterprise, describing all his travels as a four-year sacred pilgrimage (*sacra peregrinatio vestra*). The epistle takes humanist studies and endows them with greater worth: the oration becomes merged with the orison. In other words, through the finger-tips of this monastic writer, a sort of miracle has been enacted, transubstantiating the apparently secular into something holy.

This article is about the transformative power of the ecclesiastical lens, the manner in which clerics could refract any learning and so enlighten it with a spectrum of meaning beyond its mundane intentions. What follows will also be about the colour of eloquence, about the physical properties it can adopt when shaped upon the page. Uplifting rhetoric, in other words, is not only to be heard but also to be seen, given visual form through elegant lettering. The English authors and patrons who will be central to our discussion promoted particular scribal stratagems because they sensed that script choices could express virtue. This was an insight they gained through interacting with the new archaising practice which is sometimes called ‘Roman bookhand’ but was known by its humanist inventors as *littera antiqua*.⁴ This was one part of a wider English clerical engagement with the *studia humanitatis* as it developed in the Quattrocento. That interest has, in an English context, been described as ‘ecclesiastical humanism’, an unobjectionable phrase as long as there is no hint that it implies an oxymoron. From Leonardo Bruni’s early and popular rendition of St Basil’s *Ad iuvenes* via the broader programme of translation of the Greek Church Fathers promoted by the Camaldolese abbot, Ambrogio Traversari and on to works like Cristoforo Landino’s *Disputationes Camaldulenses*, the humanist endeavoured repeatedly immersed itself in Christian spirituality.⁵ England, incidentally, played an early role in this tradition, being the place of production of Latin versions of Athanasius made by Antonio Beccaria and dedicated to his employer, Humfrey, duke of Gloucester in the late 1430s and early 1440s.⁶ In Florence, Bruni’s mentor and predecessor as the city’s Chancellor, Coluccio Salutati, famously made a distinction between the *studia humanitatis* and the *studia divinitatis* but this was not intended to imply that the humanist methods of enquiry had to be alien to the study of the divine.⁷ On

³ I gather that evidence in D. Rundle, *The Renaissance Reform of the Book and Britain*, Cambridge, 2019, ch. 5.

⁴ Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, ch. 1.

⁵ I nod here to A. Cole, ‘Heresy and Humanism’ in P. Strohm ed., *Middle English*, Oxford, 2007, pp. 421-440..

⁶ D. Rundle, ‘From Greenwich to Verona: Antonio Beccaria, St Athanasius and the Translation of Orthodoxy’, *Humanistica*, v, [2012 for] 2010, pp. 109-119.

⁷ *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, ed. Francesco Novati, 4 vols, Rome, 1891-1911, iv, p. 216, discussed by B. Kohl, ‘The changing concept of the *studia humanitatis* in the early Renaissance’, *Renaissance Studies*, vi, 1992, pp. 185-209 at p. 191.

the contrary, they were at its service from the early Quattrocento; nor was the application of those methods to religious ends a particular invention of the English.

The impulse to translate Greek texts into classicising Latin is one of the humanist methods which will be relevant to the following discussion. So too will be the creation of original compositions emulating the ancient Roman pursuit of eloquence, as best personified by Cicero. With these activities came also the expectation that appropriate texts — whether translated into or composed in Latin — would be dressed in a *mise-en-page* which spoke of their archaising intentions. Together with these three methods travelled a particular focus of study: the civic. A word of caution is needed here. ‘Civic humanism’, the concept invented by Hans Baron (who first wrote of it in German as *Burgerhumanismus*) had, for various political as well as intellectual reasons, a certain celebrity in the later twentieth century.⁸ Its influence was to be felt in two English-language classics: Pocock’s *Machiavellian Moment* and Skinner’s *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*.⁹ So alluring has the concept proven that it has been adopted far beyond its original focus, with a concomitant dilution of its meaning; two outstanding scholars, Anthony Grafton and William Sherman, have recently encapsulated this usage, when, writing of sixteenth-century England, they explain that ‘civic humanism ... obliged scholars to apply their learning to the real world of politics’.¹⁰ This broader, attenuated application to a monarchical republic like the kingdom of England comes at the expense of divesting Baron’s original formulation of both its emphasis on the civic in the sense of an urban locale and its perceived opposition to one-person rule. This latter element is one reason why, in its original homeland of Florentine studies, ‘civic humanism’ has, since the late 1990s, fallen nearly as far from favour as the Morning Star did from heaven.¹¹ Baron’s depiction of a republican tradition, in deadly combat with the praise of princes which he dubbed ‘tyrannical humanism’, has received vehement criticism. It has been pointed out that, whatever the ideological divisions (and they have been put in doubt), the basic building-block of politics for most humanists was the city-state: whether they served a signorial régime or one that defined itself as a republic, all these humanists were civic-minded.¹² What will concern us here is how English clerical readers of humanist texts appropriated that focus on the city.

II. The Church’s Urban Setting

⁸ For the development of Baron’s thinking, given its classic expression in *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols, Princeton, 1955 [reprinted in an abridged one-volume edition (Princeton, 1966)], see R. Fubini, ‘Una carriera di storico del Rinascimento: Hans Baron’ in id., *L’Umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici*, Milan, 2001, pp. 277-316 [reproduced from *Rivista storica italiana*, civ, 1992; English version: ‘Renaissance Historian: the career of Hans Baron’, *Journal of Modern History*, liv, 1992, pp. 541-74].

⁹ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition*, Princeton, 1975; Q. Skinner, *Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 vols, Cambridge, 1978.

¹⁰ A. Grafton and W. Sherman, ‘In the Margins of Josephus: two ways of reading’, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, xxiii, 2016, pp. 213-238 at p. 217.

¹¹ For criticisms, see the essays in J. Hankins ed., *Renaissance Civic Humanism: reappraisals and reflections*, Cambridge, 2000, and N. S. Baker and B. J. Maxson ed., *After Civic Humanism*, Toronto, 2015, and the works of James Hankins himself, most recently his *Virtue Politics: soulcraft and statecraft in Renaissance Italy*, Cambridge MA, 2019.

¹² J. Hankins, ‘The “Baron Thesis” after Forty Years...’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, lvi, 1995, pp. 309-338, esp. pp. 327-329.

Our theme, then, is not what has come to be called ‘civic religion’, by which is denoted the recruitment of the cultural power of the church’s characteristics for the use of municipal authorities.¹³ Instead, we are moving in the opposite direction, towards a view of the universe in which the townspeople or the laity were often perceived as the oppressors of a clerical community which wanted to assert simultaneously both its marginality and centrality to the fabric of the cityscape. The fundamental source of that paradox may have been Augustine of Hippo, when he attempted to convert classical civic language into a Christian worldview in which there was a city of God. The insight that the *ecclesia* was the true *civitas* was by no means one that had to wait until the Quattrocento to be born but, in the fifteenth century, humanist texts provided new apparatus through which certain churchmen could configure their identity. To put this another way: our subjects often read humanist works with a broad Augustinian accent.

A debt to Augustine is implied by the title of the text which has become a *locus classicus* for English clerical engagement with humanist civic writings: Thomas Chaundler’s *Libellus de laudibus duarum civitatum*.¹⁴ Its two cities are not, however, conceptual but physical — they are the towns of Bath and Wells, the centres of the diocese over which presided Thomas Bekynton, the dedicatee of the work. The action of the *Libellus*, which is a dialogue, is set in 1443, the year of Bekynton’s consecration as bishop but that cannot be the moment of its composition, given that it refers to building works he undertook in the 1450s. The *Libellus* survives solely in the dedication manuscript, produced in Oxford when Chaundler, a native of Wells and long-term Warden of the *alma mater* he shared with Bekynton, New College, was also the university’s Chancellor, so between 1457 and 1461.¹⁵ The humanist pretensions of that codex are manifest both in the abbreviation used for Magister Thomas Chaundler — ‘MTC’, relating him to Marcus Tullius Cicero — and in its commitment to presenting the texts in the bookhand the humanists invented, *littera antiqua*.¹⁶ Given that humanist writings were more often presented in mid-century England in gothic scripts, the choice of this mise-

¹³ The classic statement is by André Vauchez: see his ‘Introduction’ in id., ed., *La religion civique à l’époque médiévale et moderne. Chrétienté et Islam*, Rome, 1995, pp. 1-8. For a recent overview, paying attention to the urban tensions that could be in play, is Nicholas Terpstra’s entry on the topic in J. H. Arnold ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity*, Oxford, 2014, pp. 148-163. Especially relevant to our context is A. Brown, ‘Civic religion in late medieval Europe’, *Journal of Medieval History*, xlii, 2016, pp. 338-56.

