



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Digital Reserves Copyright Notice

WARNING CONCERNING COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The Copyright Law of the United States, (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted materials.

Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research. If electronic transmission of reserve material is used for purposes in excess of what constitutes "fair use", that user may be liable for copyright infringement.

FL 29

MEDIEVAL HAGIOGRAPHY

AN ANTHOLOGY

EDITED BY
THOMAS HEAD

GARLAND PUBLISHING, INC.
A MEMBER OF THE TAYLOR & FRANCIS GROUP
NEW YORK & LONDON
2000

CHAPTER 24

THOMAS OF MONMOUTH,
LIFE AND PASSION OF
ST. WILLIAM OF NORWICH

*Originally translated by Augustus Jessopp
and Montague Rhodes James and
edited by John M. McCulloh*

INTRODUCTION

On the Saturday before Easter in 1144, the mutilated body of William, a twelve-year-old skinner's apprentice, was discovered in a wood outside Norwich, England. Within a few weeks, the child's uncle, Godwin Sturt, a priest, appeared before a meeting of the clergy of the diocese of Norwich, charging the Jews with the murder of his nephew. From this incident developed the first recorded example of the accusation that Jews practice the ritual murder of Christian children. Despite a complete lack of any reliable evidence that Jews ever performed such rites and in the face of specific denials of the charge by Christian authorities, including several popes, variations of the ritual murder libel have surfaced on hundreds of occasions from the twelfth century to the twentieth.

The beginnings of the ritual murder myth fit into a larger pattern of change in medieval European society. The high Middle Ages was a period of growing religious intolerance. On the frontiers of Christendom, Europe was expanding at the expense of non-Christian peoples, notably against the Muslims in Spain and the Mediterranean. In 1095, Pope Urban II launched the First Crusade, a military expedition that recaptured the Holy Land from the Muslim Turks. In 1096, forces assembling for the crusade in northern France and Germany carried out the first widespread, large-scale violent attacks upon Jews in Latin Europe. The twelfth century also saw the rise of both popular and official applications of violence for the suppression of heretics, religious dissenters from within the Christian community.

Although the Norwich case is the earliest known example of a ritual murder charge, we are unusually well informed about it as a result of the work of Thomas of Monmouth. On the other hand, the only information available about Thomas personally is what he chose to record in his account of the life, passion, and miracles of St. William. At Norwich the cathedral chapter, the group of clergy responsible for maintaining the liturgical life of the bishop's

church, was a house of Benedictine monks, and Thomas apparently entered the chapter in the later 1140s. He gives no indication that he witnessed any of the events surrounding the murder in 1144. However, by Lent of 1150 he had been in the monastery long enough to have absorbed some of its history and traditions. At that time he claimed to have experienced a series of visions in which he was visited by Herbert Losinga, the first bishop of Norwich. Bishop Herbert directed Thomas to have the boy's body translated from the monks' cemetery to a more honorable tomb in the chapter house where the monks held their daily meetings. After much hesitation, Thomas conveyed the message to his superiors, participated in the subsequent translation, and recorded not only the story of William's life and death but also the numerous miracles attributed to the child saint.

The series of locations in which William's body rested during the decade following his death provides an index of gradual progress toward official recognition of his sanctity. William's corpse was discovered on Saturday, March 25, 1144, but it lay exposed in the wood until the following Monday, when it was temporarily interred on the spot. A month later, after Godwin's accusation of the Jews, the monks of the cathedral chapter exhumed the body and reburied it in a prominent tomb in their cemetery beside the church. A few miraculous events occurred during and after this translation, but then enthusiasm for William apparently waned until 1149 and early 1150, when certain members of the chapter began to encourage a renewal of interest. One of these was Thomas of Monmouth, whose visions during Lent of 1150 led to the translation of William's body from the cemetery into the chapter house. William remained in the new location for only a little over a year. In July 1151 he was moved again and buried under the floor of the cathedral near the main altar. Finally, in April 1154, he was translated within the church to a special chapel dedicated to the holy martyrs. Each of these moves reflects a desire to increase the honor shown to the young saint by placing him in ever more prestigious locations.

The various burial sites also show the need to balance the demands of accessibility and security. The monks wanted the tomb in a place where pilgrims could approach it in order to seek favors and cures from the saint and to leave offerings in expression of their gratitude. At the same time, the sepulchre had to be in a location where the traffic would not disrupt the daily affairs of monastic life. The body also needed protection from potential thieves, for the relics of saints were a valuable commodity in medieval Europe. The tomb in the cemetery was accessible, but it offered little honor or security. The chapter house was more prestigious and safe, but the crowds of visitors interfered with monastic routine. The tomb in front of the altar of the church provided both honor and protection, but the chapel offered both of those advantages and moved the activity out of the center of the cathedral as well. William's body apparently remained in that location until the fifteenth century. Interestingly, however, as the official recognition of William's cult increased, the level of popular enthusiasm apparently declined. The highest

concentration of recorded miracles—which presumably had some relationship to the number of visitors to the tomb—occurred during the year that William lay buried in the chapter house.

Thomas of Monmouth most likely composed his *Life and Passion of St. William of Norwich* with the goal of obtaining papal canonization for the boy whom Thomas considered a martyr. There is, however, no evidence that the process proceeded any further, and William's cult never received papal confirmation. The selections included here represent most of Book 1, in which Thomas tells the story of William's life from a prenatal prophecy of his future holiness to his burial in the monk's cemetery. Many of the features of the *Life* are hagiographical commonplaces. Nevertheless, as a saint William was unconventional in so many respects—his youth, his lay status, and his social class, as well as the striking tale of ritual murder—that Thomas took pains to stress the conventional features of his *Life*.

