

# The Life of John Fisher

[by Richard Hall]

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# The Life of [John] Fisher

[by Richard Hall written *ca.* 1535–1604]

[*Harleian MS, 6382, British Museum Library*]

A Treatise containing the  
life and manner of death  
of that most holy prelate  
and constant martyr of  
Christ, John Fisher, Bishop  
of Rochester, and Cardinal  
of the holy Church of Rome<sup>1</sup>

In the year of our Redemption 1459, and in the seven and thirtieth year of the most noble and virtuous prince, King Henry the Sixth, this holy father and profound doctor<sup>2</sup> was born and christened at Beverley, in the province of York, a town distant from London northward, about eight score<sup>3</sup> miles, where sometime the blessed and glorious confessor, Saint John of Beverley, Archbishop of York, lived and preached. In his baptism he was named John, of his godfathers, which name he belied<sup>4</sup> not, as by the discourse of his most gracious life shall most clearly appear. His parents were of honest state and condition, and by trade of merchandise left behind them a competent wealth, from whose honesty he, by his singular virtue and learning, did nothing detract, but rather added much more than he could receive of<sup>5</sup> them: for virtue and learning be things so excellent of themselves that they purchase commendations, both in him in whom they are resident, and to them also of whom he shall descend—yea, more than they can give him.

Robert Fisher his father, after he had lived many years in good estimation and credit, died, leaving behind him this John Fisher of whom we now speak, and Robert, both in their tender age. Their mother Ann, in process of time, married again to one named White, by whom she bore three sons, named John, Thomas, and Richard, and one daughter called Elizabeth, which after was professed a nun in

Dartford. And yet she, like a tender mother, was not so affected<sup>6</sup> to her second husband and children that she neglected the first, but remaining very careful of their good education, caused her two sons John and Robert, begotten of her first husband, to be put to learning at the expenses of such goods as their father had left them; and to that end she committed them both to a priest of the Church of Beverley, a collegiate church of priests richly endowed of ancient time with lands and possessions, by whom they were (among other children) instructed and taught the first letters and rudiments of grammer. But this our John Fisher so far excelled the rest of his school fellows in his learning that it was evident to see, even then, whereto he tended, and what he was like<sup>7</sup> to prove unto in time to come, betokening no doubt the name of 'fisher,' descending from the father, to be in this his son John most properly verified, as in whom it pleased God to elect a fisher of men, which he after proved in very deed.

After when he came to more mature and wise years, his mother and other friends being still careful of his well doing began to consider among themselves for what trade of life he was most fit. And after they had perceived in him a great dexterity and aptness towards learning, and had further noted him to be (as he was indeed) naturally endowed with a sober and deep wit, a perfect and steadfast memory, and a will prompt and forward to learn, they thought among themselves no way so

<sup>1</sup> This modernized text is based on the edition published by the Early English Text Society, Extra Series, No. 117, edited by Humphrey Milford (Oxford University

Press, 1921 [for 1915]). Cross references to this EETS edition are given in the header of each page. <sup>2</sup> theologian <sup>3</sup> eight score: 120 <sup>4</sup> misrepresented <sup>5</sup> from

<sup>6</sup> attached, partial <sup>7</sup> likely

good as to continue him at study; and thereupon, by a general consent, he was sent to the University of Cambridge (distant from his native soil about eight days journey southward), which then flowed  
5 in learning, and was thoroughly frequented and furnished with doctors and scholars coming from all parts of England, as of ancient time had been accustomed.

This John, being now come to Cambridge, was  
10 there committed to the government of Master William Melton, a reverend priest and grave divine, then master of the college called Michael House, and Doctor of Divinity, under whom he so profited that in few years he became singularly well learned,  
15 as well in humanity as in logic, philosophy, and other sciences—not ignorant, but well acquainted with the Greek and Hebrew tongues, which were then very strangers in this land. Being thus furnished and instructed, he proceeded to the degrees of school,  
20 and commenced bachelor of arts in the year of our Lord 1488, and master of arts the third year after; and being elected fellow of that house, he was also shortly after chosen proctor of the university, in which space according to the ancient laws and  
25 statutes of his college, he received the holy orders of priesthood. After which time he fell to more profitable learning, and, leaving all his former study, betook himself to the high and heavenly philosophy, in which, according to the order of scholars, he kept  
30 his disputation with great laud and commendation, so that in short space he grew to such profoundness that he was easily accounted the flower of all the university, and at his due time proceeded to the dignity of bachelor, and after, doctor of divinity,  
35 which with no small praise he achieved in the year of Christ 1502.

While these things were thus in doing, it chanced Doctor Melton (whom we before mentioned) to be preferred to the room<sup>8</sup> of a chancellor within  
40 the Church of York; whereby the master's place of Michael House in Cambridge became void, whereunto the fellows, falling to election of a new master, thought none more fit for all causes than Doctor Fisher; and therefore, by a full agreement  
45 among them, they chose him master in the place of Doctor Melton, sometime his tutor. Then fell it out that the old proverb teacheth: *Magistratus*

*arguit virum;*<sup>9</sup> for who was more fit to rule and play the master than he that before was well and quietly  
50 ruled whilst he was a scholar, which in him was well verified, for after he had continued certain years in the government of his college, he so demeaned<sup>10</sup> himself in that office, that he became not only a mirror or patron to the rest that governed in their  
55 several houses in the university, but was also for his worthiness chosen vice-chancellor, which room he enjoyed twice together, and thereby ruled the whole university to his great commendation and praise.

At length his name grew so famous, that, passing the bounds of the university, it spread over all the realm, insomuch as the noble and virtuous Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby,<sup>11</sup> mother to the wise and sage prince King Henry the VII, hearing of his great virtue and learning, ceased  
60 not till she had procured him out of the university to her service, by means whereof he resigned the mastership of Michael House and left the university for that time. After he had a space remained with this noble lady, she perceived his virtue and good life far  
65 to exceed the fame that before she heard of him, and thereupon soon after made him her ghostly<sup>12</sup> father; wherein after he was a while established, he ordered himself so discreetly, so temperately and so wisely, that both she and all her family were governed by his high wisdom and discretion, whereby at last he  
70 became greatly revered and beloved, not only of<sup>13</sup> the virtuous lady, and all her household, but also of the King her son, with whom he was in no less estimation and credit all his life after than with his mistress, which appeared well not only in the  
75 King's lifetime, but also after his death, for he left him upon special trust for one of his executors.

Thus remaining in service with the Countess of Richmond, he thought with himself not good  
80 to spend his days in idleness, but calling to his remembrance that whosoever soweth but little shall reap but little,<sup>14</sup> gave himself wholly to practice that which he had now well learned, and so bent himself fully to proceed in works of mercy. And whereas of himself he was not able to accomplish  
90 this charitable and liberal enterprise for lack of substance<sup>15</sup> to answer the same,<sup>16</sup> he studied by all the means he could to provoke others of more ability to supply his want, among whom he forgot

8 office 9 See Erasmus, *Adages* 32: 976: "Command displays the man."

10 conducted 11 Margaret Beaufort (1443-1509) 12 spiritual 13 by

14 2 Cor 9:6

not this worthy countess his mistress, who although of herself she was very liberal and bountiful to all sorts of people, yet no doubt through his occasion<sup>17</sup> she much enlarged the same, not only in her  
 5 daily alms among such as were poor, but also in redemption of captives, reparation of bridges and highways, rewards towards poor maids' marriages, and diverse other like.<sup>18</sup> But he was not satisfied with this worldly food, for at his persuasion she erected  
 10 two notable and goodly colleges in Cambridge, out of which have sprung many notable and profound learned men to the great profit and commodity<sup>19</sup> of the whole Church of Christ, whereof the one she dedicated to Christ our Savior and called it Christ  
 15 College, largely endowing it with good lands and possessions, for maintainance of learning and science forever, and saw it perfectly in her lifetime built and finished of stone and brick as it now standeth. The other college she dedicated to Saint John the  
 20 Evangelist, and gave to the same possessions for like intent and purpose. But forasmuch as this College of Saint John was by him finished after her death upon her goods and possessions with some help of his own, more shall be declared hereafter.

25 She also upon his motion ordained a divinity lecture in Cambridge and another in Oxford, to be openly read in the schools for ease of such as should be preachers. To the intent that the dark and hard places of holy Scripture might thereby be opened  
 30 and expounded, and for continuance of them both, she gave good lands whereon the reader's stipend should be paid forever.

This good father proceeding thus in deeds of charity, partly procured by the liberality of others,  
 35 and partly by his own goods so far as his ability would permit, besides his daily preaching to the people with most careful diligence, became at last greatly loved and revered of all sorts of people, especially of the reverend and fatherly bishops then  
 40 living in England, among whom the most worthy and grave prelate, Doctor Richard Foxe, Bishop of Winchester, then in no small estimation and authority with King Henry the Seventh (of whose council he was), bore towards him a great affection  
 45 and good will, highly commending him to the King always when he saw convenient<sup>20</sup> time and place, only for the virtuous life and perfect sanctity he

perceived in him.

It happened that about the same time by the death of Master William Barnes, Bishop of London, Master Richard Fitzjames, then Bishop  
 50 of Rochester, was translated from thence to the See of London, whereby the bishopric of Rochester became void. Then the King (as he to whom the nomination of the next incumbent by custom of the  
 55 realm belongeth) began to consider with himself where a fit and worthy pastor might be found. The place was desired of many and no solicitation wanted to<sup>21</sup> the King, every man setting forward his friend as affection led him. But the King of<sup>22</sup> his  
 60 own mere<sup>23</sup> motion, inspired by the Holy Ghost, named Doctor Fisher, his mother's chaplain, to that bishopric contrary to the expectation, as well of them that wished the place as of many others, and directing his letters to the chapter of the Church,  
 65 required<sup>24</sup> them to name the nomination for their pastor; whereunto they straight away agreed most gladly, without any contradiction or negative voice of any one of them, and so offered unto  
 70 him the place soon after. But when Doctor Fisher understood what was done, he utterly refused the offer, and would in no wise<sup>25</sup> accept such a charge. Nevertheless, at last by persuasion of many of his friends that<sup>26</sup> declared unto him the great necessity  
 75 of the Church at that time—and specially of his old friend the Bishop of Winchester—he accepted the burden, much against his will, and shortly after was confirmed Bishop of Rochester from the See Apostolic by our holy father Julius the Second, in  
 80 the month of October, the year of our Redemption 1504, and of his age, anno forty-five.

Now for that<sup>27</sup> the King had thus suddenly preferred this man to the high promotion of a bishopric, being but a chaplain to the countess his mother, and never yet advanced to any other  
 85 dignity in the Church before, many thought that it was by the chief procurement of his mistress the Lady Margaret, and so diverse would say to the King; but indeed it was far otherwise, for the King, when he heard any man speak of it, would solemnly  
 90 affirm, and openly protest, that he never promoted him to it, either upon the suit of his mother or of any other person living, neither yet (as they call it) for price or prayer, but only for the pure devotion,

15 wealth; means 16 answer the same:  
 accomplish the aforesaid (enterprise)  
 17 cause 18 similar actions

19 benefit, advantage 20 appropriate,  
 proper 21 wanted to: lacked 22 out of  
 23 sole 24 asked 25 way 26 who

27 for that: because

perfect sanctity and great learning he saw in him. Of which the King's bountiful liberality, he himself maketh also some mention in the Statutes of Saint John's College in Cambridge, praising much the honor of the King, at whose hands he so frankly and freely received this donation. He maketh also rehearsal<sup>28</sup> somewhat thereof in his dedicatory epistle to Richard, Bishop of Winchester, before the book he wrote against Oecolampadius,<sup>29</sup> where he nameth the King for<sup>30</sup> his chiefest and best patron, by the words of which epistle he seemeth to conceive much joy and comfort, that it came to him in that sort.<sup>31</sup> His words be these: *Habeant alii proventus pinguiores*, etc. which may be thus Englished: "Although," saith he, "some others have greater rents<sup>32</sup> and fatter benefices than I, yet I have instead thereof less charge and cure<sup>33</sup> of souls, so that when account shall be made of both (which undoubtedly will be very shortly) I would not wish myself in better state of living the value of one hair," which words were very well confirmed by the sequel of his doing, for although he was after at one time offered the bishopric of Lincoln, and at another time the bishopric of Ely, at the hands of King Henry the VIII—any of them both being a far greater living than Rochester was—yet would he never accept such offer in that respect.

After this great and weighty preferment of a bishopric, there fell also unto him even at the same time another promotion, of neither small moment nor yet void of charge, for the University of Cambridge, considering with themselves what benefit they had received at his hands, and how much they were bound unto him for the same, and doubting lest they might seem forgetful or ungrateful of his goodness and good will towards them already showed, determined to consider him with all the honor they could, knowing themselves neither able to reward him with any riches, nor him (who looked for reward only at God's hands) desirous of worldly wealth; and therefore by a full consent they chose him their High Chancellor, which is the greatest magistrate that they can make, for among them he beareth the authority and jurisdiction of an archbishop, and is also their high judge in all temporal<sup>34</sup> causes.

My Lord of Rochester having now received this

dignity was not unmindful of that<sup>35</sup> belonged to the same, for knowing indeed what a precious thing learning is in all regiments,<sup>36</sup> and what they were over whom this his authority was to be used, he did not so much esteem the dignity which it contained as he well weighed the care thereunto annexed. But before we declare anything of his doings in the university, I think it best to return to his pastoral cure at Rochester, and open unto you somewhat of his proceeding there.

Being not ignorant of what a burdenous and terrible yoke he had taken upon him by accepting the care of a bishopric, he determined now to bestow all his wits and senses how to play the part of a true bishop. And first, because there is small hope of health in the members of that body where the head is sick, he began his visitation at his head church of Rochester, calling before him the prior and monks, exhorting them to obedience, chastity, and true observation of their monastical vows, and where any fault was tried he caused it to be amended. After that, he carefully visited the rest of the parish churches within his diocese in his own person, and sequestering<sup>37</sup> all such as he found unworthy to occupy that high function, he placed other sitters in their rooms.<sup>38</sup> And all such as were accused of any crime, he put to their purgation, not sparing the punishment of simony<sup>39</sup> and heresy, with other crimes and abuses. And by the way, he omitted neither preaching to the people, nor confirming of children, nor relieving of needy and indigent persons. So that by all means he observed a due comeliness<sup>40</sup> in the house of God, which being done, he returned him to his cathedral church; and there to recount how virtuously, to the godly example of others, he ordered his life, it should be tedious were it not that the labor in reading may easily be recompensed with the great profit which the studious of virtue may reap of so fruitful examples; for there is nothing noted in him which may not greatly serve to the instruction of the unlearned, and for godly imitation of those which otherwise be not ignorant.

It is an old saying and true: "Well hath he lived that well hath lurked."<sup>41</sup> Truly of all the bishops that we have known or heard of in our days, it may best be said that this bishop hath well lived, and well and

28 mention 29 *De Veritate Corporis et Sanguinis Christi in Eucharistia, adversus Johannem Oecolampadium* (1527) 30 as

31 manner 32 sources of income 33 oversight; care 34 civil 35 what 36 domains; seats of authority

37 removing 38 offices 39 the practice of buying or selling ecclesiastical preferments or benefices 40 propriety

secretly lurked: for who hath at any time seen him  
 idle walk or wander abroad? When did he frequent  
 the courts and houses of princes and noblemen to  
 the intent (as the old proverb saith) to see and be  
 5 seen?<sup>42</sup> Where did he use to<sup>43</sup> banquet and feast?  
 What noblemen or others hath he for pleasure  
 invited? What company hath used to resort unto  
 him for idle talk or driving away of time? Whom  
 hath he excluded from him that<sup>44</sup> in any wise<sup>45</sup> he  
 10 might profit? If ye will call that man occupied that  
 is still occupied in worldly business, then cannot  
 that be verified in him, for he lived most commonly  
 alone, calling himself to a daily account of his life,  
 using the church as a cloister, and his study as a  
 15 cell. As long as he was in contemplation, he kept  
 alone, but when action should be used, his divine  
 words sounded full loud in all mens' ears. What<sup>46</sup>  
 should I use many words? All pastors and curates  
 used him for their lantern, as one of whom they  
 20 might perfectly learn when to use action, and when  
 contemplation—for in these two things did he  
 so far excel, that hard it were to find one so well  
 practiced and expert in any one of them apart, as he  
 was in both of them together.

25 Consider the time when Martin Luther, the most  
 damnable and wicked heretic that ever was, began  
 to spring, and you shall not find a stouter champion  
 against him, in all his time nor since, than was this  
 religious bishop, for Luther (as I have heard) began  
 30 to sow his wicked and devilish doctrine in Germany  
 the year of our Lord God 1507, at which time my  
 Lord of Rochester had governed the see about  
 twelve years, not without the great providence of  
 Almighty God, that even at his first coming on land  
 35 in England, no sleeping dog, nor rude nor ignorant  
 shepherd might be found, but a vigilant pastor, a  
 singular cunning<sup>47</sup> and learned bishop, to catch  
 the young cub or fox at his first arrival. O wicked  
 Luther, great is the misery and calamity that thou  
 40 hast brought into this realm of England, and much  
 greater and sooner had it been but for this worthy  
 prelates' resistance, yet never couldest thou have  
 entered at all, had he not been taken away by such as  
 45 thou hadst infected with thy pernicious poison. But  
 of this Luther more shall be said hereafter in place  
 convenient.<sup>48</sup>

We have hitherto declared unto you his great and

painful diligence in preaching the Word of God,  
 which custom he used not only in his younger days,  
 when health served, but also even to his extreme  
 50 age, when many times his weary and feeble legs  
 were not able to sustain his weak body standing,  
 but forced him to have a chair, and so to teach  
 sitting. Now considering this his painful travel in  
 preaching abroad, what time can you think was left  
 55 for him to pray, or to write? First, do but behold his  
 works already extant in print; then consider diverse  
 others that he hid, and are not yet come to light;  
 then remember what a number of notable books  
 by him compiled have perished by the malice of  
 60 heretics, and ye shall easily find that he was a man  
 of such reading and writing, as may seem to be  
 only occupied therein and nothing<sup>49</sup> else, which  
 no doubt came by the benefit and goodness of  
 Almighty God enduing him with so divine a wit,  
 65 so quick invention, and so retaining a memory,  
 whereby he disposed and uttered his matter with  
 great learning, zeal and gravity.

Besides this he never omitted so much as one  
 collect of his daily service, and that he used to  
 70 say commonly to himself alone, without the help  
 of any chaplain, not in any such speedy or hasty  
 manner to be at an end, as many will do, but in  
 most reverent and devout manner, so distinctly and  
 75 treatably<sup>50</sup> pronouncing every word, that he seemed  
 a very devourer of heavenly food, never satiate nor  
 filled therewith. In so much as talking on a time  
 with a Carthusian monk, who much commended  
 his zeal and diligent pains in compiling his book  
 against Luther, he answered again,<sup>51</sup> saying that  
 80 he wished that time of writing had been spent  
 in prayer, thinking that prayer would have done  
 more good, and was of more merit. And to help  
 this his devotion, he caused a great hole to be  
 85 digged through the wall of his church of Rochester,  
 whereby he might the more commodiously have  
 prospect into the church at Mass and Evensong  
 times. When himself should say Mass, as many  
 times he used to do, if he were not letted<sup>52</sup> by some  
 90 urgent and great cause, ye might then perceive in  
 him such earnest devotion that many times the  
 tears would fall from his cheek. And lest that the  
 memory of death might hap<sup>53</sup> to slip from his mind,  
 he always accustomed to set upon one end of the

41 lived in concealment or retirement

42 Whit S131 43 use to: customarily 44 so that 45 way 46 Why

47 knowledgeable

49 with nothing

51 back, in reply

48 appropriate

50 deliberately; gently

52 hindered

altar a dead man's skull, which was also set before him at his table as he dined and supped. And in all his prayers and other talk he used continually a special reverence and devotion to the name of Jesus.

5 Now to these his prayers he adjoined two wings, which were alms and fasting, by the help whereof they might mount the speedier to heaven. To poor sick persons he was a physician, to the lame he was a staff, to poor widows an advocate, to orphans a tutor, and to poor travelers a host. Wheresoever he lay, either at Rochester or elsewhere, his order<sup>54</sup> was to inquire where any poor sick folks lay near him, which, after he once knew, he would diligently visit them, and where he saw any of them likely to die,

10 he would preach to them, teaching them the way to die with such godly persuasions that, for the most part, he never departed till the sick person were well satisfied and contented with death; many times was his chance to come to such poor houses, as for want of chimneys were very smoky and thereby so noisome that scant<sup>55</sup> any men could abide in them; nevertheless, himself would there sit by the sick patient many times the space of three or four hours together in the smoke when none of his servants were able to abide in the house, but were fain<sup>56</sup> to tarry without till his coming abroad.<sup>57</sup> And in some other poor houses where stairs were wanting, he would never disdain to climb by a ladder for such a good purpose. And when he had given them such ghostly<sup>58</sup> comfort as he thought expedient for their souls, he would at his departure leave behind him his charitable alms, giving charge to his steward or other officers daily to prepare meat convenient<sup>59</sup> for them (if they were poor), and send it to them.

15 Besides this he gave at his gate to diverse poor people (which were commonly not small number) a daily alms of money, to some two pence to some three pence, some four pence, some six pence, and some more, after the rate of<sup>60</sup> their necessity. That being done, every of them was rewarded likewise with meat, which was daily brought to the gate. And lest any fraud, partiality, or other disorder might rise in distribution of the same, he provided himself a place whereunto immediately after dinner

20 he would resort, and there stand to see the division with his own eyes.

If any strangers came to him, he would entertain

them at his table according to their vocations, with such mirth as stood with the gravity of his person, whose talk was always rather of learning or contemplation than of worldly matters. And when

50 he had no strangers, his order was now and then to sit with his chaplains, which were commonly grave and learned men, among whom he would put some great question of learning, not only to provoke

55 them to better consideration and deep search of the hidden mysteries of our religion, but also to spend the time of repast in such talk that might be (as it was indeed) pleasant, profitable, and comfortable to the waiters and standers by, and yet was he so dainty

60 and spare of time, that he would never bestow fully an hour at any meal. His diet at table was for all such as thither resorted plentiful and good, but for himself very mean, for upon such eating days as were not fasted, although he would for his health use a larger diet than at other times, yet was it with such temperance that commonly he was wont<sup>61</sup> to eat and drink by weight and measure. And the most of his sustenance was thin pottage sodden with flesh, eating of the flesh itself very sparingly. The ordinary

70 fasts appointed by the Church he kept very soundly, and to them he joined many other particular fasts of<sup>62</sup> his own devotion, as appeared well by his thin and weak body, whereupon though much flesh was not left, yet would he punish the very skin and bones upon his back. He wore most commonly a shirt of hair, and many times he would whip himself in most secret wise;<sup>63</sup> when night was come, which commonly brings rest to all creatures, then would he many times dispatch away his servants, and fall

80 to his prayers a long space. And after he had ended the same, he laid him down upon a poor hard couch of straw and mats, (for other bed he used none) provided at Rochester in his closet, near the Cathedral Church, where he might look into the choir and hear divine service; and being laid he never rested above four hours at a time, but straightways rose and ended the rest of his devout prayers. Thus lived he till towards his later days, when being more grown into age, which is (as Cicero saith) a sickness

85 of itself,<sup>64</sup> he was forced somewhat to relent of these hard and severe fasts, and the rather for that<sup>65</sup> his body was much weakend with a consumption;<sup>66</sup> wherefore, by counsel of his physician, and licence

53 happen 54 customary practice  
55 hardly 56 obliged; forced 57 out-

side 58 spiritual 59 *meet convenient*:  
food appropriate 60 *after the rate of*: in

proportion to 61 accustomed 62 ac-  
cording to 63 ways 64 *On Old Age*, 36



of his ghostly<sup>67</sup> father, he used upon some fasting days to comfort himself with a little thin gruel made for the purpose.

The care that he had of his family was not  
 5 small, for although his chiefest burden consisted  
 in discharge of his spiritual function, yet did he  
 not neglect his temporal affairs; wherefore, he  
 took such order in his revenues, that one part was  
 bestowed upon reparation and maintenance of the  
 10 church, the second upon the relief of poverty and  
 maintenance of scholars, and the third upon his  
 household expenses, and buying of books, whereof  
 he had great plenty. And lest the trouble of worldly  
 business might be same hindrance to his spiritual  
 15 exercise, he used the help of his brother Robert, a  
 layman, whom he made his steward so long as his  
 said brother lived, giving him in charge so to order  
 his expenses that by no means he brought him in  
 debt. His servants used not to wear their apparel  
 20 after any courtly or wanton manner, but went in  
 garments of a sad<sup>68</sup> and seemly colour, some in  
 gowns and some in coats as the fashion then was,  
 whom he always exhorted to frugality and thrift,  
 and in any wise<sup>69</sup> to beware of prodigality, and  
 25 where he marked any of them more given to good  
 husbandry than others, he would many times lend  
 them money, and never ask it again, and commonly  
 when it was offered him, he did forgive it. If any of  
 his household had committed a fault, as sometimes  
 30 it happened, he would first examine the matter  
 himself, and finding him faulty, would for the first  
 time but punish him with words only, but it should  
 be done with such a severity of countenance and  
 gravity of speech that whosoever came once before  
 35 him was very unwilling to come before him again  
 for any such offense. So that by this means his  
 household continued in great quietness and peace,  
 every man knowing what belonged to his duty.  
 Some among the rest (as they could get opportunity  
 40 of time) would apply their mind to study and to  
 writing, and these above all others he specially liked,  
 and would many times support them with his labor,  
 and sometimes with his money. But where he saw  
 any of them given to idleness and sloth, he would  
 45 by no means endure them in his house, because out  
 of that fountain many evils are commonly wont to  
 spring. In conclusion, his family was governed with

such temperance, devotion, and learning, that his  
 palace for continency seemed a very monastery, and  
 for learning a university. 50

As he was discreet in using severity, when the  
 inordinate and too excessive behavior of the  
 offender did necessarily require correction, so was  
 he comfortable and sweet towards such as needed  
 consolation—wherein truly he had such a divine 55  
 grace that he came to few in their heaviness<sup>70</sup> and  
 sorrows whom, ere<sup>71</sup> he left them, he did not much  
 ease, which amongst the number his old mistress  
 the Lady Margaret did often find at his hands,  
 for at such time as she was in great heaviness for 60  
 the death of her only son that noble prince King  
 Henry the VII, which happened in the year of our  
 Redemption 1509, she was not sooner advertised<sup>72</sup>  
 of the coming of this holy father to visit her, but  
 immediately she found herself bettered. And after 65  
 she had talked with him a space, was for the time  
 well satisfied and comforted, for he knew well (as  
 most learnedly he declared in a funeral sermon,  
 which upon Sunday the tenth of May in the year  
 before named, he made for the foresaid prince, 70  
 whose virtues and noble acts he there commendeth,  
 to the great example of other such princes as he was)  
 that though death be terrible of all other things, as  
 Aristotle reporteth,<sup>73</sup> yet seeing we can by no means  
 avoid it, that the best way is to acquaint ourselves 75  
 with it by often thinking and recording of it, that  
 when it cometh in deed,<sup>74</sup> it may seem less strange.  
 Even as we see those bandogs<sup>75</sup> and mastiffs that be  
 tied in chains, for unto such as do often visit them  
 they be more gentle and easy, but against strangers 80  
 that have no acquaintance or familiarity with them,  
 they furiously rise and gape to devour them, which  
 lesson, if we could well learn, we should no doubt  
 take death more patiently when it cometh, both in  
 ourselves and others, as doubtless this good lady did, 85  
 who through the great comfort she took in this and  
 other his holy exhortations (after the funerals of her  
 son the King were ended), began to return where  
 she had been, and did then set her mind wholly to  
 the increase of her charity and alms-deeds, which 90  
 the rather that she might do with effect, she called  
 unto her this good bishop, committing unto him  
 all the charge of this her charitable intent, wherein  
 he had lately before moved her—I mean for the

65 *for that*: because 66 disease causing  
 the wasting of the body, specifically  
 tuberculosis 67 spiritual 68 digni-

fied 69 way 70 sadness 71 before  
 72 notified 73 *Nichomachean Ethics* 3.6  
 74 actuality

75 a dog tied to a chain, either to guard a  
 house, or on account of its ferocity

erection of her foundations in Cambridge, which above others they thought most necessary to be dispatched, inasmuch as the care and benefit of the soul is to be preferred before the body, for at that time heresies began fast to spring; therefore, with as much convenient<sup>76</sup> speed as might be, my lord speeds himself to Cambridge, and there by virtue of his office of High Chancellor looked very straitly<sup>77</sup> to the orders and rules of the university, calling every man to his duty as well in the schools for profit of their learning, as in their churches and colleges for due keeping and observing the service of God, endeavoring himself, by all the means he could, to reduce the university to their ancient rules and statutes, which began even then to grow out of frame.<sup>78</sup> And where he saw any that with example of obedience and profit in learning exceeding the rest, them he would encourage and advance by all the means he could. Others that he saw incline to the contrary, he would expel, or avoiding of other hurt that might ensue by their example. Some others that he perceived to loiter, being apt to do better if they lifted to put to their wills, he did artificially encourage and quicken, using such means that with very shame he drove them forwards. And many times for the encouragement of the young sort, himself would be present at their disputations and readings and in disputing among them would bestow sometimes many hours together.

And here I cannot omit to declare unto you one singular token and example of his great love and charitable mind towards the university, which happened on a time as he lay<sup>79</sup> at Cambridge occupied in the business of his office of chancellorship, at which time Luther in Saxony had burst out with a venomous tongue in railing and crying against holy indulgences, commonly called pardons. It fell out so that Pope Leo the X granted out a general and free pardon (according to the ancient custom and tradition of the Church) to all Christian people contrite and confessed, through all provinces of Christendom, and specially to all such as with word and deed withstood this new devilish and pernicious doctrine set forth by Luther, which pardon in press of time came into England, and divulged into all parts of the realm. This godly man, then chancellor of the University of

Cambridge, thinking not good to neglect the benefit thereof, but with hearty desire, embracing the wholesome remedy of such a gracious medicine, sought means to cure as many therewith as he could, that as well students of the university as others there might have their parts of that heavenly treasure; wherefore, he commanded that certain copies of the said indulgences (which then were in print) should be set up in sundry public places of the university, whereof one was fixed on the school gate. Now were there at that time in Cambridge some of like ill spirit as Luther was in Saxony, though they were very secret, and in number very few, who as far as they durst<sup>80</sup> went about to deprave<sup>81</sup> the authority thereof, among whom a certain wretched and pernicious person at that time in the university, envying the spiritual profit of others, reading on a day the foresaid indulgence upon the school gate, began straightway, by instigation of some ill spirit, to excogitate and think how he might both slander the authority of the Pope, and hinder the benefit of the pardon in the hearts of good people, wherupon secretly in the night, coming to the school gate where the pardon stood, he wrote upon it these words, *Beatus vir cuius est nomen Domini spes eius, et non respexit vanitates et insanias falsas (istas)*,<sup>82</sup> wresting thereby the sense of that place of Holy Scripture from the true meaning by adding to the text this word *istas* of his own malicious invention and device. In the morning, the schools being set open, and the scholars of all sorts resorting thither, according to their wonted<sup>83</sup> manner, many beheld this strange spectacle; and as the good Catholics were much offended with the wicked kind of abusing Holy Scripture in so great a matter, so the contrary sort began among themselves to smile and secretly rejoice in approving the fact—what<sup>84</sup> should I use many words? This matter being at last brought to the Chancellor's knowledge, he was greatly moved at the detestable and wicked deed. And thereupon fell immediately to find out the doer, first by trying the handwriting, and after by other means, but all in vain, for it could not be found out. At last in a public convocation called for that purpose, he opened the case, and there before them openly detested that abominable kind of dealing. And first he approveth and alloweth<sup>85</sup> the

76 appropriate 77 urgently; strictly  
78 order 79 stayed 80 dared 81 de-  
fame 82 "Blessed is the man whose trust

is in the name of the Lord; and who hath  
not had regard to vanities, and (these)  
lying follies" [Ps 39:5(40:4)].