¹⁴ The work survives in one manuscript, Cambridge: Trinity College, MS. R.14.5; it was edited by G. Williams, *Somersetshire Archaeology and Natural History Society Proceedings*, xix, 1873, pp. 99-121. The groundbreaking study of it was S. Bridges, ‘Thomas Chaundler’ (unpublished B.Litt thesis, Oxford University, 1949). It has received some attention in recent decades: as well as A. Cole, ‘Staging Advice in Oxford, New College, MS 288: on Thomas Chaundler and Thomas Bekynton’ in Vincent Gillespie and Kantik Ghosh ed., *After Arundel: religious writing in fifteenth-century England*, Turnhout, 2011, pp. 245-64, see T. Meacham, *The performance tradition of the medieval English university: the works of Thomas Chaundler*, Berlin, 2020, pp. 75-99. On Chaundler’s works more generally, see, as well as Meacham’s monograph, Cole, ‘Heresy and Humanism’, and D. Wakelin, ‘Religion, Humanism, and Humanity: Chaundler’s Dialogues and the Winchester *Secretum*’ in Gillespie and Ghosh, *After Arundel*, pp. 225-44.

¹⁵ For the biographies of both men, see A. B. Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500*, 3 vols, Oxford, 1957-59 [hereafter *BRUO*] *sub nominibus*; also A. Judd, *The Life of Thomas Bekynton* Chichester, 1961.

¹⁶ For discussion of the manuscript’s scribes, see [Bodleian exhibition catalogue,] *Duke Humfrey and English Humanism*, Oxford, 1970 [hereafter *DH&EH*], no. 35; for one of those scribes, John Farley, see Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, pp. 235-237.

en-page speaks of a commitment to an agenda of eloquence which defines the contents of the *Libellus*, albeit not in a fully acknowledged way.¹⁷

Though the work's title announces it will be about the praise of the two cities, the text shows that Chaundler was aware of the tradition not only of the panegyric but also of the invective. The work has representatives of the towns vie for the favour of their bishop, each celebrating its own charms and belittling those of the other. The warm springs for which Bath is famous, for instance, are turned to the town's disadvantage by its opponent, who depicts them as 'stinking and sulphureous'.¹⁸ What makes their orations so notable is that they silently adopt and adapt phrasing from two humanist works: the foundational *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis* of Leonardo Bruni (c. 1402), and the riposte to it by his younger rival, Pier Candido Decembrio, the *De Laudibus Mediolanensium Urbis Panegyricus* (c. 1435).¹⁹ In Chaundler's re-use, Wells in effect becomes the Florence of the North, and Bath Milan.

It would be easy to mock the implicit parallelling created by the *Libellus* as an attempt at town-twinning based on profound ignorance. We may be more struck by the differences than the similarities between a Somerset market town dominated by a beautiful medieval cathedral and the Renaissance city by the Arno. Chaundler could have no mental image of the cities the humanists described, but his reading of their works did give him an intuition of the sources of their civic pride. In particular, he recognised in Bruni's words how the outward appearance of the cityscape could be an expression of inner virtue. He could consider this especially apposite as he knew his hometown had benefited from changes to its built environment undertaken at the orders of Thomas Bekynton. These included a conduit to allow water to flow through the streets of Wells — and the culverts it employed still remain in place.²⁰ They also involved three impressive new gatehouses standing between those streets and the cathedral precincts, known as the Bishop's Eye, the Dean's Eye and Penniless Porch.²¹ These are usually dated to the early 1450s, while other works within the cloisters were still ongoing near the end of that decade.²²

Bekynton, thus, displayed his munificence to the municipality, but the dating of these interventions encourages us to complicate our understanding with a more ambivalent interpretation. The first summer of that same decade saw, further east in England, Jack Cade's rebellion and, in its aftermath, Wells was not spared from tensions between the townspeople and its clergy: in late July, troops had to be brought in to defend the cathedral

¹⁷ I explain this agenda in *Renaissance Reform*, esp. pp. 20-41 *sed etiam passim*.

¹⁸ Williams, 'Libellus', p. 108.

¹⁹ These debts were first noticed by Shirley Bridges; I give a full listing of them at D. Rundle, 'Of Republics and Tyrants: aspect of quattrocento humanist writings and their reception in England c. 1400 – c. 1460' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 1997), p. 271, but Meacham has, in addition, noted a debt to Lorenzo Valla, writing to Decembrio about Bruni's *Laudatio: Performance Tradition*, pp. 90-91.

²⁰ R. W. Dunning, 'The Bishop's Palace' in L. S. Colchester ed., *Wells Cathedral. A History*, West Compton House, 1982, pp. 227-244 at pp. 237-38.

²¹ The fullest discussion of Beckington's building works is to be found in L. Monckton, 'Late Gothic Architecture in South West England' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1999), pp. 81-103; see also ead., 'Experimental Architecture? Vaulting and West Country Cloisters in the Late Middle Ages', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, clix, 2006, pp. 249-283.

²² Substantial work, including on the pavement of the east cloisters, was ongoing in 1457-58: Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells*, 2 vols, London, 1907-1914, ii (1914), pp. 83-89.

and its ministers.²³ With this as the backdrop to Bekynton's architectural patronage, we should wonder whether the primary intention of the gates was to beautify the market town or to add extra protection to the precincts from the town itself.²⁴ This might be read as the church closing itself off from the civic but that is not how Chaundler configures it. There is a lesser known but significant passage in another work by Chaundler dedicated to the same bishop and extant in the sister volume to the one in which the *Libellus* is presented. This other text is also a dialogue and opens with the arrival of two travellers to Wells, *haec villa* as one of them calls it. His interlocutor upbraids him:

Civitatem appellare venustius potuisses quam villam, quod profecto luce clarius intelligeres, si omnem qui intro est nitorem ac pulcritudinem conspiceres. Speciosissima namque ecclesia ista quam adhuc procul cernimus ... Habet insuper adiunctum ingens palatium, miro splendore decorum, fluentibus aquis undique vallatum, et delectabili murorum turrillorumque serie coronatum, in quo presidet dignissimus ac literatissimus presul, Thomas [Beyknton] ... Hic nempe sua industria et impensis tantum isti splendorem civitati contulit, tum ecclesiam portis, turribus, et muris tutissime muniendo, tum palatium in quo residet, ceteraque circumstantia edificia amplissime construendo ... Solent [canonici] enim advenis et peregrinis tanto humanitate officio obsequi ... Ceterum cum his ipsa quae in inferioribus clericis est urbanitas ... ordo atque civium unitas, iustissime leges, optime policie...²⁵

As in the *Libellus*, so equally here Chaundler parades his humanist affiliations. He executes a manoeuvre characteristic of the new *literati* by correcting the Latin vocabulary, distinguishing a *civitas* from a mere town (*villa* in its non-classical usage).²⁶ He then echoes his own re-use of Bruni in celebrating the physical beauty of Wells, and relating it to the virtues of those who bustle within its space. Yet, strikingly, the Wells that is described here lies entirely within the cathedral precincts: praise is reserved for the main church itself and also the episcopal palace and the surrounding walls. Similarly, the virtues of humanity, unity and — most notably — urbanity (*urbanitas*) are assigned not the town's citizen body but to the religious foundation's clergy. The *civitas* has become a synecdoche for the *ecclesia*. This is given striking visual expression in one of the full-page illustrations preceding the texts in

²³ *Calendar of MSS of Wells*, pp. 77-79, briefly discussed and placed in context by I. M. W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450*, Oxford, 1991, p. 128.

²⁴ Monckton, 'Late Gothic Architecture', pp. 86-87.

²⁵ Oxford: New College, MS. 288, fol. 4, printed at *Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton*, ed. G. Williams, 2 vols (London, 1872), ii, pp. 315-316: 'you could have more elegantly called it a city than a town, as you would understand in a clear light if you were to look closely at splendour and beauty which is within it. There is that most handsome church which we discern even at this distance ... Moreover, it has adjoined to it a large palace, decorated with remarkable splendour, surrounded on all sides with flowing waters and crowned with a delightful series of walls and turrets, in which presides the most worthy and most scholarly bishop, Thomas Bekynton ... This man, as is well known, through his own effort and expenses, has brought such splendour to this city, as much in protecting the church most safely with gates, towers and walls, as in most grandly building the palace where he resides and all the other surrounding buildings ... The canons are accustomed to showing to travellers and pilgrims such great humanity ... Furthermore, in addition to these things, there is that urbanity of the lower clergy ... an order and unity of citizens, most just laws, the best governance...' . On the manuscript, see *DH&EH*, no. 36.