Thomas's second book is directed specifically at allaying doubts about William's sanctity, and it is unusually argumentative for a hagiographical work. In the first half of the book he describes, as proof of William's holiness, five miracles that occurred between 1144 and 1149/50. These include accounts of two visionaries who claimed to have seen William in Heaven in the presence of God himself. In the second half of Book 2, Thomas presents evidence for the guilt of the Jews, most of which is entirely circumstantial. He does state, however, that human sacrifice was part of a Passover ritual performed each year in one Jewish community chosen by lot from all those in Europe, and he claims as his source the testimony of a former Jew of Cambridge who had converted to Christianity when he heard of William's miracles. Similar stories in later ritual murder accusations elsewhere suggest widespread Christian belief in an international Jewish conspiracy.

The third through the sixth books of Thomas's work are for the most part quite conventional. They present a chronologically ordered account of William's three translations in the years between 1150 and 1154 and the numerous miracles that occurred in the same period. The seventh and last book begins with a series of miracles that date from the mid-1150s. They are followed by a few more stories, much more widely spaced in time, suggesting that in later years Thomas occasionally appended an additional anecdote to his essentially finished composition. Conveniently he notes that the last miracle he records took place in 1172.

Thomas's *Life* was unknown until the 1890s, and most of the scholarly investigations of it over the past century have sought to explain young William's death. Despite these attempts at armchair detective work, the crime remains unsolved. During the last decade researchers have emphasized the more significant issue of the place of William's murder and Thomas's book in the history of medieval relations between Christians and Jews. Here the fundamental point at issue is whether Thomas of Monmouth personally created the fiction of ritual murder, or whether he simply reported a story of the killing that was widely accepted in the Norwich community and possibly

based on an existing, but otherwise undocumented, popular belief that Jews sacrificed Christian children.

SOURCES AND FURTHER READINGS

For over a century the only edition and the most detailed discussion of Thomas of Monmouth's work (*Bibliotheca hagiographica latina*, no. 8926) have been those in *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich by Thomas of Monmouth, Now First Edited from the Unique Manuscript*, ed. and trans. Augustus Jessopp and Montague Rhodes James (Cambridge, 1896). The text printed here is a modernized and occasionally corrected version of Jessopp and James's translation. A new text is now forthcoming from Oxford Medieval Texts: *Thomas of Monmouth: The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ed. and trans. Willis Johnson. Two recent studies of the significance of Thomas's work are Gavin I. Langmuir, "Thomas of Monmouth: Detector of Ritual Murder," *Speculum* 59 (1984): 820-46, who sees Thomas as the inventor of the ritual murder libel, and John M. McCulloh, "Jewish Ritual Murder: William of Norwich, Thomas of Monmouth, and the Early Dissemination of the Myth," *Speculum* 72 (1997): 698-740, who argues that Thomas is a reporter rather than the creator of the charge. Kenneth Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), provides a recent history of the Jews and their relations with Christians in the Middle Ages, while R.I. Moore, *The Formation of a Persecuting Society: Power and Deviance in Western Europe, 950-1250* (Oxford, 1987), offers a broad interpretation of the growth of persecution. Hagiographical studies of Thomas's work have emphasized his descriptions of William's miracles: Ronald Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (Totowa, NJ, 1977) and Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event, 1000-1215* (Philadelphia, 1982), especially pp. 68-76. M.D. Anderson, *A Saint at Stake: The Strange Death of William of Norwich, 1144* (London, 1964) is a readable popular account of the events surrounding William's murder and the efforts to promote his cult as a saint.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

Thomas of Monmouth, Life and Passion of St. William of Norwich

(1.) Concerning the forewarning in his mother's dream.

The mercy of divine goodness, wishing to display itself to the see of Norwich, or rather to the whole of England, and to give it in these new times a new patron, granted that a boy should be conceived in his mother's womb without her knowing that he was to be numbered among the illustrious martyrs and worthy to be honored among all the army of the saints. Moreover divine mercy brought it about that he should grow up little by little as a fragrant rose from the thorns.

His father was a certain Wenstan by name. His mother was called Elviva, and they passed their lives as honest people in the country, being very well supplied with the necessities of life. It should not seem absurd to anyone that a boy of such sanctity and destined for such honor should by God's will be born from lowly parents, when it is certain that He Himself was pleased to be born from among the poor. Accordingly his mother, although ignorant of the fact, had by divine goodness conceived, and, while still unaware, was with child. But it happened that she was chosen to receive a marvelous forewarning by a vision worthy of our honor, which revealed to her how great should be the sanctity and dignity of the child whom she bore in her womb. As she slept it seemed to her that she was standing in a road with her father Wulward, a priest, a very famous man in his time.¹ And there as she looked down, at her feet, she saw a fish known as a luce. The fish had twelve fins on each side, and they were red as if they were dabbled with blood. And she said to her father, "Father, I see a fish, but I wonder very much how it should have come here or how it can live in so dry a spot." Her father answered, "Pick it up, my daughter. Pick it up and put it in your bosom." When she did so, the fish seemed to move in her bosom and by degrees to grow so large that she could no longer hold it. So it glided out, and escaping by her sleeve and suddenly acquiring wings, it flew away, and passing through the clouds, it entered into heaven, which opened to receive it.

The woman awoke after her vision, and in the morning she told her father what she had seen in her dream. Her father having much experience in explaining visions, wondering what was presaged and what it portended, first thought it over privately and, considering all the facts, after a while he responded to his daughter. "Know for certain, my dearest daughter, that you are with child, and rejoice with joy because you shall surely bring forth a son who shall attain to highest honor on earth, and after being raised above the clouds shall be exalted exceedingly in heaven. Know, too, that when your son shall have reached the age of twelve, then he shall be raised to this pinnacle of glory." Now we can hardly believe that the father would have spoken these words to his daughter with so much certainty on the basis of his own knowledge, but rather on behalf of the Holy Spirit, to whom alone all things are present, even those things which are to come.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

In accordance with her father's words, the daughter did bring forth a son, who also at twelve years of age arrived at the height of honor that had been foretold.

(2.) Concerning his birth and infancy.