83 accustomed 84 why

Pope's pardons according to their worthiness, and after expoundeth the true sense of that place of Scripture which before by that wretched person was depraved and wrested, condemning him of vanity  
 5 and falsehood, that would so vainly and falsely usurp any place of Holy Scripture to the sensuality of his own foolish and malicious brain. Then he declared what great displeasure might justly ensue, at the hands of Almighty God and the King, in case  
 10 this horrible fact should be left unpunished. After that what a great discredit it would be to their whole university (being hitherto never suspected of any heretic coming out of her) if now such a malefactor should escape and not be inquired of.<sup>85</sup> In  
 15 conclusion, before the whole assembly there congregate, he moved<sup>87</sup> the author to repentance, and by confession of his fault to ask forgiveness at God's hands, which if he would do by a certain day there prefixed unto him (so as himself might also  
 20 have knowledge thereof) he promised in<sup>88</sup> God's behalf remission. But if, on the contrary part, he would obstinately persist and continue in his secret naughtiness,<sup>89</sup> that then such remedy should proceed against him as Christ hath ordained, and  
 25 his Church hath always observed against those kind of malefactors, who like rotten members are by the censure of excommunication cut of from the body of the Church, and so deprived of all such grace and benefits as obedient and true members to their great  
 30 comfort do enjoy, while they continue in their mother's bosom; for the malefactor so cut off, be he never so odd or secret in his naughtiness for a time, yet can he not be hidden from God, who will not fail to lay his hand upon him when it shall be too  
 35 late for him to repent. After he had spoken these words, or the like, with great fervity, the convocation was for that time dissolved, and so every man departed till the appointed day that the excommunication should be pronounced; when the  
 40 day was come and the assembly ready, which was no small number at so rare a case, the Chancellor there moved the malefactor the second time to repentance and confession of his offense, but the spirit that before suggested this wicked attempt into his heart  
 45 would by no means suffer<sup>90</sup> him to hearken to any amendment. Wherefore, the Chancellor, seeing the sickness desperate, and not like<sup>91</sup> to be cured in so

obstinate and stubborn a patient, feared most the infection of others, and therefore fell to this last and extreme remedy. And so causing a bill of  
 50 excommunication to be written, took the same in his hands and began to read it, but after that he had proceeded a space in the reading thereof, he stayed, and began again to consider in his mind the great  
 55 weight of this grievous sentence, which so much pierced his heart that even before them all he could not refrain weeping. The auditory,<sup>92</sup> seeing that lamentable sight, fell likewise to such a compassion that as well the ancient reverend doctors<sup>93</sup> and  
 60 masters, as other students of the younger sort, perceiving the mild nature of that holy man fell eftsoons<sup>94</sup> into great weeping and lamentation, and so left off without further proceeding in the excommunication for that time, nevertheless  
 65 appointing a third day for that purpose, against which time, if he came not in, then to proceed to the end without any further delay. This third day being at last come, and the convocation fully assembled, it was declared by the Chancellor with a  
 70 heavy<sup>95</sup> countenance that no tidings could be learned of this ungodly person neither of any confession or repentance by him made or done, according to the duty of a Christian man, in recompense of so ill and wicked a fact. Wherefore, now seeing no other remedy to be found, thought<sup>96</sup>  
 75 it necessary and expedient to proceed, and so ordering himself after a grave and severe manner as well in his countenance as other gesture of his body he pronounced this terrible sentence from the beginning to the ending, against this desperate and  
 80 wicked person, but not without weeping and lamentation, which struck such a fear into the hearts of his hearers, when they heard his fearful and terrible words, that most of them being present, especially of the younger sort, looked when the  
 85 ground should have opened and swallowed him up presently before them, as a right reverend and worthy prelate once told me, which then was a young man and present at all business: such was the bitterness of his words, and gravity of his sentence. 90  
 But although for that present time the mind of this miserable man was so hardened with obstinate stubbornness that it could by none of these means be induced to repentance and confession of this so

85 praises 86 *inquired of*: investigated  
 87 urged, incited 88 on 89 wicked-

ness 90 allow 91 likely 92 audience  
 93 theologians 94 soon after

95 sad, sorrowful 96 he thought  
 97 greatly; grievously 98 through

detestable act, but still continued in that willful blindness, with deep and close dissimulation for a space after, yet did not this holy man's zealous words and pitiful tears, spent in compassion of the wretched soul, altogether perish; for not long after they wrought so in him that they never went out of his mind, but engendered such remorse of conscience in his breast that although mere necessity forced him hereafter to forsake the university, and become a servant to Doctor Goodrich then superintendent of Ely, a vehement heretic and ill-disposed person, yet could he never be brought to think otherwise but that he had sore<sup>97</sup> offended Almighty God, in condemning him in<sup>98</sup> one of his so worthy vicars as was this our holy bishop, with open detestation of this naughty<sup>99</sup> doing. Insomuch as when any of his fellow servants, others in that house, would jest at him and put him in remembrance of his former act (as many times they would), he would ever blame them for so doing, rehearsing<sup>100</sup> to them this verse of the psalmist: *Delicta iuventutis meae et ignorantias ne memineris Domine.*<sup>101</sup> This man was named Peter de Valence, by calling a priest, and born in Normandy, from whence he fled, and coming to Cambridge for study remained there till this act was committed.

Thus being carefully occupied in the business of the university, he could not yet be unmindful of the Lady Margaret's business, and because he had no quiet resting place within the university to do the same, it was some impediment unto him for a long time, for by virtue of his office of chancellorship he had no habitation or mansion at all belonging unto him. Now happened it so that much about the same time Master Thomas Wilkinson, doctor of divinity and second master of the Queen's College, departed this life, which was in the year of our Lord 1505, whereupon the fellows of that house, respecting the present necessity of this good prelate, and considering of his continual diligence and care for the whole state of the university, offered him the place of their master or precedent, which with many thanks he accepted, and so was third master of that house, continuing therein the space of three years and odd months, and so at times convenient he proceeded to the erection of Christ's College

for the Lady Margaret, to the endowment whereof she gave lands for the maintainance of a master with twelve scholar-fellows and forty-six disciples forever to be brought up (as the words of her will makes mention) in learning, virtue, and cunning.<sup>102</sup>

During the time that he was thus occupied in the Lady Margaret's business, and helping the university, it happened the said lady to depart this transitory life at the Abbey of Saint Peter in Westminster to the great grief and sorrow of all good men within this realm, which was in the year of Christ 1519, the third of the calends<sup>103</sup> of July, who before her departure made her testament and last will, naming for her executors diverse great personages, among whom this good bishop was chosen as one in whom her least trust was not reposed.

These executors assembling themselves together, to debate of such things as belonged to their charge, began first to take order for her burial, which they in most solemn wise<sup>104</sup> did celebrate at Westminster, according to the dignity of such a noble princess as she was. And at her Month's Mind<sup>105</sup> my Lord of Rochester made a very notable sermon in manner of a mournful lamentation, wherein he most gravely and like a worthy father setteth forth the noble and virtuous qualities of that blessed woman. And forasmuch as<sup>106</sup> the matter thereof is well worthy to be remembered, and much the more, in that the commendation was given to such a person as justly deserved it, by such a prelate as used not to say hastily more than he could well verify, I cannot omit to declare unto you the effect thereof in few words.

In this sermon he compareth her in four points to the blessed and noble woman Martha the sister of Mary: that is to say, in nobility of person, in discipline of her body, in ordering her soul to God, and lastly in hospitality and charitable dealing to her neighbors. First touching her nobility, he showeth how nobly she was born, being the daughter of John Duke of Somerset, lineally descended from the noble prince, King Edward the Third; and after many princely qualities, there by him declared to be in her, he concludeth that, what by<sup>107</sup> lineage and what by affinity, she had thirty kings and queens within the fourth degree of marriage to her, besides dukes, marquesses, earls, and other princes. Then for

99 wicked 100 quoting 101 "Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions, O Lord" (Ps 24(25):7). 102 knowledge 103 month

104 manner 105 the commemoration of a deceased person by the celebration of a requiem Mass, on a day one month from the date of the death or funeral

106 forasmuch as: seeing that 107 what by: on account of

Christian discipline, he setteth out how carefully she  
 always eschewed<sup>108</sup> banquets, rere-suppers,<sup>109</sup> and  
 junkets<sup>110</sup> between meals. And for fasting, although  
 for her age and feebleness she was not so straitly  
 5 bound as others were, yet such days as were by the  
 Church commanded, she would diligently keep,  
 using in Lent one meal in the day only, and that  
 upon a dish of fish, besides diverse other peculiar<sup>111</sup>  
 10 fasts, which devoutly she observed. And yet when  
 she was in health, she never failed on certain days in  
 the week to wear sometimes a shirt and sometimes  
 a girdle of hair that full often her skin was pierced  
 therewith. Thirdly for ordering herself to God by  
 15 often kneeling, by sorrowful weeping, by continual  
 prayers and meditations, it is almost incredible to  
 think what time she bestowed in them all. Insomuch  
 as she accustomed herself to rise commonly at five  
 of the clock in the morning, because she would  
 omit no part thereof. Fourthly he magnifieth her,  
 20 for her godly and charitable hospitality towards  
 all sorts of people, and namely<sup>112</sup> towards poor  
 suitors,<sup>113</sup> not only in giving them meat<sup>114</sup> and  
 drink, but also in helping them to an end of their  
 causes, for the which she suffered many a rebuke.  
 25 Then for poor people, whereof twelve she daily and  
 nightly maintained in her house with meat, drink,  
 and clothing, besides visiting them in their sickness,  
 and ministering to them, with her own hands, in  
 grubbing and searching their wounds and sores with  
 30 her own fingers, declaring evidently what her good  
 will was to have done<sup>115</sup> our savior Jesus, if himself  
 had been present, seeing she did thus much to his  
 servants for his sake, which eftsoons<sup>116</sup> by her own  
 words she very well confirmed, when she would say  
 35 that if Christian princes would have warred upon  
 the enemies of our faith she would be glad to follow  
 the host and help to wash their clothes for the love  
 of Jesus, and this she still uttered till the hour of her  
 death. Many other great virtues and manifest proofs  
 40 of the sanctity of that noble lady he openeth in that  
 sermon very rare to be heard of in such a personage.  
 But because her notable acts may well require a  
 whole volume of itself, I will spare to say any further  
 thereof in this place.  
 45 When the funerals of the Lady Margaret were  
 ended and done, the executors began further to  
 consult for execution of her will, specially touching

the statutes of Christ's College, and erection of  
 Saint John's College in Cambridge, wherein because  
 my Lord of Rochester had always before more  
 50 largely dealt than any other, they thought no man so  
 fit to accomplish that business as he, who being the  
 only means and first mover of her to such godly  
 enterprises, was also best acquainted with her  
 55 meaning therein, whereupon the other executors,  
 by general consent and assent, resigned unto him  
 the whole authority, by public instrument in  
 writing, which he for the great desire he had to  
 satisfy that virtuous lady's last will in so meritorious  
 60 a cause did not unwillingly accept. And therefore  
 returning to Cambridge he proceeded in that godly  
 purpose with great diligence. And because Christ's  
 College was clean<sup>117</sup> furnished in her lifetime (as  
 before is declared), the chief care that remained was  
 65 for the College of Saint John the Evangelist, which  
 was in manner now to be built wholly after her  
 death, chiefly at her costs and charges,<sup>118</sup> as by her  
 testament she had willed, although he added thereto  
 no small sum out of his own purse; for although she  
 70 of her mere<sup>119</sup> liberality gave, by her last will and  
 testament, to this college a portion of land for  
 maintainance of a master and fifty scholars in virtue,  
 cunning,<sup>120</sup> and service of God (as her will  
 mentioneth), with all kind of furniture and servants  
 75 needful in every office, after the manner and form of  
 other colleges in Cambridge, yet did he not only  
 bear a portion of the building upon his own charge,  
 but also much augmented it in possessions, founding  
 there four fellowships, a reader of a Hebrew lecture,  
 a reader of a Greek lecture, four examiner readers,  
 80 and four under-readers to help the principal reader,  
 and because the price of victuals and other things  
 began fast to rise he gave to every one a sum of  
 money to be weekly divided in augmenting the  
 fellows' commons. Thus did this godly man not  
 85 only bestow his labour, care, and study in executing  
 the will of the noble lady the foundress, but also  
 added much thereunto of his own purse, to the  
 accomplishment and making perfect of that fair  
 college, besides the wholesome statutes and  
 90 ordinances most prudently by him penned, and  
 many godly deeds by him executed. For the  
 continual observation and maintainance whereof  
 he gave good lands to the college forever, as most

108 avoided 109 late suppers  
 110 cakes or confections

111 private; distinct 112 especially  
 113 petitioners 114 food 115 done for

116 soon after 117 completely 118 ex-  
 penses 119 sole 120 knowledge

clearly may appear by the ancient record which he left in writing, and the statutes of the same college, if since that time they be not altered and corrupted. Likewise his library of books (which was thought to be such as no bishop in Europe had the like) with all his hangings, plate,<sup>121</sup> and vessel, for hall, chamber, buttery, and kitchen, he gave long before his death, to the College of Saint John by a deed of gift, and put the house in possession thereof by gift of his own hands, and then by indenture borrowed all the said books and stuff of them again, to have the use thereof during his life. But at his apprehension all these things were converted another way and spoiled by certain commissioners sent from the King for the same purpose. And for a perpetual memory of his hearty good will and love borne towards the college, he caused a little chapel to be builded near to the high altar of the great chapel, and set therein a tomb of white marble finely wrought, minding<sup>122</sup> there to have rested his body among them, if God had not afterwards disposed him otherwise, and forasmuch as<sup>123</sup> of the two regions, the North and the South, into which England is divided he noted the North to be more barren of learning, and so ruder in manners than the South, he provided in the same statutes that the greater part as well of the fellows as of the scholars should always be received out of the North parts—not of partiality and affection that he being born in the North might seem to bear to his native country, but in respect of the need which he of his great wisdom and providence did easily see to require, whereby it is come to pass, that these two colleges (by which Cambridge is since that time much beautified) have not only in a short space brought forth a great number of learned men, well instructed in all sciences and knowledge of the three learned tongues, to the singular benefit of the Church of God and commonwealth of this realm, but have also sent out of them some holy martyrs, for in our time we may remember that famous learned father Master Richard Reynolds, doctor of divinity and monk professed in Syon, of the rule of Saint Bridget, and Master William Exmewe, a Carthusian professed in London, both which came out of Christ's College and suffered martyrdom in the time of King Henry the VIII; from that place

sprung also that most reverend and grave doctor Master Nicholas Heath, Archbishop of York, and after Chancellor of England, and Master Cuthbert Scott, Bishop of Chester. Likewise out of the College of Saint John came that famous martyr Doctor Greenwood, who suffered death under King Henry for the supremacy; and of bishops came Master George Day, Bishop of Chichester, Master Ralph Bayn, Bishop of Litchfield, Master Thomas Watson, Bishop of Lincoln, Master John Christopherson, another bishop of Chichester, and Master Thomas Bouchier,<sup>124</sup> Bishop Elect of Gloucester, and before that Abbot of Leicester, all right grave divines, learned preachers, and worthy Catholic bishops. Besides that of deans in cathedral churches, and other learned doctors and preachers, they have brought forth such an infinite number, that it is wonder think and worthy without all doubt to be attributed principally to the goodness and exceeding mercy of God over this realm, who against this wicked time of heresy did even then most graciously prepare this good lady's mind, to such a notable work of mercy, by the means of this so worthy a bishop's diligence and faithful carefulness to execute the same, which providence of God appeareth plainly in that within so short a time as passed between the erection of the colleges and the raising of the schism, it was possible for so many worthy and Catholic learned men to spring out of so small a fountain. And as by the great liberality and bounty of this noble and blessed woman the university of Cambridge doth now at this present remain much advanced in the faculties of study and learning, so may we note how that of<sup>125</sup> long time, even as it were from her first beginning, it hath pleased God to move the hearts of sundry noble Catholic kings and queens of the realm, with other noble princes of the blood royal, to put to their benevolent and helping hands. Insomuch that through their gracious and bountiful charity, proceeding no doubt of<sup>126</sup> especial favour and affection which they in their several ages<sup>127</sup> have ever borne to this university, it is at this day adorned with many goodly colleges, beautified with diverse sumptuous churches and chapels, and plentifully endowed with lands and possessions whereby she hath nourished and brought forth many singularly

121 utensils made of precious metal  
122 intending

123 *forasmuch as*: seeing that  
124 actually John Bouchier

126 out of 127 *several ages*: various times

125 for a

well learned in all faculties of knowlege and learning, wherein as she hath always won praise and commendations, so hath she most of all deserved in this one point: that in so many hundred years as she  
 5 hath flourished, never heresy, nor other unsound doctrine hath sprung out of any of her members, whereby the Catholic Church of Christ hath at any time been disturbed, but always hath persevered in sound doctrine, yea, even then most of all when  
 10 Oxford her sister, the other university, was miserably tossed and turmoiled with the pestiferous<sup>128</sup> heresies and sects of Wycliffe. For we may read of diverse learned clerks sometimes scholars and students of this university of Cambridge that have in their  
 15 several times learnedly confuted,<sup>129</sup> and most carefully rooted out, such pernicious heresies as then were dispersed as well in this realm as elsewhere. And even now in these our days there have not wanted sundry learned fathers of that  
 20 number, besides this most reverend and holy doctor of whom we now entreat, that have stept forth against these damnable errors and sects now troubling this realm, and the whole world besides, by whose learning and diligence it is not unlike, but  
 25 this realm might have been safely preserved, had not the King himself been first infected with this foul and horrible spot of heresy, who by his own unlawful power, not only removed from their places all these ancient and sage rules<sup>130</sup> that should by  
 30 their learning and grave authority have repulsed such pernicious sects, but also placed in their rooms<sup>131</sup> such and so many heretics as himself had chosen, to set forward his wicked and execrable purposes. And as it is not to be read of any heretic  
 35 by them brought forth of their own flock and number, so have they not willingly suffered<sup>132</sup> any other heretic of foreign nation or country to abide quietly among them; whereof although diverse examples might be recited, yet can I not omit this  
 40 one, being yet fresh in memory. To wit, of M. B. and P. F., two wicked and pernicious heretics, who although in the childish reign of King Edward the VI, when they and all others of their profession did frankly profess and openly teach within that  
 45 university whatsoever pleased themselves even to their dying days, and being borne out by the power of such as then ruled all at their licentious wills and

pleasures, whereby a great part of the youth of that time resident there at study were much annoyed<sup>133</sup> and infected with their pestilent heresies. Yet lacked  
 50 there not many even at that instant of the elder sort, which not so stoutly as learnedly, yea in open disputation impugned their devilish doctrine, and would not have failed to hiss them out of their  
 55 schools, had they not by sway of that time been put to silence, some by banishment, and other some by imprisonment. And yet in the time of good Queen Mary, when these and such like learned and reverend men were restored again to their accustomed estate of government within that university. They, mindful  
 60 of their duty and careful to supply the want which the iniquity of the time would not before permit them to attempt according to the holy canons of the Church, caused not only the carcasses and bones of those heretics to be unburied, and taken out of the  
 65 grave, whereof at their death they were not capable by law, but also, for example sake, by lawful authority procured the same bones and carcasses then to be openly burnt in the market place in the face of the world, that for the enormity of their heinous crime,  
 70 the dead bodies and bones might bear witness of their punishment, which they yet<sup>134</sup> living by law deserved, and should have felt by all likelihood, if (as I have said) the iniquity of the time had not  
 75 letted.<sup>135</sup> He also minded<sup>136</sup> to have erected yet a third college in Cambridge of<sup>137</sup> his proper charges, and therein consulted with Erasmus by sundry epistles for his advice, but because he was prevented by the iniquity of time that shortly after followed, in which his goods began to waste,<sup>138</sup> he left off his  
 80 purpose and never began it at all.

Now approached the time wherein God was determined to make trial of his people, the man of sin (Antichrist) should be yet more manifestly revealed, for the very mouth of hell was set open,  
 85 and out came the wicked spirit of Antichrist and entered into Martin Luther, an Augustinian friar, an infamous heretic and execrable apostate. This wicked man set forth diverse blasphemous books stuffed with most abominable and false doctrines,  
 90 which in short time came to the sight of my Lord of Rochester, whereupon he began not only to set himself to more diligent preaching and writing than ever he had yet done before, but also procured

and set forward many other learned preachers to look and foresee that this cruel and ravenous wolf should not devour England, and by occasion thereof provided, in the statutes of Saint John's College before mentioned, that the fellows of the house should so order and moderate their studies, as always the fourth part of them might be preachers, and as soon as one was gone abroad another should straightways be ready to succeed in his place. Thus he still occupied himself either privately or openly, never intermitting the spiritual care of his diocese, whether he were at London, or at Cambridge, or elsewhere, specially now when the wicked seed of Luther was so fast sown and dispersed abroad. For this cause he returned to his charge at Rochester, being then at Cambridge, and after he had there remained a certain space, preaching and teaching after his accustomed fashion, he was taken with great desire to travel to Rome, there to salute the Pope's Holiness, and to visit the tombs of the holy apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul, with the rest of the holy places and relics there. But you shall understand that this was not the first time that he had entered into that deliberation; for it was by him determined from the time that he first received his bishopric, which by certain occasions was twice before disappointed. Wherefore, having now gotten (as he thought) a good opportunity, he providently disposed his household and all his other matters, and after leave obtained<sup>139</sup> of the King and his metropolitan, he began to prepare for his journey to Rome; to this voyage he had chosen learned company. But behold, when everything was ready and the journey about to begin, all was suddenly disappointed, and he revoked,<sup>140</sup> for other business to be treated of at home, which of necessity required his presence. And this (without all doubt) was not without the providence of Almighty God, who, content with his good mind,<sup>141</sup> thought not that journey then expedient. Being then thus stayed and letted<sup>142</sup> to proceed in his devout purpose, he returned where he left to his pastoral cure<sup>143</sup> at Rochester, whereof at that time was great need, for the wicked sect of Luther grew very fast; the cause of his revocation was by means of a synod of bishops called by Cardinal Wolsey, who (having lately before received his power legateine from the

Pope) at that time ruled all things under the King also at his own will and pleasure. To this synod the clergy of England assembled themselves in great number, where it was expected that great matters for the benefit of the Church of England should have been proponed;<sup>144</sup> howbeit,<sup>145</sup> all fell out otherwise, for (as it appeared after) this counsel was called by my Lord Cardinal rather to notify to the world his great authority, and to be seen sitting in his pontifical seat, than for any great good that he meant to do, which this learned and wise prelate perceived quickly. Wherefore, having now good occasion to speak against such enormities as he saw daily rising among the spirituality<sup>146</sup> and much the rather for that<sup>147</sup> his words were among the clergy alone—without any commixture of the laity, which at that time began to hearken to any speaking against the clergy—he there reprovved very discreetly the ambition and incontincy of the clergy, utterly condemning their vanity, in wearing of costly apparel, whereby he declared the goods of the Church to be sinfully wasted and scandal to be raised among the people, seeing the tithes and other oblations, given by the devotion of them and their ancestors to a good purpose, so inordinately spent in undecent and superfluous raiment,<sup>148</sup> delicate fare,<sup>149</sup> and other worldly vanity, which matter he debated so largely, and framed his words after such sort, that the Cardinal perceived himself to be touched to the very quick, for he affirmed this kind of disorder to proceed through the example of the head, and thereupon reprovved his pomp, putting him in mind that it stood better with the modesty of such a high pastor as he was to eschew<sup>150</sup> all worldly vanity, specially in this perilous time, and by humility to make himself conformable and like the image of God:

For in this trade of life (said he) how can there be any likelihood of perpetuity with safety of conscience, neither yet any security of the clergy to continue, but such plain and imminent dangers are like<sup>151</sup> to ensue, as were never tasted nor heard of before our days. For what should we (said he) exhort our flocks to eschew and shun worldly ambition, when we ourselves that be bishops do wholly set our minds to the same things we forbid in them. What example of Christ our Savior do we imitate, who first executed doing and after fell to teaching. If we

139 was obtained 140 recalled 141 intention 142 hindered 143 charge,

office 144 put forward 145 however 146 clergy 147 for that: because

148 clothing 149 food 150 avoid, shun 151 likely



5 teach according to our doing, how absurd may  
 our doctrine be accounted; if we teach one thing  
 and do another, our labour in teaching shall never  
 benefit our flock half so much as our example in  
 10 doing shall hurt them, who can willingly suffer  
 and bear with us in whom, preaching humility,  
 sobriety, and contempt of the world, they may  
 evidently perceive haughtiness in mind, pride in  
 gesture, sumptuousness in apparel, and damnable  
 15 excess in all worldly delicacies.<sup>152</sup> Truly, most  
 reverend fathers, what this vanity in temporal  
 things worketh in you I know not, but sure I am  
 that in myself I perceive a greate impediment to  
 devotion, and so have felt a long time, for sundry  
 20 times when I have settled and fully bent myself to  
 the care of my flock committed unto me, to visit  
 my diocese, to govern my church, and to answer  
 the enemies of Christ, straightways hath come a  
 messenger for one cause or other sent from higher  
 25 authority, by whom I have been called to other  
 business and so left off my former purpose. And  
 thus by tossing and going this way and that way,  
 time hath passed, and in the meanwhile nothing  
 done, but attending after triumphs, receiving of  
 30 ambassadors, haunting of princes' courts, and  
 such like, whereby great expenses rise that might  
 better be spent otherways.

30 He added further, that whereas himself, for  
 sundry causes secretly known to himself, was thrice  
 determined to make his voyage to Rome, and at  
 every time had taken full and perfect order for his  
 cure,<sup>153</sup> his household, and for all other business,  
 till his return, still by occasion of these worldly  
 35 matters, he was disappointed of his purpose. After  
 he had uttered these with many more such words  
 in this synod, they seemed all by their silence to be  
 much astonied,<sup>154</sup> and to think well of his speeches,  
 but indeed, by the sequel of the matter, it fell out  
 40 that few were persuaded by his counsel, for no man  
 upon this amended any whit of his accustomed  
 licentious<sup>155</sup> life, no man became one hair the more  
 circumspect or watchful over his cure, and many  
 were of this mind: that they thought it nothing  
 45 necessary for them to abate anything of their fair  
 apparel for the reprehension of a few whom they  
 thought too scrupulous, so that—excuses never  
 wanting to cover sin—this holy father's words,  
 spoken with so good a zeal, were all lost, and came  
 to nothing for that time.

50 In the mean space Luther's heresy still proceeded,  
 spreading far and wide abroad in Saxony and other

dominions of Germany, and the poisoned books  
 thereof at last came freshly into England, by the  
 help of merchants that travelled that way, by means  
 55 whereof not they themselves only, but also artificers,  
 soldiers, women, and others of the common people,  
 specially of the younger sort, simply learned and  
 of little understanding, by reading these books,  
 straightways at the first receipt drank their deadly  
 60 draught of this venomous poison. Then after, it crept  
 abroad like a canker more largely, and entered into  
 the mind of many English people of the better sort,  
 who, like the nature of islanders that commonly be  
 changeable and desirous of novelties, received it  
 65 with much plausibility, which thing King Henry  
 considering, he straightway without delay called for  
 help to the bishops, and immediately with his own  
 pen set upon Luther, the head of all the mischief,  
 by means whereof, he not only showed himself well  
 to deserve the name of "Defender of the Faith" 70  
 (which after upon occasion of that book was given  
 him by our holy father Pope Leo the Tenth), but  
 also brought among the learned bishops of his own  
 realm a great hope, that by his help all would be  
 stayed for that time. That book of the King's (which 75  
 was a right worthy and learned treatise) was entitled  
*An Assertion of the Seven Sacraments against Martin  
 Luther.*

There were at that time diverse that would affirm  
 my Lord of Rochester to be author of that book, 80  
 for certain it is, that in those days no man was  
 greater with the King in that kind of business than  
 he, neither did the King yield more reverence or  
 credit to any man living than to him. Insomuch as  
 he would many times say that he thought him the 85  
 deepest divine in Europe, which doth nothing at all  
 detract from the King's praise, but rather maketh  
 the book more commendable, even as those wise  
 and substantial laws which the King doth make by  
 advice of his learned counselors do nothing derogate 90  
 from his authority, but are promulgated and  
 published for his own ordinances. He further, to the  
 advancement of the King's worthiness and defense  
 of the truth against that bitter poisoned answer of  
 Luther, made an apology,<sup>156</sup> rebuking Luther as well 95  
 for his scurrility and knavish terms used against  
 so noble a prince, as also for his false and manifest  
 errors, which he most profoundly confuteth. The  
 publishing of which book he deferred for a time,

152 *luxuries*; delicacies 153 charge  
 154 astonished 155 lax, immoral

156 *Defensio regiae assertionis contra  
 Babylonicam captivitatem* (1525)

because the rumor was that Luther would recant. But when it was perceived that he with all his factors,<sup>157</sup> with all their might ceased not to urge forward the schism, setting forth corrupted translation of bibles, and wresting the sense thereof to their own malicious understanding, he<sup>158</sup> setteth his book immediately forth, for a warning to all posterity, with a preface before it to his old acquaintance the Bishop of Ely, named Doctor West,<sup>159</sup> being both brought up together from their youth in study at Cambridge, where many disputations had passed between them, as partly in the said preface himself doth remember, the inscription of which book was thus: "A defense of the King of England's assertion of the Catholic faith against Martin Luther's book of *The Captivity of Babylon*." About the same time he was also compiling another book, wherein he defended the holy order of priesthood against Luther, and set it to the print. Thus lamenting with himself the present state of things and devising how to provide remedy for that which he saw following, like to a careful shepherd he laid watch in every corner, searching all places where the enemy might enter, and where any came within his reach, he took hold on them, specially against the Lutherans; he exalted his voice like a trumpet, preaching against them more liberally, and also more often than his former custom was. Besides, forth he sent abroad certain other preachers, men well instructed to catch the wolf and to admonish the people of the secret poison that lay hid, under pretext of reformation. But behold, how easy a thing it is to deceive the silly people, and how quickly they that be light of credit<sup>160</sup> may be induced to follow crooked ways and bypaths, for they giving care to slanderous tales and pernicious lies devilishly invented by Luther upon abuses attributed to the clergy, and clean<sup>161</sup> carried away with carnal liberty, which this new fifth gospel did liberally bring them, were fallen in that willful blindness, that making themselves judges in that which they should receive by judgment of their pastors, neither by the King's assertion against Luther, neither by the continual visitations of their bishops, neither yet by the diligent and faithful teaching of the learned fathers

and doctors,<sup>162</sup> could be stayed, but altogether drunken with the must<sup>163</sup> of licentious liberty so frankly broached unto them, and willfully wedded to their vain presumption, rashly and without reason, they suffered<sup>164</sup> themselves to be abused by that false and wicked heretic (whom they should most diligently have eschewed),<sup>165</sup> and embraced him as a true and sincere reformer of vice, calling him a holy father, a true and godly preacher of God's word, yea, a very<sup>166</sup> prophet. This did they first by whispering secretly among themselves, then by open talk, and at length by open casting abroad and using his seditious book perniciously penned to catch the ignorant sort, by abasing the authority of the pope, kings, and bishops, and all other potentates. Of this faction were six at one time apprehended, whereof the chief was Robert Barnes,<sup>167</sup> an Augustinian friar, which<sup>168</sup> after long persuasion of diverse learned men abjured<sup>169</sup> their false and detestable heresies, and for their penance stood openly at Paul's Cross on the Quinquagesima<sup>170</sup> Sunday, which was in the year of our Redemption 1525. At which time this learned bishop made there a worthy sermon, where the most reverend father Master Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal and *legate a latere* with six bishops, and a great audience of people were present. In which sermon he there prosecuted<sup>171</sup> the Gospel, uttering it against the Lutheran sects with such fervency of faith, such zeal to the Catholic Church of Christ, such force of arguments grounded upon Holy Scripture and so fully replenished with the Holy Ghost that if the King had been as true a defender of the faith in his deeds as he was in name and title, no doubt but England had been safe and soundly preserved from that miserable crime that after it fell into. He pronounced another notable sermon very shortly after before the said Lord Cardinal in the same place, within the octaves of the Ascension, in which he showed himself a stout and zealous preacher, and a most vigilant pastor against these ravening and pestiferous heretics; many other sermons and homilies to the same effect he made, besides, at London the head city of England, taking thereby occasion to tax<sup>172</sup> as well the negligence of curates, as the rashness and levity of the people,

157 supporters 158 i.e., Bishop Fisher  
159 Nicholas West (1461–1533) 160 un-  
steady in their belief 161 completely  
162 theologians 163 wine 164 allowed  
165 avoided 166 true; actual

167 Robert Barnes (1495–1540), an  
Augustinian friar and prior in Cambridge,  
became a reformer and was executed for  
heresy in 1540. 168 who 169 re-  
nounced under oath

170 the Sunday before Ash Wednesday  
171 dealt with in detail; praised

exhorting all sorts in their vocation to play the vigilant soldiers in stoutly resisting these devilish assaults of heresy.

Now after this his wearisome occupation of preaching, there followed yet another painful labor of writing, for at this time rose out of Luther's school Oecolampadius,<sup>173</sup> who like a mighty giant burst out more venomously (if more could be) than his master, Friar Luther. For thinking himself better learned than his master, he went an ace<sup>174</sup> further, denying damnably the real presence of the body and blood of our Savior in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, wherein as he went altogether from his mother, the Church, so did he differ far from his schoolmaster, Martin Luther; wherefore, the grave prelate and zealous pastor, like a valiant champion that never could be tired, set upon this ravening wolf with five weapons, which were five books most diligently and clerkly<sup>175</sup> collected, well stuffed with evident scriptures, and censures of holy fathers, both in their learned works, and also in their general councils, where lawfully assembled they have declared such things as are expedient for the maintenance of the truth representing our mother the Church, by the authority and virtue whereof he so wounded this Goliath that in conclusion he clean overthrew him and laid him flat on the ground. These books were written in the year of Christ 1525, at which time he had governed the See of Rochester about twenty years, and the next year following they were published and set abroad in print, to the great confirmation of all good Christians that either read or heard the same, and no less discourage of all heretics, as by the sequel may well appear, for neither to those books, neither yet to any other of his books or works hath any heretic to this day yet made answer or refutation, which I think can hardly be said of any other Catholic writer that wrote in his time.

Hitherto we have described unto you this worthy prelate, neither dumb in preaching, nor idle in writing: neither cold in devotion, nor ambitious in aspiring. It followeth now that we must entreat<sup>176</sup> of a great and lamentable calamity that chanced in these our days, whereof as I think there are very few that can say they have clean<sup>177</sup> escaped without

feeling some part of the smart, so this reverend father tasted plentifully thereof, whom it chanced in the very beginning to be one of the first that broke the ice, and to open and show the inconvenience<sup>178</sup> that followed thereby, no doubt to his immortal fame and glory, and no less to the reproach and ignominy of all such as were his persecutors, as by the sequel of this history shall well appear. I mean here of the divorce between King Henry and Queen Catherine his wife, the very spring from which so many lamentable and miserable tragedies have sprung, to the utter ruin and desolation of this noble realm of England, in the true service of God, and ministration of justice, and knowledge of all civil honesty. So that besides the grief and loathsomeness thereof I think it a matter almost impossible to be expressed in writing, but forasmuch as<sup>179</sup> the worthy acts of this holy father cannot plainly be understood, unless we enter somewhat into this matter, neither this matter fully perceived except<sup>180</sup> we make a little digression, yet it shall be convenient<sup>181</sup> to repeat, from the first original and fountain, the cause of all this grievous business, wherein if I shall seem somewhat prolix and tedious, I must desire<sup>182</sup> the reader to consider the fruit which he may reap by the full discourse thereof, being full of profitable and virtuous lessons and good examples.