²⁶ For humanist manoeuvres, see my 'Humanist Eloquence among the Barbarians in fifteenth-century England' in C. Burnett & N. Mann ed., *Britannia Latina* [Warburg Institute Colloquia, viii], London & Turin, 2005, pp. 68-85; I discuss them further in *England and the Identity of Renaissance Humanism* (in preparation).

the manuscript, where Wells is presented by a depiction of the cathedral close and the palace, with only three buildings which abut the walls standing beyond the religious spaces.²⁷

Thus, Chaundler has deployed the ecclesiastical lens to make the church not a separate sphere from the civic but instead its very heart, its refuge held safe within the embrace of the cathedral precinct's walls. This implies that the city (which is the church) is embattled — and that perception too could have been drawn from humanist sources. In proclaiming the virtues of his own city, Bruni, in the *Laudatio*, also acknowledges that Florence has its enemies: how could that not be, when its people are free-born and so despise the very idea of tyranny?²⁸ Tyrants and their sycophants plot against them, attack them, and they resist, they emerge undefeated, and so with them and through them liberty itself survives. Like the Florentines, English clerics of the 1450s beyond Bekynton and Chaundler had reason to consider themselves besieged. Before, though, we turn to this wider context there is a final point to be made about Chaundler's depiction of Wells.

We might still not be able to shrug off a sense of incongruity: what have the fan-vaulting and crenellations of Beckynton's gatehouses to do with Renaissance Florence? Of course, Bruni himself wrote his praise of the Florentine cityscape long before the Golden Gates of the Baptistery were completed, before the dome of the cathedral had been even begun, before its architect, Filippo Brunelleschi, had dreamt of the Pazzi Chapel and before the person responsible for the Palazzo Rucellai, Leon Battista Alberti, was out of swaddling clothes. The humanist epideictic rhetoric which envisaged streets and buildings' façades as manifestations of inner virtue did not have to wait for Renaissance architecture to be born. Furthermore, despite the purpose of Bruni's praise being the celebration of a single city, the idiom he had moulded did not have to be confined to the urban locale where it was first deployed. Bruni's words did not presuppose that only a specific style of architecture was capable of displaying the virtues that could inhere within a structure's stonework. A core group of humanists did see their intellectual agenda as being tied to a form of visual expression, but that was a matter of *mise-en-page*, not *mise-en-scene* of the urban layout. The humanists' ambitions had their limits; they invented an aesthetic of the book, not a *zeitgeist*.²⁹

To put this another way, in what was once his cathedral at Wells, we can look upon Bekynton's tomb with its double depiction of its subject — clothed and recumbent above a cadaver whose decomposition has been caught for eternity in stone — and see there a fashion far removed from anything promoted in contemporary central Italy. Yet, the transition from transi tomb to the translation of humanist modes into a Somerset setting is not a discordant clash between mutually exclusive forms. The shift between the two (as much as the sculptural dual presentation) demonstrates the plural identities that could cohabit within one character.

III. *versus civitatem*: Building the City

²⁷ Oxford: New College, MS. 288, fol. 3^v.

²⁸ Leonardo Bruni, *Opere letterarie e politiche*, ed. P. Viti, Turin, 1996, pp. 596-608.

²⁹ I acknowledge my obvious debt here to the classic essay of E. Gombrich, 'From the Revival of Letters to the Reform of the Arts: Niccolò Niccoli and Filippo Brunelleschi' in D. Fraser *et al.* ed., *Essays in the History of Art presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, London, 1967, pp. 71-82; I have used the reprinted version in *The Essential Gombrich*, ed. R. Woodfield, London, 1996, pp. 411-435.

In 1450, fate did not force Bekynton to become a second Becket. He could well have thanked God for the bearable lightness of his suffering, contrasting his lot to that of two colleagues on the episcopal bench whom he would never see again. At the start of the year, on 9th January, Adam Moleyns, bishop of Chichester and Keeper of the Privy Seal, had been attacked and murdered while arranging the payment of belated wages to sailors at Portsmouth; for this atrocity, the town was put under excommunication for over half a century, until a ritual of contrition was undertaken in 1508.³⁰ Moleyns had shared with Bekynton not only service to Henry VI but also humanist interests, being the first Englishman to deliver an oration in humanist Latin (albeit they were ghost-written for him).³¹ Meanwhile, Moleyns was known as a close political associate of another casualty of that year, William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk (2nd May), as was the second bishop to be bludgeoned to death, William Ayscough (29th June).³² Ayscough was not at his episcopal seat of Salisbury when he was assaulted, but that did not stop his palace being ransacked or others of the cathedral's clergy being threatened. They included the dean, Gilbert Kymer, who had been, like Bekynton, a servant of Humfrey, duke of Gloucester — a reminder that association with the man the rebels had converted into the 'Good Duke' provided no protection from hatred.³³

Kymer exemplifies the bookish churchmen who, in the mid-century, gathered in and around Salisbury's cathedral close and whose interests extended to humanist texts.³⁴ This community was also energetic in its efforts to enhance the cathedral, both physically and spiritually. At the time violence struck the precincts, building work was taking place on a new library and lecture room.³⁵ There was also a renewed dynamism in seeking the canonisation of an earlier bishop, Osmund, a campaign which achieved success in 1457.³⁶ That cult, notably, was one supported and promoted by at least some of the townspeople.³⁷ The relationship between precincts and laity, in other words, was not one of continual or universal conflict and was, at

³⁰ Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, p. 63. For the ending of the excommunication, see H. P. Wright, *The story of the 'Domus Dei' of Portsmouth, commonly called The Royal Garrison church*, London, 1873, pp. 142-147. On Moleyns, see A. Compton Reeve, *Lancastrian Englishmen*, Washington DC, 1981, pp. 203-63.

³¹ The oration's author was, in fact, Antonio Beccaria: see Texts D in the Appendix to R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, ed. D. Rundle and A. J. Lappin, Oxford, 2011 [online]; D. Rundle, 'Humanism before the Tudors' in J. Woolfson ed., *Reassessing Tudor Humanism*, London, 2002, pp. 22-42.

³² Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, p. 86; cf. C. L. Kingsford, *English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century*, Oxford, 1913, pp. 346-349. For a revision of Ayscough's political affiliations, see S. Lane, 'The Political Career of William Ayscough, Bishop of Salisbury, 1438-1450' in L. Clark ed., *Examining Identity [The Fifteenth Century, xvi]*, Woodbridge, 2018, pp. 63-82. For Ayscough's bequest of books to his cathedral, see James Willoughby and Nigel Ramsey ed., *Secular Cathedrals [Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues]* (London, in preparation).

³³ Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, pp. 124-126; on Kymer, see BRUO and R. Thompson, 'Gilbert Kymer: Rector of the first conjoint medical college', *Journal of Medical Biography*, published online 1st November 2018.

³⁴ I touch on the range of humanist interests in D. Rundle, 'Poggio Bracciolini's International Reputation and the Significance of Bryn Mawr MS. 48' in R. Ricci and E. Pumroy ed., *Humanism and Poggio Bracciolini*, Florence, 2020, pp. 41-70.

³⁵ These initiatives are briefly discussed by R. M. Ball, 'Thomas Cyrcetur, a Fifteenth-century Theologian and Preacher', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, xxxvii, 1986, pp. 205-239 at pp. 208-209; cf. 'The cathedral of Salisbury: From the foundation to the fifteenth century' in *A History of the County of Wiltshire: Volume 3 [Victoria County History]*, ed. R. B. Pugh and E. Crittall, London, 1956, pp. 156-183, for which I have used digitised version at British History Online, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/wilts/vol3/pp156-183> [accessed 2nd April 2020].

³⁶ A. R. Malden ed., *The canonization of Saint Osmund*, Salisbury, 1901.

³⁷ A. D. Brown, *Popular Piety in Late Medieval England: The Diocese of Salisbury 1250-1550*, Oxford, 1995, pp. 57-65.

times (perhaps more often), a symbiotic one of mutual support. Frictions, however, did reoccur: in 1474, the mass was disrupted by some discontented local people.³⁸ In the context of intermittent unrest, it is unsurprising that work was carried out on the walls of the cathedral close, including the erection of a new gate to the south, Harnham Gate, and the addition of a portcullis to the gate facing the town's High Street.³⁹

The epicentre of the 1450 risings was not in any of the dioceses so far mentioned, but further east, with its origins in Kent. Of that county's two cathedral cities, Rochester saw some of the activity of Jack Cade and his followers as they retreated from London in the summer of that year, but Canterbury was largely untouched.⁴⁰ In January, rebels led by Thomas Cheyne had plans to attack Christ Church priory, but in fact only ransacked the hospital of St Radigund's, a few hundred yards to the north-west.⁴¹ This incident did not gain a mention in the chronicle of the Christ Church monk, John Stone, though he did record the murders of Moleyns and Ayscough; he also made a note of the revolt in the summer led by Jack Cade when, he said, four thousand men encamped on the hillside north of the city for three hours, but then moved on towards London.⁴² It seems they had been hoping for signs of support from the town, but they were not forthcoming and, indeed, some of the citizens were active in opposition to the uprisings.⁴³ This does not mean, however, that there was unclouded sky of perpetual harmony between the laity and the cathedral priory. Animosity could take the form of low-level anti-monastic grumblings, as in 1452 when 'a certain foul-mouthed fellow called the monks whoresons and farting monks'.⁴⁴ More seriously, there were tensions over jurisdiction between the priory and the city's authorities which, in 1500, erupted into violence, with some monks being attacked in the disputed fields just north of the city walls.⁴⁵

The prior embroiled in this conflict with the mayor and aldermen was Thomas Goldstone (second of that name, elected 1495), who is now best remembered for being responsible for the cathedral's main gatehouse, facing onto the town's Buttermarket, and begun in the first years of the sixteenth century but completed only after his death in 1517.⁴⁶ In contrast to Bekynton's gates at Wells, its design incorporated Renaissance influences, with, at the ground storey, all'antica pilasters similar to those found woven in the Low Countries tapestries the prior commissioned for the cathedral choir.⁴⁷ There is a similarity with Wells,

³⁸ Brown, *Piety*, p. 49.