After some time had passed and the day had arrived for his delivery, a son was born to the woman, and he was called William. But he was born on the day of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, that is on Candlemas.² Perhaps this also indicated how great the purity and sanctity of the child would be, and that he would greatly love candles and their brightness. But I have judged that I should not omit one event, which I later learned of from his mother and his brothers and the priest who had baptized him, so I have inserted it here. On the day of his weaning, when his father Wenstan was entertaining his relatives who had been invited to the feast, a man who was undergoing penance, with iron bands upon his arms, presented himself to the guests as if begging for alms. After dinner the man cheerfully held up the child in his hands, and the baby, wondering at the iron fetters in the innocence of childhood, touched them with his little hands. Suddenly the bonds broke and fell to pieces. The guests, amazed at the sight, were greatly astonished, and attributed what had occurred to the merits of the child. The penitent, set free by divine favor, went his way giving thanks. The priest, who was among the guests, collected the broken rings and placed them in a conspicuous place in his church at Haveringland, not only for keeping up the memory of those who were living but also as a record for those who should come after; and he carefully preserved them for a long time.

The mother, loving her child exceedingly, reared him with very great care, and by carefully educating him she brought him up from his infancy to the age of reason. When he was only seven years old, as I learned from the mother's narrative, he became so devoted to abstinence that, although his elder brothers did not fast, he himself fasted on three days of the week—namely Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. He also celebrated with devout fasting the vigils of the apostles and of other saints that were announced to the people.³ And his zeal gradually increasing, he used to pass many days content with nothing but bread and water. With his heart overflowing with piety, whatever he could save from his own portion of food or extort from his mother by his pleas, he used to distribute to the poor, sometimes openly and sometimes secretly. But while doing these things he conducted himself so dutifully, kindly, and prudently, that as far as possible he at the same time benefited the poor and did not cause his parents any annoyance. He attended church joyfully, learned his letters and the Psalms and prayers, and treated all the things of God with the greatest reverence. With divine grace anticipating him in all things, he strove with earnest effort by kindness to all, to be loved by all and to be burdensome to none. Divine providence worked in the child (who was knowingly ignorant and wisely untaught) the mighty works of grace and pointed out by sure signs even then how great his merits were going to be later on.

(3.) How he was accustomed to associate with the Jews and, rebuked by his own people for doing so, how he withdrew himself from them.

When therefore he was flourishing in this blessed boyhood of his and had attained his eighth year, he was entrusted to the skinners to be taught their craft. Gifted with a teachable nature and eagerly applying hard work, in a short time he far surpassed lads of his own age in the craft, and he equaled some who had been his teachers. So attracted by a divine command, he left the country and moved to the city and lived for some time with a very famous master of that craft. He was seldom in the country, but was occupied in the city and diligently gave himself to the practice of his craft, and thus he reached his twelfth year.

Now, while he was staying in Norwich, the Jews who were settled there and needed to have their cloaks or their robes or other garments (whether held as security for loans or their own property) repaired, preferred him over all other skinners. For they thought him to be especially suited for their work, either because they had learned that he was honest and skillful, or because attracted to him by their avarice, they thought they could bargain with him for a lower price, or as I believe instead, because by the ordering of divine providence he had been predestined to martyrdom from the beginning of time, and gradually step by step was drawn on toward that fate. And the Jews, thinking him to be somewhat naive and thus more suited to their purpose, had chosen him to be mocked and sacrificed in scorn of the Lord's passion. For we have learned from certain Jews, who were afterward converted to the Christian faith, that at that time they had planned to do this very thing with some Christian. And in order to carry out their evil purpose, at the beginning of Lent they had chosen the boy William, who was twelve years old and unusually innocent. When therefore the holy boy, ignorant of their treacherous plan, had frequent dealings with the Jews, he was taken to task by Godwin the priest, whose wife was the boy's aunt, and by a certain Wulward with whom he was staying, and he was prohibited from associating with them any more. But the Jews, annoyed that their plans were thwarted, tried with all their might to salvage their wicked scheme. They were especially eager because the day for carrying out the crime they had decided upon was approaching, and the victim whom they had thought they had already secured had slipped out of their wicked hands. Accordingly, collecting all the cunning of their crafty plots, they found a man—I am not sure whether he was a Christian or a Jew—who was a most treacherous fellow and just the fitting person for carrying out their detestable crime. With great haste—for their Passover was only three days off—they sent him to find and bring back with him the victim who, as I said before, had slipped out of their hands.

(4.) How he was deceived by the Jews' messenger.

At the dawn of day, on the Monday after Palm Sunday, that detestable messenger of the Jews set out to execute the business that was committed to him, and after searching with very great care, he at last found the boy William. When the child was found, the man deluded him with cunning

wordy tricks and deceived him with lying promises. For he pretended that he was the cook of William, archdeacon of Norwich, and that he wished to have him as a helper in the kitchen, where if he should continue steadily with him he would get many advantages in his situation. The simple boy was deceived and trusted himself to the man. However, wishing to have his mother's approval—for his father had died by this time—he started with the fellow to find her. When they had come to where she was, the boy told her the reason for his visit, and the traitor, repeating his previous offer, cast the net of his treachery. So with many promises that son of perdition easily prevailed upon the boy's mind with his tempting offers. Yet at first he could not at all gain the mother's consent. But when the scoundrel persisted, the innocent boy agreed though his mother resisted, moved by forebodings and in her motherly affection feeling some fear for her son. On one side was the traitor, on the other the mother. He begs; she refuses. He begs, but only that he may make away with the boy. She refuses, afraid lest she should lose him. He asserts that he is the archdeacon's cook, but she does not believe him at all. So between her and him you might have seen a struggle as between a sheep and a wolf (who seemed at first sight far the strongest) in defense of a third. The lamb was between them. Here stood the sheep and there the wolf. The wolf persists so that he may rend and devour; the sheep holds her ground that she may rescue and save. But because the boy, being led astray, favored the one and kept on incessantly begging the consent of the other, the mother, partly overcome by her son's prayers and partly seduced by the man's rosy promises, at last was compelled against her will to give way. She begged, however, for delay till after Easter; but the traitor swore he would not wait three days, not for thirty pieces of silver. The mother refused to let him go, and vowed she would not release him before Easter. So the traitor took three shillings from his purse with intent to weaken the mother's devotion and to bend the capricious stubbornness of a fickle woman, seduced by the glitter of money to the lust of gain. Thus the money was offered as the price of the innocent's service, or rather in truth as the price of his blood. But not even yet was the mother's devotion shaken, nor the intuition of a coming evil easily removed. The wrangling still went on: on one side with prayers, and on the other with the pieces of silver, so that, if he could not wear down her stubbornness by his continual offers, the brightness of the coins that smiled at her might arouse her avarice. So the mother's mind was cruelly disturbed by these, even though her motherly affection only slowly gave way under the temptation and, persuaded at last by the shining pieces of silver, she was the victim of her greed, and once overcome, willingly or not, she came to accept that which she still opposed. Briefly told, the mother being won over, the lamb was handed over to the wolf, and the boy William was given up to the betrayer.