There hath of<sup>183</sup> long time continued an ancient amity and friendship between the house of Burgundy and this realm of England, whereby among other commodities,<sup>184</sup> great traffic of merchandise from the one country to the other hath usually been practiced to the which House of Burgundy when in process of time, the noble families of Austria, Spain, Naples, and Sicily was by marriage adjoined, the most sage and virtuous prince King Henry the VII, perceiving so many noble kingdoms and countries now brought to one monarchy, and therewith much desiring the continuance of his ancient league and amity aforesaid, sent unto Ferdinand, King of Aragon and Castile, requiring of him in marriage the Lady Catherine his daughter for the Lord Arthur, Prince of Wales, his eldest son.

King Ferdinand, as he was a wise and noble prince, so in this matter he showed himself neither hard nor strange,<sup>185</sup> but straightways agreed to this

172 reprove; call to account 173 Johannes Hussgen (1482–1531), who went by Oecolampadius, was a promi-

nent German Protestant. 174 point 175 learnedly; skillfully 176 give an account 177 completely 178 harm;

trouble 179 *forasmuch as*: seeing that 180 unless 181 appropriate 182 ask 183 for a 184 benefits

good motion. Then was preparation made for the journey, and the noble young lady being embarked and arrived in England, was at last solemnly married to the said Prince Arthur in the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul within London, which was in the year of our Lord God 1500, and the twenty-sixth year of King Henry the Seventh his<sup>186</sup> reign. After the solemnity of the marriage was finished, they went both to Ludlow, in Shropshire, and there for a space remained, and kept house together. But behold (God so ordering the matter), within five months after the marriage, Prince Arthur being always but a weak and sickly young man, not above the age of fifteen years chanced to depart this transitory life, by means whereof, the good intent and meaning of the two kings their fathers, was now become all frustrated and void. Nevertheless, that so good a matter, so well begun, should not altogether quail,<sup>187</sup> there was yet another way devised how all might be solved again, and the first good intention take place: this was, that seeing the Lady Catherine was now a widow, without issue of Prince Arthur her husband, she might therefore be married to the Lord Henry, brother to the said prince. Of this device both the kings liked well, and to that inclined their minds accordingly, and lest some cavillation<sup>188</sup> might in time arise about this matter, because of the Levitical law, forbidding the one brother to reveal the secrets of the other, it was thought good by the learned counsel on both sides that dispensation should be sued for from the See Apostolic, which was done and granted according to the two kings' requests by our holy father Pope Julius the Second. In this bull the marriage with Prince Henry was dispensed, for that<sup>189</sup> the lady was before married to his brother Prince Arthur, yea, in case there were carnal knowledge between them.

The tenor whereof was thus:

*Julius episcopus, servus servorum dei.*

*Dilecto filio Henrico carissimo in Christo filii nostri Henrici Angliae regis illustris nato; et dilecte Catherinae carissimi in Christo filii nostri Ferdinandi regis, et carissimae filiae Elizabethae reginae Hispaniarum et Siciliae catholicorum natae illustribus, salutem, etc.*

*Romani pontificis praecellens autoritas confessa sibi desuper utimur potestate prout personarum*

*negotiorum et temporum qualitate pensata in domino conspicit salubriter expedire.*

*Oblata nobis nuper pro parte vestra petitionis series continebat, quod cum alias tam in Christo filia Catherina et tunc in humanis agens quondam Arthurus carissimi in Christo filii nostri, Henrici Angliae regis illustris, primogenitus pro conservandis pacis et amicitiae nexibus et foederibus, inter carissimum in Christo filium nostrum Ferdinandum et carissimam in Christo filiam nostram Elizabetham Hispaniarum et Siciliae reginam Catholicos; ac praefatos Angliae reges et reginam matrimonium legitime per verba de presenti contraxissetis, illudque carnali copula forsitan consummavissetis dictus Arthurus prole ex huiusmodi matrimonii non suscepta decessit. Cum autem sicut eadem petitio subiungebat ad hoc, ut vinculum pacis et amicitiae inter praefatos regem et reginam huiusmodi diutius permaneat, cupiatis matrimonium inter vos per verba legitime de praesenti contrahere, supplicari nobis fecistis, ut vobis in praemissis de oportuna dispensationis gratia providere; de benignitate apostolica dignaremur.*

*Nos igitur qui inter singulos Christi fideles ac praesertim catholicos reges et principes, pacis et concordiae amoenitatem urgere intensis desideriis affectamus, vos et quemlibet vestrum, a quibuscumque excommunicationibus, etc. Huiusmodi supplicationibus inclinati, vos bicumque ut (impedimento affinitatis huiusmodi ex praemissis proveniente ac constitutionibus et ordinationibus apostolicis caeterisque contrariis nequaquam obstantibus) matrimonium per verba legitime de praesenti inter vos contrahere, et in eo postquam contractum fuerit et si iam forsitan hactenus de facto publice vel clandestine contraxeritis ac illud carnali copula consummaveritis, licite remanere valeatis auctoritate apostolica, tenore presentium de spiritualis dono gratiae dispensamus, ac vos et quemlibet vestrum si contraxeritis, ut praesertur ab excessu huiusmodi excommunicationis sententia quam propterea incurristis eadem auctoritate absolvimus prolem ex huiusmodi matrimonio sive contracto sive contrahendo susceptam forsitan vel suscipiendam legitimam decerendo.*

*Provisio quod tu in Christo filia Catherina propter huiusmodi rapta non fueris, volumus autem si huiusmodi matrimonium de facto contraxeritis*

185 unfriendly; unwilling 186 *Seventh* 188 frivolous quibble  
 his: Seventh's 187 fail, come to nothing 189 for that: because

*Confessor per vos et quemlibet vestrum eligendus paenitentiam salutarem propterea vobis iuiungat, quam adimplere teneamini. Nulli ergo, etc., datum Romae, etc., 1507, calendis Ianuarii, Anno etc.,*

5 which in English may be thus understood:

Julius Bishop, servant to the servants of god. To our loving son Henry, the son of our most dear son in Christ, Henry the noble king of England. And to our beloved daughter in Christ, Catherine the daughter of our most dear son and daughter Ferdinand and Elizabeth, the Catholic king and queen of Spain and Sicily, greeting, etc. The Bishop of Rome by his high authority given unto him from above doth use his power, weighing the quality of the persons, the business, and the time, as he seeth expedient and profitable in our Lord. There hath lately been presented unto us a petition on your behalf containing that where you, our well beloved daughter Catherine and Arthur then living, the eldest son of our most dear son in Christ Henry, the noble king of England, had (for conservation of the bonds and pacts of peace and amity between our most dear son and daughter Ferdinand and Elizabeth, Catholic king and queen of Spain and Sicily, and the foresaid king and queen of England lawfully contracted between you a matrimony by present words, and had also perhaps consummated the same by carnal knowledge, the said Arthur deceased without any issue borne of the same matrimony. And whereas you desire to contract a lawful matrimony between you by present words, to the intent that the bond of peace and amity should be the more durable between the said king and queen. And made petition unto us also that we would vouchsafe<sup>190</sup> to provide for you in the premises<sup>191</sup> with convenient<sup>192</sup> dispensation, by the grace and bounty of the See Apostolic as in the said supplication and mentioned; we therefore, who with earnest desire do affect<sup>193</sup> the advancement of blessed peace and concord among all Christian people, specially between Catholic kings and princes, tendering that your supplication, do absolve you and every of you from all manner of excommunication, etc. And do by authority of the See Apostolic, according to the tenor of these present, dispense with you and every of you by the gift of spiritual grace, that you may contract between

you a matrimony by present words, and after the same so contracted, either openly or secretly,<sup>194</sup> and by carnal consent consummated, that ye may therein lawfully remain, any impediment of affinity growing by the premises, or any constitution or ordinance apostolic or other contrary provisions notwithstanding. And if ye have so contracted as before is declared, we also do by the same authority absolve you and every of you from such excess and sentence of excommunication wherein you be run by means of the same, decreeing the issue of such matrimony either contracted or to be contracted, for lawful, yea, although<sup>195</sup> the same be already born. Provided always that you, our daughter in Christ Catherine, were not rapt<sup>196</sup> against your will. And we will that if ye have already contracted any such matrimony, the confessor by you or any of you to be chosen shall enjoin you wholesome penance for the same, to the performance whereof ye shall be bound. No man therefore, etc., and if they shall, etc.,

Given at Rome, etc., 1507 the calends<sup>197</sup> of January, in the year, etc.

The two kings having thus with their great charges<sup>198</sup> obtained this bull, thought now that all things were well provided for, and all matters of conscience thoroughly dispensed, and then rested no more but the solemnization of the marriage, before the accomplishing whereof, it chanced the foresaid sage prince King Henry the VII to depart this world, leaving behind him to succeed in the kingdom his only son Henry the Eighth, who following the conclusion of his father's agreement, espoused the said lady in the Cathedral Church of Saint Paul in London, within two months after he began to reign, and begot of her Henry and diverse other sons, which<sup>199</sup> died in short space after they were born, and Mary who in process of time succeeded in the crown. In this marriage they continued and lived well and prosperously together almost the space of twenty years, all things in this realm so well succeeding as the like hath never since been seen. But Satan, the common enemy of all mankind, who still envieth his prosperity and joyeth at his woe, perceiving what great good was like<sup>200</sup> to ensue to the Christian world by the continuance of this marriage, and how likely his own kingdom was

190 agree 191 aforementioned  
192 appropriate 193 seek to obtain

194 openly or secretly: publicly or privately  
195 even if 196 carried away by force

197 month 198 expense; trouble  
199 who 200 likely

thereby to abate in the hearts of Christian men, he so wrought and bestirred himself in this matter, that contrary to man's expectation and the two noble princes' good and virtuous intention, there followed, instead of tranquility and peace, an utter ruin and misery. For in all this great prosperity, behold even suddenly what a sore<sup>201</sup> flame was kindled of one little spark, by reason of a scruple crept into the King's breast, that the marriage between him and this good queen his wife should not be lawful because she was before married to his brother. How this foolish and unhappy scruple entered first into his head, I will not certainly affirm, because I have heard it diversely reported. Some thinking it came by the Bishop of Bayonne, who being on<sup>202</sup> a time ambassador to this King Henry from Francis the French king, to treat of a marriage between the Lady Mary, daughter to King Henry, and the Duke of Orleans, second son to the said king of France named Henry, even as the matter after long debating was come to determination, the Bishop desired<sup>203</sup> respite of concluding the matrimony, till such time as he had once again spoken with the King his master, because (as he said) he was not fully persuaded of the legitimization of the Lady Mary being the King's daughter begotten of his brother's wife, which words the King secretly marked, and never after forgot. Others have supposed that it was a thing but only conceived of the King himself, who perceiving that he had no issue male by the Queen, and doubting now that he was like to have none at all by her (she growing towards the age of forty years), began to conceive a weariness of her person, and so sought means to be rid of her, and to marry a new wife, and for furthering of his purpose thought it a good color<sup>204</sup> and cleanly<sup>205</sup> excuse to allege the trouble of his conscience, and the danger that might ensue to this realm, for lack of issue male. But most have affirmed that this matter was first put into his head by an envious proud man (then ruling mightily in this realm) called Master Thomas Wolsey, Cardinal and Archbishop of York, which I take to have most semblance of truth for sundry reasons, and the rather for that<sup>206</sup> the good Queen openly charged him sore<sup>207</sup> therewith as after shall be declared, and therefore no doubt but he found out the truth

thereof. Myself have also seen and read diverse and sundry letters, written from the Cardinal to the King's ambassadors at Rome, when he aspired to be pope, wherein he seemed nothing<sup>208</sup> to favor this good queen, and therefore labored the more earnestly to be pope, because he meant to give definitive sentence against her to pleasure the King withal.<sup>209</sup> This cardinal, as he lacked no excellency of wit, readiness of speech, and quickness of memory, so was he also neither faint of courage, nor ignorant of civil manners, ne<sup>210</sup> yet all unlearned, for he had studied and taken degrees of school in the University of Oxford. Of parentage he was base<sup>211</sup> and obscure, and yet nevertheless wanted no audacity to advance himself among great personages, yea in matters of great importance and weight, for in continuance of time—besides his great and rich promotion in the Church, which were neither small nor few—he was also Lord Chancellor of England, and thereby in temporal<sup>212</sup> matters ruled all under the King at his own will and pleasure, so that what by the one and what by the other, he was accounted the richest cardinal in revenues and goods that ever was in England. And indeed, although in his great authority he won at many wise men's hands great praise for his indifferency<sup>213</sup> showed to all persons as well rich as poor, without respect of dignity, governing the realm many years under the King in great peace and tranquility, yet for the obscuring and darkening of all these goodly gifts of good nature, this one fault of ambition (lacking not the company of some other vices) reigned so abundantly in him that his goodness was not thought able to surmount the one half of his ill. But now by means of this cardinal's forwardness in service, and much taking upon him, it was thought by judgment of many wise men (as myself have heard some report, and cannot without grief rehearse<sup>214</sup> again) that the King fell then to idleness and rest, giving his mind to wanton love and sensual pleasure, and so with expenses of his treasure and loss of his time gave over the kingly occupation (wherein he had so long before virtuously exercised himself with the great commendation of all men) and left all to the ministry and disposition of the Cardinal, which he willingly took upon him, setting himself then daily forward to the world with great pomp more than he

201 great 202 for 203 requested  
204 pretext 205 clever

206 for that: because  
ouly 208 not at all

207 greatly; griev-  
209 with or by

(it) 210 nor 211 low-born 212 civil  
213 impartiality 214 tell

had before used. And yet besides his own great sumpt<sup>215</sup> and expenses in wearing of silk and other costly apparel decked with gold and silver, he was also thereby occasion to others of the clergy to do the like beyond all reason and measure, for by reason of his great revenues he lived rather like a king than a subject, having in his hands all at one instant of spiritual livings, the archbishopric of York, the bishopric of Winchester, and the Abbey of Saint Albans. He had also in farm<sup>216</sup> the bishopric of Bath, Worcester, and Hereford, because the incumbents thereof were strangers and continually absent in their own countries, by reason whereof, he had the full disposition<sup>217</sup> of all the spiritual promotions and presentations in those bishoprics, as freely as any of his own; besides this he was *legate de latere*,<sup>218</sup> by virtue whereof he would convocate the clergy of this realm at his pleasure, and visit all spiritual houses and ministry of the Church, and for that purpose had officers and magistrates throughout the realm, and would present to all benefices whom he pleased, to his own no small gain and profit. It is also thought that he had out of France a yearly pension, and whether he received anything out of Italy for his dignity of cardinal or no, it is uncertain. It were a long matter to rehearse all the secular business wherein he wrapped himself and the lucre which he received by the same. But the most lamentable thing to be remembered is this: that being in all this authority, he showed himself in his counsel very inconstant, and made small account of the conservation of the true amity and friendship between princes, for therein he preferred his own ambitious will before the common peace and tranquility of Christian nations. By which manner of doings he procured many great and lamentable tragedies in Christendom, and unto himself the hatred of many good people, and specially of the good and virtuous lady Queen Catherine, wife to King Henry the Eighth, and likewise of the noble Emperor Charles the Fifth, her nephew by the sister's side. And yet (God be thanked) I have been credibly informed by sundry good and wise personages, that were about him and knew much of his secrets, that after he once espied the sequel of his doings, he lived in great sorrow and repentance for the same all his life after. And being at York a year or

more before his death in the King's heavy displeasure, he there lamented all the while that ever he flattered so much with the King, and neglected the displeasure of Almighty God. And to that effect he also sent a message to the King a little before his death by Sir William Kingston, then constable of the Tower, desiring him for God's sake to proceed no further in this business of divorce, whatsoever he had said to him before, but rather to arm and prepare himself against these horrible heresies daily entering into this realm, lest by overmuch negligence in repressing them at the first he should endanger himself and his whole realm so far that at last the sore might be grown uncurable, whereof he showed the example to be yet fresh in memory in the realms of Bohemia and Hungary. Many other like words he uttered to that effect, wherein his repentance largely appeared. But to return to our matter, the Cardinal fearing now lest the King, in whom he perceived the lustiness of youth to fade and decay, might soon wax<sup>219</sup> weary and repent himself of that wanton trade of life, hitherto spent for a great part in pastime and foolish pleasure, whereby he might at last, by the good Queen's persuasion (whom he knew to bear him no great good favor), fall to straighter, looking to the government of things than he had before done, and so at length require account of his<sup>220</sup> doings, and being offended (as before is said) at the Emperor and thereby made on the French king's part, thought best now to devise some means how to prevent this danger, lest by lingering too long, he might be disappointed of that he so desired and earnestly affected to enjoy. Now what the cause was of this the Cardinal's unjust and malicious grudge against this noble queen, it shall not be impertinent to our purpose here by<sup>221</sup> the way to open unto you, and therefore you must understand that at such time as it chanced the archbishopric of Toledo in Spain to become void, the Cardinal hearing thereof, and being (as he was indeed) a man not only covetous and greedy of riches, but also of a marvelous and high aspiring mind to<sup>222</sup> honor, made means straightway to the noble Emperor Charles the Fifth to have and enjoy that great dignity, causing the King to write earnestly to him in his behalf. But the wise Emperor, noting the Cardinal's insatiable ambition and vanity, did

215 expenditure; sumptuousness 216 *in farm*: letted at a fixed rent 217 control; management

218 a papal representative of the highest degree 219 become, grow 220 i.e., the Cardinal's 221 on

222 *mind to*: disposition toward

altogether mislike of it, and would in no wise<sup>223</sup> condescend<sup>224</sup> to his request, whereat the Cardinal took such hearty displeasure against the Emperor that ever after he bore him in stomach.<sup>225</sup>

5 Shortly after it fortun'd the See Apostolic to become vacant by the death of Pope Leo the Tenth, unto which high prelacy the Cardinal ambitiously aspired, and made great and subtle means by help of diverse friends, as well of King Henry of England as  
10 of King Louis of France, who for certain purposes travailed<sup>226</sup> earnestly for him; but thereof he was likewise prevented and utterly disappointed by the Emperor, who so wrought with the cardinals in the conclave, that to that room<sup>227</sup> was elected Cardinal  
15 Hadrian, who sometime before had been his schoolmaster, and taught him in Loraine, and was called by the name of Hadrian the Sixth, a man very rare for his singular virtue and learning.

These and such other things lying hot boiling  
20 in the Cardinal's stomach against the Emperor, he conceived at last such malice against him that ever after he procured and labored by all his might to kindle variance<sup>228</sup> and grudge between the King and him, causing the King to join in more assured  
25 amity than he was wont<sup>229</sup> with the King of France, whom he knew to favor the Emperor nothing at all. And yet not only content to malign and envy the Emperor alone, he also sought by all the means he could to annoy and displease his friends and  
30 kindred for his sake. Among which the virtuous lady Queen Catherine his aunt was one, whom for her nephew's sake lie aggrieved and hurt many ways, but specially by raising this secret matter of discord between the King and her, whereby he might the  
35 rather bring her in some misliking of the King, and therewithal<sup>230</sup> diminish the ancient and sure<sup>231</sup> friendship so long continued between this realm and the noble House of Burgundy; and so treating with the King on a time of sundry matters, he broke  
40 at last with him of his lack of issue male to succeed him in the crown of England, which he took to be the best means to enter some suspicion into the King's head for the marriage of his brother's wife. Saying unto him that it was a thing much spoken  
45 of, as well in foreign nations as here at home in his own realm, and therefore in conscience (as he said) he could not but advertise<sup>232</sup> him thereof, for the

love and duty he bore towards him, to the intent he might now consider of it, and inquire further. The  
50 King being at the first moved and greatly dismayed at this strange motion, looking earnestly at the Cardinal for a good space, said at the last to him, "Why, my lord, you know this marriage was greatly  
55 discussed in the beginning among many learned men, and being by them at last agreed for good and lawful, it was after confirmed and dispensed by the Pope himself, and therefore, good father, take heed what you do in this great and weighty matter," and so immediately upon that motion departed asunder. But after that time, what by prick of his conscience,  
60 and what by the sleight<sup>233</sup> of the Cardinal, he was as easily taken as a fish is with a hook, for at the Cardinal's next coming to him, which was within two or three days after, he began to discuss with him the validity of his marriage for a good space<sup>234</sup>  
65 together. The Cardinal having obtained somewhat of that<sup>235</sup> he desired, and being now much more emboldened than he was at the first, rehearsed<sup>236</sup> the matter more fully, and at length wishing the King to confer with his ghostly<sup>237</sup> father, which was then  
70 Doctor John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, a man very timorous, and loath to say or do anything that might any ways offend the King or the Cardinal. Now what conference had been between the Cardinal and the Bishop of Lincoln, I will not recite  
75 all that I have heard. But by very good and credible persons it hath been reported that the Cardinal stood in fear of a blind prophecy—that a woman should be his confusion, which he conjectured to be this good Queen Catherine, for that<sup>238</sup> he was  
80 always French and enemy to the Emperor and his blood. Wherefore, he persuaded the said Bishop of Lincoln that when the King should deal with him about any scruple of his marriage with his wife  
85 Queen Catherine, he should in any wise further the same as much as in him lay, and make it a matter of great conscience to cohabit with her, being not his lawful wife. The Bishop not forgetful of his lesson, when shortly after the King had opened the matter  
90 to him, he straightways advised him to consult further with some other learned bishops and divines, for the better satisfaction of his conscience, even in such manner as the Cardinal had instructed him, whereupon the King, using again the advice

223 way 224 consent, agree 225 anger; ill will 226 labored 227 office 228 disagreement 229 accustomed

230 thereby 231 secure; certain 232 notify 233 craft; strategy 234 period of time 235 what

236 gave an account 237 spiritual 238 for that: because



of the Cardinal, called many other of the bishops to debate the cause, at the Cardinal's house in Westminster. To this counsel (among others) this worthy Bishop of Rochester was specially called, and there desired<sup>239</sup> to speak his mind frankly and freely, who without fear or respect of the King, the Cardinal, or any other man, showed that there was no cause at all of any question, seeing the marriage between the King and the Queen was good and lawful from the beginning, and therefore (said he) it is rather necessary to remove this scruple out of the King's breast as speedily as may be. And thus in conclusion, he refuted<sup>240</sup> and fully answered many reasons that were there made by way of argument to the great satisfaction (as it seemed) of most of the bishops there assembled. When this matter was reported to the King by the Cardinal, the King, who already (as it after appeared by the sequel of the whole business) wished nothing more than to hear of a divorce, perceived that all did and was most like to stick in<sup>241</sup> my Lord of Rochester; wherefore, consulting again with the Cardinal what way were best to use to bring him to favor his desire, it was advised by my Lord Cardinal that the King should call unto him my Lord of Rochester, and by fair means work him to incline to his mind; wherefore, the King, on a day, sent to him and he came; the King using him very courteously gave him many reverend and good words, and at last took him into the long gallery at Westminster, and there walking with him a while, after diverse words of great praise given him for his worthy learning and virtue, he at last broke with him of this matter in the presence of the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, and certain of the bishops, alleging there how sore<sup>242</sup> his conscience was tormented, and how for that cause he had secretly consulted with his ghostly father and diverse other learned men, by whom he was not yet satisfied, and therefore said that upon special confidence in his great learning, he had now made choice of him to use his advice above all others, praying<sup>243</sup> him to declare his opinion freely, so as with the hearing thereof he might sufficiently be instructed in his conscience, and remain no longer in this scruple, wherewith he was so much unquieted. My Lord of Rochester, hearing all this case proponed<sup>244</sup> by the King, never stuck<sup>245</sup> long in answering the matter,

which he both knew and thought to be good and true, but falling straightways upon his knees offered to speak to the King, but the King immediately lifted him up again with his own hands and blamed him for so doing. Then spoke this learned prelate, with a reverend gravity, after this or the like sort:

I beseech your Grace in God's name to be of good cheer, and no further to dismay yourself with this matter, neither to unquiet or trouble your conscience for the same, for (said he) there is no heed to be taken to these men that account themselves so wise and arrogate to themselves more cunning<sup>246</sup> and knowledge in divinity than had all the learned fathers and divines, both of Spain and also of this your realm in your late father's time, neither yet so much credit to be given unto them as is to the See Apostolic, by whose authority this marriage was confirmed, dispensed, and approved for good and lawful. Truly, truly, (said he) my Sovereign Lord and King, you may well and justly ought to make conscience<sup>247</sup> of casting any scruple or doubt of this so clear and weighty a matter in bringing it by any means into question, and therefore by my advice and counsel you shall with all speed put all such thought out of your mind; and as for any peril or danger that to your soul may ensue thereby, I am not afraid in giving you this counsel to take upon my own soul all the damage, and will not refuse to answer against all men in your behalf, either privately or openly, that can anything object against this matter, nothing doubting but there are many right worthy and learned persons within this your realm, that be of this mind with me, and thinks it a very perilous and unseemly thing, that any divorce should be spoken of; unto which side I rather wish your grace to hearken than to the other. And what color<sup>248</sup> or show they may seem to have in this their motions to your Highness, yet God forbid that your Majesty upon so small a foundation should so easily incline yourself to hearken to any person living in so weighty a case, passed and established by so great an authority as the See Apostolic.

These and diverse other like words he there uttered to the King which might have satisfied his sick mind, had not he been otherwise perversely bent, and therefore all was in vain; for the King (whether upon remorse of conscience indeed, or seduced with another affection, I know not) alienated himself daily more and more from the company of the good queen, his wife, refusing

239 asked 240 refuted 241 *stick in*:  
be hindered by 242 greatly; grievously

243 asking 244 proposed  
245 hesitated 246 learning

247 *make conscience*: make it a matter of  
conscience 248 appearance, pretext

to hear or give care to all good counsel given him by this good father and other learned men to the contrary, and so for that time my Lord of Rochester departed from the King, who from that day forward  
 5 never looked on him with merry countenance, as the good bishop did well perceive, for that<sup>249</sup> his grudge daily increased towards him.

While these things were thus in doing, it came to pass that the King was fallen in love with a young  
 10 gentlewoman in the Court waiting on the Queen, called mistress Anne Boleyn, daughter of Sir Thomas Boleyn, Knight, who after, for his daughter's sake, was promoted to many high honors and dignities. This Mistress Anne had sometime before  
 15 that been brought up in the court of France with the Lady Mary, the French queen, that was sister to King Henry and sometime wife to King Louis the XII, where she learned much courtly fashion and manners, strange and dainty in the English court,  
 20 wherein she far surpassed other ladies, her companions, which so inflamed the King's mind that in the end he took her into his secret and deep favor, and so continued many days towards her, she knowing yet nothing thereof. But the flame at  
 25 length burned so far within him that he began not only to speak of his forethought divorce with Queen Catherine, but also of a new marriage with mistress Anne Boleyn, wherein is to be noted the just and secret working of Almighty God, for  
 30 although the Cardinal (to satisfy his ambitious humor in establishing that thing which he somewhat doubted) had wrought this variance between the King and the good Queen, it fell out clean<sup>250</sup> contrary to his expectation, for it was nothing<sup>251</sup> his  
 35 meaning the King should incline his mind to a new marriage this way, but rather elsewhere, as he had devised; wherefore, after mistress Anne had once knowledge of the King's secret good will towards her, and of the Cardinal's contrary working to  
 40 withstand the same, she so ordered the matter that in short space she wrought the Cardinal's utter confusion, for now began the matter to work apace,<sup>252</sup> and that to be now earnestly and openly called upon which hitherto was but secretly handled  
 45 in counsels and convocations of bishops and other learned divines. The King, I say, began to open himself more fully than he had yet done, and for

that purpose were, at my Lord Cardinal's house at Westminster, assembled many notable and famous  
 50 clerks,<sup>253</sup> not only of both the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, but also of diverse cathedral churches and religious houses of this realm. There was this the King's matter debated, argued, and consulted the space of many days, that it was a  
 55 wonderful thing to hear, but yet all fell not out so clear for the King as it was expected, for by the opinion of the greatest number, the cause was too hard and of too great importance for them to decide, and therefore the fathers departed without  
 60 any resolution. Howbeit,<sup>254</sup> diverse of the bishops were of mind<sup>255</sup> that the King should send his orators to sundry universities, as well abroad in Christendom as to the two universities at home, to have his cause discussed substantially among them,  
 65 and the definition<sup>256</sup> thereof to bring with them in writing under their common seals, which was done accordingly to the King's great cost and charges,<sup>257</sup> for it was well known that these seals were obtained  
 70 by corruption of money, and not by any free grant or consent; nevertheless, great joy was made for obtaining thereof, and the orators were highly rewarded at their return for their great labors and travels, some with bishoprics, and some otherwise  
 75 far beyond their merits and deservings. Notwithstanding, the matter proceeded apace, and these instruments thus obtained under the universities' seals were all delivered into the  
 80 Cardinal's hands, who immediately sent for all the bishops, and fell to consultation once again, but all to little purpose; further the conclusion was that although the universities had given out these  
 85 censures<sup>258</sup> under their seals, yet was the cause too great for them to define of themselves,<sup>259</sup> and therefore not to be further dealt in by them without the authority of the See Apostolic; wherefore, it was  
 90 agreed that the King should send to Rome certain orators with the seals of these universities, to treat with the Pope for his confirmation. According to which resolution the ambassadors were speedily dispatched to the Pope's Holiness, which then was  
 Clement the VII, The ambassadors' names were these: Doctor Stephen Gardiner,<sup>260</sup> the King's secretary; Sir Thomas Bryan,<sup>261</sup> Knight, one of the gentlemen of the King's Privy Chamber; Sir

249 *for that*: because 250 completely

251 not at all 252 speedily 253 clerics

254 However 255 an opinion 256 for-

mal decision 257 expense 258 formal

judgments or opinions 259 decide on

their own 260 *ca.* 1497-1555

Gregory da Casale, an Italian; and Master Peter Vanus,<sup>262</sup> a Venetian. These ambassadors being arrived at Rome, after they had propounded the cause of their coming, and a while rested themselves, the matter fell speedily in hand. Then wanted no posting of letters between the King and the ambassadors, instructing them from time to time how to deal with the Pope, that this business might be brought about. Likewise the Cardinal omitted no time or occasion by his letters to set forward the same. But (God so ordering the matter) the ambassadors were not half so hasty in demanding, but the Pope was as slow in granting, and much the slower, by reason of his sickness, being at that time so sore pained with the gout that there was doubt of his life. Wherefore, after knowledge come<sup>263</sup> once to the King and the Cardinal, then letters went thick and threefold to the orators, willing them to call more earnestly upon him for his definitive answer, thinking now by reason of the great pain he continually felt of his infirmity, he would the rather be rid of their calling, and so end the matter, according to their demand. Further, they had instruction from the King and the Cardinal in their letters, that in case the Pope chanced to die at this present, that then they should by all means they could devise some way how the Cardinal of York might be elected to succeed in the place, and for furtherance thereof to deal with certain cardinals, promising them in the King's name golden mountains and silver rivers to give their suffrages with him. And in case they would not by this means bring their purposes to pass, but that the cardinals in the conclave would needs choose into the place some such as perhaps would not further the King's intent, then to take up a sum of money upon the King's credit, and therewithal to raise a power or presidy<sup>264</sup> of men (as by the King's letters and the cardinals it is termed), and taking with them such cardinals as might be brought to favor their purpose, to depart out of the city into some out place not far off, and there to make a schism in election of the Cardinal of York to the papacy. But (lauded be God) all fell out otherwise than was then meant; for the Pope recovered health, and after lived to finish all business, though indeed clean<sup>265</sup> otherwise than

the King expected, as after shall be declared. Wherefore, seeing none of these ways would speed,<sup>266</sup> and finding that the Pope would make no such haste in satisfying the King's desire as the orators required, it was at last requested that it might please his Holiness to send a legate into England, giving him full authority to hear the case debated there, and finally to give sentence according to right and equity. After the expenses of many days the Pope was at last contented (with much ado) to agree to that request, and to this affair he appointed Lawrence Campagius,<sup>267</sup> a cardinal of the Church of Rome, entitled *Sancte Mariae trans Tiberim*,<sup>268</sup> a man very well learned, and of great courage and magnanimity, to whom the King, about ten years afore,<sup>269</sup> had given the bishopric of Bath at his being in England about another matter. The ambassadors being returned with this conclusion, there rested no more then but to prepare for the legate's coming, who (after long expectation and many weary journeys) arrived at last in England, and coming to London was lodged at Bath place, sometime his own house. But before his arrival it was thought very necessary, by such as favored the King's purpose, that the Cardinal of York should be joined in commission with him. Whereupon such speedy order was taken that before Campeggio came to Calais, a new commission was brought him from the Pope, wherein the Cardinal of York and he were made joint commissioners together. And because the Pope understood that King Henry desired nothing more than a full and speedy expedition<sup>270</sup> of this matter, and was very impatient of long tracting<sup>271</sup> of time in trial thereof, the more to put the King in hope of ready justice—if the equity of his cause so required—he made (as I have heard say) a bull of sentence to be written ready, wherein the marriage was utterly frustrate<sup>272</sup> and made void, and this bull he delivered very secretly to Cardinal Campeggio after his departure, willing and charging him, nevertheless, that after the bull once showed to the King and the Cardinal, he should after keep it close<sup>273</sup> from all others, and in no wise to publish the same till such time as he had received a new authority and commandment from him—no although he saw and had proof of sufficient matter

261 Sir Francis Bryan (ca. 1490–1550), Anne Boleyn's cousin 262 Pietro Vannes of Lucca (d. 1563), Latin secretary to Henry VIII

263 had come 264 guard, garrison 265 completely 266 succeed 267 Lorenzo Campeggio (1474–1539), an Italian Cardinal and papal legate to England