³⁹ T. W. T. Tatton-Brown, *Salisbury Cathedral: the making of a medieval masterpiece*, London, 2009, p. 86.

⁴⁰ Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, pp. 98-99.

⁴¹ Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, pp. 64-66.

⁴² *Christ Church, Canterbury. I. The chronicle of John Stone...*, ed. W. G. Searle [Cambridge Antiquarian Society, xxxiv], Cambridge, 1902, pp. 48-49.

⁴³ Harvey, *Cade's Rebellion*, pp.103-104.

⁴⁴ W. Somner, *The Most Accurate History of the Ancient City and Famous Cathedral of Canterbury*, London, 1661, p. 294.

⁴⁵ R. Warren, 'Conflict, Compromise and Cooperation: the civic government's relationship with the church in late medieval Canterbury' (unpublished MA thesis, University of Kent, 2010), pp. 38-42; I thank Dr Warren for her kindness in sharing her unpublished work with me and allowing me to cite it. See also S. Sweetinburgh, 'Canterbury's Martyred Archbishop: the 'cult' of Simon Sudbury and the relations between city and cathedral' in Michael Penman ed., *Monuments and monumentality across medieval and early modern Europe*, Donington, 2013, pp. 199-211 at p. 210.

⁴⁶ For Goldstone's career, see *BRUO sub nomine*.

⁴⁷ R. A. E. Garrett, 'Canterbury Cathedral's Choir Tapestry: patronage, production, history and display' (unpublished PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 2016), p. 195; I thank Dr Garrett for her kindness in sharing her thesis with me. The gate as it now stands also includes an inscription providing the

however, in as much that there is a written record of the building work. In the case of Canterbury, it is in the form of an obituary rather than a dialogue, but it is similarly expressed with some debt to humanist styles of expression. This was not entirely new at the priory where Goldstone's predecessor had been William Sellyng, himself (as we shall see) a translator in the humanist vein, from Greek into Latin: Sellyng's own obituary had also drawn attention to his building works in humanist-inflected language.⁴⁸ For Goldstone, however, this was amplified and was also joined with a presentation of the text in a thick *littera antiqua* which had become a Canterbury idiom.⁴⁹ It is worth giving a taste of the prose by quoting part of the relevant passage:

...Nouum quoque edificium vulgariter vocatum newlodgyng iuxta antiquam priorum mansionem vocatum le gloriet satis pulchrum atque formosum cum cameris cenaculis solarijs ac ceteris appendicijs idem edificium concernentibus cum portico decenti versus curiam ac cum omni apparatu ad ornatum dicte mansionis pertinente magnifice ac laudabiliter consummauit. ... Ac denique portam ecclesie exteriorem versus ciuitatem opera decenti ac pulcherissime insculptam a fundamentis erexit sed necdum ad consummacionem eiusdem deo disponente attingere ualens impensas tamen ad consummacionem eiusdem sufficientes eius successori prudenter ac satis prouide reliquit...⁵⁰

The description combines praise of the buildings themselves for their beauty (*pulcher atque formosus*; *pulcherissima*) and their appropriateness (*decens*), with praise of Goldstone himself, for his prudence and foresight (*prudenter ac satis provide*) and for acting with magnificence (*magnifice*). The physical (as for Chaundler earlier and for Brunni before him) could reveal inner goodness: what is set in stone can speak of what beats in the heart. Of the virtues attributed to Goldstone, one — magnificence — was considered by Brunni, following Aristotle, to be a public or civic expression of liberality.⁵¹ Here it is attributed to Goldstone's project of the New Lodging which was situated within the precincts beyond the Great Cloister; the public to whom it was most readily visible were the monks of the convent. The civic is being placed within the priory's curtilage.

We might contrast that phrasing with the obituary's description of the new gate being placed *versus civitatem* — towards, or against, the city. Its façade, with its classicising detail blended into a more traditional design, looked out upon the bustling shopping streets and could act as a visual pleasure for the merchants and their customers, rather than for the inmates of the priory; at the same time, its presence emphasised that the cathedral stood guarded against outsiders, with whatever hostility they might have in their breasts. The gate announced that the priory was within the city but not of the city yet, as we have seen, the paradox goes

date of construction presented in humanist capitals, but this appears to be an addition in the restoration work of the 1930s: see M. Sparks, *Canterbury Cathedral Precincts*, Canterbury, 2007, p. 83.

⁴⁸ London: British Library [hereafter BL], MS. Arundel 68, fol. 4. For discussion, see D. Wakelin, 'England' in D. Rundle ed., *Humanism in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, Oxford, 2012, pp. 265-306 at p. 303. On Sellyng, see p. ++ below.

⁴⁹ On this scribe and the Canterbury context, see Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, pp. 164-168.

⁵⁰ BL, MS. Arundel 68, fol. 65^v-66.

⁵¹ Brunni discusses the virtue in his *Isagogicon*: see Brunni, *Opere*, p. 222. The best introduction to the concept of magnificence in the Renaissance is now Rupert Shepherd's entry in M. Sgarbi, *Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*, Cham, 2014; see also P. Howard, *Creating Magnificence in Renaissance Florence*, Toronto, 2012. For a discussion of magnificence as it relates to late medieval English prelates, see M. Heale, *The abbots and priors of late medieval and Reformation England*, Oxford, 2014, pp. 139-86.

deeper: the ecclesiastical community is beyond the city but in some deep sense is more truly a city where civic virtues can thrive.

Most of the elements we have discussed were individually unoriginal. In architectural terms, these building works of the later fifteenth century did not stand at the start of a tradition. It has been said that the heyday of the English gatehouse was the fourteenth century.⁵² Nor was it unprecedented for fortified structures like these to be built in the wake of social unrest: at Bury St Edmunds, the abbey's Great Gate was erected after a riot of 1327; at Colchester, St John's Abbey commissioned its elegant entrance in the aftermath of the Peasants' Revolt, and in the same period, south of Canterbury's city walls, at St Augustine's Abbey, Fyndon's Gate was rebuilt and Cemetery Gate added. There were certainly also precedents for seeing clerical investment in the built fabric of religious houses as worthy of praise — we might think back to the mention of the waterworks at Christ Church Canterbury in the obituary written for Prior Wibert (d. 1167).⁵³ What sets apart the examples we have been discussing is the manner in which the availability of knowledge of humanist habits could act as a catalyst for reflection, enhancing the self-identity of clerics as the citizens of the true city, one which was virtuous but which also had its foes. The final section of this article will consider this perception further by keeping us within the ambit of Thomas Goldstone but moving us towards other textual performances.

IV. The Agonistic City

A principle has underpinned the discussion of the texts in the previous sections: when a manuscript produced in Quattrocento or early Cinquecento England deploys *littera antiqua*, it is making a conscious choice. An association is being announced with those archaising practices we would primarily associate with Renaissance Italy but with which these English adopters sense an affinity. Our shorthand for those practices is the term 'humanism' but our definition of that phenomenon's identity is different from any perceived by the scribes, commissioners and readers who were its contemporaries. What specific force each of them wished to convey — and it shifted in nuance from case to case — is difficult to divine, but, whatever it might be, we with our arrogance of hindsight might assume that it involved a misunderstanding. My fundamental claim is that they, like us, looked to a cluster of activities and manoeuvres and perceived that they shared a character; I am suggesting, moreover, that our challenge is to attempt to view humanism through their eyes. I have already delineated how the English clerics we are discussing recognised that *littera antiqua* was a visual expression of an eloquence that they could put to God's use. They also were conscious of the focus upon the city in some of the texts available to them, and were able to see the relevance of that to their lives, both in the city's ability to be the locus of virtue and in its being a community under attack. The last example we shall discuss enriches the insights further, and suggests a changed perception of who posed a threat to the *ecclesia*.

⁵² J. Luxford, 'Architecture and Environment: St Benet's Holm and the Fashioning of the English Monastic Gatehouse', *Architectural History*, lvii, 2014, pp. 31-72 at p. 39; cf. more generally J. Goodall, 'The English Gatehouse', *Architectural History*, lv, 2012, pp. 1-23.