(5.) How on going to the Jews he was taken, mocked and slain.

In the morning accordingly that traitor, an imitator in almost everything of the traitor Judas, returns to Norwich with the boy, and as he was passing by the house of the boy's aunt he went in with him and said that the mother

had entrusted the boy to him, and then he went out again hastily. But the boy's aunt said quickly to her daughter, "Follow them at once, and take care you find out where that man is leading the boy off to." Thus the girl ran out to explore the way they were going, and she followed them at a distance as they turned about through some private alleys. At last she saw them entering cautiously into the house of a certain Jew, and she observed that the door closed right after them. When she saw this, she went back to her mother and told her what she had seen.

Then the boy, like an innocent lamb led to the slaughter, was treated kindly by the Jews. Ignorant of what was being prepared for him, he was kept until the following morning. But on the next day, which in that year was their Passover, after the singing of the hymns for the day in the synagogue, the leaders of the Jews assembled in the house of the Jew mentioned earlier. Suddenly they seized hold of the boy William as he was having his dinner and in no fear of any treachery, and they ill treated him in various horrible ways. For while some of them held him from behind, others opened his mouth and gagged him with a wooden rod, fixing it by thongs through both jaws to the back of his neck, they fastened it with a knot as tightly as they could. After that, taking a short piece of rope about the thickness of one's little finger and tying three knots in it at certain distances marked out, they bound it around that innocent head from the forehead to the back, forcing the middle knot into his forehead and the two others into his temples. The two ends of the rope were stretched most tightly at the back of his head and fastened in a very tight knot. The ends of the rope were then passed around his neck and carried around his throat under his chin, and there they finished off this dreadful engine of torture in a fifth knot.

But not even yet could the cruelty of the torturers be satisfied without adding still more severe pains. Having shaved his head, they stabbed it with countless thorn-points, and made the blood come horribly from the wounds they made. And they were so cruel and so eager to inflict pain that it was difficult to say whether they were more cruel or more eager in their tortures. Indeed, their skill in torturing gave strength to their cruelty and provided it with implements. Thus, while these enemies of the Christian name were reveling in the spirit of malice around the boy, some of those present decided that he should be fixed to a cross in mockery of the Lord's passion. And they did it as if to say, "Just as we condemned the Christ to a shameful death, so let us also condemn the Christian, so that, uniting the Lord and his servant in a like punishment, we may turn back upon them the pain of His reproach that they attribute to us."

Conspiring, therefore, to accomplish the crime of this great and detestable malice, they next laid their bloodstained hands upon the innocent victim, and having lifted him from the ground and fastened him upon the cross, they vied with one another in their efforts to make an end of him. And we, after inquiring into the matter very diligently, both found the house and discovered in it some most certain and clear marks of what had been done there. For people

say that there was there instead of a cross a post set up between two other posts, and a beam stretched across the middle post and attached to the others on either side. And as we afterward discovered, from the marks of the wounds and of the bonds, the right hand and foot had been tightly bound and fastened with cords, but the left hand and foot were pierced with two nails. Thus, the deed was planned so that, in case at any time he should be found and the fastenings of the nails discovered, it might not be detected that he had been killed by Jews rather than by Christians. But while in doing these things they were adding pain to pain and wound to wound, still they were not able to satisfy their senseless cruelty and their inborn hatred of Christians. Indeed, after all these many and great tortures, they inflicted a frightful wound in his left side, reaching all the way to the center of his heart, and as though to make an end of the matter they extinguished his mortal life so far as it was in their power. And since many streams of blood were running down from all parts of his body, they poured boiling water over him to stop the blood and to wash and close the wounds.

Thus the glorious boy and martyr of Christ, William, dying the death of time in mockery of the Lord's death, but crowned with the blood of a glorious martyrdom, entered into the kingdom of glory on high to live forever, in the year of our Lord's Incarnation, 1144, on Wednesday, the 22nd day of March.⁴ His soul rejoices blissfully in Heaven among the shining hosts of the saints, and his body works miracles upon earth by the omnipotence of divine mercy.

(6.) How they conferred about hiding him.

Thus, their wicked purpose having been accomplished, the Jews consulted with one another about what else was to be done. They took down the lifeless body from the post and began to plot what they should do with it . . . [They discussed their problem on Wednesday without reaching agreement. Meeting again on Thursday, they concluded that they should dispose of the body well away from their neighborhood in order to divert suspicion from themselves. Nevertheless, because the Thursday before Easter was Absolution Day, when penitents from throughout the diocese gathered at the cathedral to receive absolution of their sins, the Jews decided that it would be safer to wait until Friday to dispose of the corpse.]

(7.) How he was carried out and hidden in the wood.