268 "of St. Mary's across the Tiber" 269 before 270 execution 271 drawing out 272 invalid, null 273 secret

so to give sentence. And this the Pope did only to the intent that the King should the more quietly be content to have all tried in due form and order of law, although<sup>274</sup> it were the longer in doing. When the two cardinals were met and had communed a season<sup>275</sup> of their business, they first took order for the open reading and declaring of their commission. Then a place was assigned where it should be done, and that was at the Dominican Friars in London, and the King with the Queen his wife should be lodged at a place now called Bridewell, standing hard<sup>276</sup> by. Then stood ready the counselors, learned as well on the King's part as the Queen's; for the King (because he would<sup>277</sup> seem indifferent)<sup>278</sup> willed the Queen to choose her counsel, which although of herself she would choose none at all—because she suspected the indifferency of the King's own subjects towards her, being in his own dominion and realm—yet for fashion sake were assigned unto her diverse learned men—that is to say, of divines: this excellent man of whom we entreat,<sup>279</sup> John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester; Henry Standish, Bishop of Saint Asaph; Thomas Abell, Richard Fetherston, Edward Powell, and Robert Ridley, all doctors of divinity. And of civilians and canonists<sup>280</sup> were there: William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury; Cuthbert Tunstall, Bishop of London; Nicholas West, Bishop of Ely; and John Clarke, Bishop of Bath, because Cardinal Campeggio was then translated<sup>281</sup> to the See of Salisbury; she had also other profound clerks, as well divines as lawyers. On the King's part were also another like number of learned doctors. Then peace and silence was proclaimed, and the commission was read; that being done, this our learned bishop offered up to the legates a book which he had compiled in defense of the marriage, and therewith made a learned and grave oration unto them, desiring them to take good heed what they did in this weighty case, putting them in mind of sundry manifold dangers that were likely to ensue, not only to this realm, but also to the whole state of Christendom, by bringing in question the validity or invalidity of this marriage, being indeed a matter so plain, as there was no doubt therein at all. After that<sup>282</sup> his oration was ended, the King was called by name, and answered “here.” Then was the Queen

called, who made no answer, but rose immediately out of her chair, and coming about by the court, she kneeled down to the King openly in sight of the legates and all the court, and spoke in effect these words, some in broken English, and some in French:

Sir, (quoth she) I beseech you do justice and right and take some pity upon me, for I am a simple woman and a stranger, born out<sup>283</sup> of your dominions, having here no indifferent counsel, and less assurance of friendship. Alas, sir, what have I offended you, or what occasion of displeasure have I given you, that should go about to put me from you after this sort.<sup>284</sup> I take God to my judge, I have been to you a true and humble wife, ever conformable to your will and pleasure. I never contraried or gainsaid<sup>285</sup> you therein, but always contented myself with all things wherein you had delight and pleasure, whether it were little or much, without grudge or countenance of discontentation. I loved for your sake all them that you loved, whether I had cause or not, or whether they were my friends or foes; I have been your wife this twenty years, and you have had by me diverse children, and when you took me at the first (I take God to my judge) I was a very<sup>286</sup> maid, and whether it be true or no I put it to your conscience. Now if there be any just cause that you allege against me, either of dishonesty or other matter, whereby you may put me from you, I am content to depart with shame and rebuke, but if there be none, then, I pray you, let me have justice at your hands. The King, your father, was in his time of such an excellent wit<sup>287</sup> that he was accounted of<sup>288</sup> many men for his wisdom a second Solomon. And King Ferdinand, my father, was reckoned to be one of the wisest princes that reigned in Spain many years before his days. These being both so wise princes, it is not to be doubted but they had gathered unto them as wise counselors of every realm as by their wisdoms they thought meet.<sup>289</sup> And as I take it, there were in those days as wise and well learned in both realms as be now in these days, who thought at that time the marriage between you and me to be good and lawful. But of all this business I may thank you, my Lord Cardinal of York, who having long sought to make this dissension between my lord the King and me, because I have so oft found fault with your pomp and vanity and aspiring mind. Howbeit,<sup>290</sup> this your malice against me proceedeth not from you as in respect of myself alone, but your chief displeasure is against my nephew the Emperor, for that<sup>291</sup> at his hands

274 even if 275 *communed a season:*  
talked for a while 276 close 277 want-  
ed to 278 impartial 279 treat

280 those skilled in canon law  
281 transferred 282 *After that:* After  
283 outside

284 *after this sort:* in this way 285 con-  
tradicted 286 true 287 intellect  
288 by 289 fitting

you were first repelled from the bishopric of  
 Toledo, which greedily you desired, and after that  
 were by his means kept from the chief and high  
 bishopric of Rome, whereunto most ambitiously  
 5 you aspired, whereat being sore<sup>292</sup> offended, and  
 yet not able to revenge your quarrel on him, you  
 have now raised this quarrel against me, his poor  
 aunt, thinking thereby to ease your cruel mind,  
 for the which God forgive you and amend you. It  
 10 is therefore a wonder to hear what new inventions  
 are now devised against me that never intended  
 but honestly. And now to cause me to stand to  
 the order and judgment of this court, ye should  
 (said she to the King) do me much wrong, as  
 15 seemeth to me, seeing one of the judges is partial  
 against me, and hath sought means to raise this  
 displeasure between you and me. And further, if  
 I should agree to stand to the judgment of this  
 court, ye may condemn me for lack of answer,  
 20 having no counsel but such as you have assigned  
 me, and those ye may well consider cannot be  
 indifferent<sup>293</sup> on my part, seeing they be your own  
 subjects and such as you have taken and chosen  
 out of your own counsel, whereunto they are  
 25 privy and dare not disclose your will and intent.  
 Therefore, I refuse here to stand to the order of  
 this court, and do appeal to the See Apostolic  
 before our holy father the Pope, humbly  
 beseeching you in the way of charity to spare me  
 30 till I may further understand what way my friends  
 in Spain will advise me to take. And if you will  
 not this do, then your pleasure be fulfilled.

And with that she rose up and, making a low  
 curtsy to the King, departed, leaving there many  
 35 a weeping eye and sorrowful heart, that heard her  
 lamentable words. Amongst whom this worthy  
 Bishop of Rochester (as one that knew most of the  
 equity of the cause) was not able to refrain from  
 tears, which open sight caused many others to have  
 40 the more compassion of<sup>294</sup> the good Queen's cause.

As soon as the Queen was up, it was supposed  
 that she would have returned to her place from  
 whence she came, but she departed straight out of  
 the court, and would in no wise return, saying to  
 45 such as were about her that she would no longer  
 tarry, for the Court was not indifferent for her, and  
 so she departed for that time, and would never after  
 appear in open court.

The King, perceiving that she was thus gone, and  
 50 considering well on the words she had there spoken,  
 said to the audience thus in effect:

Forasmuch as<sup>295</sup> the Queen is now gone, I will  
 in her absence declare unto you all: That she  
 hath been to me as true, as obedient, and as  
 conformable a wife as I could wish or desire; she  
 55 hath all the virtuous qualities that ought to be in a  
 woman of her dignity, or any other, yea, though<sup>296</sup>  
 she were of baser state. She is also a noblewoman  
 born, as her noble conditions will well declare,  
 and the special cause that moved me in this matter  
 60 was a certain scruple, that pricked my conscience.  
 Whether my daughter Mary should be legitimate  
 or no, in respect of this marriage with this woman  
 being sometime my brother's wife, which thing  
 once conceived in the secrets of my breast, by  
 65 a certain occasion given me when time was,  
 engendered such a scrupulous doubt in me, that  
 my mind was incontinently accumbered,<sup>297</sup> vexed,  
 and disquieted, whereby I mistrusted myself to be  
 greatly in the danger of God's indignation, which  
 70 appeared to me (as to me seemed the rather), for  
 that<sup>298</sup> he sent us no issue male, and that all such  
 issues as she had by me died incontinently after  
 they came into this world, so that I doubted<sup>299</sup>  
 75 the great displeasure of Almighty God in that  
 behalf. Thus my conscience, being tossed to and  
 fro with the waves of continual unquietness, and  
 almost in despair to have any other issue than I  
 had already by this lady, it behooved me further  
 80 to consider the state of this realm, and the danger  
 it stood in for lack of a prince to succeed me.  
 And therefore, I thought it good in release of  
 this mighty burden of my conscience, and the  
 quiet state of this noble realm, to attempt the law  
 85 therein, whether I might lawfully take another  
 wife, by whom God may send me issue, in case  
 this, my first marriage, were not good. And this is  
 the only cause I have sought thus far, and not for  
 any displeasure or disliking of the Queen's person  
 or age, with whom I could be as well content to  
 90 continue (if our marriage may stand with the laws  
 of God) as with any woman alive. And in this  
 point consisteth all the doubt that we go about  
 to try, by the learning, wisdom, and judgments of  
 95 you, my lords, the prelates and pastors of this our  
 realm, now here assembled for that purpose, to  
 whose conscience and learning I have committed  
 the charge thereof, and according to that will I  
 be content (God willing) to submit myself with  
 100 obedience. And that I meant not to wade in so  
 weighty a matter of myself, without the opinion  
 and judgment of you, my lords spiritual, it may  
 well appear in this: that shortly after the coming  
 of this scruple into my head, I moved it to you, my  
 105 Lord of Lincoln, then my ghostly<sup>300</sup> father. And  
 forasmuch as yourself were then in some doubt,

290 However 291 *for that*: because  
 292 greatly 293 impartial 294 for

295 *Forasmuch as*: Seeing that 296 even  
 if 297 *incontinently accumbered*: imme-

diately oppressed 298 *for that*: because  
 299 feared

you advised me to ask the counsel of the rest of my lords the bishops; whereupon I moved<sup>301</sup> you, my Lord of Canterbury, first to have your license (inasmuch as you were metropolitan) to put this matter in question, and so I did of all you, my lords, to which you all granted under your seals, and that I have here to be showed.

“That is true, if it please your grace,” quoth my Lord of Canterbury, “and I doubt notbut my brethren here will acknowledge the same.”

Then my Lord of Rochester, knowing the clearness of his own conscience, and perceiving the double dealing in this matter, was forced for discharge of his own credit and truth to break a little square,<sup>302</sup>

and said to my Lord of Canterbury, “No, no, my lord, not so. Under your favor all the bishops were not so far agreed, for to that instrument you have neither my hand nor seal.” “No, ah,” quoth the King, and therewith looking upon my Lord of Rochester with a frowning countenance said, “Look here, is not this your hand and your seal?” and showed him the instrument with seals. “No, forsooth,”<sup>303</sup> quoth the Bishop. “How say you to that?” said the King to my Lord of Canterbury. “Sir,” said he, “it is his hand and his seal.” “No, my lord,” quoth the Bishop of Rochester again. “Indeed, you were often in hand with<sup>304</sup> me for my hand and my seal, as other of my lords have done, but then I ever said to you, I would in no wise consent to any such act, for it was much against my conscience to have this matter so much as once called in question, and therefore my hand and seal should never be put to any such instrument, God willing, with more communication between us in that business, if you remember.” “Indeed,” quoth my Lord of Canterbury, “True it is that such words you had with me, but after our talk ended, you were at last resolved and content that I should subscribe your name, and put to your seal, and you would allow the same as if it had been done by yourself.”

Then my Lord of Rochester, seeing himself so unjustly charged by the Bishop of Canterbury, said unto him openly again, “No, my lord, by your favor and license, all this you have said of me is untrue,” and with that meant to have said more, but that<sup>305</sup> the King stopping him, said, ‘Well, well, my Lord of Rochester, it maketh no great matter; we will not stand with you in argument about this business, for

you are but one man among the rest, if the worst fall.” And so for that time all was ended.

Shortly after, another day of sitting was appointed, where they two cardinals were present, at which time the counsel on both sides were there ready to answer. There was much matter proposed by the counsel on the King’s part to prove the marriage not lawful from the begining, because of the carnal copulation had between Prince Arthur and the Queen. This matter being vehemently urged, many reasons and similitudes<sup>306</sup> were alleged to prove the carnal copulation, but, being again negatively answered by the counsel of the Queen’s side, all seemed to rest upon proof, which was very hard and almost impossible to be tried. But my Lord of Rochester said that the truth of this marriage was plain enough to be proved good and lawful from the begining—whether there were carnal knowledge between the parties or no—for the case (he said) was thoroughly scanned and debated in the begining by many great learned divines and lawyers, whereof himself remembered the time, and was not altogether ignorant of the manner of dealing therein. And being after ratified and approved by authority of the See Apostolic, so amply and so largely, he thought it a hard matter to call it now again in question before any other judge. Then spoke Doctor Ridley, who was a man of very little and small personage,<sup>307</sup> but high of courage and profound in learning, and he said to my Lord Cardinal that it was a great shame and dishonor to this honorable presence, that any such presumptuous similitudes and conjectures should be so openly alleged, for they be detestable to be rehearsed.<sup>308</sup> “What!” quoth my Lord Cardinal, “*Domine doctor, magis reverenter.*”<sup>309</sup> “No, no, my lord,” quoth he, “there belongeth no reverence to be given at all, for an unreverent matter would be unreverently answered.” Against that court day the Bishop of London, Cuthbert Tunstall, had framed and written a very learned treatise in defense of the Queen’s marriage, which he delivered before to Cardinal Campeggio, to be read at the day; but the King, fearing him much (as he was indeed a very famous learned man), made such speedy order with him that he was of purpose sent away ambassador into Scotland about a matter of small importance,

300 spiritual 301 appealed to  
302 break ... square: interrupt the regular order a little 303 in truth

304 in hand with: endeavoring to persuade; in conference with 305 but that: but 306 likelihoods

307 rank, distinction 308 related, described 309 “Lord doctor, [speak] more reverently!”

and appeared not in the court the second sitting, by reason whereof the book was not read at all. Nevertheless, Cardinal Campeggio called for him, and wished to hear him speak, for he said in Latin,  
 5 *Cum Tonstallum lego videor mihi ipsum uspiam audire.*<sup>310</sup> Thus, proceeding from day to day, the legates still sat at their accustomed place, but all matters of question were clean<sup>311</sup> laid aside, seeing the Queen had appealed, and they now inquired  
 10 only of such things as belonged to instruction of the cause, and information to be given to the Pope's Holiness. But the Bishop of Ely, being one of the Queen's counsel, and one that mistrusted the Cardinal of York's just and true dealing with her, openly declared in his writing that he marveled  
 15 what my lords the legates meant, to hear or hold any further plea of this matter, seeing the Queen had made her appeal to a higher judge than they. The matter being come to this conclusion, the King was  
 20 clean disappointed, and driven now to seek a new way. Wherefore, he sent for the Cardinal of York to come unto him, and gave unto him a great charge to go with the other Cardinal his fellow to the Queen, and by their wisdoms to persuade with her to give  
 25 over her appeal, and to stand to the judgment of this court, or else to surrender the matter into his hands, which should be much better and more honorable for both parties than to stand to open trial in the court of Rome. The Cardinal, to satisfy the King's  
 30 pleasure, did according to his commandment, but all in vain, for the Queen stood very stiffly to her appeal, and could by no means be altered from that mind, for anything the Cardinal of York could say or do, who was much more earnest with her than the  
 35 other cardinal was, she alleging still for herself her simplicity and unbleness to answer in so weighty a matter, being but a woman, and clean destitute of friends or counsel here within the King's realm, for "think you" said she, "that any of the King's subjects  
 40 will adventure themselves to incur his displeasure for my cause? No, no. And therefore, I pray<sup>312</sup> you bear with me, a poor woman destitute of friendship, and let me have your charitable counsel what is best for me to do, so as all may be ended to the glory  
 45 of God and satisfaction of the King's Majesty and me." This communication ended, they returned to the King and made relation of her talk.

This strange case proceeding thus from day to day and court to court, the King at last grew weary and urged the cardinals to a final day of sentence, at  
 50 which time the King came thither, and was openly set in his chair to hear the judgment, where all their proceedings and acts were openly read in Latin. That done the King's counsel called for judgment; with that said Cardinal Campeggio in Latin: 55

No, not so, I will give no sentence till I have made relation unto the Pope of all our doings, whose commandment I will observe in this case; the matter is too high for us to define hastily, considering the highness of the persons and the doubtful arguments alleged, remembering  
 60 also whose commissioners we be, and under whose authority we sit, it were (methinketh) good reason we should make our chief head of counsel therewith before we proceed to sentence  
 65 definitive. I come not hither to please—for favor, meed,<sup>313</sup> or dread of any person alive, be he king or subject—neither have I such respect to the person that I will offend my conscience or displease God. I am now an old man, both weak  
 70 and sickly, and daily look for death, and should I now put my soul in danger of God's displeasure to my everlasting damnation for the favor or fear of any prince in this world? My coming hither is  
 75 only to see justice ministred<sup>314</sup> according to my conscience. And forasmuch as<sup>315</sup> I understand by the allegations the matter to be very doubtful and also that the party defendant will make no answer here, but doth rather appeal from us, supposing  
 80 that we cannot be indifferent judges for her, considering the King's high authority and dignity within his own realm, where she thinketh we dare not do her justice, for fear of his displeasure. Therefore to avoid all these ambiguities I will  
 85 not damn my soul for any prince or potentate alive. In consideration whereof I intend not to wade any further in this matter till I have the just opinion and assent of the Pope, and such other as be better seen<sup>316</sup> in such doubtful causes of law than I am. Wherefore, I do here adjourn  
 90 this court for this time, according to the order of the court of Rome, from whence our authority is derived, which if we should transgress, might be accounted in us great folly and rashness, and redound<sup>317</sup> to our discredit and blame. 95

And with that the court was dissolved, and no more was ever done after that day.

The noble men about<sup>318</sup> the King, seeing all this business come to this conclusion, began to mutiny

310 "When I read Tunstall, I seem to hear him speaking somewhere!" 311 com-

pletely 312 ask 313 reward 314 ex- ecuted 315 *forasmuch as*: seeing that

316 skilled, proficient 317 contribute

and speak ill of the two cardinals, specially such as were flatterers and parasites about the King. Insomuch as the Duke of Suffolk, Charles Brandon, whom the King had before highly advanced from  
 5 a base<sup>319</sup> state to great honors and possessions, and also given him his own sister in marriage, clapping his hands on the board, swore, by God's blood, that he found now the old saying was true—that cardinals did never good in England—and that he  
 10 spoke with such a spirit of vehemency, and with so clamorous a noise, that all men about him marveled what he meant, and wise men thought he durst<sup>320</sup> not thus have said, but that he knew the King's mind aforehand.

15 The King himself conceived likewise great indignation and displeasure, both against the Cardinal of York, and also the Queen's counsel, for that<sup>321</sup> he had lost and spent in vain (as he thought) all this long time, and grew now so wrathful against them that he determined in his mind never to cease  
 20 till he was revenged on them all, as after it came to pass indeed, though greatly to all their merits and everlasting glory, and his own perpetual ignominy and reproach, for of this branch proceeded the death, not only of this holy and reverend bishop  
 25 of whom we entreat, but also of that glorious man, Sir Thomas More, with many other worthy and famous prelates and laymen, whereof three, that were sometime of the Queen's learned counsel  
 30 in this matter of divorce, were put to most cruel death in Smithfield, all in one day, which was also meant to the rest had it not been that death by great sorrow and grief shortened some of their days, and prevented the King's purpose, as happened to the  
 35 Bishop of Ely<sup>322</sup> and Doctor Ridley. And some others, not being of such fortitude as the rest were, yielded themselves for<sup>323</sup> fear to the King's will and pleasure, leaving the Queen (as they call it) in plain field.<sup>324</sup> Among which the bishop of Canterbury

40 was one who most deceived her and many more.

Cardinal Campeggio perceiving the King now fallen into this fury, and further seeing that there was no more to be done by him nor his fellow  
 (the Queen having made her appeal), he thought  
 45 it therefore best to be shortly gone, and so, taking his leave of the King, departed towards Rome, after he had tarried in England about this business nigh

the space of one year. He was no sooner gone, but a rumor rose (I wot<sup>325</sup> not by what means) that he had  
 50 carried with him a great heap of treasure of the other cardinals, who for fear of the King's displeasure was suspected likely to fly out of the realm, insomuch as he sent speedily after Cardinal Campeggio certain  
 55 persons, who overtook him at Calais, and there stayed him till he was searched very narrowly, and when they had done all that could be done, they found about him scant<sup>326</sup> so much money as would pay for his riding charges, and so dismissed him on his journey greatly discontented. Now although the  
 60 color<sup>327</sup> of this search was for the Cardinal of York's treasure, yet indeed it was well known after to be done for another purpose; for the King thought to have found about him the instrument (whereof we spoke lately before) delivered unto him by the Pope  
 65 at his departure from Rome, wherein was contained the sentence of divorce, which if he might have found, no doubt but he would have made some play therewith, whether the meaning of the Pope had been to have it published or no. But he was, for  
 70 all that, deceived<sup>328</sup> of his purpose, and all they that gave him counsel to the same.

By this time the King's ire was so sore<sup>329</sup> kindled against the whole clergy, and specially against this our holy bishop—whom he knew to bear such a  
 75 stroke<sup>330</sup> among them that, as long as he was there, nothing could succeed according to his purpose—that he began to devise new laws against the right and patrimony of the Church; for in the twenty-second year of his reign he summoned a Parliament to begin at London, the third day of November,  
 80 which was in the year of our Lord God 1529. In this Parliament the Common House was so partially chosen that the King had his will almost in all things that himself lifted, for where in old time the King used to direct his brief or writ of Parliament to every city, borough, and corporate town within this  
 85 realm, that they among them should make election of two honest, fit, and skillful men of their own number to come to this Parliament, the same order and form of the writ was now in this Parliament  
 90 observed, but then with every writ there came also a private letter from some one or other of the King's counselors, requesting them to choose the persons nominated in their letters, who fearing their great

318 around 319 low-born 320 dared  
 321 for that: because 322 Nicholas  
 West (1461-1533) 323 on account of

324 in plain field: on the open battlefield  
 325 know 326 hardly 327 appearance,  
 pretext 328 frustrated; disappointed

329 greatly; harshly 330 bear ... stroke:  
 have such great influence



authority, durst<sup>331</sup> commonly choose none other, so that where<sup>332</sup> in times past, the Common House was usually furnished with grave and discreet townsmen, appareled in comely and sage furred gowns, now might you have seen in this Parliament few others than roistering<sup>333</sup> courtiers, servingmen, parasites, and flatterers of all sorts highly appareled in short cloaks and swords, and as lightly furnished either with learning or honesty, so that when anything was moved against the spirituality<sup>334</sup> or the liberty of the Church, to that they hearkened diligently, giving straight their assents in anything that the King would require. Then were preferred in the Common House all the slanderous bills against the clergy that might be devised, complaining of their idleness, their great wealth, and abuse in spending of their revenues, whereof although some bills were rejected in the higher house, yet many took place. Among which, one was for abating of charges in the probate of testaments and wills, another was for diminishing of mortuaries,<sup>335</sup> another against pluralities of benefices<sup>336</sup> and taking of farms by spiritual men, which were all directly passed by the Common House in derogation and prejudice of the Church, but after they were brought to the Higher House and there read, my Lord of Rochester stepped up among the other lords, and said in effect as followeth:

My lords, I pray you for God's sake, consider what bills are here daily preferred<sup>337</sup> from the Commons; what the same may sound in some of your ears I cannot tell, but in my ears they sound all to this effect: that our Holy Mother the Church, being left unto us by the great liberality and diligence of our forefathers, in most perfect and peaceable freedom, shall now by us be brought into servile thralldom, like to a bound maid, or rather by little and little to be clean<sup>338</sup> banished and driven out of our confines and dwelling places; for else to what end should all this importunate and injurious petitions from the Commons tend? What strange words be here uttered, not to be heard of<sup>339</sup> any Christian ears, and unworthy to be spoken in the hearing of Christian princes? For they say that bishops and their associates, abbots, priests, and others of the clergy are vicious, ravenous, insatiable, idle, cruel, and so forth. What, are all of this sort? Or is there any of these abuses that the clergy seek not to

extirpate and destroy? Be there not laws already provided against such and many more disorders? Are not books full of them to be read of such as list<sup>340</sup> to read them, if they were executed? But, my lords, beware of yourselves and your country; nay, beware of the liberty of our Mother the Church. Luther, one of the most cruel enemies to the faith that ever was, is at hand, and the common people study for<sup>341</sup> novelties, and with good will hear what can be said in favor of heresy. What success is there to be hoped for in these attempts other than such as our neighbors have already tasted, whose harms may be a good warning to us? Remember with yourselves what these sects and divisions have wrought among the Bohemians and Germans, who, besides an innumerable number of mischiefs fallen among them, have almost lost their ancient and Catholic faith. And what, by the snares of Jan Hus,<sup>342</sup> and after him Martin Luther (whom they reverence like a prophet), they have almost excluded themselves from the unity of Christ's holy Church. These men now among us seem to reprove the life and doings of the clergy, but after such a sort as they endeavor to bring them into contempt and hatred of the laity, and so finding fault with other men's manners, whom they have no authority to correct, omit and forget their own, which is far worse and much more out of order than the other. But if the truth were known, ye shall find that they rather hunger and thirst after the riches and possessions of the clergy than after amendment of their faults and abuses. And therefore it was not for nothing that this motion was lately made for the small monasteries to be taken into the King's hands. Wherefore, I will tell you, my lords, plainly what I think: except<sup>343</sup> you resist manfully by your authorities this violent heap of mischief offered by the Commons, ye shall shortly see all obedience withdrawn, first from the clergy, and after yourselves, whereupon will ensue the utter ruin and danger of the Christian faith; and in place of it (that which is likely to follow) the most wicked and tyrannical government of the Turk, for ye shall find that all these mischiefs among them riseth through lack of faith.

This speech being ended, although there were diverse of the clergy that liked well thereof, and some of the laity also, yet were there some again that seemed to dislike the same only for flattery and fear of the King, insomuch as the Duke of Norfolk reproved him half merrily and half angrily, saying

331 dared 332 whereas 333 revelling;  
boisterous 334 clergy 335 payments to  
priests for funerals

336 ecclesiastical livings 337 presented,  
submitted 338 completely 339 by  
340 choose; wish 341 study for: set their

mind on 342 Hus (*ca.* 1372–1415), a  
leader of the Reformation in Bohemia  
343 unless

that many of these words might have been missed, adding further these words, "Iwis,<sup>344</sup> my lord, it is many times seen that the greatest clerks be not always the wisest men," but to that he answered as  
 5 merrily again, and said that he could not remember any fools in his time that had proved great clerks. But when the Commons heard of these words spoken against them, they straightway conceived such displeasure against my Lord of Rochester, that  
 10 by the mouth of Master Audley, their Speaker, they made a grievous complaint to the King of his words, saying that it was a great discredit to them all to be thus charged that they lacked faith, which in effect was all one to say they were heretics and infidels,  
 15 and therefore desired<sup>345</sup> the King that they might have some remedy against him. The King therefore, to satisfy them, called my Lord of Rochester before him, and demanded why he spoke in that sort.<sup>346</sup> And he answered again that, being in counsel, he  
 20 spoke his mind in defense and right of the Church, whom he saw daily injured and oppressed among the common people, whose office was not to deal with her, and therefore said that he thought himself in conscience bound to defend her all that he might.  
 25 The King, nevertheless, willed him to use his words temperately. And so the matter ended, much to the discontentation of Master Audley and diverse others of the Common House.

In the same Parliament was also a motion made  
 30 (as ye have heard before), that the King had been at great charges and large expenses in suing forth sundry instruments<sup>347</sup> touching the divorce between him and Queen Catherine, which chiefly rose (as was there said) by the false and double dealing of  
 35 the Cardinal and the clergy, and therefore reason that it should be answered among them again. And to satisfy this matter withal,<sup>348</sup> nothing was thought so convenient<sup>349</sup> as to recompense him in the Convocation, by granting unto him all the small  
 40 abbeys and monasteries within this realm of the value of two hundred pounds, lands and under. This matter was hardly<sup>350</sup> urged and set forth by many of the King's counsel, with all the terrible show that might be of the King's displeasure, if it were  
 45 not granted according to his request and demand, insomuch as diverse of the Convocation, fearing the King's grievous indignation and cruelty, and

thinking that their yielding in this matter would be a means to stop all and save the rest, were of mind<sup>351</sup> to condescend<sup>352</sup> to that demand. But the good father could never be brought to that opinion, but  
 50 openly resisted it with all the force he could. And on a time said among them,

My lords, I pray you take good heed what you do in hasty granting to the King's demand in this  
 55 great matter. It is here required that we should grant unto him the small abbeys for the ease of his charges; whereunto, if we condescend, it is likely the great will be demanded ere<sup>353</sup> it be long  
 60 after: And therefore considering the manner of this dealing, it putteth me in remembrance of a fable. How the axe that lacked a handle came on a time to the wood, and making his moan  
 to the great trees, how that for lack of a handle to work withal<sup>354</sup> he was fain<sup>355</sup> to stand idle, he  
 65 therefore desired<sup>356</sup> of them to grant him some young sapling in the wood to make him one; they mistrusting no guile forthwith<sup>357</sup> granted young small tree, whereof he shaped himself a handle,  
 70 and being at last a perfect axe in all points, he fell to work, and so labored in the wood that in process of time he left neither great tree nor small standing. And so, my lords, if ye grant to the  
 King the small monasteries, ye do but make him a handle, and so give him occasion to demand the  
 75 rest ere it be long after, whereof cannot but ensue the displeasure of Almighty God in that ye take upon you to give the things that is none of your own.

To this counsel most of the lords in the covocation  
 80 inclined, and so for that time all was rejected and no more said as long as this good father lived, but shortly after his death the matter was revived and granted to the King's first will and pleasure.

Now whilst these things were thus in handling,  
 85 it chanced this reverend father to fall into a great danger and peril, whereby he escaped very narrowly with his life; for a certain naughty<sup>358</sup> person, of a most damnable and wicked disposition, provided on a day a quantity of poison, and came with the  
 90 same into my Lord of Rochester's house to the cook, being of his acquaintance, between whom, after a few words had passed, the cook offered him to drink, and so went to the buttery to fetch him  
 95 drink. Then this ungodly person, having gotten a good opportunity for his purpose (while nobody

344 Truly 345 asked 346 manner  
 347 legal documents 348 therefore,  
 thereby 349 appropriate, suitable

350 vigorously 351 intention 352 con-  
 sent, agree 353 before 354 with  
 355 obliged, forced 356 asked, requested

357 immediately 358 wicked

was left within the kitchen), threw the poison into a pail of yeast,<sup>359</sup> whereof pottage was to be made for my lord to eat at dinner with others of his family, at his house in Lambeth Marsh. But see the wonderful chance, or rather the great provision of Almighty God: when his servant came to call him to his dinner, it happened that the said reverend father, by overlong sitting and reading in his study that forenoon, more than his accustomed hour, to have no great stomach to his dinner. And therefore answered that he would spare his dinner for that time till night, the like whereof it could not be remembered that he had at any time done before, willing, nevertheless, that the household servants should be set to dinner, who eating of the poisoned gruel were so pitifully infected therewith that the most part of them never recovered their health to their dying day, and two died forthwith, the one a gentleman called Master Bennett Curwen, and the other an old widow, and so he was delivered of that danger, being reserved (as it may be thought) of God for a more precious death. This wicked person that did the act was named Richard Rose, who was after, for the same offense, boiled quick<sup>360</sup> in Smithfield in the twenty-second year of King Henry's reign. Shortly after this dangerous escape, there happened also unto him another great danger at the same house in Lambeth, for suddenly a gun was shot through the top of his house, not far from his study, where he accustomedly used to sit, which made such a horrible noise over his head, and bruised the tiles and rafters of the house so sore,<sup>361</sup> that both he and diverse others of his servants were suddenly amazed thereat; wherefore, speedy search was made whence this shot should come, and what it meant, which at last was found to come from the other side of the Thames out of the Earl of Wiltshire's house, who was father to the Lady Anne. Then he perceived that great malice was meant towards him, and calling speedily certain of his servants, said, "Let us truss up our gear<sup>362</sup> and be gone from hence, for here is no place for us to tarry any longer," and so immediately departed to Rochester, where he remained not long quiet, before he heard of new trouble. What the occasion of this dealing towards him was, or whether it were by the King's consent or no, I will not certainly affirm, but sure it is that the King at

that time ought<sup>363</sup> him his hearty displeasure, and spoke such and so many dangerous words of him, both at his table and elsewhere, that others hearing the same were the more emboldened to use violence and injury towards him.

After he was departed from London and safely come to Rochester, in this great displeasure and danger, he then fell to his old trade of preaching to his flock and visiting of sick persons, besides an infinite number of other deeds of mercy, and at that time also he bestowed great cost upon the reparation of the bridge of Rochester. But over and above all this, he bestowed no small labor and pain in repressing of heresies, which by this time were very much increased and far spread in this realm. And although by his continual travel he brought many heretics into the way again, that<sup>364</sup> before were far strayed and gone from the truth, yet among other heretics his most labor was with one John Frith,<sup>365</sup> a very obstinate and stubborn wretch, whom he could never reclaim nor bring to any conformity, and therefore was justly by order of law condemned, and after burned in Smithfield.

And although, by means of this great displeasure of the King and many of his nobility, he stood in great danger of his life (as before is mentioned), yet considering the quarrel he had taken in hand, he never seemed to be one whit dismayed thereat, neither yet to be moved for any worldly trouble that could happen unto him; whereof although I could recite you many examples, yet for this time this one may suffice. On a night, as he lay at his manor house of Halling near Rochester, a company of thieves broke privily in the night time into his house, and robbed him of all his plate,<sup>366</sup> which being in the morning perceived and known to his officers and servants, they were much vexed and sorry through the mischance; wherefore, pursuit was speedily made after the thieves, and such diligence was used that, before my lord knew any thing thereof, some part of the plate was found again in a wood joining to the house where the thieves had passed, which through haste in flying they scattered behind them, and durst<sup>367</sup> no more return for it. When dinner time was come, my lord perceived unquietness and heaviness<sup>368</sup> among his servants more than was wont<sup>369</sup> to be, for no man durst open unto him the

359 the yeasty froth from the top of fermenting ale, used in cooking and medicine  
360 alive

361 greatly; severely  
362 truss ... gear:

363 bore 364 who

365 Frith (1503-33) was an English priest burned for heresy. 366 items of precious metal 367 dared

cause, thinking he would have taken it so ill; at last, my lord mistrusting<sup>370</sup> more and more by their countenances of some great harm, he asked one of them what this matter meant, but his servant for fear durst not open unto him the mischance. “No,” said my lord, “I mean not to dine this day before I know what it is.” “Then,” said he, “This night a certain number of thieves have robbed you of your plate, which is all lost and gone, saving<sup>371</sup> a litle quantity that was recovered in a wood by following them, and that,” said he, “was brought back again.” “Is this all?” said my lord. “Then let us go to dinner and be merry, and thank God for that<sup>372</sup> we have still remaining, and look better to it than we did to the rest before,” and so ate his dinner very merrily and quietly.