⁵³ London: British Library, MS. Cotton Claudius C.vi, fol. 171^{vb}.

There are two closely related codices, both connected to Prior Goldstone. One was made entirely at Christ Church priory, in a single script which I have characterised as a ‘gothic bookhand with some humanist influence’.⁵⁴ It therefore stands as a witness to a particularly Canterbury engagement with *littera antiqua*, alongside the script later used in the obituary for Goldstone himself.⁵⁵ This manuscript was created for presentation to William Warham, whose coat-of-arms as archbishop of Canterbury open the book; as we are about to see, the volume was probably made close to his enthronement in 1504.⁵⁶ It presents three texts, the first of which celebrates the recent humanist tradition at the priory: it is a translation of *Homiliae* by St John Chrysostom, turned into Latin by Goldstone’s predecessor, William Sellyng.⁵⁷ The second work is older in date but also claims a local connexion: it is the *Speculum regis Edwardi tertii*, attributed here to Simon Islip, archbishop from 1349 until his death in 1366.⁵⁸ The final work returns us to the later fifteenth century but takes us to Italy, as it is an oration, addressed to the senate of Venice, discouraging (through ample classical references) heavy taxation of the clergy; it is by a canon regular of the Lateran congregation, Celso Maffei (d. 1508), entitled *Dissuasoria* and composed probably in 1471.

These three texts may seem curious bed-fellows but how the combination came about is partially explained by the other manuscript.⁵⁹ It has the same three works, and also shares, for the first two texts, the same scribe. The Maffei, however, is in another script, a thin *littera antiqua*, by a scribe who signs himself here as ‘P.M.’ and is identifiable as the Dutch long-term resident in England, Pieter Meghen.⁶⁰ One of Meghen’s first patrons, at the turn of the century, was Christopher Urswick, dean of Windsor, and in this manuscript, Maffei’s *Dissuasoria* is followed by a letter (in Meghen’s hand) addressed by Urswick to Prior Goldstone.⁶¹ Maffei’s work was already known to Urswick, as he had arranged for Meghen to

⁵⁴ Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, p. 151. With its thickness, angularity and rounded feet, it has the aspect of a *textualis rotunda*, but it incorporates some humanist features: both its preference for straight ascenders and some specific letterforms, including a sharp-necked **g** and the ampersand. This scribe goes by the designation of Ps-Meghen as some of his work has been misattributed to the better-known Pieter Meghen: see further Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, pp. 142, 154, 286

⁵⁵ See above, p. ++, and for the association of an earlier humanist scribe, Theoderic Werken, with Christ Church, see Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, pp. 136-141.

⁵⁶ BL, MS. Add. 47675 (olim Holkham 70). The dating can be inferred from both the illumination and its relationship with BL, MS. Add. 15673, on which see n. ++ below. On Warham, see now P. Marshall, ‘Thomas Becket, William Warham and the Crisis of the early Tudor Church’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, lxxi (2020), pp. 293-315; Prof. Marshall’s article appeared after I had completed writing this one but it will be clear that there are some congruences of interpretation.

⁵⁷ For Sellyng’s career, see *BRUO sub nomine*.

⁵⁸ The work is edited by J. Moisant, *De speculo regis Edwardi III*, Paris, 1891, as ‘recensio B’ with a closely related, earlier text as ‘recensio A’. The earlier text is now known as the *Epistola ad regem Edwardum III* and its author has been identified as the canonist and pastoral writer, William de Pagula: see L. E. Boyle, ‘The *Oculus sacerdotis* and some other works of William of Pagula’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., v, 1955, pp. 81-110. The attribution of the *Speculum* to Islip has long been rejected, with the present consensus being that it was also by Pagula: L. E. Boyle, ‘William of Pagula and the *Speculum Regis Edwardi III*’, *Mediaeval Studies*, xxxii, 1970, pp. 329-336.

⁵⁹ BL, MS. Add. 15673.

⁶⁰ On Meghen, the fundamental studies remain J. B. Trapp, ‘Notes on Manuscripts Written by Pieter Meghen’, *The Book Collector*, xxiv, 1975, pp. 80-96 and id., ‘Pieter Meghen, Yet Again’ in id. ed., *Manuscripts in the Fifty Years after the Invention of Printing*, London, 1983, pp. 23-28; see also Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, pp. 142-164.

⁶¹ The second fascicule is BL, MS. Add. 15673, fol. 77-115^v. On Urswick, see J.B. Trapp, ‘Christopher Urswick’s Books: the reading of Henry VII’s almoner’, *Renaissance Studies*, i, 1987, pp. 48-70, and P. I.

make at least two copies of it, from the 1494 printed edition; neither is dated but the palaeography narrows down the time of their production to the end of the 1490s in the first couple of years of the following decade.⁶² It is clear that Urswick was sent by Goldstone the copy of Sellyng and the *Speculum*. He harboured no expectation of keeping hold of the manuscript, so had the *Speculum* transcribed by Meghen, who dates it to 1502.⁶³ Urswick then returned the manuscript to Canterbury with the addition of the Maffei, supplemented by his own letter. Subsequently, Goldstone had the whole (excepting Urswick's epistle) transcribed by his scribe for donation to the new archbishop. It is Urswick's letter to the prior that suggests how the Maffei was expected to be read.⁶⁴

Urswick opens his epistle by suggesting how appropriate reading matter Maffei is for the prior of the place where his namesake Thomas 'vitam profundere maluit quam ecclesiasticae libertati superstes esse'. This creates a telling implicit parallel between Becket and Cato the Younger, who preferred death to the prospect of Julius Caesar bringing an end to the Roman Republic.⁶⁵ There was precedent for the association between saint and senator: the very first miracle recorded by William of Canterbury in the early 1170s involved the reading of a passage on Lucan describing Cato, from which the hagiographer drew the lesson that both he and the late archbishop were defenders of liberty.⁶⁶ Refracted through the ecclesiastical lens, the pagan nobility of suicide can be transformed into veneration of martyrdom in the name of ecclesiastical freedom. Notably, however, that parallel had not often been repeated in descriptions of Becket. By the time Urswick wrote, there was another context of praise for Cato, provided by some humanists of the early Quattrocento, who celebrated his steadfast stance against monarchy.⁶⁷ Urswick's choice of script as much as of words suggests he was invoking Cato's ghost conscious of this recent development.

Kaufman, 'Polydore Vergil and the Strange Disappearance of Christopher Urswick', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, xvii, 1986, pp. 69-85. Urswick annotates MS. Add. 15673 at fol. 31

⁶² Until recently only one has been known; it is Oxford: Bodleian Library, MS. Barlow 14, transcribed from the printed edition, ISTC im00015000 (Bologna: Franciscus de Benedictis, 27 June 1494). For its dating, see Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, p. 149. However, in April 2021, Peter Kidd brought to my attention a manuscript sold by Olschki of Florence in the mid-1950s and now in private hands: it includes a copy of this text, and it has not been previously noticed that it was made for Urswick and is written by Pieter Meghen in what I have described as his 'Ur-style' (Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, p. 150).

⁶³ Urswick's copy is now New Haven: Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS. Osborn a.50, fol. 87-147v; Meghen's colophon is, in fact, confused: it gives the year as 1502 but also as 19 Henry VII, i.e. 22 August 1503 – 21 August 1504.

⁶⁴ A transcription and translation of the letter is given in the Appendix below. The letter is noted by Marshall, 'Becket, Warham', p. 303 (noting it is undated), building on the useful discussion by Kaufman, 'Strange Disappearance'. Kaufman, at p. 79, suggests a date for the letter of the mid-1510s, which is too late. He did so before the evidence of Yale, MS. Osborn a.50 was available; as the preceding discussion — not to mention the evidence of the script and illumination — demonstrates, the letter must have been composed a decade earlier. See further my discussion of the chronology of Pieter Meghen's manuscripts on the Wolsey Manuscripts website: <http://www.wolseymanuscripts.ac.uk/> [last accessed 1st March 2021].

⁶⁵ For classical expressions of Cato not wanting to outlive the liberty of his *patria*, see Cicero, *De officiis*, I.xxxi.112; Valerius Maximus, VI.ii.5; Seneca the Younger, *Epistolae Morales*, xxiv.7 and id., *De constantia*, ii.2, and also next footnote.

⁶⁶ *Materials for the history of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. J. C. Robertson, 7 vols, London, 1875-85, i (1875), pp. 139-41, with the passage mentioned being Lucan, *De bello civili*, IX.566-567.

⁶⁷ For the humanist reputation of Cato the Younger, see M. Pade, *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, 2 vols, Copenhagen, 2007, pp. 133-41, and the texts of the Scipio / Caesar controversy gathered in Poggio Bracciolini et al., *On princes and tyrants*, trans. H. Schadee, K. Sidwell and D. Rundle, Cambridge MA, forthcoming.