The next day dawned, when everywhere the Christian religion specially celebrates the adoration of the venerable Cross.⁵ On that day it is the custom among all Christians not only to fast but also to abstain from all amusements and pleasures, and while going around to the churches of the saints to be diligently engaged in devout attendance at prayers. At daylight, therefore, on this day the Jews who had been chosen the day before namely, Eleazar⁶ and another, tied up the body of the blessed martyr William in a sack and carried it out. And when they had got out of the city with the body and were just entering Thorpe Wood, it happened that a certain citizen of Norwich—indeed, one of the most eminent and richest of the citizens—met them. His Christian name was Elward and his surname was Ded. After visiting all the

churches in the city during the previous night, he was returning from the church of Saint Mary Magdalen, which is the church at the hospital near the wood, and was making his way with a single servant along the edge of the wood to Saint Leonard's church. Divine grace arranged for this to happen so that there might be a lawful witness,⁷ and when the body was afterward discovered, the matter might not be concealed from the Christians. So Elward, coming upon the Jews as they were going along, recognized them, but he could not tell what it was that one of them was carrying in front of him on his horse's neck. However, being suspicious and considering what sort of business the passers-by were conducting and what it could possibly be that they were carrying with them, and why they should have gone so far from home on a day when Jews did not normally leave their houses,⁸ he halted for a moment and asked them where they were going. Then, going nearer and reaching out his hands, he touched what they were carrying with his right hand, and he found it was a human body. But they, frightened at having been discovered and in their terror having nothing to say, gave their horses free rein and rushed into the thick of the wood. Whereupon a suspicion of some mischief suggested itself to the mind of Elward; yet he turned his thoughts once again to the road he had been traveling with the pious enthusiasm of devotion.

Meanwhile the Jews, picking their way through the tangled thickets of the wood, hung the body by a thin flaxen cord to a tree and left it there, and then returned home by another path. And because they were extremely terrified and conceived new fears at every meeting with anyone that they saw, I conjecture that the same thing happened to them that usually occurs to very timid people who are feeling guilty. For in such a case they look with suspicion at everyone they encounter, and they see pitfalls everywhere, and they suppose that tree trunks and stones seen at a distance are men. At any rate when they got back, the Jews told the others the mishap that had occurred to them on the road.

(8.) How by giving a hundred marks to the sheriff they were rid of their fear.

The enemies of the Christians, being very much alarmed, were quite at a loss to know what to do. And in despair, while one was suggesting this and another that measure for their common safety, they decided at last to hasten to John the sheriff, who in the past had been their refuge and their one and only protector.⁹ So by common consent it was arranged that certain of them who were their chief men in influence and power should go to him and deal with him so that, supported by his authority, they should have nothing more to fear. So they went and passing within the castle walls, were admitted to the presence of the sheriff. They said that they had a great secret to divulge and wished to communicate secretly with him alone. Without delay, when all who were present had withdrawn, John bade them immediately to declare what they wanted, and they replied, "Listen, we are placed in a position of great anxiety, and if you can help us out of it, we promise you a hundred marks." He, delighted at the number of marks, promised that he would keep their

secret and that, according to his power, he would not fail to give them his support on any occasion.

Accordingly, when the great secret had been revealed, Elward was hastily summoned. When he arrived, he was immediately ordered, or rather compelled, by the sheriff, whether he wished to or not, to take an oath that he would reveal no information against the Jews nor divulge what he had seen during his lifetime, or at any rate until he himself was at the point of death. But the ordering of the divine goodness by no means wished that event to be hidden forever, which He determined should be revealed in many ways to the praise of His illustrious martyr and to keeping alive the memory of His own passion in the future.

Accordingly, when five years had gone by, this Elward, overtaken by infirmity, was brought to the end of his life. But as his last hour was drawing near, he was admonished in a vision by the holy boy, William himself (who was already now becoming very famous throughout the whole province by his frequent miracles), not to neglect to reveal the things he had seen to whomever he pleased. So, he invited to his bedside certain persons whom he thought worthy to receive the revelation of such a great secret, namely Wicheman, a monk to whom the bishop had committed the responsibility for receiving the confessions of penitents and . . . , priest of Saint Nicholas.¹⁰ At last on his deathbed, and almost with his last words, in obedience to the martyr's command, he set forth in order what he had first seen and afterward had come to know was certainly true.

All of this I, Thomas, a monk of Norwich, after hearing it from their lips and knowing it to be certainly true, have been careful to hand down in writing, because I did not think that the story of so important a truth ought to be lost or concealed by silence.

(9.) How a light from heaven gleamed over his body like a ladder of fire.

While these things were going on in the city, on the very same day, that is the Friday before the sacred feast of the resurrection of the Lord, the divine grace, which is never absent from His servants, condescended to exhibit around about the body of the glorious martyr, which was lying in the wood, certain glorious testimonies of his piety. For toward evening of that same day a fiery light suddenly flashed down from heaven, which, extending by degrees as far as the place where the body was, blazed in the eyes of many people who were in different places. Particularly Henry de Sprowston, formerly the keeper of the stable to Bishop Eborard,¹¹ saw it as he was standing at the door of his house with all his family. The lady Legarda, formerly wife of William of Apulia, with her attendants saw it too. She, for the love of God, lives near the hospital of Saint Mary Magdalen, looking after the sick, and engaged in such services, she lives as a beggar for the salvation of her soul. But in the same night, when the sick people of the hospital were getting up for the midnight office in the silence of the night, they saw the brightness of that same light when Legarda showed it to them. Indeed some of them say that even on the morning of Holy Saturday the brightness was apparent to them as they gazed

until sunrise. Moreover, that light divided into two rays and seemed to take the shape of a very long ladder, extending from below into the sky to the eastward. And, as they who first found the body lying in the open air in the wood testified, one of these rays stretched as far as his head and the other to his feet. What else did the divine grace wish to signify to His faithful ones with this sign except that it was His pleasure to declare, by a clear indication to all, how great was the merit of him whom He was so glorifying by signs from heaven? For the form of the ladder typifies his ascent to glory, and the brightness of the light declares his deserving of the martyr's crown.