The King remaining still grievously offended with the whole clergy of England for the ill success of the great matter of divorce, held his Parliament at Westminster, beginning after diverse prorogations the sixteenth day of January in the twenty-second year of his reign, and the year of our Lord God 1530, at which time the clergy of the Province of Canterbury (according to their ancient custom) summoned a Convocation at Westminster. In this Parliament diverse things were boldly proposed and stoutly urged against the clergy, and among other matters it was there declared what great charges<sup>373</sup> the King had wrongfully been at (as it was termed) about his matter of divorce in suit to the court of Rome, and obtaining of sundry instruments of foreign universities, and drafts of many learned mens’ opinions, amounting, as it was declared, to the sum of one hundred thousand pounds and more, the chief and only cause whereof was (as they said) the falsehood and dissimulation of the Cardinal, and certain others of the chief of the clergy; in consideration whereof it was there demanded to be paid among them.

In this matter, as there wanted<sup>374</sup> no orators of the King’s faction to prefer his purpose, so the orator’s wanted no words to debate and set it forward to the most, and on the contrary part, nothing might be heard, or scant<sup>375</sup> any man durst<sup>376</sup> whisper or open his mouth. But yet among the Convocation there wanted not some that spoke stoutly against

the King’s unreasonable demand, among which this holy man was chief, saying that it was not their fault that the King had been at all this charge; neither was there any just cause why he should have spent any one penny about this business, and therefore except<sup>377</sup> some other allegation might be made than they yet heard of, it was flatly denied to give him anything at all.

Then the King growing more furious sought another way, and so by process, bringing the whole clergy into the King’s Bench, sued the Cardinal and them in a Praemunire<sup>378</sup> for acknowledging the authority and power legative of the said Cardinal Wolsey, wherein with small difficulty he condemned them in short space, determining then fully with himself, not only to imprison such and so many of them as himself liked, but also to enter upon their whole possessions and goods. And here I think it not amiss to declare unto you what I have heard of the occasion and cause of this condemnation in the Praemunire.

This realm of England hath of long time challenged (by what means I know not) a privilege granted (as is said) from the See of Rome, that no *legate de latere*<sup>379</sup> should enter the realm except<sup>380</sup> the king had first sent to Rome for him; wherefore, Cardinal Wolsey, either ignorant, forgetful, or else making but small account, being a man wonderful ambitious and aspiring to honor, and in such favor and credit then with the King that he durst attempt what him listed,<sup>381</sup> made such means to the See Apostlic that he obtained power legative from the pope that then was, and exercised the same a certain space<sup>382</sup> without the King’s consent or knowledge. But yet at last remembering what he had done, and weighing the danger that depended thereupon, whilst he more diligently marked the sequel thereof, in case the state of things subject to the course of fortune should change—as many times it happeneth—he wrought so with the King that he obtained his warrant, confirmed under the Great Seal of England, as well for that which was past as for the rest to come. Afterward when the King, mistrusting the Cardinal’s dealing in his great and weighty matter of divorce, began to turn his accustomed love into extreme hatred, for

368 sadness 369 accustomed 370 suspecting 371 except 372 what 373 expenses 374 were lacking 375 hardly 376 dared 377 unless

378 The Statute of Praemunire (1393) forbade British subjects from appealing any legal decisions to any foreign person or body. It specifically targeted appeals made

to Church courts in Rome. 379 *legate de latere*: papal representative of the highest degree 380 unless 381 wished 382 period of time

the more easy practicing thereof he used the help of Master Cromwell—then his servant, and in great trust with him—to get from the Cardinal the foresaid warrant, which, like an unfaithful and traitorous servant, the said Cromwell stole from his master and delivered to the King, who straightways upon it charged the Cardinal with a Praemunire upon a statute of Richard the Second, comprising not only the Cardinal within the compass of that statute for exercising such power legative, but also the rest of the clergy of the realm for accepting and acknowledging the same. But the clergy, not willing to abide the danger of the King's cruel displeasure (if by any means they might avoid it) granted unto him £100,000 by persuasion of the King's counsel, and thereupon desired<sup>383</sup> pardon for the rest of their goods, which at last with much ado<sup>384</sup> was promised unto them all (certain persons excepted), but yet it was not accomplished over-hastily, for before the full performance thereof, a new and strange demand was made to the clergy in their Convocation, such a one as hath not in any Christian prince's days been heard of before, and that was that they should acknowledge the King to be their Supreme Head. This request, although it was very monstrous and rare, yet notwithstanding, the matter was sore<sup>385</sup> urged, and the King's orators omitted no time nor occasion that might help forward their purpose, sometimes by fair words, and sometimes by hard and cruel threatenings, among which Master Thomas Audley was a great doer, who, after such time as blessed Sir Thomas More gave over the office of lord chancellor, succeeded him in that place.

When this matter was come to scanning<sup>386</sup> in the Convocation house, great hold<sup>387</sup> and stir was made about it, for among them there wanted not some that stood ready to set forward the King's purpose, and for fear of them many others durst not speak their minds freely. But when this holy father saw what was towards,<sup>388</sup> and how ready some of their own company were to help forward the King's purpose, he opened before the bishops such and so many inconveniences,<sup>389</sup> by granting to this demand, that in conclusion all was rejected and the King's intent clean<sup>390</sup> overthrown for that time.

Then the King hearing what was done, and perceiving that the whole Convocation rested upon

this worthy bishop, he wrought by sundry means to bring the matter about, and yet doubting that with overmuch haste and vigor at the beginning he might easily at the first overthrow all his intent, he sent his orators at another time to the Convocation house, who in their own names moved the clergy to have good consideration of this gentle and reasonable demand, putting them in mind what danger and peril they stood in at this present against his Majesty for their late contempt in accepting the legative power of the Cardinal, whereby they had also deeply incurred the danger of the law, that their land and goods were wholly at his Highness's will and pleasure, which, notwithstanding, he hath hitherto forborne to execute, upon hope of their good wills and conformities to be showed to him again in this matter. Then the King sent for diverse of the bishops, and certain others of the chief Convocation to come to him, at his palace of Westminster, to whom he proponed<sup>391</sup> with gentle words his request and demand, promising them in the word of a king, that if they would among them acknowledge and confess him for Supreme Head of the Church of England, he would never by virtue of that grant assume unto himself any more power, jurisdiction, or authority over them than all other the kings of the realm of his predecessors had done before, neither would take upon him to make or promulgate any spiritual law, or exercise any spiritual jurisdiction, nor yet by any kind of means intermeddle himself among them in altering, changing, ordering, or judging of any spiritual business. "Therefore, having made you," said he, "this frank promise, I do expect that you should deal as frankly with me again, whereby agreement may the better continue between us." And so the bishops departed with heavy hearts to talk further of this matter in the Convocation among themselves. But still it stuck sore among them upon certain inconveniences before showed by my Lord of Rochester who never spared to open and declare his mind freely in defense of the Church, which many others durst<sup>392</sup> not so frankly do for fear of the King's displeasure, although they were for the most part men of deep wisdom and profound learning.

Then came the King's counselors again from the King to know how the matter sped, seeming as

383 requested 384 trouble 385 greatly  
386 examination, judgment; discussion

387 contention 388 at hand, imminent  
389 troubles; inconsistencies

390 completely 391 proposed  
392 dared

though they had not known what was said before in the Convocation house before their coming. So hotly they followed this matter, once begun for many causes, the King having indeed a further secret meaning than was commonly known to many, which in few years broke out, to the confusion of the whole clergy and temperality<sup>393</sup> both. These counselors there repeated unto the Convocation the King's words, which he himself had spoken to some of them, saying further that if any man would stick<sup>394</sup> now against his Majesty in this point, it must needs declare a great mistrustfulness they had in his Highness's words, seeing he had made so solemn and high an oath. With this subtle and false persuasion, the clergy began somewhat to think, and for the most part to yield to the King's request, saving<sup>395</sup> this holy bishop, who utterly refused to condescend<sup>396</sup> thereunto, and therefore earnestly required<sup>397</sup> the lords, and others of the Convocation to consider and take good heed what mischiefs and inconveniences<sup>398</sup> would ensue to the whole Church of Christ, by this unreasonable and unseemly grant made to a temporal prince, which never yet to this day was once so much as once demanded before, neither can it by any means or reason be in the power or rule of any temporal potentate. "And therefore," said he, "if ye grant to the King's vain request in this matter, it seemeth to me to pretend an imminent and present danger at hand, for what if he should shortly after change his mind and exercise indeed the supremacy over the Church of this realm? Or what if he should die, and then his successor challenge the continuance of the same? Or what if the crown of this realm should in time fall to an infant or a woman that shall still continue and take the same name upon them? What shall we then do? Whom shall we serve unto? Or where shall we have remedy?" The King's counselors to that replied and said that the King had no such meaning as he doubted,<sup>399</sup> and then alleged again his royal protestation and oath made in the word of a King. "And further," said they, "though the supremacy were granted to his Majesty simply and absolutely according to his demand, yet it must needs be understood and taken that he can have no further power or authority by it than *quantum per legem dei licet*,<sup>400</sup> and then if a temporal prince

can have no such authority and power by God's law (as his Lordship had there declared), what needeth the forecasting of all these doubts?" Then at last the counselors fell into disputation among the bishops, of a temporal prince's authority over the clergy, but thereto my Lord of Rochester answered them so fully that they had no list<sup>401</sup> to deal that way any further, for they were indeed but simple smatterers in divinity to speak before such a divine as he was. And so they departed in great anger, showing themselves openly in their own likeness, and saying that whosoever would refuse to condescend to the King's demand herein, was not worthy to be accounted a true and loving subject.

The lords and others of the Convocation seeing this kind of threatening persuasion, besides many other false practices, and fearing the report of the counselors to be made to the King, whom they knew and perceived to be all cruelly bent against the clergy, grew at last to a conclusion, and so after sundry days' argument in great striving and contention agreed in manner<sup>402</sup> fully and wholly among them to condescend to the King's demand that he should be Supreme Head of the Church of England, and to credit his princely word so faithfully and solemnly promised unto them.

My Lord of Rochester perceiving this sudden and hasty grant only made for fear, and not upon any just ground, stood up again all angry, and rebuked them for their pusillanimity in being so lightly changed and easily persuaded. And being very loath that any such grant should pass from the clergy thus absolutely, and yet by no means able to stay it for the fear that was among them, he then advised the Convocation that, seeing the King, both by his own mouth and also by the sundry speeches of his orators, had faithfully promised, and solemnly sworn in the high word of a king that his meaning was to require no further than *quantum per legem dei licet*, and that by virtue thereof his purpose was not to intermeddle with any spiritual laws, spiritual jurisdiction, or government more than all other his predecessors had always done before—"if it so be that you are fully determined to grant him his demand (which I rather wish you to deny than grant), yet for a more true and plain exposition of your meaning towards the King and all his posterity,

393 laity 394 persist in arguing 395 except 396 consent, agree

397 asked 398 troubles; injuries 399 suspected 400 "as much as it is

permitted according to the law of God" 401 desire 402 in manner: so to speak

let these conditional words be expressed in your grant, *quantum per legem dei licet*, which is no other wise (as the King and his counselors say) than themselves mean. But then the counselors (who by  
 5 that time were returned to the Convocation house for speed<sup>403</sup> of their business) hearing of my Lord of Rochester's words, cried upon them with open and continual clamor to have the grant pass absolutely, and to credit the King's honor in giving them so  
 10 solemn a protestation and oath. But after this time nothing could prevail, for then the clergy answered with their full resolution: that they neither could nor would grant this title and dignity of supremacy without these conditional words, *quantum per*  
 15 *legem dei licet.*" And so the orators departed, making to the King relation of all that was done, who, seeing no other remedy, was of necessity driven to accept it in this conditional sort, and then granted to the clergy pardon for their bodies and goods, so that  
 20 they should pay him a hundred thousand pounds, which was paid to the last penny.

But this rested not long after this sort, for the King within a few years after took upon him and exercised the supremacy of the Church of England contrary  
 25 to his promise, as this holy man doubted and foresaw. And in a Parliament held at Westminster the twenty-sixth year of his reign (when the good father was in prison within the Tower of London), he made an Act of Parliament by authority of his lay  
 30 people, wherein he was confirmed Supreme Head of the Church of England, without any further exception or condition at all, framing nevertheless the words of that act in such sort, as though the clergy in their Convocation had absolutely  
 35 recognized him for Supreme Head before, and after caused the same to be annexed to his style<sup>404</sup> as a title of his dignity royal, appointing to all such as should by any means withstand or gainsay<sup>405</sup> the same no less punishment than is due in cases of high  
 40 treason, were they spiritual or temporal,<sup>406</sup> which his successors hath since that time practiced, as by experience we may see. And yet to that Act and many other licentious and schismatical doings of the King, all the bishops afterward agreed, only this  
 45 holy bishop excepted.

About this time (which was in the twenty-fourth year of the King's reign) this good father happened

to fall into great trouble, which the King sought him by sundry means. The manner of which trouble was thus. When by public fame the King's intent  
 50 was known abroad, that he meant to separate from him the good Queen Catherine, his most lawful wife, and many another, the realm began as it were to divide, and much talk was used herein, some  
 55 in favor of the King, and some of the Queen. But the far greater number as well of the learned sort as of the vulgar people stuck rather to the Queen's part than to the King's. At the same time one Elizabeth Barton, a young maiden born in Kent, at a place called Court-at-Street, declared unto sundry  
 60 persons that many times she had certain visions revealed unto her touching the King's doings in his matter of divorce—by what means she could not tell—but (as she thought) they came from God. Wherein, for mine own part I will not for certain  
 65 affirm anything, either with her or against her, because I have heard her diversely reported of, and that of persons of right good fame and estimation. But true it is that diverse times, being in her trance (wherein she happened to fall very often), she  
 70 uttered such words touching the reproving of heresies, which then began fast to spread, declaring what mischief and calamity would ensue to this realm, by admitting the same,<sup>407</sup> that it was thought wonderful to be heard at the mouth of a simple  
 75 woman. She would say that it was showed unto her in her vision, that the King had an ill intent and purpose in him, and specially in that he minded<sup>408</sup> to separate himself and the good Queen Catherine his wife asunder, and minded for his voluptuous  
 80 and carnal appetite to marry another, which by no means he could do without the great displeasure of Almighty God, for it was directly against his holy laws. And this matter she opened on a time to Master Richard Master, parson of Aldington in  
 85 Kent, and then her ghostly<sup>409</sup> father, saying unto him further that by her revelation she perceived that if the King desisted not from his purpose in this great case of divorce, but would needs prosecute the same and marry again, that then after such marriage  
 90 he should not long be king of this realm, and in reputation of God he should not be king thereof one day nor one hour after, and that he should die a shameful and miserable death. Likewise she

403 success 404 ceremonial designation 406 clergy or laity 407 aforesaid  
 of a sovereign 405 contradict 408 intended 409 spiritual

said and affirmed that the good virtuous Queen Catherine was the King's lawful wife, and that he could not lawfully marry any other, but whether he did marry any or not, yet should the Lady Mary, the daughter of the said good queen, prosper and reign in the Realm, and have many friends to establish and maintain her. These and diverse such like matters being opened to the said Parson of Aldington, he gave her advice to go to Canterbury, and there to talk with Master Edward Bocking, doctor of divinity, and a monk of Christ's Church, because he was of all men reputed for a learned and virtuous man; from him she went to Master John Dering, another monk of the same house. These good fathers, being marvelously astonished at her strange speeches, opened the same to the most reverend father in God, William Warham, Archbishop of Canterbury, who immediately after the beginning of this business departed this life. At length her name spread so wide that she was much resorted unto of many people, and for her virtuous and austere life was commonly called the holy maid of Kent. And shortly after, by the advice of the reverend Doctor Bocking, she was professed a nun, in the priory of Saint Sepulchre in Canterbury, where she continued during the time of her life in great penance and punishment of herself. And being there a nun professed, she after declared much of this matter to one Master Henry Gould, a learned man and bachelor in divinity, and to Father Hugh Rich, warden of the Friars Observant in Canterbury, and Richard Resby, another of the brothers of the same house, all which before mentioned persons greatly set forth the name of the said Elizabeth in their sermons and preachings to the people, so that she became famous almost throughout all the realm. Then afterwards the foresaid nun, as well as some others of the religious men before named, came to this most reverend bishop of Rochester, and Doctor John Addison his chaplain, and likewise to Doctor Thomas Abell, sometime the Queen's chaplain, making them privy to the wonderful and strange revelations and speeches of this nun; from thence she went (by the counsel of Doctor Bocking and the parson of Adlington) to the Charterhouse<sup>410</sup> of London and Sheen, to the nunnery of Syon, and to the friar houses of Richmond, Canterbury, and

Greenwich, declaring to them in like sort as she had done before to others, and lastly to the King himself, then lying<sup>411</sup> at Hanworth, before whom kneeling, she opened all her mind as freely as she was able to utter it, desiring him therefore in God's name, as well for the safety of his own soul as for preservation of this most noble realm, to take good heed what he did, and to proceed no further in this business. The King all the while gave her quiet hearing, seeming to all men that were there present, not only content with the words, but also much dismayed to hear them at the mouth of so simple a woman, and so dismissed her peaceably for that time to her house at Canterbury, where she remained not long quiet after. For now the King, perceiving that his doings were openly known to the world, and finding withal<sup>412</sup> that the greatest part of his realm liked not thereof— within short time was like<sup>413</sup> by such means as this to bring some inconvenience<sup>414</sup> and danger toward him if the same were not prevented in convenient<sup>415</sup> time— he fell therefore in consultation with his flattering counsel what were best to do in this matter, whom he found divided among themselves, some thinking good that it should be handled with clemency and pity, and some, on the contrary part, with all rigor and cruelty, for an example to others. But in the end it was resolved that pity should be set aside, and severity take place, and so all was turned to this: that it was but only a traitorous conspiracy between the nun and all the forenamed fathers and other persons to bring the King and his government into a misliking and hatred of the people of his realm, and to raise a grudge between him and them, whereby they might the better be encouraged to make a tumult and commotion against him. Wherefore, the King, having now gotten (as he thought) a good and sufficient matter of treason against this good bishop, whom he specially sought and shot at before all others, because he was privy to the cause among them, he sent for his judges, and certain other lawyers, and before them caused the case to be proponed,<sup>416</sup> desiring of them to know the law in that point, and how they might all be brought in the case of high treason. The lawyers, sitting long in consultation of this matter, and yet knowing in manner the King's mind beforehand, fell at last to a

410 Carthusian monastery 411 staying 414 harm; trouble 415 appropriate  
412 moreover 413 likely 416 proposed



resolution, and concluded that the said Elizabeth Barton the nun, Edward Bocking and John Dering, monks; Richard Master and Henry Gould, priests; Hugh Rich and Richard Resby, friars minors, were all by the law in case of high treason. But my Lord of Rochester, with Doctor Addison his Chaplain, and Doctor Abell, with certain other persons, because they were not the first contrivers of the matter, but only heard it reported by them, and concealed it, were by the said judges deemed to be in the case of misprision of treason, which is the loss of their goods, and imprisonment of their bodies during the King's pleasure.

The King not having herein his intended desire, because he rather shot at the life of this good man than his goods, was fain<sup>417</sup> yet to content himself therewith for that time, and so shortly after, the poor nun, with all other the religious persons and priests before mentioned, were attached<sup>418</sup> and brought up to Lambeth before the new bishop of Canterbury, Doctor Cranmer, where by him and certain other commissioners appointed for that purpose, they were very strictly examined and charged with all the terror that might be: how they most traitorously, with false feigned hypocrisy and dissembled sanctity, had conspired against the King in moving and exciting displeasure and grudge<sup>419</sup> between him and his people, to the intent to raise a commotion in this realm, to the great danger of his person, and subversion of the whole realm, and so finally were all sent to the Tower of London, where they lay long after in much misery, till such time as by sharp and cruel death they ended their days; for in a Parliament held at Westminster the twenty-fifth year of the King's reign, beginning (after diverse prorogations) the fifteenth day of January, they were all attainted<sup>420</sup> of high treason, and in April next following, the silly<sup>421</sup> nun was hanged and headed at Tyburn, and the rest were also the same day hanged, and after quartered alive. And forasmuch as<sup>422</sup> my Lord of Rochester; Doctor John Addison, his chaplain; Doctor Thomas Abell; Thomas Lawrence, Register to the Archdeacon of Canterbury; and Edward Thwaytes, gentleman, did not only know of the foresaid offense, but also gave credence to the offenders, whereby the said offenders took courage in their doings, were

all convicted of misprision of treason, to suffer imprisonment during the King's pleasure, and to forfeit unto him all their goods, chattels, and debts. But yet for all this terrible sentence given upon this good bishop, neither was he imprisoned ne<sup>423</sup> yet despoiled of his goods for that time, although (as I heard after) he was fain<sup>424</sup> to redeem himself with payment of three hundred pounds for a fine, which was one whole year's revenue of the bishopric, for the King (as before is said) meant not to spoil his goods, which he knew to be but of small value, but rather thirsted after his life, knowing him to be (as he was indeed) a great stop and hinderer of all his licentious proceedings, for that<sup>425</sup> he bore so great a sway in the Convocation house as he did.

You have heard before how Cardinal Campeggio departed out of this realm to the Pope's Holiness, after such time as the Queen had made her appeal to the See Apostlic, who, being long before this time arrived at Rome, made there to the Pope's Holiness a declaration of all his proceedings. Shortly after whose departure, the King sent to the Pope Doctor Bonner and Doctor Keane, both doctors of the civil law and profound men, to treat with him of this matter as of themselves<sup>426</sup> and not sent from him, who, according to their secret commission given them, dealt very largely in the King's behalf, signifying unto the Pope that all the bishops and clergy of England were fully agreed, and thought the marriage between the King and the Queen to be unlawful from the beginning, and that it was therefore very necessary to make a separation between them by a sentence definitive from his Holiness. The Pope, perceiving nevertheless that they came without authority or commission, demanded of them a certificate under the bishops' hands, and seals of this they had said. Then the King labored earnestly for this certificate, which by one means or other was at last gotten out under all their hands and seals, saving<sup>427</sup> my Lord of Rochester, who by no means would ever agree to it. At length the certificate was sent to these counterfeit ambassadors, who presented the same to the Pope. But when he perceived this good bishop's hand and seal wanting among the rest, and understood also that it was gotten of the other bishops rather by sleighty<sup>428</sup> devices and compulsion than by any

417 obliged 418 arrested 419 ill-will 420 convicted 421 holy; pitiable 422 forasmuch as: seeing that 423 nor

424 forced 425 for that: because 426 as of themselves: as if acting on their own accord 427 except

direct or orderly means, the instrument was clean rejected, and reputed to no purpose.

Then the Pope, because he considered the case to be great and weighty, would in no wise proceed any further without great and substantial advice, and for that purpose called unto him the most worthy divines and canonists,<sup>429</sup> that could be gotten. Then he consulted with all the universities that at that time were either famous or willing to be talked with. Likewise he procured the censures of many famous men, set forth in their several writings, among which one was the book of this most worthy and learned bishop of Rochester, whereof some mention is before made, which book, by the opinion and judgment of that reverend and famous clerk, Alphonsus de Castro,<sup>430</sup> a Spanish friar of the Order of Minors, is (as himself writeth) of all others the most excellent and learned work. The Pope (I say), after so long and diligent examination in this great matrimonial cause, setting in his tribunal seat and open consistory,<sup>431</sup> with the assent and counsel of his most reverend brethren, the cardinals of the holy Church of Rome, pronounced a sentence definitive, approving therein the foresaid matrimony to be good and lawful. And because this sentence is perhaps unknown unto many, and specially of the country of England, that others have not heard, or rather will not willingly hear thereof, I have thought good to insert the same in this our history word-for-word as it was pronounced. Let us then hear what the Pope himself saith:

*Clemens papa septimus.*

*Christi nomine invocato in throno justitiae pro tribunali sedentes et solūm deum prae oculis habentes per hanc nostram definitivam sententiam, quam de venerabilium fratrum nostrorum. Sanctā Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalium consistorialiter coram nobis congregatorum consilio et assensu firmiter in his scriptis pronuntiamus decernimus et declaramus, in causa et causis ad nos et sedem apostolicam per appellationem per carissimam in Christo filiam Catherinam Angliae reginam illustrem a nostris et sedis apostolicae legatis in regno Angliae deputatis interpositam legitime devolutis et advocatis, inter praedictam Catharinam Reginam, et charissimum in Christo filium Henricum octavum Angliae regem illustrem, super validitate et invaliditate matrimonii inter eosdem reges contracti*

*et consummati, rebusque aliis in actis causae et causarum huiusmodi latius deductis et dilecto filio Paulo Capissucho causarum sacri Pallatii tunc decano, et propter ipsius Pauli absentiam, venerabili fratri nostro Jacobo Simonetae Episcopo Pisauriensi unius ex dicti pallatii auditoribus locum tenenti, audiendis, instruendis, et in consistorio nostro referendis commissis, et per eos nobis et eisdem Cardinalibus relatis et mature discussis, coram nobis pendentibus matrimonium inter praedictos Catherinam et Henricum Angliae reges contractum, et inde sequuta quaecumque fuisse validum et canonicum, validaque et canonica, suosque debitos debuisse et debere fortiri effectus: Prolemque exinde susceptam vel suscipiendam fuisse et fore legitimam. Et praefatum Henricum Angliae regem, teneri et obligatum fuisse et fore ad cohabitandum cum dicta Catherina Regina eius legitima coniuge, illamque maritali affectione et regis honore tractandum. Et eundem Henricum Angliae regem ad praemissa omnia et singula cum effectu adimplendum, condemnandum omnibusque iuris remediis cogendum et compellendum fore, pro ut condemnamus, cogimus, et compellimus: molestationesque et denegationes per eundem Henricum Regem eidem Catherinae Reginae super invaliditate et foedere dicti matrimonii quomodo libet factas, fuisse et esse illicitas et iniustas. Et eidem Henrico regi super illas et validitatem matrimonii huiusmodi perpetuum silentium imponendum fore, et imponimus Eundemque Henricum Angliae regem in expensis in huiusmodi causa et parte dictae Catherinae Reginae coram nobis et dictis omnibus legitime factis condemnandum fore, et condemnamus. Quarum expensarum taxationem nobis in posterum reservamus. Ita pronuntiamus.*

*Lata fuit Romae in Pallatio apostolico publice in consistorio die*

*23 Martii anno 1534.*

Pope Clement the VII

We invoking the name of Christ and sitting judiciously in throne of justice, having only before our eyes the glory of Almighty God, by this our definitive sentence, which by the counsel and assent of our venerable brethren, the cardinals of the holy Church of Rome, assembled before us in consistory. We do in these writings give, pronounce, decree, and declare in the cause and causes lawfully devolved and

428 crafty, subtle 429 those skilled in canon law 430 Alphonso de Castro

(1492–1558), a Franciscan theologian, best known for his *Adversus omnes haereses*

431 council-chamber

advocated to us and the See Apostlic, by appellation brought before us by our well beloved daughter in Christ, Catherine, Queen of England, from the judgments of the legates deputed and sent from us and the foresaid See Apostlic, between the foresaid Queen Catherine and our well beloved son in Christ, Henry the VIII, the noble King of England, upon the validity and invalidity of the matrimony between them contracted and consummated, and upon other matters more largely deduced in<sup>432</sup> the acts of such like cause and causes, and committed to our son Paulus Capisuchus, then dean of the causes of our holy palace, and in his absence to our reverend brother James Simonetta,<sup>433</sup> Bishop of Pesaro supplying the place of one of the auditors of our said palace, to be heard instructed, and in our consistory to be reported and maturely discussed, during the time of the matter depending before us; that the matrimony contracted between the said Queen Catherine and King Henry of England, with all other consequences of the same, was and is of good force and canonical; and that they may and ought to enjoy to them their due effects; and that the issue between them heretofore born or hereafter to be born was and shall be legitimate; and that the foresaid King Henry hath, is, and shall be bound and obliged to cohabit and dwell with the said Queen Catherine, his lawful wife, and to entreat<sup>434</sup> her with husbandly affection and kingly honor; and that the said King Henry is condemned, and by all remedies of law is to be restrained and compelled, as we do condemn, constrain, and compel him to accomplish and fulfill all and singular the premises effectually;<sup>435</sup> and that the molestation and refusals by the foresaid King Henry by any manner ways made to the said Queen Catherine, touching the invalidity of the said matrimony, are presently and always from the beginning were unlawful and unjust; and that perpetual silence concerning all the foresaid matters and the invalidity of the said matrimony shall be enjoined unto the said Henry. And we do enjoin it. And that the said King Henry of England is to be condemned, and we do condemn him in the expenses lawfully made before us and our said brethren in such case on the behalf of the said Queen Catherine, the taxation of which expenses we reserve to ourself till another time.

So we have pronounced.

This was published in the palace at Rome in the open consistory 23 March, Anno Domini 1534.

And thus after many troublesome days of suit with great expenses of money, strange devices,<sup>436</sup> and wonderful practices, ended this matrimonial case by this notable sentence pronounced and published by the head judge upon earth, to whom Christ gave the full power and authority of himself to bind and to loose,<sup>437</sup> with which sentence and full determination it is to be wished that the King would have submitted himself to this great authority, which if he had done, no doubt but then had this noble realm still continued in that ancient flourishing state of virtue, devotion, and wealth wherein he found it. Then had he preserved his own honor and good fame, which he afterward most worthily lost. Then had he not opened such a gap to schisms and heresies as he did, to our undoing, and the manifest perdition of his own soul. Then had the whole state of Christendom stand in much better surety<sup>438</sup> than of long time it hath and now of likelihood it doth. Then had he still abidden<sup>439</sup> with this most noble lady, his lawful wife. And then consequently had he not proceeded to this horrible second marriage as he did, contrary to the sound advice of this our blessed father and of diverse others, whereof ensued as well the death of this holy bishop, as of many other devout and reverend abbots and priors, religious men and priests, besides a number of worthy persons of the temporality,<sup>440</sup> the like whereof it is to be thought this realm never had at one instant before his days. But alas, how far was the King now changed from the man he was than when by advice and help of this holy father he wrote his most learned book of the *Assertion of the Seven Sacraments* against Luther, and what an alteration of obedience to the See Apostlic was this in him, from that time in which he dedicated his said book to the Pope's Holiness, with these words: *Itaque etiam hac fiducia rem tentavimus et qua in ea meditati sumus Sanctitati tuae dedicavimus ut sub tuo nomine, qui Christi vicem in terris geris, publicum iudicium subeant* ("And so with this confidence we have attempted this matter, and have dedicated to your Holiness all our labor therein, to the intent that under your name, who upon earth doth supply

<sup>432</sup> *deduced in*: derived from

<sup>433</sup> Jacopo Simonetta of Milan (ca. 1475

–1539) <sup>434</sup> treat <sup>435</sup> thoroughly

<sup>436</sup> schemes, contrivances

<sup>437</sup> See Mt 16:19. <sup>438</sup> safety; security

<sup>439</sup> remained <sup>440</sup> laity

the place of Christ, the same may come to the public judgment of the world”). Many other such like places are to be found in that worthy book, whosoever shall well peruse and read the same.

5 But let us further consider what moved this blessed man to stand in defense of this quarrel, and we shall soon perceive that he had great cause to do as he did, for although he thought in his conscience, and by his profound learning most assuredly knew, 10 that the King for no cause yet alleged could by the law of God make any separation between him and his wife, this noble princess, yet had he a more secret intelligence of the King’s doings, and further intent therein than at that time was 15 known to many others—I mean of his proceeding to a second marriage with the Lady Anne Boleyn, whereof although, for the great reverence he bore to the King’s person, he spared to speak openly that which he knew for true, yet to some of his secret 20 friends, when it might serve to the purpose, he would not stick<sup>441</sup> to utter that the King could not by any means proceed to such marriage without the ruin of his honor and good name, and the inestimable loss of his soul forever. No, although<sup>442</sup> 25 the Pope should pronounce the first marriage to be void and annihilated, and that for sundry causes; for first it was well known that even about such time as the King began to cast his carnal love to this lady, Anne Boleyn, the Lord Henry Percy, son 30 and heir to the Earl of Northumberland, chanced also not long before that time to fall in love with her, and therein at last proceeded so far that they were assured before good witnesses in the way of marriage, he being then attendant upon Cardinal 35 Wolsey, and she waiting in the court upon this good Queen Catherine (neither of them yet knowing the King’s intent), but when knowledge thereof came to the King’s ears, he waxed<sup>443</sup> angry, and was much moved against the Lord Percy, insomuch as he sent 40 in haste for the Cardinal to come to him on a time to Bridewell, and there opened unto him all his intent and purpose, willing him in any wise<sup>444</sup> with all the speed that might be, to call before him the said Lord Percy, and to infringe<sup>445</sup> his assurance by 45 all the means he could devise. The Cardinal seeing all this matter come to this effect was not a litle unquieted thereat. Howbeit,<sup>446</sup> returning home to

his house at Westminster, and not forgetting the King’s commandment, he called the Lord Percy 50 before him, and there in presence of diverse of his servants demanded of him with many sharp words what he had done, and how far he had proceeded 55 in this matter. The Lord Percy perceiving this his doing to be ill taken, and very likely to turn to his displeasure,<sup>447</sup> answered, upon his knee with fear, that they were assured before witness. “Then,” said 60 the Cardinal, “hast thou done like a lewd<sup>448</sup> boy, to attempt any such thing without the knowledge other<sup>449</sup> of the King’s Majesty, thy father, or me, and therefore I command thee that thou come no more 65 in her company upon pain of the King’s displeasure and mine, for by this means thou hast gotten thee already his ill will. And I will also signify unto thy father thy bold and rash attempt, whereby it is like<sup>450</sup> thou shalt be disinherited forever.” Then the 70 Lord Percy in most lamentable and pitiful manner said unto the Cardinal (still kneeling), “I most humbly desire your Grace’s favor herein, and that you will stand so much, my good lord, as to entreat the King’s Majesty for me, for truly I have now gone 75 so far in this matter, and that before many worthy witnesses, that I know not how to discharge my conscience before God, nor yet excuse myself before men.” “Why,” said the Cardinal, “dost thou harp still upon that string? I thought thou wouldst have 80 showed thyself penitent for thy foolish doings, and here have promised to relinquish from henceforth any further attempt therein.” “Truly,” said the Lord Percy, “so will I with all my heart as much as in me lieth, my conscience only reserved for my former 85 promise.” “Well,” said the Cardinal, “I will signify so much to the King,” and so departed. And this was one cause that made this reverend man to dislike of this second marriage.