Urswick goes on to lament that the present age is so inauspicious for the church: the name of Christianity had once spread across the world but it is now confined to a corner (an allusion, presumably, to the success of the Ottomans). Times had been when the laity had given freely to the church but now they prefer to snatch away what they can — liberality has given way to rapacity. They justify their actions by saying there are corrupt clergymen but I ask you (Urswick says):

si quis ob vnus aut alterius ciuis flagitia totam ciuitatem rectis alioquin institutis gubernatam infamem iudicauerit: equusne is arbiter existimari poterit?

He does not invoke the concept of church-as-city but instead takes the *civitas* as a comparison for the *ecclesia*. He then proceeds to ask a most striking question: were the clergy of old any purer than they are now? His defence is that any community, in the past as in the present, includes some who are less than virtuous, but we should not traduce the whole by smearing it with the crimes of the few.

Urswick's epistle provides, on my submission, a reading not just of Maffei's *Dissuasoria* but more widely of the compilation of the three texts within this manuscript. At the level of immediate visual impact, his choice of an archaising presentation which responds to the style sent to him from Canterbury announces a community of spirit, sharing with Goldstone a commitment to return to earlier values: he attributes to themselves a separation from the depraved times which he is describing. Moreover, the words he composed resonate with the other works in the volume. Sellyng's Chrysostom calls upon his readers to see themselves as citizens of Nineveh, to remember their manifold sins and learn the need to repent:

Nequaquam igitur in fuga sed in mutacione morum spem nostre salutis collocemus. Irascitur tibi deus non quia in ciuitate manes sed quia peccatis tuis illum ad iracundiam prouocasti.⁶⁸

The sense of what those sins were is given sharper definition by the following work, the *Speculum regis Edward tertii*. It does not fully live up to its title of being a mirror-for-princes, because it is focussed on a single issue — financial exactions (most particularly, household purveyance) by the crown — and stresses a single warning — that attacks on the church would turn a king into a tyrant.⁶⁹ The affinity of subject-matter with Maffei's oration is manifest. It may still seem curious that a work from the second quarter of the fourteenth century should be resurrected for use in the first years of the sixteenth, but that in itself may be a reason for its inclusion: the extant copies of the *Speculum* suggest that interest in it was not sustained through the fifteenth century, and Goldstone's intention may have been to pour new life into an old work which, through its association with a former archbishop, had a local resonance.⁷⁰ In the choice of texts as in the choice of script, Goldstone was promoting a little

⁶⁸ BL, MS. Add. 15673, fol. 22v: 'therefore, we should place hope for our safety in no manner of flight whatsoever but in a change of habits. God is angry with you not because you remain in the city but because you have aroused him to rage through your sins'.

⁶⁹ For a discussion of the work, see most recently F. Lachaud, 'The Knowledge and Use of the "Teachings of Saint Louis" in Fourteenth-Century England' in R. L. J. Shaw, H. Skoda, and P. Lantschner ed., *Contact and Exchange in Later Medieval Europe: essays in honour of Malcolm Vale*, Woodbridge, 2012, pp. 189-209; for its context, see also Wendy Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England 1272-1553* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 22-24, and C. J. Nederman and C. J. Neville, 'The origins of the *Speculum regis Edwardi III* of William of Pagula', *Studi Medievali*, 3rd ser., xxxviii, 1997, pp. 317-29.

⁷⁰ Of the manuscripts of the *Speculum* earlier than those discussed here, two are from the late fourteenth century (Oxford: Bodleian, MSS. Bodl. 624 and Rawl C. 606) while another, of Welsh provenance, is from the fifteenth (Cardiff: Public Library, MS. 2.2). The closely related *Epistola* (see n. ++ above) shares a similar history: two

Renaissance in Canterbury. Its inclusion, alongside the two other works, is intended to demonstrate that at the priory over which he presided there was a tradition of learning which allowed them to appreciate the message that Urswick found in these texts: the church was under attack and needed the full force of all forms of eloquence to persuade its powerful enemies to desist. This is a key change from the mid-fifteenth century: while then the fear had been of the disaffected rebelling against authority, it was now the authorities themselves who were to be feared as the source of the attacks. The inclusion of the *Speculum* and Urswick's explicit reference to Becket imply that this was a return to a situation which was all too familiar. Former times may not have seemed to Urswick and his colleagues as degenerate as those in which they lived, but they also had their imperfections.

We might object that this Canterbury Renaissance had a very limited audience if it were confined to the two codices we have discussed. I have already hinted at how these should be placed in a longer tradition of manuscript production in that cathedral city.⁷¹ It is also the case that, for two of the works in these volumes, there is evidence of a slightly wider circulation. First, there is another copy of the opening text, Sellyng's translation of Chrysostom, made by the same Canterbury scribe; in that codex, it is coupled with Girolamo Savonarola's popular last works, his commentaries on Psalms 50 and 30.⁷² More significantly, Maffei's *Dissuasoria* was put into print in London, very soon after these manuscripts were produced, in 1505, by Richard Pynson.⁷³ There is no evidence as to who may have encouraged this venture, but subsequent events would show that Pynson was acquainted with others in the circles in which Goldstone and Urswick moved.

In type, Maffei's text lost its humanist appearance — no Roman fount was available for use in England until Pynson imported a set four years later.⁷⁴ Soon after that, another work relevant to us was given humanist treatment by the same printer: John Colet's Convocation Sermon of 1512, published later that year.⁷⁵ Colet, dean of St Paul's, was friends with Urswick (now the former dean of Windsor), and shared with him a fervently expressed fear that the church was under attack, but he diagnosed its cause quite differently; rather than deprecating corruption among the clergy, Colet opened his sermon by quoting Isaiah: 'civitas

fourteenth century copies (Oxford: Bodleian, MS. Digby 172 and BL, MS. Cotton Faustina B.i), one of the early fifteenth (Cambridge: University Library, MS. Kk.iv.4, work attributed to Islip) and then renewed interest in the sixteenth, with two copies (BL, MSS Royal 10.B.xi and Cotton Cleo. D.ix). In addition, it was known at Christ Church priory in the mid-fifteenth century, as extracts from it were made by the monk, Henry Cranebroke, in 1459: BL, MS. Royal 10.B.ix, fol. 67^v.

⁷¹ See note 55 above.

⁷² The manuscript is in private hands and unavailable for consultation; it was last seen in public when it was sold at Sotheby's London house as lot no. 91 in the sale of 8th December 1981. Several other manuscripts of Savonarola's commentaries were made in England. They include Cambridge: Corpus Christi College, MS. 237 and two codices in the hand of Pieter Meghen, Oxford: Corpus Christi College, MS. 547 (Psalm 50 only, c. 1500 × c. 1505) and Oxford: University College MS. 40 (datable: 1518 × 1521). In addition, there is Wynkyn de Worde's 1500 printing of the Psalm 50 commentary (STC 21798).

⁷³ STC 17181.5; only one copy of this printing is known to survive, at Christ Church, Oxford.

⁷⁴ A. F. Johnson, 'Sources of Roman and Italic Types Used by English Printers in the Sixteenth Century', *The Library*, 4th ser., xvii, 1936, pp. 70–82 at p. 72.

⁷⁵ STC 5545. The classic discussion of this text is Christopher Harper-Bill, 'Dean Colet's Convocation Sermon and the Pre-Reformation Church in England', *History*, lxxiii, 1988, pp. 191–210.

fidelis facta est meretrix'.⁷⁶ The city, which is the church, has become a well of vice. For Colet, the concept of the city had personal resonance, as he identified himself as Londoner. Eloquent expression of this is provided in a colophon of one of the many manuscripts made for him by the scribe who had passed from Urswick's service to his, Pieter Meghen. It is an imposing copy of the first two Gospels, completed in 1509, in honour (Meghen writes) of God and the Virgin, at the expense of John Colet, who is described as the son 'egregii viri Henrici Colett Militis opulentissime ciuitatis Londini quondam Senatoris & eiusdem bis Consulis'.⁷⁷ Sir Henry Colet's role in civic government — he was frequently an alderman and Mayor of London twice, in 1486-87 and 1495-96 — is expressed in terms suited to the Roman Republic, a formulation which would meet humanist approval.⁷⁸ In the same colophon, Meghen goes on to record the precise day of his completing the work, 18th May 1509, and then to note recent events:

... Eodem anno mensis Aprilis [space left blank] die Illustrissimus Rex Anglie (pie memorie) Henricus VII (Qui vt alter Salomon sapiens, diues, pacificus) diem clausit extremum: heredem regni relinquens non vt Salomon Roboam filium stolidum: sed Nobilissimum Henricum VIII, filium patre sapienterem, cuius bona incia omnipotens deus sua ineffabili pietate ad optima dignetur producere extrema. AMEN⁷⁹

Perhaps this tries too hard to ensure its praise of the late king does not besmirch the incoming one; the assertion that 'the son is wiser than the father' cannot blot out the earlier reference to the deceased as Solomon, an analogy bound to raise concerns that the successor will, indeed, prove a new Rehoboam. The kings of the Old Testament offer more plentiful examples of failings than of virtue.