(10.) How he was discovered and by whom.

[On Saturday morning, the nun Legarda and some of the residents of the hospital went out before sunrise to find the spot where the light had appeared. When they got there, they found the boy's body at the base of an oak tree, where two crows were trying to feed on the corpse. Nevertheless, their efforts were in vain because "divine providence, having foreseen to preserve him . . . , wished him to remain undefiled by birds and wild beasts."]

(11.) How he was found a second time.

On that same Saturday, after sunrise, Henry de Sprowston, the forester whom I mentioned before, mounting his horse, went into the wood to see if he could find anyone who might be doing mischief by cutting down anything in the wood without permission. As he was going along, either chance or, as I rather believe, the divine will inclined his mind toward the place where he had seen the beams of the bright light gleaming on the day before. While he was passing back and forth in that part of the wood, suddenly he observed a man cutting wood who said that he had discovered there close by a boy who had been slain. Then, led by the peasant, Henry found the boy, but who he was or how he had got there he could not understand. But when he had looked at him very carefully to find out if by any chance he knew him, he perceived that he had been wounded, and he noticed the wooden torture in his mouth. Becoming aware that the boy had been treated with unusual cruelty, he now began to suspect, from the manner of his treatment, that it was no Christian but in fact a Jew who had presumed to slaughter an innocent child of this kind with such horrible barbarity. So, observing the place very carefully and taking note of the quarter of the heavens, he became certain that this was the same place where on the day before he had seen the rays of light gleaming and flashing upward. Accordingly, when he had considered these things with much astonishment, Henry went back and told his wife and all his household all he had seen. Then summoning a priest he announced to him that the body of a little innocent who had been treated in the most cruel manner had been discovered exposed in the wood, and that he very much wished to take it away from there and, if the priest approved, to bury it in the churchyard of Sprowston. After very earnestly deliberating about carrying out this intention, they came to the conclusion that, because the festival of Easter was coming the next day, they should defer their arrangement until the third day¹² and so carry out their devout intention more fittingly.

(12.) How he was buried in the wood.

So the business of burying him was put off. But in the meantime by one man after another telling others their versions of the story the rumor got spread in all directions, and when it reached the city, it struck the hearts of all who heard it with great amazement. The city was stirred with a strange excitement, the streets were crowded with agitated people, and already many of them asserted that only the Jews would have done such a deed, especially at that time. And so some were standing about as if amazed by the new and extraordinary affair. Many were running here and there, especially the boys and the young men. Drawn by a divine impulse, they rushed in crowds to the wood to see the sight. What they sought they found, and on detecting the marks of the torture in the body and carefully looking into the method of the act, some suspected that the Jews were not guiltless of the deed; but some, led on by what was truly a premonition, asserted that it was so. When these returned, they who had stayed at home got together in groups, and when they heard how the case stood, they too hurried to see for themselves, and when they returned, they described the same evidence to others. And thus all through the Saturday and all through Easter day all the city everywhere was occupied in going and returning time after time, and everybody was excited and astonished at the extraordinary event.

And so the earnestness of their devout fervor was urging all of them to destroy the Jews, and they would there and then have laid hands upon them except that restrained by fear of Sheriff John they kept quiet for awhile.

While things were going on in this way for two days in the city, Henry de Sprowston, with his wife and family, on the Monday after Easter Sunday got ready to carry out his intention, and about the first hour of the day, he hastened to where the blessed martyr's glorious body was still lying in the open air. But when he got to the place with his party, forewarned I think by a divine impulse, he decided that he must change his plans because he was afraid to carry out his intention without the bishop's permission. Accordingly with all reverence he adopted another plan and buried the body in the place where it had been found.

But this fact I think ought to be mentioned, that while the body was being carried by the hands of those who were going to bury it, suddenly a fragrant perfume filled the nostrils of the bystanders as if there had been growing there a great mass of sweet-smelling herbs and flowers. And I think it was divinely determined that the burial happened to take place there, so that afterward the body might be transferred for greater veneration, and although he was translated, yet in this place, too, divine grace wished to make him illustrious with many miracles.

(13.) How the priest Godwin took pains to learn whether it was he.

When the illustrious martyr's body was buried, the word spread through some of his former companions that this body was the body of William who had formerly had dealings with the Jews, and at last the news came to the ears

of Godwin the priest, whose surname was Sturt, and who was married to the martyr's aunt.

And when he learned from the boy's companions that it really was so, he took care the next day to visit the place with his son Alexander, then a deacon, and with Robert, the martyr's brother. He did so first in order to make sure whether it was William himself, and also so that, if the boy were recognized, Godwin might perform the burial service right away. But because he could not be recognized until the earth that was laid upon him had been removed, they determined to dig him up. However, while they were digging and throwing out the earth, when they got near the body, suddenly the earth before their very eyes seemed by some strong force to be lifted up from below and thrown out. When the diggers saw this, immediately a great horror and amazement penetrated their hearts, and falling back they left off what they had started. But when the priest called them back, they took courage and resumed their interrupted task. But when the same thing happened again the same way as before, it seemed to them certain that here was one who was not yet dead but alive. At that the priest crying out ordered them to hurry, for he believed that they would find him still alive. They were hastening eagerly, when they actually touched the body with their hands. When the soil was removed, the face was exposed, and they plainly distinguished whose it was. Brother recognized brother and friends their friend. Brother wept for his dead brother and friends bewailed their murdered friend. The more they had loved him living, the more they grieved for him slain. And when they came closer they were greatly astonished because, although so many days had passed since the time when they suspected he had been put to death, yet absolutely no bad smell was perceptible. But what seemed more deserving of their wonder was—that though there was never a flower there nor any sweet-smelling herb growing thereabout—yet there the perfume of spring flowers and fragrant herbs was wafted to the nostrils of all present. At last having celebrated the burial rites they replaced the earth that had been dug up and disturbed, and commending the soul and body to God they went their way.