Another cause was for that<sup>451</sup> there was a great 85 and constant fame<sup>452</sup> how the King had before carnally known the Lady Anne’s mother, which in law forbiddeth all marriage of the children forever after, because otherwise it might be doubt<sup>453</sup> that the King should marry his own daughter. And for some 90 better probability thereof, I have heard it reported of diverse persons of good credit that the Countess of Wiltshire her mother, as she happened on a time to talk with the King of this matter, suddenly said

<sup>441</sup> hesitate <sup>442</sup> even if <sup>443</sup> became  
<sup>444</sup> way <sup>445</sup> break down; weaken

<sup>446</sup> However <sup>447</sup> grief, trouble  
<sup>448</sup> rude; ignorant; wicked

<sup>449</sup> either <sup>450</sup> likely <sup>451</sup> for that;  
because <sup>452</sup> rumor <sup>453</sup> a risk

unto him in the hearing of sundry persons, half in sport and half in earnest, these words: "Sir, for the reverence of God take heed what you do in marrying my daughter, for if you record your conscience well,  
5 she is your own daughter as well as mine."

Likewise it was very evident to many that were about the King that he commonly knew not only this lady, Anne Boleyn, before he married her, but also long before that he knew in like manner the  
10 Lady Mary Carey, her sister. And these were causes why this good man thought that the King could not by any means lawfully proceed to this marriage—no, although<sup>454</sup> his first marriage had been void and annihilated, or though this good queen had been  
15 dead, and the King free to marry.

Other causes there were though not of so great importance as these be, yet very just and probable why the King with his honor and safety of his realm could not well proceed thereunto. For first there  
20 went a great rumor of her incontinency and loose living, and what inconveniences<sup>455</sup> have grown in many Christian realms by doubtful succession of bastardy, there needeth here no example to be rehearsed,<sup>456</sup> being a case so well known to the  
25 world as it is; and of this it should seem there was a shrewd<sup>457</sup> likelihood when Sir Thomas Wyatt, after he understood of the King's intended purpose to marry with her, came to the King and declared unto him the truth of that<sup>458</sup> he knew, doubting indeed  
30 that the same coming else<sup>459</sup> to his knowledge by some other means might kindle displeasure secretly in his breast against him, and so at one time or other break out to his confusion.<sup>460</sup>

Wherefore, coming (I say) to the King, he told  
35 him plainly that she was no fit wife for his Majesty, confessing there almost in plain word, with great fear, that himself had been familiar with her. Likewise she was greatly suspected, and in manner notoriously known of diverse persons to be a heretic,  
40 and thereby very likely to corrupt the King, being so extremely blinded with their unlawful doctrine as she was, which after came to pass indeed, for she was the first and only person that of a long time durst<sup>461</sup> break with him in such matters. The effect and  
45 fruit whereof, the world seeth, and this miserable country more and more feeleth to our undoing.

Now approached the time wherein this blessed

man grew to his final and last trouble, for at the Parliament before mentioned, wherein he was  
50 attainted of misprision of treason for the matter of the Nun of Canterbury, there was also in the same Parliament another statute made, declaring the establishment of the King's succession in the imperial crown of this realm, by virtue whereof  
55 it was enacted that the said marriage heretofore solemnized between the King and the Lady Catherine, being before his older brother's wife, and by him carnally known (as the Act reporteth), should be by the authority of that Parliament, definitively, clearly, and absolutely declared, deemed,  
60 and judged to be against the laws of Almighty God, and also excepted, reputed, and taken of no value or effect, but utterly void to all intents and purposes, according to sentence made at Dunstable by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury; and  
65 that the matrimony had<sup>462</sup> and solemnized between the King and Queen Anne should be established and taken for undoubtful, true, sincere, and perfect, according to the judgment of the said archbishop. And that the issue coming of that marriage should  
70 be inheritable to the crown and government of the realm. By means whereof, the Lady Mary, being issue of his former marriage, was disinherited and disabled to all intents and purposes. And if any person, of what estate or condition soever he be,  
75 shall by writing, printing, or any exterior act or deed procure or do anything, to the prejudice, slander, disturbance, or derogation of the said matrimony, or the issue growing of the same, that every such person should be deemed and judged as a high traitor, and  
80 should suffer such pains and losses as in case of high treason is provided. And further, if any person should, by word or speech only, without writing or doing, utter or publish anything in derogation of this matrimony, that every such offense should be  
85 taken and adjudged for misprision of high treason, and the offenders to suffer imprisonment during the King's pleasure, and to lose to him all their goods, chattels, and debts. And that for offending in any of these treasons or misprisings, no privilege nor  
90 immunity of sanctuary within this realm should serve. Certain other things there be also contained within the same act, as by reading of the same statute may appear more at large. But, lastly, it is

454 even if 455 harms; troubles

456 related 457 ominous; damaging

458 what 459 otherwise 460 ruin

461 dared 462 held

concluded that for the better and more sure keeping and observing of this act, as well the nobles of this realm, spiritual and temporal,<sup>463</sup> as all other subjects of the same, shall make a corporal oath: that they  
 5 shall truly and constantly observe, defend, and keep to the uttermost of their cunning,<sup>464</sup> will, and power the whole effect and contents of this statute. The words of which oath (although they be not expressed at large in the statute) were these:

10 Ye shall swear to bear faith, truth, and obedience all only to the King's Majesty, and to his heirs of his body of his most dear and entirely beloved lawful wife, Queen Anne, begotten and to be begotten; and further, to the heirs of our  
 15 Sovereign Lord according to the limitation in the statute, made for surety<sup>465</sup> of his succession in the crown of this realm mentioned and contained, and not to any other within this realm, no foreign authority or potentate; and in case any  
 20 oath be made or hath been made by you to any person or persons, that then ye<sup>466</sup> to repute the same as vain and annihilated, and that to your cunning, wit, and uttermost of your power, without guile, fraud, or other undue means, ye  
 25 shall observe, keep, maintain, and defend the said Act of Succession, and all the whole effects and contents thereof, and all other acts and statutes made in confirmation and for execution of the same, or of anything therein contained; and this  
 30 ye shall do against all manner of persons of what estate, dignity, degree, or condition soever they be; and in no wise do or attempt, nor to your power suffer<sup>467</sup> to be done or attempted directly, anything or things privily or apertly,<sup>468</sup> to the  
 35 let,<sup>469</sup> hindrance, danger, or derogation thereof or of any part of the same, by any manner of means, or for any manner of pretense, so help you God and all Saints, and the holy Evangelist.

This oath, although it was not in these words  
 40 expressed in the statute (as is before said), and thereby not of any such force that any man was compellable by virtue of that law to take it, yet it so pleased the King and his counselors of their own authority to have it framed, and likewise tendered  
 45 to all such as were called before the commissioners for that cause authorized, and in the end of that session of Parliament (which was the thirtieth of March) it was offered to all the lords of the Higher House, both spiritual and temporal, and likewise to  
 50 the commons in the Lower House; whereof most of

both houses accepted it with heavy hearts, only my Lord of Rochester except, who openly refused to swear it. Nevertheless he was winked at for that time, and nothing said to him. And so the Parliament being ended, he departed home to his palace<sup>470</sup> of  
 55 Rochester, where he had not remained above the space of four days but a letter came to him from the Archbishop of Canterbury and certain other commissioners, willing him personally to appear before them at Lambeth, in the said archbishop's  
 60 house, by a certain day expressed within that letter, all excuses set apart. This letter being once known and heard of within his house cast such a terror and fear among his servants, and after among other his friends in the country, that nothing was there  
 65 to be heard of but lamentation and mourning on all sides. Howbeit,<sup>471</sup> the holy man, nothing at all dismayed thereat (as a thing that he daily and hourly looked for before), called all his family before him, and willed them to be of good cheer, and to take  
 70 no care for him, saying that he nothing doubted but all this should be to the glory of God, and his own quietness. "And for that,"<sup>472</sup> said he, "I being once gone, you may doubt of the time of my return hither to you again, I have willed my steward to  
 75 consider<sup>473</sup> every of you with a portion of my goods as far as they extend, desiring God to send both you and me his grace," and so turning his back left them all weeping, and went about other business. And calling his officers to him to consult for the  
 80 disposition of his goods, he first allotted to Michael House in Cambridge (where he was brought up at learning) a hundred pounds, which was after paid to the house in gold. Another portion he caused to be divided among his servants, allowing every one  
 85 of them a rate according to his place and worthiness. Likewise to poor people in Rochester he assigned another sum to be distributed. The rest he reserved for himself to defend his necessity in prison, where he accounted himself sure as soon as he was come  
 90 before the commissioners, always reserving unto the College of Saint John in Cambridge such parcels of goods as he before had given them, and borrowed again of them by his writing, though indeed his good meaning in that point was never fulfilled, as  
 95 after shall be declared. The next day he set forward his journey towards Lambeth, and passing through

463 civil 464 knowledge, cleverness  
 465 security; certainty 466 you are

467 allow 468 openly, publicly  
 469 obstacle 470 house 471 However

472 for that: because 473 recompense

Rochester, there were by that time assembled a great number of people of that city and country about to see him depart, to whom he gave his blessing on all sides, as he rode through the city bareheaded. There  
 5 might you have heard great wailing and lamenting, some crying that they should never see him again. Some others said, "Woe worth they that are the cause of his trouble;" others cried out upon the wickedness of the time to see such sight, every one  
 10 uttering his grief to others as their minds served them. Thus passed he till he came to a place in<sup>474</sup> the way called Shooter's Hill, nigh twenty miles from Rochester, on the top whereof he rested himself, and descended from his horse, and because the  
 15 hour of his refection<sup>475</sup> was then come, which he observed at due times, he caused to be set before him such victuals as were thither brought for him of purpose, and there dined openly in the air, his servants standing round about him, and so came  
 20 to London that night. And this precise order of diet he used long before, because the physicians thought, and he feared himself, to be entered into a consumption.<sup>476</sup> When the day of his appearance was come, he presented himself before the Bishop  
 25 of Canterbury; the Lord Audley, Chancellor of England; and Master Thomas Cromwell, the King's secretary; and certain other commissioners authorized under the Great Seal to tender the oath to him and others, they sitting then at Lambeth,  
 30 where he found at the same time Sir Thomas More and Master Doctor Wilson, sometime the King's confessor, who both had refused the oath a little before his coming, and thereupon Sir Thomas being committed to the custody of the Abbot of  
 35 Westminster; Doctor Wilson was forthwith<sup>477</sup> sent to the tower of London. Against<sup>478</sup> the same day all the clergy of London were also warned to come thither about the same purpose, whereof few or none refused the oath for that time. Then was he  
 40 called into the chamber before them, and there my Lord of Canterbury put him in remembrance of the late Act of Parliament, wherein is provided an oath to be ministered<sup>479</sup> to all the King's Majesty's subjects for the surety<sup>480</sup> of his succession in the  
 45 crown of this realm, "Which oath," said he, "all the lords, both spiritual and temporal,<sup>481</sup> have willingly taken, only your Lordship except. And therefore

his Majesty holdeth himself greatly discontent with you, and hath by his commission appointed us to call you before us, and to offer you the oath once  
 50 again, which we have here present," and therewith laying the oath before him, demanded of him what he said to it. Then said my Lord of Rochester, "I pray you let me see the oath, and consider a little  
 55 upon it." Then the commisioners, consulting a little among themselves, granted him space for four or five days, and so he departed again to his own house in Lambeth Marsh where he lodged.

During the time of his lying there, many of his friends came to visit him, and as it were to take their  
 60 leaves of him, thinking to see him no more after that day, among which the masters and fellows of Saint John's College in Cambridge, not forgetting their great benefit recieved at his hands, sent up two of their company, called Master Seton and Master  
 65 Brandsbe, partly to salute and visit him in the name of the whole house, and partly to desire<sup>482</sup> of him the confirmation of their statutes under his seal, which himself long before had made and drawn in writing, but yet never confirmed. And therefore doubting<sup>483</sup>  
 70 much the time of his imprisonment to be very near at hand, their humble suit was that it would please him to allow the same statutes under his seal before he went to prison, but to that he answered that he would first read and consider of them once more,  
 75 and then, if he liked them, he would fulfill their request. "Alas," said they, "we fear the time is now so short for you to read them before you go to prison." "Then," said he, "I will read them in prison." "Nay," said they, "that we think will hardly be brought to  
 80 pass." "Then," said he, "let God's will be done, for I will never allow under my seal that thing which I have not well and substantially viewed and considered." Wherefore, these two fellows departed  
 85 without their purpose. But shortly after, when this good father was in prison, and things began to alter and change, the Bishop of Canterbury and Master Cromwell, the King's secretary, with certain others, by virtue of a commission from the King, made a new book of statutes, and sent them down under  
 90 their authority to the college, which new statutes being received, then were the old, then made by the Bishop of Rochester, pronounced void and of none effect, and therefore the books to be laid away,

474 on 475 refreshment; meal 476 a disease that causes wasting of the body

477 immediately In preparation for

478 Drawing towards; 479 administered

480 security; certainty 481 civil 482 request 483 suspecting

and disposed at their pleasure. At the same time was president in that house one Master George Cowper, a bachelor in divinity, and a right well-learned and reverend man. This Master Cowper, having one  
 5 of the old statute books remaining in his custody (as by virtue of his office belonged unto him), was loath to deface or cast it away for his sake that made them, but studying with himself what were best to be done with the book, agreed at the last to give the  
 10 same to somebody to be kept for a remembrance of that holy man, and so upon some special fancy (as it seemed) gave them to a young fellow of that house standing by called Thomas Watson, saying to him, "Hold, take this book of my gift, and keep  
 15 it well, for the time may come that thou shalt live and restore it to the house, and so bring the statutes into their force again." And indeed, as this good man said, it came after to pass, for that young man prospered in his studies so singularly well that he  
 20 came to great honor, estimation, and credit, and being many years after elected master of that house, restored again those good statutes, which stood in force till wickedness again got the upper hand. But since that, for his special merits, he being most  
 25 worthily promoted to the bishopric of Lincoln, is for his great and profound learning accounted a rare man in his time.

The day being at last come when this blessed man should give answer before the commissioners, whether he would accept the oath or not, he presented himself again unto them, saying that he had perused the same oath with as good  
 30 deliberation as he could, but that it being framed in such sort as it is, by no means he could accept it with safety of his conscience. "Nevertheless," said he, "to satisfy the King's Majesty's will and pleasure, I can be content to swear to some part thereof, so that myself may frame it with other conditions, and in  
 35 other sort than it now standeth, and so both mine own conscience shall be the better satisfied, and his Majesty's doings the better justified and warranted by law."

But to that they answered that the King would by no means like of exceptions or conditions, "and therefore," said my Lord of Canterbury, "you  
 45 must answer directly to our question, whether you will swear the oath or no." Then said my Lord of Rochester, "If you will needs have me to answer

directly, my answer is, that forasmuch as<sup>484</sup> mine own conscience cannot be satisfied, I do absolutely  
 50 refuse the oath," upon which answer he was sent straightway to the Tower of London, where he remained very close locked and shut up in a strong prison, without the company of any person more  
 55 than one servant to help him in his necessity, because he was aged; and this was done on Tuesday the twenty-first of April, in the year of our Lord God 1534, and the twenty-fifth year of the King's reign, being the last day of his reign for that year.

After he had lain in prison six months and more, the Parliament began again at Westminster upon  
 60 prorogation in the twenty-sixth year of the King's reign, the third day of November. This Parliament, although it were but short (for it continued but five and forty days), yet were the matters within it both  
 65 great and weighty. Among which, one act was made for ratifying the oath made in the last Parliament, touching the succession, for the refusing whereof this good bishop was committed to prison (as  
 70 ye have heard before), for ye shall understand that although this oath was ministered to diverse persons, whereof the most accepted it for fear, and some refused it that were forthwith<sup>485</sup> imprisoned, yet was not the same ever warranted by law, neither  
 75 yet any man compellable by that law to take it before the making of the second act. And therefore, seeing it so fell out that this good father was by their own laws wrongfully imprisoned for refusing this oath, it was now ordered that his wrongful imprisonment  
 80 was to be judged and accounted rightful from the beginning by this act of Parliament.

Then was there another statute made in the same Parliament, whereby the King's heirs and successors, contrary to his former promise solemnly made to  
 85 the Convocation in the word of a king, should be taken, accepted, and reputed (for so be the very terms of the statute) the one Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England, called *Anglicana Ecclesia*, to have and enjoy the same as a title and style to  
 90 his imperial crown, with all honors, jurisdictions, authorities, and privileges to the same belonging, and should have full power and authority, as himself listeth,<sup>486</sup> to visit,<sup>487</sup> repress, redress, reform, order, correct, restore, and amend all heresies, abuses, errors, and offenses, whatsoever they were, as fully  
 95 and amply as the same might or ought to be done, or

484 *forasmuch as*: seeing that

485 immediately



corrected by any spiritual authority or jurisdiction. And whereas the Convocation gave him this title in the twenty-second year of his reign, with much ado, as ye have read before—and yet not simply, but  
 5 with these conditional words, *quantum per legem dei licet*<sup>488</sup>—now were these words forgotten, and all was taken by this act as of the lay people, without any condition at all, or mention of these words, even  
 10 as this holy man foresaw, and had given warning aforehand. And that it might the more easily be wrought, the King kept this good bishop fast in prison all the Parliament time, lest he, being among the lords in the Higher House, might (as he had done before) hinder the matter, which doubtless  
 15 to the uttermost of his power he would have done indeed, not only in this act, but also in sundry other acts, both in this Parliament and in other Parliaments after, wherein the Church of England was utterly ruined, spoiled, and quite overthrown.  
 20 In the same Parliament it was further enacted that if any manner of person should, by word or deed, maliciously presume to deny the title of supremacy, that then every such person should be reputed and taken as a high traitor, and to suffer and abide  
 25 such losses and pains as in cases of high treason is provided. And here I cannot omit to declare unto you what a business was in the Parliament house when this act was made, for there were many that thought the law very hard and rigorous to condemn  
 30 a man of high treason for saying the King is not Supreme Head of the Church, for sometimes a man might say it negligently and unawares, and sometimes in sport by way of talk, and therefore, except<sup>489</sup> due proof could be made that the words  
 35 were spoken maliciously, the Common House was very loath to pass the act at all. This was debated amongst them for many days, so that at last this word “maliciously” was expressed in the act, though afterward it served to no purpose at all.

40 During the time that this blessed man lay thus closely imprisoned, the King sent to him diverse of his counsel, and sometimes certain of the bishops, and sometimes other lay men that were learned, to persuade with him to take the Oath of Succession,  
 45 but all in vain, for such was his entire constancy that neither pain of his imprisonment—which to a weak and old man could not be small—nor yet the fair

flattering words—which they that were sent from the King, with no small show of eloquence, used  
 50 towards him—could at all move him to take such oath against his conscience—no, although he might win thereby (as himself said) the whole world.<sup>490</sup> Now was it so that even about the very same time, or very soon after that he was thus committed  
 55 to the Tower, the most famous and worthy man, Sir Thomas More, his companion and fellow in trouble, was also committed to the same place for like refusal of that oath. This worthy man, as he was for his singular wit<sup>491</sup> far surpassing any that ever yet hath been heard or read of in this realm,  
 60 and rarely elsewhere, so for learning it was very hard to find a layman of that time his like. When word was brought to my Lord of Rochester, by his man, that Sir Thomas More was brought thither prisoner, he began straight away to conceive a certain joy,  
 65 being glad, no doubt, of so good and faithful company as he thereby hoped, in having now such a worthy companion in this great and worthy cause; wherefore, as soon as he had opportunity, he sent him his loving and hearty commendation, receiving  
 70 from him the like again. And after that, being in time somewhat released of that close and hard imprisonment that at the first they suffered, they would now and then salute<sup>492</sup> one another secretly by their mutual letters, which continued for a time,  
 75 to both their exceeding comforts, till at length, God taking pity upon their innocent souls, in these long and troublesome afflictions of their bodies, was pleased to accept their good hearts and wills, that so zealously fought and labored to be with him, for  
 80 he permitted one letter at last to be taken, which my Lord of Rochester had written to Sir Thomas More, and sent by his own servant; which letter, being brought to the Lieutenant, he forthwith<sup>493</sup>  
 85 sent it to the King’s Counsel, by whom it was opened and read, containing his hearty request made to Sir Thomas More, to know what he had said before the counsel at a certain time (when he was called before them within the Tower), touching the divorce, and receiving the oath limited in the  
 90 new act of Parliament, and in the same letter he also declared what answer himself had made before them, being hardly urged in the same matters a day or two before. This letter being thus known to

486 wishes; pleases 487 judge; test  
 488 “insofar as the law of God allows”

489 unless 490 See Mt 16:26, Mk 8:36.  
 491 mind, intellect; ingenuity 492 greet

493 immediately

the King and the counsel, was grievously taken by them all, conceiving thereby straightway that much conference had been between them long together. Wherefore, they were more straitly<sup>494</sup> imprisoned than ever they had been before. Then was my Lord of Rochester's man, that was messenger between them, very closely shut up also, and terribly threatened to be hanged, in case he did not confess the truth in all such questions as should be demanded of him, among which one question was: how many letters he had from time to time carried between his master and Sir Thomas More, who, fearing much his life, and being but a simple fellow, confessed that he had carried about sixteen or seventeen letters, but of the contents thereof he knew nothing, because they were sealed. Howbeit,<sup>495</sup> some of them were written with ink, and some with coal. When this matter came to the knowledge of the two prisoners, no marvel though<sup>496</sup> they thought themselves grieved, and were very sorry for their poor man, whose case they more lamented than their own, for touching that matter they had in hand, they were both fully agreed, though<sup>497</sup> these letters had never been, as after by their doings it appeared further to the world. But at their arraignment these letters were heinously laid to both their charges, and taken as a conspiracy between them, whereby the one comforted the other in their willful obstinacy, because their answers were always alike. When, after diverse means used, the King saw that no way would serve, he sent on a day to this constant bishop the Lord Chancellor Audley, the Duke of Suffolk, the Earl of Wiltshire, Master Secretary Cromwell, and certain others of his privy council, to signify unto him the new law that was lately made since his imprisonment for the King's supremacy, containing within it the pain of high treason to all such as should directly gainsay,<sup>498</sup> or by any manner ways withstand the same: "Wherefore," said they, "We are now come unto you in his Majesty's name, to understand whether you are content to acknowledge and confess the same as other lords spiritual and temporal, and the commons in the name of the whole realm, have done or no?" This matter, as it was both great and weighty, so it began to touch him as near as his shirt—for upon answer of this case he knew right well his life rested—for

he considered deeply with himself, both by that which he had before read in the statute, and also the report which he had heard of others, that if by plain and express words he should say the King was not Supreme Head of the Church of England, then were he in danger of his life, because it was plain treason by the new statute. And knowing again by his learning that, notwithstanding this law, the King neither was, nor by any right (the law of God repugning) could justly be supreme, he was persuaded that to confess that openly in his mouth which his conscience taught him to be clean<sup>499</sup> false and untrue, were nothing else but manifestly to incur the displeasure of God, and endanger his soul; wherefore, being in great perplexity with himself what answer he might make for the preservation of his life in this world and his soul in the other world to come, at last, for saving of them both together, he made this wise and grave answer:

My lords, you have here demanded of me a question so doubtful to answer, that I wot<sup>500</sup> not almost what to say to it with mine own safety, and therefore this new act seemeth to me much like a two-edged sword; for if I answer you directly, with denial of the King's supremacy, then am I sure of death; and if, on the contrary part, I acknowledge the same, contrary to my own conscience, then am I sure of the loss of my soul; wherefore, as near as I can to avoid both dangers, I shall desire<sup>501</sup> your Lordships to bear with my silence, for I am not minded to make any direct answer to it at all.

The lords, and others of the King's council, hearing his answer, were nothing satisfied nor contented therewith; wherefore, they began to urge him yet a little nearer, and the Lord Chancellor, in the name of the rest, said unto him that it were good he did a little better consider of this matter, "for these kind of words," said he, "will by no means like<sup>502</sup> the King's Majesty." And then he repeated unto him how the King's Grace was informed of the mutual conference that had passed between him and Sir Thomas More by sundry letters, which he took in very ill part; "and therefore," said he, "if you shall now stand in this manner against him, you shall more exasperate his grievous indignation and displeasure, and give him good cause to think that you deal more stubbornly with him than standeth

494 closely, strictly 495 However  
496 if 497 even if 498 contradict

499 completely 500 know 501 ask  
502 please

with the duty of a good subject.”

To that my Lord of Rochester answered that, touching that which had passed between him and Sir Thomas More, he wished now with all his heart that they were all there ready to be showed, affirming upon his word and promise that the effect of the most of them was no other thing than friendly salutation:

And further (said he), knowing that Sir Thomas More was sundry times since his imprisonment called before your lordships and others, as I was, to answer to such questions as there were proponed<sup>503</sup> unto him, touching the new statute, I was desirous to know his answers, because of the great opinion I have in his profound learning and singular wit. And, like<sup>504</sup> as I was desirous to know his answer, so I advertised<sup>505</sup> him of mine. And where it is thought that the King's Majesty will be much displeased with me with this kind of doubtful answer, truly no man shall be more sorry for it than I. But where the case so standeth, as by mine open and plain answer, with satisfying his Majesty's pleasure I cannot escape the displeasure of Almighty God, I think it the more tolerable on my part if I use silence, and do trust that his Grace will so accept it.

Then said Master Cromwell, “Whereby think you, more than other men have done, that in satisfying the King's Majesty herein, you should displease God?” “Because,” said he, “I know how mine own conscience standeth, and so do I not another man's.” “If your conscience be so settled,” said my Lord Chancellor, “I doubt not but you can render some good cause thereof, and that ye can be content to open the same to us.” “Indeed,” said he, “I think I am able to render you a good sufficient cause why my conscience so standeth, and could also be content to declare you the same, might I do it with mine own safety, and without offense to the King's Majesty and his laws.” Whereunto no man answered any more for that time, but, calling for the lieutenant, he was delivered again unto him, again with a very straight charge that no further conference or message should pass between him and Sir Thomas More, or any other. And so they went to the King, and made report of all that was done, after the which time the lieutenant, according to his great charge, looked more narrowly to them both than before he had done, so that no knowledge

passed between them more than by God's Holy Spirit, which undoubtedly directed them both in all their saying and doings, for in all their examinations after, their answers were ever agreeable.

Thus were those two notable and worthy persons from day to day labored and wrought by the King's council sundry ways to confess and acknowledge this new Act of Succession, and to receive the oath for observing the same. But for all that could be done, neither of them would be ever brought so far; wherefore, seeing that none of these means would serve, the Council used a new crafty and subtle device to deceive them both (if it might have been), by giving out false rumors of the one to the other, for at a solemn day appointed, when my Lord of Rochester was called before them and therefore urged to take the oath, they threatened earnestly upon him that he rested himself altogether upon Sir Thomas More, and that by his persuasion he stood so stiffly in the matter as he did; and therefore to drive him from that hold, they told him plainly, and put him out of doubt, that Sir Thomas More had received the oath, and should therefore find the King his good lord, and be very shortly restored to his full liberty with his Grace's favor, which did at the first cast this good father into some perplexity and sorrow for Sir More's sake, whom for his manifold divine gifts he tendered<sup>506</sup> and highly revered, thinking it had been true in deed, because he mistrusted not the false trains<sup>507</sup> of the counselors. But yet could not all this move him to take the oath.

Likewise when Sir Thomas More was called before them, they would persuade with him as they did before with my Lord of Rochester, making him believe that he would never have stood thus long but for my Lord of Rochester, and then in the end told him that he was content to accept the oath, which Sir Thomas More suspected greatly to have been true—and yet not altogether true for that<sup>508</sup> it was so given out by the lords (of whose sleights<sup>509</sup> he was not ignorant), but because it was a common talk among diverse others, as he understood by the report of mistress Margaret Roper, his daughter, who upon special suit had free access to her father for the most time of his imprisonment. She had thus reported unto him upon occasion of talk once with

503 504 just 505 informed 506 es-  
teemed 507 deceits

508 for that: because  
509 tricks; stratagems

my Lord Chancellor, who on a time as she was suitor to him for her father's increase of liberty, answered her that her father was a great deal too obstinate and self-willed, saying that there were no more in the realm that sticked<sup>510</sup> in this matter but he and a blind bishop (meaning my Lord of Rochester), "who is now content," said he, "with much ado<sup>511</sup> to accept the oath, and so I wish your father to do, for otherwise I can do him no good." And the like answer my Lord Chancellor made also to the Lady Alice Alington, the wife of Sir Giles Alington, and daughter of Sir Thomas More's last wife, when she at another time before was suitor for her father-in-law, Sir Thomas More, in the same case.

The King seeing himself by all this never the nearer to his purpose, began then to seek daily new inventions, either to bring him to confess his supremacy according to this new act, or else for denying the same to entrap him into such danger as is provided in the said act. Then came to him at several times Bishop Stokesley of London, Bishop Stephen Gardiner of Winchester, Bishop Tunstall of Durham,<sup>512</sup> with certain other bishops, to persuade him to yield to the King's demand. And yet no doubt but most of them did this against their stomachs, and rather for fear of the King's displeasure (in whom they knew there was no mercy) than for any truth they thought in the matter, for I have credibly heard say that Bishop Stokesley all his life after, when he had occasion to speak of this business, would earnestly weep and say, "Oh, that I had holden still with my brother Fisher and not left him when time was." And for the Bishop of Winchester, myself have diverse times heard him, sometimes in the pulpit openly, and sometimes in talk at dinner among the lords of the council, and sometimes in other places very earnestly accuse himself of his behavior and doings at that time. I have also heard the right reverend and learned father Doctor Thomas Harding, sometime his chaplain and ghostly<sup>513</sup> father, say that oftentimes in much of his secret talk among his chaplains, he would so bitterly accuse himself of his doings, in that and such like business of those days, that at last the tears would fall from his eyes abundantly, and finally in the days of King Edward the Sixth, being convented<sup>514</sup> before the King's commissioners, and there greatly

urged to proceed yet further, according to the fruits of that time, he not only retracted before them all his former doings, but also suffered<sup>515</sup> himself to be deprived of his great dignity, and living with sharp imprisonment within the tower of London the space of five years and more, minding<sup>516</sup> there to have recovered the thing which he before had lost—I mean the blessed state of martyrdom, if God had been so pleased, or else in place thereof to continue a godly confessor—remaining a perpetual prisoner all his days, for a just and true deserved penance of his offense. Howbeit,<sup>517</sup> it shortly after fell out otherwise, in the reign of this most noble and virtuous Queen Mary, for after God had once placed her in the government and crown of this realm, she not only restored the ancient and Catholic religion throughout the same realm, but also delivered him out of prison with the Bishop of Durham before named, and diverse others, who lay there in like sort and almost the like space that the Bishop of Winchester did. These bishops, I say, persuaded thus continually with this holy man, sometimes one and sometimes another, but all in vain, for by no means would he be won to swear one jot from that which by his learning he knew to be just and true.

At another time came to him, by the King's commandment, six or seven bishops at once, to treat with him in like sort as the others had done severally<sup>518</sup> before. And when they had declared their intent and cause of their coming, he made answer again in these, or like words:

My lords, it is no small grief to me that occasion is given to deal in such matters as these be, but it grieveth me much more to see and hear such men as you be persuade with me therein, seeing it concerneth you in your several charges as deeply as it doth me in mine, and therefore methinketh it had been rather our parts to stick together in repressing these violent and unlawful intrusions and injuries daily offered to our common mother, the holy Church of Christ, than by any manner of persuasions to help or set forward the same. And we ought rather to seek by all means the temporal destruction of the so ravenous wolves, that daily go about worrying and devouring

<sup>510</sup> hesitated; obstinately persisted <sup>511</sup> trouble <sup>512</sup> John Stokesley (ca. 1475-1539), Cuthbert Tunstall

(1474-1559), Stephen Gardiner (ca. 1497-1555) <sup>513</sup> spiritual <sup>514</sup> summoned <sup>515</sup> allowed <sup>516</sup> intending

<sup>517</sup> However <sup>518</sup> separately

everlastingly the flock that Christ committed to our charge, and the flock that himself died for, than to suffer<sup>519</sup> them thus to range abroad. But alas, seeing we do it not, ye see in what peril the Christian State now standeth. We are besieged on all sides, and can hardly escape the danger of our enemy. And seeing that judgment is begun at the house of God, what hope is there left, if we fall, that the rest shall stand! The fort is betrayed even of<sup>520</sup> them that should have defended it. And therefore, seeing the matter is thus begun, and so faintly resisted on our parts, I fear we be not the men that shall see the end of the misery. Wherefore, seeing I am an old man and look<sup>521</sup> not long to live, I mind not by the help of God to trouble my conscience in pleasing the King this way whatsoever become of me, but rather here to spend out the remnant of my old days in praying to God for him.