Another Londoner and another friend of Colet's, Thomas More, was not so positive in 1509 about the dead king. While he did not foresee that Henry VIII could be a Rehoboam, his celebration of the new dawn (as I have argued elsewhere) is not as rose-tinted as an unsuspecting reading would suggest.⁸⁰ Some of More's writings from the following decade went further, and have him present himself as unenamoured with the practice of monarchy. One of his epigrams, printed in 1516, debates 'quis optimus reipublicae status', preferring the idea of being ruled by *senatus* rather than *rex* — but stops himself and asks whether he is in any position to decide who should rule.⁸¹ This outlook is akin to the 'golden sentence'

⁷⁶ Isaiah 1.21, paraphrased. For Colet's friendship with Urswick, see Wallace K. Ferguson, 'An Unpublished Letter of John Colet, Dean of St Paul's', *American Historical Review*, xxxix, 1934, pp. 696-99, and Trapp, 'Urswick and his books', pp. 53-54 and 57.

⁷⁷ Cambridge: University Library, MS. Dd.vii.3, fol. 295^v.

⁷⁸ The record of Henry Colet's service (including his time as MP, a role notably unmentioned in this colophon) is summarised by Jonathan Arnold, *Dean John Colet of St Paul's: Humanism and Reform in Early Tudor England*, London, 2007, pp. 17-18.

⁷⁹ Cambridge: University Library, MS. Dd.vii.3, fol. 295^v: '...In the same year on the [blank] day of April, the most illustrious King of England (of blessed memory) Henry VII (who was as another Solomon, wise, rich, peaceful) closed his last day, leaving as heir to the kingdom not, as Solomon did, a stupid son Rehoboam, but the most noble Henry VIII, a son wiser than the father, whose good beginnings may the all-mighty Lord in his ineffable kindness see fit to lead to the best ends. Amen'.

⁸⁰ D. Rundle, 'A New Golden Age? More, Skelton and the accession verses of 1509', *Renaissance Studies*, ix, 1995, pp. 58-76.

⁸¹ Thomas More, *Latin Poems*, ed. C. H. Miller et al. [The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of ... Thomas More, iii/2], New Haven CT, 1984, epigram 198. See also G. B. Wegemer, *Young Thomas More and the Arts of Liberty*, Cambridge, 2011.

Machiavelli attributed to Tacitus, by which men should desire good princes and tolerate the ones they have; here the implication is that they may desire no princes at all, but still should tolerate those who rule over them.⁸² If such an attitude can be graced with the name republican, it is in a romantic or a wistful mode. In forming More's vision, there were many influences, with one of them being his own urban identity. His debt, however, was not solely to the *civitas* of his birth but also to that other city which we have been discussing. His learned circle of friends sat within a wider network which, through one filiation, takes us back to Canterbury, c. 1500, where an existing tradition of humanist reading gains a new inflection: the godly city is under attack again, but this time not by a rabble; this time it is by the seat of secular authority. It is a critique that means the city could turn radical.

V. Towards a Conclusion — and Beyond

We began this article with an epistle from the priory of Christ Church, Canterbury to someone they considered a friend of theirs, John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester. Whatever identity they projected onto him, he presented himself as someone whose humanist education heightened his consciousness of the duties his position in the nobility placed upon him. As I have argued elsewhere, he had a vision of reform of what he called in Latin the *res publica* and in English 'the estate publique', at a time when others were developing the term 'common weal'.⁸³ Pitted against this, what I have described as the ecclesiastical ability to transubstantiate the secular into the holy might be considered a heresy. While the language of the 'common weal' configured the English polity as a civic entity, the authors we have been discussing wished, as it were, to cloister the terminology, appropriating it for the exclusive use of their own clerical community. In truth, both processes involve a creative re-application (some might say that is a euphemism for misapplication) of the humanists' urban-centred vision, relocating it at another level. Recent scholarship has paid some attention to the application of humanist-informed eloquence to English secular politics but, arguably, in the period we are discussing, the ecclesiastical practice we have delineated was at least as prevalent.⁸⁴

This is not to suggest there was a single tradition that connected the generations of clerics we have discussed. It is certainly highly plausible that, even if Goldstone had no direct knowledge of Thomas Chaundler, he would have heard of him from his predecessor as prior, William Sellyng, since the two had been contemporaries at Oxford. It is, however, unlikely that Chaundler's works were available for the monks of Canterbury to peruse, as the only known copies of them were stored at Wells. The similarities in their activities had, instead, two sources. One was the ubiquity of the ecclesiastical lens which was no new-found thing in the fifteenth century. What, in contrast, was novel was the availability of humanist texts from which they could draw particular inspiration. What they learnt from those works was that both archaising writing and modern architecture could act as bulwarks, defending their *civitas* by expressing its virtue. The positive qualities of writing were dual, subsisting likewise in a

⁸² Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, III.6.

⁸³ Rundle, *Renaissance Reform*, esp. pp. 218-219. For the wider context, see J. Watts, "'Common weal' and 'commonwealth': England's Monarchical Republic in the Making, c. 1450-c. 1530' in A. Gamberini et al. ed., *The Languages of Political Society. Western Europe, 14th-17th Centuries*, Rome, 2011, pp. 147-63

⁸⁴ See the article by John Watts cited in the preceding footnote; we look forward to his discussion in his volume in the Oxford History of England series.

well-turned phrase and in the physical form of words elegantly marked out upon the page. As we have seen, those two elements of a written text could be separated: a text like the *Speculum regis* attributed to Archbishop Islip may not have been composed to later standards of rhetoric but it could still be considered worthy of being presented as true to this agenda.

So, among the clerical circles we have discussed, there was a promotion of appropriate elegance as a material witness to inner virtue. The expression of that on the page had a particular value, as its archaising demonstrated not only their respect for pristine dignity but also their determination to revive old values. This was an intention which united Chaundler, Goldstone and Urswick, even in the face of those who treated their church — their city — viciously. What separated the generations was the identification of those who unjustly attacked them. When Chaundler was writing, social unrest was a present peril, and Lollard sedition a recent memory. In the same years, news of the fall of Constantinople suggested that the whole of Christendom was at risk. The Ottoman threat remained at the turn of the century and, as we have seen, Urswick alludes to it, but it could not have felt as imminent as it had fifty years earlier.⁸⁵ Urswick's main concern, instead, was emerging royal policy. He presumably had in mind initiatives undertaken in the name of Henry VII, to whom Urswick had been a loyal supporter from his days in exile: the threats to sanctuary early in the reign, for instance, or the debate over clerical taxation during the Parliament of 1489.⁸⁶ Yet, these were not as life-threatening as the menaces of 1450; there was, after all, no murder of a bishop to compare with the mid-century. If, then, Goldstone and Urswick felt themselves to be as persecuted as their recent predecessors, they may have misjudged. Or perhaps they were not insensible to the differences. Perhaps the claims that they had never had it so bad were shrill not because the threats were existential but because these churchmen had come to realise that feeling one's city was under attack was not enervating but energising.

They may not have needed the rhetoric of Italian humanists to teach them this insight but, as we have seen, they chose to turn to that idiom and redirected it to their own archaising agenda. Brunni had demonstrated that self-confidence could be born of being challenged and being determined to tackle those challenges; this was remoulded by these Englishmen for the higher purposes of God's city. In doing this, the logic of their rhetoric required a fearsome enemy. Their choice entailed that they should provide eloquent criticism of those holding secular power, yet that could become a critique not of the holders of authority but of the structures that raised them to that position. Their humanism, that is to say, was both civic and *in potentia* anti-monarchical. We in the twenty-first century are conscious of the limitations of the perspective first enunciated by Hans Baron and given richer expression by scholars like Quentin Skinner. We have learnt that, in Renaissance Italy, 'civic humanism' was not allied with any particular constitution but we also find, at the other end of Europe, the possibility of its teachings being deployed to question — albeit tentatively and ambiguously — the existing

⁸⁵ Notably, Pius II's calls for a crusade against the Turks, along with the pope's letter on the subject to Thomas Bekynton, were copied into one of Chaundler's manuscripts: Oxford: New College, MS. 288, fol. 55-73^v, on which see Rundle, 'Of Republics and Tyrants', pp. 452-457.

⁸⁶ P. R. Cavill, *The English Parliaments of Henry VII*, Oxford, 2009, pp. 62-63; Marshall, 'Becket, Warham'; D. Rundle, 'Was there a Renaissance style of politics in late medieval England?' in S. Gunn & G. Bernard ed., *Authority and Consent in Tudor England*, Aldershot, 2002, pp. 15-32 at p. 26; cf. Kaufmann, 'Strange Disappearance', esp. pp. 75-78. Though it concentrates on a slightly later period, see also P. R. Cavill, 'Anticlericalism and the Early Tudor Parliament', *Parliamentary History*, xxxiv, 2015, pp. 14-29.

royal constitution. Perhaps, in this instance, the English did misunderstand, but, if so, they have proven to be in good company.