(14.) Concerning the warning to his aunt in a vision.

When the priest Godwin got home he related to his wife Liviva, who was the boy's aunt, exactly what had happened. Immediately clapping her hands and breaking out into loud cries, she said, "It is true, and my dream was only too true. It came to me on the Saturday before Palm Sunday, when the Lord was pleased to reveal to me plainly—in spite of my ignorance—the most certain truth of this business. I saw in a vision of the night, in which I was standing in the middle of the street of the marketplace when suddenly the Jews came upon me running up from all sides, and they surrounded me as I fled and they seized me. And as they held me they broke my right leg with a club and they tore it away from the rest of my body, and running off rapidly, they seemed to carry it away with them. O, how true was the forewarning of my vision! O, how happy I would be if I had not dreamed a true dream! I remem-

ber what you, my lord, said to me when I related this dream to you: that soon I would lose one of my dear ones through the Jews, and one whom I certainly loved more than all others. Behold, I am now suffering what you predicted. See, I'm sad to say it has happened just as you predicted." She had scarcely finished speaking when a chill pierced her to the marrow, her face grew very pale, she lost consciousness, and as though dead she slipped from the hands of the bystanders and fell to the earth.

Recovering consciousness after a while, the woman rose, and immediately bursting into tears, she bewailed the nephew whom she had so greatly loved. For a long while afterward she could scarcely be restrained from her lamentations, and she kept on lamenting him whom she had so dearly and tenderly loved.

(15.) Concerning the mother's lamentations.

Just at this time as the report was spreading, the story of her son's murder came to the ears of his mother who, naturally overwhelmed by the sad news, immediately fainted away as if she were dead. After a while, however, recovering herself, she hastened to Norwich without delay to inquire into the truth of the matter. But when she learned by the report of many people that her son was dead and was buried in the wood—immediately tearing her hair and clapping her hands, she ran weeping and wailing through the streets like a mad woman. At last going to the house of her sister, whom I mentioned before and inquiring of both the priest Godwin and her sister, she could learn nothing about the circumstances and the truth except that he had been slain in an extraordinary way. Nevertheless, from many probable indications and conclusions she was convinced that they were not Christians but Jews who had dared to do this sort of deed. With a woman's readiness of belief she easily gave credence to these conjectures. Whereupon she at once burst forth into denouncing the Jews publicly with insults and indignation. Sometimes she behaved like a mother moved by a mother's love; sometimes she bore herself like a woman with a woman's passionate rashness. And so, assuming as certain what she only suspected, asserting what she imagined as though it had actually been seen—she went through the streets and open places. And carried along by her motherly distress, she kept calling upon everybody with dreadful screams, protesting that the Jews had seduced and stolen her son away from her and killed him. This conduct worked very greatly upon the minds of the populace to accept the truth, and so everybody began to cry out with one voice that all the Jews ought to be utterly destroyed as eternal enemies of Christians and the Christian religion.

(16.) How the priest Godwin accused the Jews at a synod and offered to prove by ordeal that they were guilty of the death of the boy William.

When some days had passed, the day for holding the synod drew near, and according to custom Bishop Eborard presided. The sermon having been preached, the aforesaid Godwin, the priest, arose, saying that he was about to bring to the ears of the bishop and his brother priests a distressing complaint

and one which had not been heard of in the present time. Wherefore, after everyone had been ordered to be silent, he began in the following manner:

"Very reverend Lord, Father, and Bishop, may your goodness, which has been so well known in the past and will continue to be for all time, deign to incline your ears graciously to the words of our complaint. May also the reverend assembly of my brethren and fellow priests, whom I see attending the present synod, condescend to listen patiently to my sad complaint and receive it without indifference. Truly I have come forward to plead not so much a private or domestic case as to make known to you an outrage that has recently been done to the whole Christian community. Indeed I think it is not unknown to you, Father and very reverend Prelate, nor do I think it is a secret to most of you, my dear brethren, that a certain boy—a very little boy and a harmless innocent, too—was treated in the most horrible manner in Passion Week, was found in a wood, and up to this time has been buried there without a Christian funeral. He was indeed a cousin of my own children, and because of the tie of kinship which united us he was very dear to me. Therefore, when I lay my complaint before you all concerning his death, I can hardly keep the tears from my eyes. To begin with, I excuse all Christians as innocent in this detestable act of murder. But, in the second place, I accuse the Jews, the enemies of the Christian name, as the doers of this deed and as the shedders of innocent blood. Third, I am ready to prove the truth of my statements at such time and place and by such proof as is allowed me by Christian law. You should not consider me hasty or unwise in the present business. If I were not certain of the truth of the charge I have laid before you, I certainly would not have come forward so confidently to establish the proof I have promised. And that the facts are so you can judge for yourselves, not only from the practices that the Jews are bound to carry out on the days specified, but also from the manner of the punishment inflicted and the character of the wounds as well as from the many circumstances that fit together. To these and many other most evident proofs must also be added Leviva, the boy's aunt, with her very remarkable warning vision. There is also the weeping mother who laments that she was circumvented and seduced by the crafty tricks of a very cunning messenger of the Jews, and so her son was taken away. Thus, since these things are so certain and I too am concerned when my neighbor's house is in flames, therefore I come before you as my one and only protection, and I present my complaint to you with greater confidence because I firmly believe that you will by no means deviate from the laws of right and equity."

With this conclusion he brought his speech to an end and was silent. With attentive ears, eyes fixed on the ground, and an anxious heart, he waited for the bishop's answer. Accordingly, while all were disturbed and stunned at what had occurred, they say that the prelate, very much moved by the atrocity of the deed and motivated by his zeal for justice, replied as follows:

"What you affirm to be certain is so far clearly uncertain to us; however, we shall take care to arrive at reliable knowledge of this business. And if

indeed it turns out to be as you say, you may be sure that the rigor of our justice shall not be found wanting in any respect. But since it is not proper that a just judge should pronounce upon those who are absent and unheard, let the Jews be summoned and have a hearing tomorrow. Then, if they are convicted, let them receive the punishment they deserve."