And so their communication being ended, the bishops departed, some of them with heavy hearts, and after that day came no more to him. But within a little space after these bishops were thus gone, his own man that kept him in the prison being but a simple fellow, and hearing all this talk, fell in hand<sup>522</sup> with him about this matter and said, “Alas, my lord, why should you stick with the King more than the rest of the bishops have done, who be right well learned and godly men; doubt you not he requireth no more of you, but only to say he is head of the Church, and methinketh that is no great matter, for your lordships may still think as you list.”<sup>523</sup> The Bishop perceiving his simplicity and knowing he spoke of<sup>524</sup> good will and love towards him, said unto him again in the way of talk, “Tush, tush, thou art but a fool, and knowest little what this matter meaneth, but hereafter thou mayest know more. But I tell thee it is not for the supremacy only that I am thus tossed and troubled, but also for an oath” (meaning the oath of the King’s succession) “which if I would have sworn, I doubt whether I should ever have been questioned for the supremacy or no, but God being my good Lord, I will never agree to any of them both. And this thou mayest say another day thou heardest me speak when I am dead and gone out of this world.”

The King being still desirous to take all the

vantage against this good father that might be found by virtue of his new law, and yet, by all that he had hitherto spoken or done, not able to take enough for his purpose, began now a new way how to entrap him by policy, which although it were very uncharitable, and not standing with a Prince’s Majesty, yet such was the King’s malice against this holy man that, so he might compass<sup>525</sup> his purpose, he respected neither right nor wrong, truth nor falsehood, honor nor shame. The manner of this new-invented policy was this. About the beginning of May, after this blessed father had been prisoner somewhat more than a year, the King sent unto him one Master Richard Rich, being then his general solicitor, and a man in great trust about him, with a secret message to be imparted unto him in his Majesty’s behalf, which message, though it were indeed for the time very secret, yet fell it out at last to be openly known to the world, both to the King’s great dishonor and perpetual infamy of the wicked and traitorous messenger as after shall appear; nevertheless, this messenger being come to the presence of this blessed father in his prison, did there his errand (as it seemed) according to the King’s commandment, for it was not long after his return to the King with answer of his message, but an indictment of high treason was framed against him, and he arraigned and condemned at the bar upon the talk that had passed between them so secretly, as after shall be declared unto you.

It fell out in the meantime that Pope Paul the Third of blessed memory, hearing much of the great constancy of this blessed man, as well before his imprisonment as now in all the time of his hard restraint, was disposed to advance him to a higher dignity and place according to his great worthiness and desert, thinking that by reason of this kind of advancement the King would have showed him more clemency, and left off further working him trouble and danger, for his great dignity’s sake. And so at a solemn creation of cardinals had<sup>526</sup> at Rome in the first year of his consecration, among diverse other worthy and famous cardinals, this good bishop was also created a cardinal, the twenty-first day of May, in the year of our Lord God 1535, entitled *Sanctae Ecclesiae Tituli Sancti Vitalis presbiter Cardinalis*,<sup>527</sup> whereupon shortly after, the

519 allow 520 by 521 expect  
522 fell in hand: argued; had words

523 wish; please 524 out of  
525 accomplish 526 held

cardinal's hat was sent towards him, but when it came to Calais it was there stayed till such time as the King was advertised<sup>528</sup> thereof, and his pleasure known, who (as soon as he heard of it) sent speedily  
 5 in great anger to the Lord Deputy, commanding him in any wise to suffer<sup>529</sup> it to come no nearer till his further pleasure known,<sup>530</sup> and immediately after sent Master Thomas Cromwell, his secretary, to this good father in his prison to advertise him what was  
 10 done, only to the intent to know what he would say to it. Master Cromwell being come into his chamber, and entering into talk with him of many matters, asked at last: "My Lord of Rochester," said he, "if the Pope should now send you a cardinal's hat, what would you do, would you take it?" "Sir," said  
 15 he, "I know myself far unworthy of any such dignity, that I think nothing less than such matters, but if he do send it me, assure yourself I will work with it by all the means I can to benefit the Church of Christ, and in that respect I will receive it upon my knees." Master Cromwell making report afterward of this answer to the King, the King said again with great indignation and spite, "Yea, is he yet so lusty:<sup>531</sup> Well, let the Pope send him a hat when he will, but  
 20 I will so provide that whensoever it cometh he shall wear it on his shoulders for head shall he have none to set it on."

Wherefore, the King minding<sup>532</sup> now upon the return of Rich unto him to tract<sup>533</sup> no longer time,  
 30 seeing he had matter sufficient (as he thought) to condemn him of high treason for speaking against his new laws, caused a commission to be made under his Great Seal to inquire and determine treasons, which commission was dated the first  
 35 day of June, in the twenty-seventh year of his reign, against which time the King's learned council had also drawn an indictment of treason against this blessed bishop, and three holy monks of the Charterhouse<sup>534</sup> of London, whose names were:  
 40 William Exmew, Humphrey Middlemore, and Sebastian Newdigate. This indictment was not long in finding, for on Saint Barnabas Day the Apostle, being the eleventh of June, it was presented to the commissioners sitting in the King's Bench at  
 45 Westminster, whereupon the Carthusians were shortly after arraigned and condemned, and having judgment of high treason pronounced upon them,

were most cruelly put to death at Tyburn, the nineteenth day of June next following, all in their religious habits. But this good father, Bishop of Rochester, or rather this devout and most reverend  
 50 cardinal, of the holy Church of Rome (for so I may now from henceforth term him), chanced at that present to be so sick and feeble that he kept his bed in great danger of his life. Wherefore, the  
 55 King sent unto him diverse physicians to give him preservatives, whereby he might the rather be able to come to his public trial and cruel punishment, which the King above all things desired, insomuch that he spent upon him in charge of physic the  
 60 sum of forty or fifty pounds, and in the meantime, lest any convenience might be made of his goods remaining at Rochester, or elsewhere in Kent, the King sent down Sir Richard Morrison of his Privy Chamber, and one Estwick, with certain other  
 65 commissioners, to make a seizure of all his movable goods they could there find. These commissioners being come to Rochester, according to their commission entered his house, and first turned out all his servants. Then they fell to rifling of his goods,  
 70 whereof some part was taken to the King's use, but more was embezzled to the uses of themselves and their servants. Then they came into his library of books, which the[y] spoiled in most pitiful wise,<sup>535</sup> scattering them in such sort as it was lamentable to  
 75 behold, for it was replenished<sup>536</sup> with such and so many kinds of books as the like was scant<sup>537</sup> to be found again in the possession of any one private man in Christendom, and of them they trussed<sup>538</sup>  
 80 up thirty-two great pipes,<sup>539</sup> besides a number that were stolen away. And whereas many years before he had made a deed of gift of all these books and other his household stuff to the College of Saint John's in Cambridge (as is mentioned in the beginning of  
 85 this history), the poor college was now defrauded of their gift, and all was turned another way. And where likewise a sum of money of three hundred pounds was given by one of his predecessors, a bishop of Rochester, to remain forever to the said  
 90 See of Rochester, in custody of the Bishop for the time being, for any sudden mischance that by occasion might hap<sup>540</sup> unto the bishopric, the same sum of 351, with 151 more laid to it, was found in his gallery locked in a chest, and from thence carried

527 "The Cardinal priest of the Holy Church of the Title of St. Vitalis"  
 528 notified 529 allow

530 was known 531 lively; insolent;  
 desirous 532 intending 533 draw out  
 534 Carthusian monastery

535 way, manner 536 filled 537 hardly  
 538 packed, loaded 539 casks

clean away by the commissioners. Among all other things found in his house I cannot omit to tell you of a coffer standing in his oratory, where commonly no man came but himself alone, for it was his secret place of prayer. This coffer being surely<sup>541</sup> locked and standing always so near unto him, every man began to think that some great treasure was there stored up; wherefore, because no collusion or falsehood should be used to defraud the King in a matter of so great charge as this was thought to be, witnesses were solemnly called to be present, so the coffer was broken up before them; but when it was open they found within it, instead of gold and silver which they looked for, a shirt of hair and two or three whips, wherewith he used full often to punish himself, as some of his chaplains and servants would report that were then about him, and curiously marked his doings. And other treasure than that found they none at all. But when report was made to him in his prison of the opening of that coffer, he was very sorry for it, and said that if haste had not made him forget that and many things else, they should not have found it there at that time.

After this most reverend cardinal was recovered to some better strength by the help of his physicians, and that he was more able to be carried abroad, he was on Thursday the seventeenth of June, brought to the King's Bench at Westminster Hall from the Tower, with a huge number of halberds,<sup>542</sup> bills,<sup>543</sup> and other weapons about him, and the axe of the Tower born before him with the edge from him (as the manner is). And because he was not yet so well recovered that he was able to walk by land all the way on foot, he rode part of the way on horseback, in a black cloth gown, and the rest he was carried by water, for that<sup>544</sup> he was not able to ride through for weakness. As soon as he was come to Westminster, he was there presented at the bar before the said commissioners, being all set ready in their places against<sup>545</sup> his coming, whose names were these: Sir Thomas Audley, Knight, Lord Chancellor of England; Charles, Duke of Suffolk; Henry, Earl of Cumberland; Thomas, Earl of Wiltshire; Thomas Cromwell; Sir John Fitzjames, Chief Justice of England; Sir John Baldwin, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas; Sir William Paulet; Sir Richard Lister, Chief Baron of the Exchequer; Sir John

Port; Sir John Spilman; and Sir Walter Luke, Justice of the King's Bench; and Sir Anthony Fitzherbert, one of the justices of the common pleas. Being thus presented before these commissioners, he was commanded by the name of John Fisher, late of Rochester, clerk, otherwise called John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, to hold up his hand, which he did with a most cheerful countenance and rare constancy. Then was his indictment read, which was very long and full of words, but the effect of it was thus: that he maliciously, traitorously, and falsely, had said these words: "The King our sovereign lord is not Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England." And being read to the end, it was asked him whether he was guilty of this treason or no, whereunto he pleaded not guilty. Then was a jury of twelve men, being freeholders of Middlesex, called to try the issue, whose names were these: Sir Hugh Vaughan, Knight; Sir Walter Hungerford, Knight; Thomas Burbage; John Newdigate; William Brown; John Hewes; Jasper Leake; John Palmer; Richard Henry Young; Henry Lodisman; John Erlerington; and George Hevemingham, Esquires. These twelve men being sworn to try whether the prisoner were guilty of this treason or no, at last came forth to give evidence against him Master Rich, the secret and close messenger that passed between the King and him, as you have read before, who openly in the presence of the judges, and all the people there assembled (which were a huge number) deposed and swore that he heard the prisoner say in plain words within the tower of London that he believed in his conscience, and by his learning assuredly knew, that the King neither was, nor by right could be, Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England.

When this blessed father heard the accusations of this most wretched and false person, contrary to his former oath and promise, he was not a little astonished thereat; wherefore, he said to him in this manner:

Master Rich, I cannot but marvel to hear you come in and bear witness against me of these words, knowing in what secret manner you came to me; but suppose I so said unto you, yet in that saying I committed no treason, for upon what occasion and for what cause it might be said yourself doth know right well. And therefore,

540 happen 541 securely 542 battle-axes 543 broadswords

544 for that: because 545 in preparation for

being now urged (said he) by this occasion, to open somewhat of this matter, I shall desire<sup>546</sup> my lords and others here to take a litle patience in hearing what I shall say for myself. This man (meaning Master Rich) came to me from the King, as he said, on a secret message, with commendations from his grace, declaring at large what a good opinion his Majesty had of me, and how sorry he was of my trouble, with many more words than are here needful to be recited, because they tended so much to my praise, as I was not only ashamed to hear them, but also knew right well that I could no way deserve them. At last he broke with me of the King's supremacy, lately granted unto him by act of Parliament, "to the which," he said, "although all the bishops in the realm have consented, except yourself alone, and also the whole Court of Parliament, both spiritual and temporal,"<sup>547</sup> except a very few," yet he told me that the King, for better satisfaction of his own conscience, had sent him unto me in this secret manner to know my full opinion in the matter, for the great affiance<sup>548</sup> he had in me more than in any other. He added further that if I would herein frankly and freely advertise<sup>549</sup> his Majesty of my knowledge, that upon certificate of my misliking he was very like<sup>550</sup> to retract much of his former doings, and make satisfaction for the same, in case I should so advise him. When I had heard all his message, and considered a little upon his words, I put him in mind of the new act of Parliament, which, standing in force as it doth against all them that shall directly say or do anything against it, might thereby endanger me very much, in case I should utter unto him anything that were offensive against the law. To that he told me that the King willed him to assure me on his honor, and in the word of a king, that whatsoever I should say unto him by this his secret messenger, I should abide<sup>551</sup> no danger nor peril for it, neither that any advantage should be taken against me for the same—no, although my words were never so directly against the statute, seeing it was but a declaration of my mind secretly to him, as to his own person. And for the messenger himself, he gave me his faithful promise that he would never utter my words in this matter to any man living, but to the King alone. Now therefore, my lords (quoth he), seeing it pleased the King's Majesty to send me word thus secretly, under the pretense of plain and true meaning, to know my poor advice and opinion in these his weighty and great doings, which I most gladly was, and ever will be, to send him; methink it is very hard injustice to

hear the messenger's accusation, and to allow the same as a sufficient testimony against me, in case of treason. 55

To this the messenger would make no direct answer, but with a most impudent and shameless face (neither denying his words for false, nor confessing them for true) said that whatsoever he had said unto him on the King's behalf, he said no more than his Majesty commanded him. "But," said he, "if I had said to you in such sort as you have declared, I would gladly know what discharge this is to you in law against his Majesty for so directly speaking against the statute?" Whereat some of the judges, taking quick hold one after another, said that this message or promise from the King to him neither could nor did, by vigor of the law, discharge him, but in so declaring of his mind against the supremacy, yea, though it were at the King's own commandment and request, he committed treason by the statute, and nothing can discharge him from death but the King's pardon. This good father, perceiving the small account made of his words, and the favorable credit given to his accuser, might then easily smell which way the matter would go; wherefore, directing his speeches to the lords, his judges, he said: "Yet I pray you, my lords, consider that by all equity, justice, worldly honesty, and courteous dealings, I cannot (as the case standeth) be directly charged therewith as with treason, though I had spoken the words indeed, the same being not spoken maliciously, but in the way of advice and counsel, when it was requested of me by the King himself, and that favor the very words of the statute do give me, being made only against such as shall maliciously gainsay<sup>552</sup> the King's supremacy, and none other." To that it was answered by some of the judges that the word "maliciously" in the statute, is but a superfluous and void word, for if a man speak against the King's supremacy by any manner of means, that speaking is to be understood and taken in law as maliciously. "My lord," said he, "if the law be so understood, then it is a hard exposition, and (as I take it) contrary to the meaning of them that made the law. But then let me demand this question, whether a single testimony of one man may be admitted as sufficient to prove 100

546 ask 547 spiritual and temporal:  
of the clergy and laymen 548 trust  
549 notify 550 likely 551 await

552 contradict



me guilty of treason for speaking these words, or no? And whether my answer negatively may not be accepted against his affirmative, to my avail and benefit, or no?" To that the judges and lawyers  
 5 answered that, being the King's case, it rested much in conscience and discretion of the jury, "and as they upon the evidence given before them shall find it, you are either to be acquitted, or else by judgment to be condemned." The jury, having heard all this  
 10 simple evidence, departed (according to the order) into a secret place, there to agree upon the verdict, but before they went from the place the case was so aggravated to them by my Lord Chancellor, making it so heinous and dangerous a treason, that they  
 15 easily perceived what verdict they must return, or else heap such danger upon their own heads, as was for none of their cases to bear. Some others of the commissioners charged this most reverend cardinal with obstinacy and singularity, alleging that he, being  
 20 but one man, did presumptuously stand against that which was in the great council of Parliament agreed and finally consented unto by all the bishops of this realm, saving<sup>553</sup> himself alone. But to that he answered that he might well be accounted singular,  
 25 if he alone should stand in this matter as they said, but having on his part<sup>554</sup> the rest of the bishops of Christendom, far surmounting the number of the bishops of England, they could not justly account him singular. And having, on his part, all the  
 30 Catholic bishops of the world, from Christ his<sup>555</sup> ascension till now, joined with the whole consent of Christ's Universal Church, "I must needs," said he, "account mine own part far the surer. And as for obstinacy, which is likewise objected against me, I  
 35 have no way to clear myself thereof but by my own solemn word and promise to the contrary, if you please to believe it; or else, if that will not serve, I am here ready to confirm the same by mine oath." Thus in effect he answered their objections, though  
 40 with many more words, both wisely and profoundly uttered, and that with marvelous courageous and rare constancy, insomuch as many of his hearers, yea, some of his judges, lamented so grievously that their inward sorrow on all sides was expressed by the  
 45 outward tears of their eyes, to perceive such a famous and reverend man in danger to be condemned to cruel death by such an impious law, upon so weak

evidence given by such a wicked accuser, contrary to all faith and promise of the King himself. But all pity, mercy, and right being laid aside, rigor, cruelty, and malice took place; for the twelve men, being shortly  
 50 returned from their consultation, verdict was given that he was guilty of the treason, which, although they thus did upon the menacing and threatening words of the commissioners, and the King's learned  
 55 counsel, yet was it (no doubt) full sore<sup>556</sup> against their consciences, as some of them would after report to their dying days, only for safety of their goods and lives, which they were well assured to lose in case they had acquitted him. After the verdict  
 60 thus given by the twelve men, the Lord Chancellor, commanding silence to be kept, said unto the prisoner in this sort: "My Lord of Rochester, you have been here arraigned of high treason, and putting yourself to the trial of twelve men, you have  
 65 pleaded not guilty, and they, notwithstanding, have found you guilty in their consciences; wherefore, if you have any more to say for yourself, you are now to be heard, or else to receive judgment according to the order and course of the law." Then said this  
 70 blessed father again, "Truly, my lords, if that which I have before spoken be not sufficient, I have no more to say, but only to desire<sup>557</sup> Almighty God to forgive them that have thus condemned me, for I think they know not what they have done."<sup>558</sup> Then my  
 75 Lord Chancellor, framing himself to a solemnity in countenance, pronounced sentence of death upon him in manner and form following:

You shall be lead to the place from whence you came, and from thence shall be drawn through  
 80 the city to the place of execution at Tyburn, where your body shall be hanged by the neck, and being half alive, you shall be cut down and thrown to the ground, your bowels to be taken out of your body, and burnt before you, being alive; your head to  
 85 be smitten off, and your body to be divided into four quarters; and after, your head and quarters to be set up where the King shall appoint, and God have mercy upon your soul.

After the pronouncing of this horrible and cruel  
 90 sentence of death, the Lieutenant of the Tower with his band of men stood ready to receive and carry him back again to his prison. But before his departure he desired audience of the commissioners

for a few words, which being granted he said thus in effect:

5 My lords, I am here condemned before you of high treason for denial of the King's supremacy over the Church of England, but by what order of justice, I leave to God, who is searcher both of the King's Majesty's conscience and yours. Nevertheless, being found guilty, as it is termed, I am and must be content with all that God shall send, to whose will I wholly reserve and submit myself. And now to tell you more plainly my mind touching this matter of the King's supremacy, I think indeed and always have thought, and do now lastly affirm, that his Grace cannot justly claim any such supremacy over the Church of God as he now taketh upon him, neither hath it been ever seen or heard of, that any temporal Prince before his days hath presumed to that dignity. Wherefore, if the King will now adventure<sup>559</sup> himself in proceeding in this strange and unwonted<sup>560</sup> case, no doubt but he shall deeply incur the grievous displeasure of Almighty God, to the great danger of his own soul and of many others, and to the utter ruin of this realm committed to his charge, whereof will ensue some sharp punishment at his hand. Wherefore, I pray God his Grace may remember himself in time, and hearken to good counsel, for the preservation of himself and his realm, and the quietness of all Christendom

30 which words being ended he was conveyed back again to the Tower of London, part on foot, and part on horseback, with a like number of men bearing halberds and other weapons about him, as was before at his coming to arraignment. And when he was come to the Tower gate, he turned him back to all his train that had thus conducted him forward and backward, and said unto them, "My masters, I thank you all for the great labor and pains ye have taken with me this day, I am not able to give you anything in recompense, for I have nothing left, and therefore I pray accept in good part my hearty thanks," and this he spoke with so lusty<sup>561</sup> a courage, so amiable a countenance, and with so fresh and lively a color, as he seemed rather to have come from a great feast or a banquet than from his arraignment, showing by all his gestures and outward countenance such joy and gladness, as it was easy to perceive how earnestly he desired in his heart to be in that blessed state for which he had so long labored, whereof he made the surer account,

for that<sup>562</sup> he was thus innocently condemned for Christ's cause.

Thus being after his condemnation the space of four days in his prison, he occupied himself in continual prayer most fervently, and although he looked daily for death, yet could ye not have perceived him one whit dismayed or disquieted thereat, neither in word nor countenance, but still continued his former trade of constancy and patience, and that rather with a more joyful cheer and free mind than ever he had done before, which appeared well by this chance that I will tell you. There happened a false rumor to rise suddenly among the people that he should be brought to his execution by a certain day, whereupon his cook that was wont<sup>563</sup> to dress his dinner and carry it daily unto him, hearing among others of this execution, dressed him no dinner at all that day; wherefore, at the cook's next repair unto him, he demanded the cause why he brought him not his dinner as he was wont to do. "Sir," said the cook, "it was commonly talked all the town over that you should have died that day, and therefore I thought it but in vain to dress anything for you." "Well," said he merrily to him again, "for all that report, thou seest me yet alive, and therefore whatsoever news thou shalt hear of me hereafter, let me no more lack my dinner, but make it ready as thou art wont to do, and if thou see me dead when thou comest, then eat it thyself; but I promise thee, if I be alive, I mind by God's grace to eat never a bit the less."

Thus while this blessed bishop, and most reverend cardinal, lay daily expecting the hour of his death, the King (who no less desired his death than himself looked for it) caused at last a writ of execution to be made, and brought to Sir Edmund Walsingham, Lieutenant of the Tower. But where,<sup>564</sup> by his judgment at Westminster, he was condemned (as ye have heard before) to drawing, hanging, and quartering, as traitors always be, yet was he spared from that cruel execution—not for any pity or clemency meant on the King's part towards him. But the only cause thereof (as I have credibly heard) was for that,<sup>565</sup> if he should have been laid upon a hurdle<sup>566</sup> and drawn to Tyburn, being the ordinary place for that purpose, and distant above two miles from the Tower, it was not unlikely, but

559 risk 560 unusual 561 strong;  
joyful 562 for that: because

563 accustomed 564 whereas

he would have been dead long ere<sup>567</sup> he had come there, seeing he was a man of great age, and besides that very sickly and weak of body, through his long imprisonment. Wherefore, order was taken that he should be led no further than to the Tower Hill, and there to have his head struck off.

After the Lieutenant had received this bloody writ, he called unto him certain persons, whose service and presence was to be used in that business, commanding them to be ready against<sup>568</sup> the next day in the morning, and because it was then very late in the night, and the prisoner asleep, he was loath to disease<sup>569</sup> him from his rest for that time, and so in the morning before five of the clock he came to him in his chamber in the bell tower, finding him yet asleep in his bed, and waked him, showing him that he was come to him on a message from the King, and after some circumstances used with persuasion that he should remember himself to be an old man, and that for age he could not by course of nature live long, he told him at the last that he was come to signify unto him that the King's pleasure was he should suffer death that forenoon. "Well," quoth this blessed father, "if this be your errand, you bring me no great news, for I have long time looked for this message, and I most humbly thank the King's Majesty that it pleaseth him to rid me from all this worldly business, and I thank you also for your tidings. But I pray you, Master Lieutenant," said he, "when is my hour that I must go hence?" "Your hour" (said the lieutenant), "must be nine of the clock." "And what hour is it now?" said he. "It is now about five," said the Lieutenant. "Well then," said he, "let me by your patience sleep an hour or two, for I have slept very little this night; and yet, to tell you the truth, not for any fear of death, I thank God, but by reason of my great infirmity and weakness." "The King's further pleasure is," said the Lieutenant, "that you should use as little speech as may be, specially of anything touching his Majesty, whereby the people should have any cause to think of him or his proceedings otherwise than well." "For that," said he, "you shall see me order myself as, by God's grace, neither the King nor any man else shall have occasion to mistake of my words," with which answer the Lieutenant departed from him, and so the prisoner, falling again to rest, slept

soundly two hours and more. And after he was waked, he called to his man to help him up. But first of all he commanded him to fetch away the shirt of hair which accustomedly he wore on his back, and to convey it privily out of the house, and instead thereof to lay him out a clean white shirt, and all the best apparel he had as cleanly brushed as might be, and as he was in arraying himself, his man, perceiving in him a more curiosity and care for the fine and cleanly wearing of his apparel that day than ever was wont to be before, demanded of him what this sudden change meant, saying that his lordship knew well enough he must put off all again within two hours and lose it. "What of that?" said he. "Dost thou not mark that this is our marriage day, and that it behooveth us therefore to use more cleanliness for solemnity of that marriage?" About nine of the clock the Lieutenant came again to his prison and, finding him almost ready, said that he was now come for him. "I will wait upon you straight," said he, "as fast as this thin body of mine will give me leave." Then said he to his man, "Reach me my furred tippet and put it about my neck." "O, my lord," quoth the Lieutenant, "what need you be so careful for your health for this little, being as your lordship knoweth not much above an hour?" "I think no otherwise," said this blessed father, "but yet in the meantime I will keep myself as well as I can till the very time of my execution, for I tell you truth, though I have (I thank our Lord) a very good desire and willing mind to die at this present, and so trust of his infinite mercy and goodness he will continue it, yet will I not willingly hinder my health in the meantime one minute of an hour, but still prolong the same as long as I can by such reasonable ways and means as Almighty God hath provided for me." And with that, taking a little book in his hand, which was a New Testament lying by him, he made a cross on his forehead and went out of his prison door with the Lieutenant, being so weak that he was scant<sup>570</sup> able to go down the stairs; wherefore, at the stair's foot, he was taken up in a chair between two of the Lieutenant's men, and carried to the Tower gate with a great number of weapons about him, to be delivered to the sheriffs of London for execution. And as they were come to the uttermost precinct or liberty<sup>571</sup> of the Tower, they rested there with him

565 for that: because 566 a frame or sledge for leading traitors to execution

567 before 568 in preparation for 569 disturb 570 barely

a space, till such time as one was sent afore,<sup>572</sup> to know in what readiness the Sheriffs were to receive him, during which space he rose out of his chair, and standing on his feet leaned his shoulder to the wall, and lifting his eyes up toward heaven he opened his little book in his hand and said, "O Lord, this is the last time that ever I shall open this book; let some comfortable place now chance unto me, whereby I, thy poor servant, may glorify thee in this [m]y last hour," and with that, looking into the book, the first thing that came to his sight, were these words: "*Haec est autem vita aeterna ut cognoscant te solum verum deum, et quem misisti Jesum Christum. Ego te clarificavi super terram opus consummavi quod dedisti mihi ut faciam: et nunc clarifica tu me pater apud te metipsum claritate quam habui priusquam, etc.*"<sup>573</sup> And with that he shut the book together and said, "Here is even learning enough for me even to my life's end." And so, the sheriffs being ready for him, he was taken up again among certain of the sheriffs's men, with a new and much greater company of weapons than was before, and carried to the scaffold on the Tower Hill, otherwise called East Smithfield, himself praying all the way, and recording<sup>574</sup> upon the words which he before had read, and when he was come to the foot of the scaffold, they that carried him offered to help him up the stairs, but then said he, "Nay, masters, seeing I am come so far, let me alone, and ye shall see me shift for myself well enough," and so went up the stairs without any help, so lively that it was marvel to them that knew before of his debility and weakness. But as he was mounting up the stairs the southeast sun shined very bright in his face, whereupon he said to himself these words, lifting up his hands, "*Accedite ad eum et illuminamini et facies vestrae non confundentur.*"<sup>575</sup> By that time he was up the scaffold, it was about ten of the clock, where the executioner being ready to do his office kneeled down to him, as the fashion<sup>576</sup> is, and asked him forgiveness. "I forgive thee," said he, "with all my heart, and I trust thou shalt see me overcome this storm lustily." Then was his gown and tippet taken from him, and he stood in his doublet and hose in sight of all the people, whereof was no small number assembled to see this

horrible execution. There was to be seen, a long, lean, and slender body, having on it little other substance besides the skin and bones, insomuch as most part of the beholders marveled much to see a living man so far consumed, for he seemed a very image of death, and as it were death in man's shape using a man's voice, and therefore monstrous, was it thought, that the King could be so cruel as to put such a man to death, being already so near death as he was, yea, though he had been an offender indeed. And surely it may be thought that if he had been in the Turk's dominion and there found guilty of some great offense, yet would the Turk never have put him to death, being already so near death. For it is a horrible and exceeding cruelty to kill that thing which is presently dying, except it be for pity sake, to rid it from longer pain, which in this case appeared not, and therefore it may be thought that the cruelty and hard heart of King Henry in this point passed all the Turks and tyrants that ever have been heard or read of.

When the innocent and holy Cardinal was come upon the scaffold, he spoke to the people in effect as followeth:

Christian people, I am come hither to die for the faith of Christ's holy Catholic Church, and I thank God hitherto my stomach<sup>577</sup> hath served me very well thereunto, so that yet I have not feared death; wherefore, I do desire<sup>578</sup> you all to help and assist me with your prayers, that at the very point and instant of death's stroke, I may in that very moment stand steadfast without fainting in any one point of the Catholic faith, free from any fear, and I beseech Almighty God of his infinite goodness to save the King and this realm, and that it may please him to hold his holy hand over it, and send the King good counsel.

These or like words he spoke with such a cheerful countenance, such a stout and constant courage, and such a reverent gravity that he appeared to all men not only void of fear but also glad of death. Besides this he uttered his words so distinctly and with so loud and clear a voice that the people were astonished thereat, and noted it for a miraculous

571 domain 572 ahead 573 "Now this is eternal life: That they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou

gavest me to do. And now glorify thou me, O Father, with thyself, with the glory which I had, before the world was, with thee" (Jn 17:3-5). 574 reflecting 575 "Come ye to him and be enlightened:

and your faces shall not be confounded" [Ps 33:6(34:5)]. 576 custom 577 courage 578 ask

thing to hear so plain and audible a voice come from  
 so weak and sickly an old body, for the youngest  
 man in that presence, being in good and perfect  
 health, could not have spoken to be better heard  
 5 and perceived than he was. Then after these few  
 words by him uttered, he kneeled down on both  
 his knees and said certain prayers, among which  
 (as some reported) one was the Hymn of *Te Deum*  
*laudamus* to the end, and the psalm *In te domine*  
 10 *speravi*.<sup>579</sup> Then came the executioner and bound  
 a handkerchief about his eyes, and so this holy  
 father, lifting up his hands and heart to heaven, said  
 a few prayers which were not long but fervent and  
 devout, which being ended, he laid his holy head  
 15 down over the midst<sup>580</sup> of the block, where the  
 executioner being ready with a sharp and heavy axe  
 cut asunder his slender neck at one blow, which  
 bled so abundantly that many wondered to see so  
 much blood issue out of so lean and slender a body;  
 20 and so head and body being severed, his innocent  
 soul mounted to the blissful joys of heaven.

And as concerning the head, the executioner put  
 it into a bag, and carried it away with him, meaning  
 to have set it upon London Bridge that night as he  
 25 was commanded. But it was reported that the Lady  
 Anne Boleyn, who was the chief cause of this holy  
 man's death, had a certain desire to see the head  
 before it were set up, whereupon being brought unto  
 her, she beheld it a space, and at last contemptuously  
 30 said these or like words: "Is this head that so often  
 exclaimed against me? I trust it shall never do me  
 more harm," and with that, striking it upon the  
 mouth with the back of her hand, hurt one of her  
 fingers upon a tooth that stood somewhat more out  
 35 than the rest did: which finger after grew sore, and  
 putting her to pain many days after, was nevertheless  
 cured at last with some difficulty. But after it was  
 healed, the mark of the hurt place remained to  
 be seen till her dying day. This may seem strange,  
 40 as a rare example of cruel boldness in that sex,  
 which by nature is fearful and cannot well behold  
 such spectacles, and therefore argues no doubt a  
 wonderful malice, which she by likelihood bore  
 to the holy man living, that could thus cruelly use  
 45 his head being dead. Then stripping the body out  
 of his shirt and all his clothes, he departed thence,  
 leaving the headless carcass naked upon the scaffold,  
 where it remained after that sort for the most part

of that day, saving<sup>581</sup> that one for pity and humanity  
 cast a little straw upon his privities; and about eight  
 50 of the clock in the evening, commandment came  
 from the King's council to such as watched about  
 the dead body (for it was still watched with many  
 halberds and weapons), that they should cause it to  
 be buried. Whereupon two of the watchers took it  
 55 upon a halberd between them, and so carried it to  
 a churchyard there hard<sup>582</sup> by, called All Hallows  
 Barking, where on the north side of the church, hard  
 by the wall, they digged a grave with their halberds,  
 and therein without any reverence tumbled the  
 60 body of this holy prelate and blessed martyr all  
 naked and flat upon his belly, without either sheet  
 or other accustomed thing belonging to a Christian  
 man's burial, and so covered it quickly with earth,  
 following herein the King's commandment, who  
 65 willed it should be buried contemptuously. And  
 this was done on the day of Saint Alban<sup>583</sup> the  
 protomartyr and first martyr of England, being  
 Tuesday the twenty-second of June, in the year of  
 our Redemption 1535, and the twenty-seventh  
 70 year of King Henry's reign, after he had lived full  
 threescore and sixteen years nine months and odd  
 days.