Appendix

Urswick's letter to Thomas Goldstone at BL, MS. Add. 15673, fol. 113-115^v

Christophorus Vrswyke Reverendo in Christo patri domino Thome Goldstone Priori ecclesie Christi Cantuarie: Salutem P.D.

En tibi (vir religiosissime) Celsi Veronensis ad Venetos epistolam qua ne ecclesiasticos vsuperent census plurimis & rationibus dehortatur & exemplis. Quae si a te vehementer est desiderata: sane non miror. Quippe quum & ea quicquid in eiusmodi re aut a disertissimis viris dici aut excogitari ab acutissimis possit luculentissime copiosissimeque contineat: & tu in ea aede secundum locum teneas: cuius aliquando pontifex diuus Thomas vitam profundere maluit quam ecclesiasticae libertati superstes esse. Ex hac itaque epistola velut ex fonte quodam plurimam disserendi materiam haurire tibi licebit: quotiens erit tibi cum eccle[fol. 113^v]siasticae libertatis obtrectatoribus congregandum qui sane (quod dolendum est) ubique sunt plurimi. Porro temporum quadam (vt arbitror) vicissitudine est effectum: vt sicut christianum nomen quondam per totum terrarum orbem longe lateque diffusum nunc in angustum cogit: ac nisi minimam orbis particulam occupat: ita quoque in his ipsis prouintiis quae christianam adhuc religionem retinent: in peius omnia vergant ac longe minor sacerdotalis dignitatis sit reuerentia quam apud maiores nostros fuerit: id quod facile deprehendas si nostrae aetatis homines cum priscis illis conferas. Nempe illi adeo sunt sacerdotes venerati: vt & viuentes plurimi magnam patrimonii partem sacerdotis dicarent: & morientes non alios heredes relinquere quam ecclesias [fol. 114] vellent. Quot templa vbique terrarum in dei honorem a priscis illis structa: quot sacras in vnaquaque prouintia aedes licet cernere amplissimis possessionibus ab his donatas? certissima profecto priscae religionis indicia. At nostra aetate eo deuentum est: vt non modo nihil sibi donari sperent ecclesiae: sed preclare secum actum putent si nihil illis eripitur. adeo in priscae liberalitatis locum detestanda plurimorum rapacitas: immo verius sacrilegium successit. Hi tamen qui talia audent recte se agere contendunt & statim corruptos clericorum mores & vicia palam nota in ore habent: velut ad eos talium cohertio pertineat. Ita illi in nobis priscam illam vite integritatem & morum sanctitatem requirunt. Sed vide ne iustius multo [fol. 114^v] nos in illis aequum de nobis desyderemus iudicium. Age quaeso si quis ob vnus aut alterius cuius flagitia totam ciuitatem rectis alioquin institutis gubernatam infamem iudicauerit: equus ne is arbiter existimari poterit? id ipsum quod isti iam nunc faciunt. nam quum nonnullorum facinora deprehenderint: continuo discurrunt: ac vniuersum clericorum gregem flagitiosum esse predicant, ignari profecto vitae humanae in qua nulla multitudo sine sceleratis esse potest. Quanto aequiores prisci illi fuerunt? Nam si quis illa secula viciosos clericos non tulisse contendat: facile sanctorum patrum decretis seuerissime clericorum vicia cohercentibus conuincitur: Illi tamen ob hoc non vniuersum clerum odio habendum nec [fol. 115] ceteros bonos reuerentia minori colendos, aut liberalitate non prosequendos esse putauerunt. Nunc vero si hominum vicia vehementius insectere: vna omnium vox vnusque sermo, talia etiam clericos audere. Hoc veluti propugnaculo se tutos esse putant: quasi non pessima quaeque contemnenda sint: sed potius imitanda. Ita relatione criminum contenti nec sese emendant: nec de vniuersis clericis ob quorundam peccata male dicere maleque sentire desistunt. Sed id aequo feramus animo modo nihil sceleratius audeant. Quid quae deo dicata pro prophanis habent: atque ea velut ab hostibus iusto bello capta occupare ac retinere

student? Eiusmodi homines quaeso num sacrilegii crimen effugiunt? Habes igitur aduersus eos mi Thoma [fol. 115^v] velut clipeum hanc Celsi viri religiosissimi quam diu a me efflagitasti epistolam, iam tandem descriptam: in qua profecto dubium an orationis ornatus materiam: an materia ornatum superauerit. Et quia duobus viris aetatis nostrae doctissimis Hermolao Barbaro ac Domitio Veronensi vehementer ea placuit. eorum epistolas quibus miris eam laudibus efferunt annectendas esse putavi vt & magis tuum iudicium probes & ad eius lectionem acrius excitens. Vale.

Translation

Christopher Urswick to the reverend father in Christ Thomas Goldstone, prior of Christ Church Canterbury, greetings.

Behold, here for you (most holy sir) is the letter of Celso of Verona to the Venetians in which he discourages them with very many reasons and examples from taking for themselves ecclesiastical possessions. If you have keenly wished to have this from me, I am not at all surprised, both since it contains most splendidly and richly something on the sort of matter which can be discussed by the most learned men and considered by the most sagacious of them, and because you hold the second place in that church where once the holy bishop Thomas preferred to lose his life than outlive ecclesiastical liberty. So, from this letter as from some well you will be able to draw out a very large supply of arguments, as often as you encounter disparagers of ecclesiastical liberty who truly (and this is to be deplored) are very many. I judge this, moreover, to be the result of a certain reversal in the times: just as the Christian name, which was once spread far and wide across the whole world, is now forced into a narrow space and possesses nothing but the tiniest part of the globe, so also in those very provinces which still retain the Christian religion everything is turned to the worse and the reverence for priestly dignity is much less than it was among our ancestors. You can easily discern this if you compare the men of our age with those of former times. Clearly, they respected priests so much that many of them, even when they were living, would dedicate a large part of their estate to priests and when they were dying wanted to bequeath to no other heirs than to churches. How many temples, everywhere across the earth, were built to God's honour by those ancient people? How many holy houses in every part of the world is it possible to identify that were given the most abundant holdings by these people? These are, indeed, the most definite signs of the religion of old. But in our age it has come to such a situation that not only do they hope to have nothing of their own donated to the church but think that they have acted outstandingly well if they snatch nothing away from them. To this extent has the reprehensible rapacity of many — or, let us be honest, sacrilege — taken over the place of ancient generosity. Indeed, those who dare to do such things claim that they are acting rightly and straightaway make talk of the corrupt morals of clerics and their widely known vices, as if the crowding together of such things were relevant to them. Thus they demand of us that ancient wholesomeness of living and holiness of morals. But, look whether it would not be much more just for us to seek a reasonable judgement of them. Consider, I ask, if someone were to judge that because of the shameful acts of one or other citizen a whole city, otherwise rightly constituted, was notoriously governed, could that adjudicator be thought to be reasonable? That is the same thing as what they are doing right now. For when they detect the crimes of some, they harp on about them continually and preach that the whole crowd of clerics is shameful. They are entirely ignorant of human life in which there

can be no large group which is without evil-doers. By how much were the ancients more just? For if there is any who claims that those ages did not have clerics with vices, that person could easily be persuaded by the holy fathers' decrees which curbed clerics' vices with the utmost severity. They, though, did not think that, because of this, that all the clergy should be held in hatred or that the rest of the good ones should be regarded with less reverence or that they should not be honoured with generosity. Now truly if one inveighs with any force against men's vices, all say with one voice and one expression: even clerics dare to do such things. They think to keep themselves safe by saying this, as if it were their bulwark, as if whatever is worst should not be condemned but rather imitated. They are so satisfied with the telling of crimes that they neither reform themselves nor refrain from talking and thinking badly about all the clergy on the basis of the sins of some. But we could bear that with equanimity if only they did not dare to do anything more wicked. Why do they consider anything dedicated to God as unholy, and strive to take them and hold them as if they were things captured by the enemy in a just war? Will men of this stripe, I ask you, not flee from any crime of sacrilege? You have, therefore, against those people, my Thomas, as a shield, this letter of the most religious man Celso, for which you have importuned me for so long and which now at last is transcribed. In this, indeed, it is an open question whether the ornament of the oration is greater than the matter or the matter than the ornament. Because it pleased so forcefully two of the most learned men of our age, Ermolao Barbaro and Domizio [Calderini] of Verona, I have thought to append to it their letters in which they shower the work with remarkable praise in order that you may both approve more of your own judgement and be encouraged yet more keenly to the reading of it. Farewell.

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