The next day after his burial, the head being  
 somewhat parboiled in hot water, was pricked upon  
 75 a pole and set on high upon London bridge, among  
 the rest of the holy Carthusians' heads that suffered  
 death lately before him. And here I cannot omit to  
 declare unto you the miraculous sight of this head,  
 which after it had stood up the space of fourteen  
 80 days upon the bridge, could not be perceived to  
 waste nor consume, neither for the weather, which  
 then was very hot, neither for the parboiling in hot  
 water, but grew daily fresher and fresher, so that in  
 his lifetime he never looked so well, for his cheeks  
 85 being beautified with a comely red, the face looked  
 as though it had beholden the people passing by,  
 and would have spoken to them, which many took  
 for a miracle that Almighty God was pleased to  
 show above the course of nature in thus preserving  
 90 the fresh and lively color of his face far passing the  
 color he had being alive, whereby was notified to  
 the world the innocency and holiness of this blessed  
 father, that thus innocently was contented to lose  
 his head in defense of his mother's head, the holy  
 95 Catholic Church of Christ. Wherefore, the people

coming daily to see this strange sight, the passage over the bridge was so stopped with their going and coming that almost neither cart nor horse could pass. And therefore at the end of fourteen days the executioner commanded to throw down the head in the nighttime into the river of Thames, and in place thereof was set the head of the most blessed and constant martyr Sir Thomas More, his companion and fellow in all his troubles, who suffered his passion<sup>584</sup> the sixth day of July next following.

And touching the place of his burial in Barking Churchyard, it was well observed at that time by diverse worthy personages of the nations of Italy, Spain, and France, that were then abiding in the realm, and more diligently noted and wrote the course of things, and with less fear and suspicion than any of the King's subjects might or durst do, that for the space of seven years after his burial there grew neither leaf nor grass upon his grave, but the earth still remained as bare as though it had been continually occupied and trodden.

When by common fame this bloody execution was blown and spread abroad, straightway the name of King Henry began to grow odious among all good people, not only in his own realm at home, but also among all foreign princes and nations abroad through Christendom, which specially appeared in the most worthy Pope Paul the Third, who with great grief signified this horrible and barbarous cruelty by his several letters to the Christian princes, openly detesting the outrage of King Henry in committing such a wicked and manifest injury, not only against the freedom and privilege of the Church of Rome, but also against the whole state of Christ's Universal Church, for the which, in short space after, he pronounced the terrible sentence of excommunication against him.

Likewise the most noble and Christian Emperor Charles the V, at such time as Sir Thomas More was beheaded, and word thereof brought to him, he sent speedily for Sir Thomas Elyot, the King's ambassador, there resident with him, and asked him whether he heard any such news or no, who answered him that he heard no such thing. "Yea," said the Emperor, "it is true, and too true that Sir Thomas More is now executed to death as a good bishop hath lately been before," and with that (giving a sigh) said, "Alas, what meant the King to kill two

such men, for," said he, "the Bishop was such a one, as for all purposes, I think, the King had not the like again in all his realm, neither yet was to be matched through Christendom. So that," said he, "the King, your master, hath in killing that bishop killed at one blow all the bishops in England," meaning (no doubt) that this bishop, considering his pastoral care and constant profession of his bishoply duty in defense of the Church, in respect of the rest of his brethren, did only deserve the name of a bishop. "And Sir Thomas More," said he, "was well known for a man of such profound wisdom, cunning,<sup>585</sup> and virtue, that if he had been towards me as he was towards the King your master, I had rather have lost the best city in all my dominion than such a man."

And in like manner King Francis, the French King, though in some respects a man wished to be otherwise than he was, yet talking on a time with Sir John Wallop, the King's ambassador, of those two blessed men, told him plainly that either the King his master had very ill counsel about him, or else himself had a very hard heart, that could put to death two such worthy men, as the like were not again within his realm, whereof King Henry being advertised<sup>586</sup> took it very ill at the hands of King Francis for so reporting of him, saying that he did nothing but that himself was first made privy to it.

But generally among all Christian people King Henry was both ill thought and ill spoken of, as no doubt but there was great cause, for sundry considerations, as well for the innocent death of this blessed father as of diverse other blessed men, both spiritual and temporal,<sup>587</sup> whereof some died before him and some after him, though in all respects no one comparable to him, partly for his great age, partly for his profound learning, partly for his sanctity of life, and partly for his great and high dignities, as after shall be declared unto you.

In stature of body he was tall and comely, exceeding the common and middle sort of men, for he was to the quantity of six foot in height, and being therewith very slender and lean was nevertheless upright and well framed, straight-backed, big jointed and strongly sinewed. His hair by nature black, though in his later time, through age and imprisonment, turned to hoariness or rather whiteness, his eyes long and round, neither full black nor full gray, but of a mixed color

between both, his forehead smooth and large, his nose of a good and even proportion, somewhat wide-mouthed and big-jawed, as one ordained to utter speech much, wherein was notwithstanding  
 5 a certain comeliness, his skin somewhat tawny, mixed with many blue veins, his face, hands, and all his body so bare of flesh as is almost incredible, which came the rather (as may be thought) by the  
 10 great abstinence and penance he used upon himself many years together, even from his youth. In his countenance he bore such a reverend gravity, and therewith in his doings exercised such discreet severity, that not only of his equals, but even of his superiors he was both honored and feared. In  
 15 speech he was very mild, temperate, and modest, saving<sup>588</sup> in matters of God and his charge, which then began to trouble the world, and therein he would be earnest above his accustomed order. But vainly or without cause he would never speak,  
 20 neither was his ordinary talk of common worldly matters, but rather of the divinity and high power of God, of the joys of heaven and the pains of hell, of the glorious death of martyrs, and straight life of confessors, with such like virtuous and profitable  
 25 talk, which he always uttered with such a heavenly grace that his words were always a great edifying to his hearers. He had such a continual impression of death in his heart that his mouth never ceased to utter the inward thoughts of his mind, not only in  
 30 all times of his exercise, but also at his meals, for he would always say that the remembrance of death came never out of season. And of his own death he would now and then, as occasion of speech was given, cast out such words as though he had some  
 35 foreknowledge of the manner of his death. For diverse of his chaplains and household servants have reported that long before his death they have heard him say that he should not die in his bed, but always in speaking thereof he would utter his words  
 40 with such a cheerful countenance as they might easily perceive him rather to conceive joy than sorrow thereat. In study he was very laborious, and painful, in preaching assiduous, ever beating down heresy and vice, in prayer most fervent and devout,  
 45 in fasting, abstinence, and punishing of his bare body, rigorous without measure. And generally in all things belonging to the care and charge of a true bishop he was to all the bishops of England living

in his days the very mirror and lantern of light. In his time he wrote many famous and learned works, whereof so many as have come to our knowledge I have thought good to notify unto you.

[The list of books is omitted, and a note in the margin says, "Here wants the catalogue of books."]

Many other learned treatises this profound  
 55 doctor wrote with great diligence, whereof no more came to light, because he lived not to finish them, but myself have seen diverse of them, and some others I have heard of by report of good and credible persons. And it was once told me by a  
 60 reverend father, that was dean of Rochester many years together, named Master Philips, that on a time in the days of King Edward the Sixth, when certain commissioners were coming towards him to search his house for books, he for fear burned a  
 65 large volume, which this holy bishop had compiled, containing in it the whole story and matter of divorce, which volume he gave him with his own hand a little before his trouble for the loss, whereof  
 70 the dean would many times after lament, and wish the book whole again, upon condition that he had not one groat to live on. Many others of his works were consumed by the iniquity of heretics, which<sup>589</sup>  
 75 shortly after his death swarmed thick in every place, and grew into great credit, doing thereby what themselves listed.<sup>590</sup> And, as it hath been reported by a good old priest, called Master Buddell, who in  
 80 his youth wrote many of his books for him, there came to him on a certain time, in the foresaid King Edward's days, a minister, by authority of him that then occupied the See of Rochester, and took from him as many written books and papers of this holy  
 85 man's labors as loaded a horse, and, carrying them to his master, they were all afterwards burned (as he heard say) by the master, minister, and the man. This Master Buddell was then parson of Cookstone, in Kent, not far from Rochester, where he yet liveth  
 90 a very old man, and declareth many notable things of the austere life and virtue of this holy man.

But although many of his doings were thus  
 95 obscured and lost by this wicked means, yet shall his name never die, nor be darkend, so long as the rest of his writings shall remain, nor yet so long as the worthy writings of so many other profound doctors shall be extant, which after his days wrote highly to his laud and praise; whereof, although the number

be very great, and would require a whole volume to express them all, yet I cannot omit to set forth unto you the sayings of some of them, being as they are of such great authority, credit, and worthiness.

5 And, first to begin at our holy father, Pope Paul the Third, he, writing (as before is said) to the Princes of Christendom, of the most wicked and cruel dealing of King Henry against this godly man, wrote among others one letter to Ferdinand, King of Romans, which myself have seen and read. In this letter, after great complaint made of King Henry for killing of such a man, whom he before for his great sanctity and virtue had enrolled into the number and society of the cardinals, hoping thereby that all should have turned to his better safety and deliverance, because that dignity in all places hath ever been accounted for holy, yet now falling out otherwise, he taketh occasion to compare the doings of King Henry the Eighth to the doings of his progenitors, King Henry the Second, and this holy father he compareth, or rather preferreth, to the holy martyr, Saint Thomas of Canterbury, saying that this King Henry did not only renew the impiety of that King Henry, but also went far beyond him—for where he slew one, this slew many. Saint Thomas defended the right of one particular Church, this of the Universal Church. That king killed an archbishop, but this king hath put to death a cardinal of the holy Church of Rome. That king exiled Saint Thomas by long banishment, but this king tormented this holy man by long and hard imprisonment. He sent unto Saint Thomas certain hired men to kill him; to this was assigned only a hangman. He caused Saint Thomas to be slain by a forcible death, but this by a shameful torment hath killed the holy man of God. He, in conclusion, sought to purge himself before Alexander the Third and, laying the fault upon others, did with humility take upon him such penance as was to him enjoined by the Bishop of Rome. But this, with a most obstinate mind, defended his own horrible fact,<sup>591</sup> showing with a most earnest desire himself not only unwilling to penance, but also becometh a stubborn and rebellious enemy against the Church of Rome.

45 Then consider what that man of happy memory, Cardinal Pole,<sup>592</sup> writeth of him in sundry places of his works, who in his lifetime both knew him, and was familiarly acquainted with him. But

specially in that book which he wrote to King Henry the Eighth entitled *Pro ecclesiasticae unitatis defensione*,<sup>593</sup> wherein he extollet the name of this blessed prelate with words according to his great worthiness, saying to the King that if an ambassador had been to be sent from earth to heaven, there could not among all the bishops and clergy so fit a man be chosen as he. “For what other man,” saith he, “have the present, or of many years past have ye had comparable with him in sanctity, learning, wisdom, and careful diligence in the office and duty of a bishop? Of whom ye may justly above all other nations glory and rejoice that if all the corners of Christendom were narrowly sought, there could not be found out any one man that in all things did accomplish the parts and degrees of a bishop equal with him.” Further, in the same place he laudeth him highly for his great travail<sup>594</sup> and care in the education of youth, specially of the younger students in the University of Cambridge, for that<sup>595</sup> by his only<sup>596</sup> means and motion that noble and right virtuous Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby, sometime his mistress, erected two famous colleges in the university (as before in this history hath been declared) wherein young scholars receive great comfort towards their instruction in learning, unto which number himself became also a patron and father. And, being after chosen by the whole consent of the university, to the room<sup>597</sup> of their high chancellor, he became no less careful over them than over the flock of his diocese. All which, with many other high praises, this most virtuous, learned, and noble born cardinal, setteth out very bountifully of him.

Likewise, blessed Sir Thomas More, his companion and fellow in adversity and trouble, upon occasion of talk ministered unto him by his daughter, Mistress Roper, about refusing the oath, by my Lord of Rochester and himself, saith in a certain epistle written to said daughter that he hath him in such a reverend estimation, as for his wisdom, learning, and long approved virtue together, he reckoneth in this realm no one man to be matched or compared with him.<sup>598</sup>

Furthermore, the renowned bishop of Nocera, and most eloquent historiographer of our time, Paolus Jovius<sup>599</sup> although he lacketh no commendation of

<sup>591</sup> crime <sup>592</sup> A cousin (by both the Plantagenet and Tudor lines) and one-time close friend of Henry VIII, Reginald Pole

was the last Roman Catholic archbishop of Canterbury. <sup>593</sup> *In Defense of Ecclesiastical Unity* (1536) <sup>594</sup> work

<sup>595</sup> for that: because <sup>596</sup> sole <sup>597</sup> office



him through his whole history,<sup>600</sup> yet in one place specially he saith that upon the acceptance of his great charge of a bishopric, he became so vigilant over his flock the space of many years together  
 5 that he was to be wondered at, not only of his own country people at home, but also of all other outward nations; then he greatly reverenceth him for his constant piety in defending the marriage between King Henry and his lawful wife Queen  
 10 Catherine, and for withstanding the King's willful mind in taking upon him so absurdly the name and title of Supreme Head of the Church, for the which he did not refuse, even in his old age, to suffer the loss of liberty, livings, life, and all.

15 Then weigh what is said of him by that most eloquent and learned father of our days, Stanislaus Hosius, Bishop of Warmia<sup>601</sup> in Poland, and Cardinal of Rome, in his Book of Confutation against Brentius the heretic.<sup>602</sup> His words being  
 20 thus: *Fatemur et nos Brenti, etc.*; wherein he showeth very notably how, although in all ages heretics have lifted up themselves against the Church of God, yet hath he not forsaken or left her destitute at any time, neither doth he yet forsake  
 25 her at this day. For against Arius God raised those notable and excellent men, Liberius, Athanasius, and Hilary. When Macedonius sprung, he brought into the field against him Damasus, Gregorius Nazianzus, and Basil. At another time Nestorius  
 30 broke out; against him were sent Celestinus, Bishop of Rome, and Cyril, Archbishop of Alexandria. Then issued out (I wot<sup>603</sup> not from what dungeon) the heretic Eutyches,<sup>604</sup> against whom he set the strong and mighty Leo. Likewise Ireneaus against  
 35 Valentinus; Tertullian against Martian; Origen against Celsus, Cyprian against Novatus; Saint Jerome against Helvidius, Jovinianus, Vigilantius, and the Luciferans; Saint Augustine against the Donatists and Pelagians; Agatho against the  
 40 Monothelites; Tarasius against the Iconoclasts; Lanfranc, Sirmond and Alger against Berengarius; Petrus Cluniacensis<sup>605</sup> against the Henricians and Petrobrussians; Saint Bernard against Abelard. And generally, in what time soever heresies have showed  
 45 forth their horns, there have always been by the

singular benefit of God such worthy men for wit, learning, and eloquence as have confuted them, partly by authority of Scriptures, and partly by tradition of the Church. Neither hath God in these  
 our unfortunate days failed his Church, for whereas  
 50 you Lutherans are broken forth, and from you are sprung Zwinglians, Muncerians or Patrimontanes, and a number of horrible sects of heretics more, God hath produced against you into the battle many worthy men endued with singular wit<sup>606</sup> and  
 55 excellent learning, by whom your raging madness might be suppressed and put down: Among whom specially and by name, was that famous holy man, John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, who in defense of the faith and Catholic Church of Christ, never  
 60 stuck<sup>607</sup> for the loss of his life and shedding of his blood.

Finally, whosoever shall read the works of Cochlaeus Wisellius,<sup>608</sup> Eckius,<sup>609</sup> and others, learned writers of Germany; of the worthy bishop  
 65 and eloquent writer Osorius,<sup>610</sup> of Alphonsus de Castro, and others of Spain and of Portugal, besides a number of such other learned fathers of many nations, whereof some lived in his own days, and some since, shall easily perceive that he was a man,  
 70 for his profound learning and rare virtue, highly revered and esteemed throughout Christendom.

And, no doubt, but if his writings and doings be well compared, ye shall find him most like unto those holy fathers and doctors that in the primitive  
 75 Church laid the very first ground and foundation of our belief, upon the which we have since rested and stayed ourselves, whom to describe wholly and fully unto you according to his worthiness I will not take upon me, neither am I able to do it. No, were  
 80 I as eloquent as Cicero, or as witty and subtle as Aristotle, as copious as Demosthenes, or as profound in philosophy as Plato—such, and so innumerable, were his singular virtues. But herein I will content myself with the general commendations which all  
 85 the famous universities of divinity in Europe do give this learned bishop, calling him blessed martyr, and alleging his works for great authority.

Thus much I may also say, that unto Justus his predecessor, the first bishop of Rochester, he was a  
 90

598 See Letter 200, *EW* 1314. 599 Italian historian (1483–1552) 600 *Historiarum sui temporis libri XLV* (1550–52) 601 (1504–79), a Polish cardinal and influential figure in the Counter-Reforma-

tion 602 *Confutatio . . . Brentii* (1558), against Lutheran reformer Johannes Brenz (1499–1570) 603 know 604 *ca.* 375–454, founder of Eutychanism 605 Peter the Venerable (*ca.* 1092–1156)

606 intellect 607 hesitated 608 Johannes Cochlaeus (1479–1552) 609 Johann Eck (1486–1553) 610 Jeronimo Osorio da Fonseca (1506–1580)

just and true successor. The place of his birth he doth greatly beautify, with the glorious bishop, Saint John of Beverley. To the country of Kent, where he was bishop, he is an ornament with Saint Thomas of Canterbury. In gravity of his writing he is to be revered with Saint Bede; for stout defending the right and liberty of the holy Church against the power of princes, he is not inferior to the blessed bishop Saint Ambrose and Saint Chrysostom. In praying for his enemies and persecutors he resembleth holy Saint Stephen. In constancy and stoutness of his martyrdom he was a second Cyprian. But above all others, he is most to be likened and compared to that holy prophet and martyr of God, Saint John Baptist. And first, to set aside the congruence in their names of John, it is to be noted that as that John lived in wilderness a hard and solitary life, in penance and punishment of himself, so this John lived a solitary and austere life in his private house and cell (saving<sup>611</sup> when he was called abroad to other business), punishing himself with study, hard lodging upon the mats, fasting, praying, wearing of hair shirts, and whipping himself. Likewise, as that John preached diligently the coming of Christ at hand, giving knowledge of salvation to all them that would believe and be baptized, so this John, with like diligence and care warned the people by his continual preaching and writing of Christ's departure at hand, in case they stopped not their ears against those horrible heresies daily preached and set forth unto them. And as that John died for a case of matrimony, saying to King Herod, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," so this John died for a case in matrimony, contrary in appearance, but agreeable in substance and truth, saying unto King Henry, "It is not lawful for thee to put away thy wife and take another, though she were once thy brother's wife, seeing thy brother is dead without issue, and thou now lawfully married unto her by dispensation and authority of the Church." For Herod, whom Saint John Baptist reprehended, took to him his brother's wife, his brother living, which, as manifestly repugning to God's law, could not be done. But King Henry took his brother's wife when his brother was dead, without issue of her, which by Moses's law is not in that case forbidden, and by the authority of the Church may be permitted, as this was, and therefore

was the marriage good and lawful, and consequently the second, detestable and unlawful. Furthermore, as that John's head was begged of King Herod at a banquet, by a psaltress or woman dancer, so this John's head was begged by a like person of King Henry, as he sat banqueting and cheering at his house of Hanworth. As that John was beheaded on the birthday of King Herod, so this John was beheaded on the birthday of King Henry, the King having that day accomplished the just age of five and forty years. And as the holy finger of that John, which pointed to the lamb when he said, "*Ecce agnus dei*,"<sup>612</sup> was miraculously preserved from corruption long after his death and martyrdom, so the holy head of this John, wherewith he stoutly defended the head of our Holy Mother the Church, was by miracle preserved long after his martyrdom with a fresh and lively color, till by commandment of the King it was taken away and conveyed out of sight. Finally, as in the person of that John there died three notable functions or offices at once—that is to say, of a priest, a prophet, and a patriarch—so in the person of this John there died three like worthy vocations—that is to say, a priest, a bishop, and a cardinal. And thus we see how the death of our holy John may be compared to Saint John the Baptist's death. And, yet in very deed, for some respects it surpasseth the death of Saint John, and the wicked doings of King Henry surpasseth likewise the wicked doings of King Herod. For Saint John Baptist reprehended Herod, and would not allow his act in taking only his brother's wife, but King Henry (whom this, our holy John, reprehended) put away his lawful and virtuous wife, and took to him (as is rehearsed)<sup>613</sup> his own unlawful daughter, made sure already to another, and in honesty no better than a harlot. Herod was sorry for his rash promise made to the woman dancer, his daughter, when he heard her ask Saint John's head, but King Henry was nothing at all sorry for the promise he made of this holy John's head, but willfully and maliciously sought all unlawful means to cut it from the body, neither respecting his age, his virtue, his learning, sanctity of life, dignity, nor other quality in his worthy personage. The fact of King Herod, for which Saint John died, did most concern the injury which Herod did to his brother, whose wife he took. But the fact of King Henry,

wherefore our blessed John died, did not only touch the injury committed against the virtuous lady, his lawful wife, but it contained the express contempt of our holy father the Pope, and of the authority of the Catholic Church, besides the occasion of sin and scandal which it gave to the party that did pretend title to her, whom the King would needs marry. But what should I speak of Herod, whose cruelty was nothing to be compared to this King? For in malice which he showed to a great number of holy and learned men, principally to this, our holy father, he had never yet his like bearing the name of Christ, and professing his faith. In unthankfulness he was much worse than Alexander, for he did not only nothing consider the great affiance<sup>614</sup> which his noble father, King Henry the VII had in this holy man, making him at his death one of his executors (as we have before mentioned), nothing weighing the singular affection and credit that his grandmother, that worthy Lady Margaret, Countess of Richmond and Derby, had in him above all the prelates and bishops of the land, but setting at nought<sup>615</sup> the great virtue, learning, and holiness which he perfectly knew to be in him so rare a bishop, and utterly forgetting the honor and fame which by him both he and all his realm had gotten, like a most unthankful prince, and most contemptuous of his sovereign and holy father, the head of Christ's Church in earth, sought out most wickedly all the means he could to entrap this holy bishop and virtuous cardinal, and contrary both to the law of God and decrees of our Holy Mother, the Church, being a mere lay prince, and so having no authority nor jurisdiction whereby he might lawfully thus proceed against an anointed bishop and cardinal of the Church of Rome, but that by intending the least of the ways which he used against him, must of necessity incur the sore<sup>616</sup> and grievous censure of excommunication, accompanied with many other dangers and inconveniences<sup>617</sup> more than can well be rehearsed. He (I say), condemning all these, did most wickedly take upon him and usurp the authority which, before his days, never Christian and Catholic prince did, and— which John Calvin, a heretic, did utterly detest and condemn in him—against all law and reason most cruelly put to death this man of God, over whom, neither by law nor custom he could have any

criminal jurisdiction, but ought—if he had made an offense—to have referred the hearing and discussing of his crime to his metropolitan, or rather to the chief head of all bishops, to whom only the judgment and hearing of a bishop's crime in a spiritual cause—as this was—doth and always hath of right appertained. And as the enormities of King Henry in this case were so exorbitant, and surpassing all law, reason, and conscience, so is the wonderful working of Almighty God (whose judgments are secret and strange in our sights) much to be marked and noted in him and his adherents. For as God of his own nature is patient and long-suffering, because he expecteth the amendment of our sinful lives, so is he also just in his doings, and punisheth grievously where no amendment is endeavored, as now may well be perceived by these persons that were persecutors of this blessed man, for they escaped not the danger of his heavy hand, as shall be declared unto you.

And first, to begin with, the Lady Anne Boleyn as the chief and principal cause for whom all this woeful tragedy begun, who was also chief persecutor of this holy man—mark how she was in short space after cast down from the top of her high honor and dignity wherein she was exalted, and for a most foul and abominable incest committed with her own brother, besides sundry adulteries with other persons, was thrown into cruel and strait prison, where she remained not long before she was condemned to death by sundry noble men of this realm, that lately before were full pliable and ready to please her in all her commandments, whereof some were near of kindred to her—yea, one of them her own father—according to which condemnation she was put to open and shameful execution of death, leaving behind her nothing but an infamous name to continue forever. Of whose loss the King himself took so little sorrow that the very next day after she was dead he was married to another wife.

Next that, the Lord Cromwell is to be remembered, who with great diligence solicited the matter to the King, and earnestly provoked him in this and many other ill purposes. He, being advanced to such honor and authority as no man in this realm at that time bore the like about the King, grew at last into such hatred among the noblemen and commons throughout the realm for his intolerable

614 trust 615 *setting at nought*; valuing as nothing 616 harsh; severe 617 troubles; injuries

and tyrannical cruelty exercised over them that finally he was by sundry practices brought also into the King's displeasure, and so cast into miserable prison, condemned to death by act of Parliament for heresy and treason, and after executed according to his judgment, no man pitying his case.

Then cometh to mind Master Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, who of his own power without just warrant or authority pronounced the sentence of divorce between the King and the Queen, and after calling this holy man before him and others, cast him into prison with as much extremity as could be showed for refusing the two new oaths, the one of the King's new marriage, the other of the supremacy from whence he was never delivered till death rid him of all worldly cares. This Master Cranmer, although he continued his place and dignity during the unnatural and cruel times of King Henry and the infant his son King Edward, yet at last in the reign of that most blessed lady, Queen Mary, when the true light of justice of Christ's ancient and Catholic religion began again to shine, he was called to a reckoning for many of his former ill doings, and lastly, standing stiff in diverse horrible and foul heresies, was most worthily burnt with fire and consumed to ashes.

Likewise Master Rich, the King's solicitor, that gave false testimony against him, and was forsworn at his arraignment in so falsely betraying him, although for many years after he continued corruptly gathering together of wealth till the days of King Henry were ended, yet have I been credibly informed that if the King had lived but a few days longer than he did, he was grown into such displeasure against him for sundry falsehoods and deceits, in fraudulent purchasing and exchanging of land between the King and him, wherein the King was deceived of no small value, and likewise for diverse bribes extorted upon many of his subjects, that he was finally determined to have attained him of felony, extortion, and perjury, and so in one hour to have spoiled<sup>618</sup> him of all that great heap which he so falsely had raked together in many years before. But being after in the wicked time of the infant's reign advanced to high honor and place far above his desert, yet lived he to be deposed again of that place even by the same persons that preferred him. But since in the days of that noble

and blessed queen, many of worthy memory, he became penitent (as I have heard) for many of his offenses, for the which God permitted him (as it may be thought) to die in better order than the rest before did. But true it is that after his death, his body escaped a narrow danger of burning, for at such time as he was dead and his body laid into a coffin, cered<sup>619</sup> and balmed, and certain candles set upon the hearse, as the manner was, one of the candles—either by the will of God, or else by negligence of some of the watchers that were absent—fell down, and took hold first of the clothes and after of the coffin, that in the end before anybody was aware, the fire was fastened upon the cerecloths,<sup>620</sup> where this miserable carcass lay, and had without all doubt consumed the same into ashes, had it not then been speedily espied by certain of the servants by chance, who saved all for that time, though not without great danger to the body, and the rest of the house also. All which so narrow escapes I can impute to nothing but only to the goodness of God, for that<sup>621</sup> he conceived (as before is said) some repentance, though I never heard of any penance by him done at all.

Last of all, it is worthy to be remembered how justly the King himself was plagued first by the inordinate number of his wives, being in all six, and not one lawful more than the first, as may be thought. Of these six, two were repudiated, two beheaded for incontineny, one killed wittingly in childbed for saving of her child, and the sixth survived him, wherein her fortune was better than the rest of her fellows, for—as I have heard reported by such as had no cause to lie—he was weary of her long before he died, and therefore, if he had lived but one year longer, meant to have framed such matter against her for heresy as should have cost her her life, as it did some others of her predecessors before. And as for heir male of his body, which he so much desired and made so great ado for, as though the realm had been utterly undone if he had died without issue male, we see that God for some purpose permitted him at last to have a son, rather (as it may be thought) that no silly women should lose their lives for satisfying his licentious and vain appetite, than for any other just respect. But after his death, the reign of that son was very short, and his years very few, so is there no great matter

618 strip 619 covered with wax

620 waxed cloths, used for wrapping

a dead body 621 for that: because

praiseworthy to be written of him. But of things done under the color<sup>622</sup> of his name and authority have we all great cause to lament, which tended to nothing else but the overthrow and extirpation of the Catholic faith here within this realm, as we felt and tasted, and should still have tasted daily more and more if God had not taken him upon some special favor (as may be thought) and merciful pity which at last he began to have of this poor afflicted country, reducing it again to the true and ancient faith, by the cutting away of such an imp, at whose hands we were not to look for more grace than the father by his pernicious examples had grafted in so incestuous and damnable a stock. Then note his unmerciful and unspeakable cruelty, wherein he was once entered by the horrible murder of this holy prelate, he conceived such a boldness, and therewithal was struck with such a blindness, that in cruelty he was to be accounted nothing inferior to Nero, for whereas Nero committed execrable parricide in causing his natural mother to be slain, and not satiate therewith, commanding that in his presence her belly should be opened to the intent (as he said) that unnaturally he might behold the place where he was conceived in her womb. This King Henry, another Nero, did not only perpetrate parricide and sacrilege, but also that heinous treason of heresy all at one clap, while in ripping the bowels of his mother, the holy Church and very spouse of Christ upon earth, he labored to tear her in pieces, and despising her authority, being but one of her rotten members, monstrously took upon him to be her Supreme Head—for this only act (if he had done nothing else) always was and by law is accounted so enormous and exorbitant that as he which withdraweth or detracteth from any peculiar Church her right doth manifest injury and wrong, so he that goeth about to take away the privilege of the Church of Rome, given of Christ himself, the Supreme Head of all Churches, falleth into heresy. And whereas the other transgressor is to be termed injurious and unnatural, this kind of offense in this is to be called both a schismatic and a heretic, for he doth violate faith and nature in attempting against the Church, which is the mother of faith. But this our second Nero was not yet content with this abominable act, but heaped a great many more upon it, razing to the ground holy

monasteries, priories, and all other sorts of religious houses, profaning them with all the holy relics and precious ornaments dedicated to the service of God, not sparing the bloodshed of all such holy men and learned clerks as preferred the pleasure of God and commandment of their mother the Catholic Church, before his unlawful laws and wicked will. And for noble personages of this realm, both men and women, he spared neither kindred nor others; yea, many times for a word speaking he would revenge by death, were it spoken upon never so reasonable a ground or cause. By reason whereof more of the nobility were consumed in his days than in any three of his predecessors since this realm was first inhabited, so that in murder (if it be well considered) he passed the cruel Turk Selim.<sup>623</sup> To this join his licentious and wanton expenses whereby he consumed the treasure of his realm, and then falling into lack turned his gold and silver into copper, and after, spending the same unthrifly, took of his subjects so excessively that never prince in this realm lived with less love and favor of all good people, though among flatterers and parasites (among whom this treasure was spent) never any so highly magnified and extolled. Then consider how justly he was plagued in his gross body many years before his death, with sores and diseases that grew upon him, by means of drunken surfeits, idleness, sloth, and vicious trade of life, among women, sparing neither kindred nor others if she liked his carnal appetite, whereby he became at last so impotent and loathsome, that when the sergeants should dress him, it hath been reported by some of his privy chamber that they have smelled the ill favor of his sores the space of two chambers before they came at him. Lastly and most of all, weigh the danger of his miserable soul dying in the perilous state of excommunication without reconciliation or repentance known or heard of to the world; yea, it hath been reported by such as were about him at his end that he died almost in desperation, crying out upon the physicians because they could not cure him, saying, "Have I thus rewarded you with livings and given you fees, and none of you now able to help me when I have most need of your help." And with that, calling for Sir Anthony Denny, an egregious flatterer about him, and commonly never far from him, commanded him to whip them.

622 pretext 623 Selim I (ca. 1470–1520), Sultan of the Ottoman Empire

And although he perceived at last that by no means he could escape death, yet what did he? Can any man report that, in all the time of his sickness, he once called to God for mercy and forgiveness of his former wretched life? No, truly. But sometimes lying in a study with himself, and sometimes sorrowing as seemed by his countenance, would suddenly say, "Oh! I must die." "Yea, sir," would some or other say sometimes, "You must needs die once; so must I and every man here, but I trust you shall not die now." "Alas," would he say again, "thinkest thou that I shall be saved when I die? For I have been a king, and lived like a king." And no doubt, but even as his life was sinful, so after his death God showed a strange example upon his wretched carcass, for at such time as it was in preparing to be cered<sup>624</sup> and spiced by the surgeons in the chamber at Westminster, where he died, to be after removed down to the chapel, and so from thence to Windsor, where it was buried, it chanced the said carcass by mishap and over-boisterous lifting to fall to the ground, out of which issued such a quantity of horrible and stinking filthy blood and matter, that it was no small trouble to a number about it to cleanse the place again, and to make ready against<sup>625</sup> the next day for the remove. But before all could be done, there came into the place (as I have been credibly informed) a great black dog, no man could tell from whence, which dog (while everybody was occupied) filled himself so full as his sides could hold with licking up his filthy blood that was spilt, and in the end escaped without hurt from the guard and diverse others that struck at him with their halberds and other weapons, meaning verily<sup>626</sup> to have killed him if they could.

Others I could have named unto you that were doers in this business, and that of right great calling,

whom God worthily after finished, some by a foul and shameful end, some by leaving them without issue or kindred, whereby their lands and goods after their death came to the hands of strangers that fell in strife among themselves; others were attained, and thereby not only their own bodies executed to shameful death, but also their lands and goods being forfeited their children went a-begging. Some came to one mishap and some to another, which if it were written at large would require a long process.

These being manifest signs and tokens of God's indignation and heavy displeasure against this whole realm for so cruel and horrible murdering of his holy prophets, it standeth us in hand, and that speedily without delay, to prostrate ourselves before him, and with humility to beseech him of his infinite mercy and goodness, that we be not according to our deserts worthily punished, first in this world, by the intolerable yoke and barbarous tyranny of infidels and Turks, and after in the world to come by everlasting pain and torment of hellfire. But that rather by the merits and intercession of this holy martyr, this noble realm may once again be restored to that ancient and true Christian faith in which our forefathers lived these thousand years and more, and that we the dwellers therein and our posterity may once again peaceably serve him in the same faith all the days of our lives, and after in the world to come, glorify him in his heavenly kingdom where he reigneth forever and ever. Amen.

FINIS.