The handling of this business being thus put off until the next day, and the business of the synod having been dealt with in part, all dispersed intending to return the next morning. But on the same day, by order of the bishop, the dean¹³ of Norwich summoned the Jews to appear and ordered them to present themselves before the bishop in the morning to answer before the synod regarding such an important matter.

The Jews were greatly disturbed and ran to Sheriff John as their only refuge, seeking help and counsel in so difficult a cause because by trusting to his patronage they had often escaped many dangers. So John, having taken counsel and being one who was not ignorant of the truth, did not allow the Jews to come to the synod on the following day. Indeed he sent word through his servants that the bishop had nothing to do with the Jews, and that in the absence of the king the Jews should make no answer to such nonsense on the part of the Christians. But the bishop having received this message (and the priest wishing to repeat his complaint of the previous day in full synod), inquired of Dom Aimar, prior of Saint Pancras,¹⁴ and other very learned and prudent men who happened then to be present at the synod, what answer they thought ought to be given. They declared unanimously that a clear outrage was being done to God and Christian law, and they advised that it should be quickly restrained with rigorous ecclesiastical justice. In the meantime, however, the bishop, not wishing to appear hasty, and yet not shrinking from doing what was right, decided that the aforesaid enemies of Christ should be summoned a second and a third time, lest too much hurrying of the sentence should either go beyond moderation or exceed the ordinary limits of custom. The dean did not delay in executing what the bishop had decreed. But the Jews refused to appear. When the synod had come to an end, the bishop again consulted with the wisest men as to what was to be done under the circumstances. Accordingly it was determined by common consent that notice should be given to John that he should not protect the Jews against God, and to the Jews that peremptory sentence would be passed upon them, and that unless they at once came to clear themselves of the charge they must understand that without doubt they would be exterminated.

Of course John moved by these words came with the Jews without delay, intending to hear what might be said against them, and presented himself, grumbling, before the bishop.

Thereupon the aforesaid priest rose and explained his previous complaint, and what he asserted in word he promised that he would prove without delay by the judgment of God.

The Jews on the advice of the sheriff denied the charge brought against them, but as to the proposed ordeal, they asked for a short delay to deliberate.

But when the priest refused this and protested against any kind of delay, with the assent of the bishop they proceed to take counsel intending to confer secretly about it. The sheriff was consulted as to what remained for them to do in such a critical situation, since they perceived that on the one hand any delay was denied them, and on the other they were dreadfully afraid of the trial by ordeal. After seeking some way of compromise, with a great deal of discussion, and after dealing with each alternative on its merits, they found no safe escape from such a great difficulty except by obtaining some truce and delay. If they could obtain that, they hoped they could easily extort from the king with money the favor of getting a chance to argue the case, and so utterly put an end to the rumor of the crime of which they stood accused.

When the greatest part of the day had been spent in this kind of discussion, at last they sent to the bishop asking that they be allowed some sort of delay. When this was denied them, the sheriff departed with the Jews, without making the customary request for permission to leave. But because it was not safe for them to remain outside, the sheriff protected them within the defenses of the castle until, their security having been guaranteed by a royal edict, they might be safe for the future and out of harm's way. When it was told to the bishop and his supporters that they had gone away, the bishop said nothing at the time because he feared openly to oppose the king and his officers. Instead he reserved the speech which had been thus interrupted, intending to repeat it when a future occasion should arise.

(17.) How Aimar, the prior of Saint Pancras, asked leave to take away with him the body of the holy martyr.

But Aimar, the prior of Saint Pancras, having seen and heard and pondered all that had taken place and moved by inward devotion of heart, drew aside a certain priest from whom he took pains to inform himself very fully and carefully about the facts of the case as far as the priest knew them. But when he learned the manner of the boy's death, both the kind of torture and the marks and number of the blows, what else could he infer with all of this evidence except that the most holy boy had truly been killed by the Jews as an insult to Christ?

So, moved by a certain inward warmth of devotion, he went straight to the bishop and earnestly begged with many prayers that he might be allowed to take away with him the body of the holy boy. But when he could not succeed in obtaining his request, it is said that he answered that if he had been so fortunate as to get him to Saint Pancras, no amount of silver or gold would have induced him to allow the boy to be taken away. Instead, he would have kept him very diligently like a most precious treasure, and the boy would have been properly glorified according to his merits and become famous by frequent veneration and worship. These words of the prior so affected the mind of Bishop Eborard that they became an incentive to his veneration and served to increase his devotion toward the holy boy. Urged by this and affected by the advice of very many, he determined that the body of the blessed boy should be brought into the cathedral church and be buried in the monks' cemetery.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

(18.) How after being laid out and washed he was found to be uncorrupted.

Then the bishop chose certain of the monks along with some of the clergy to bring the boy in, and he directed them to carry out his orders on April 24. While they were carrying out their instructions and were just returning, so large a crowd of the common people met them that you would have thought very few had stayed behind in the city. Thus that precious and desirable treasure was carried with immense delight of clergy and people and brought by the venerable convent of the monks in procession and carried into the cathedral church and placed with its bier before the altar of the Holy Cross. Moreover the bier was covered with a festive drapery, and candlesticks were placed upon it on both sides at all four corners, and they gleamed with burning tapers. The mass of requiem was solemnly sung by the monks, and the whole church was filled from end to end with crowds of citizens.

And when the Mass had been celebrated, the body was laid up between the pulpit and the monks' choir lest the crowds of people that were pressing in desiring to kiss the bier, and if possible to rush forward to see the body, should hinder rather than help the brethren who were performing the proper ministry of washing the corpse. For it was a joy to be present at so great a spectacle and good fortune to be standing nearby. So some of the brethren were chosen to wash the body and, when it was washed, to wrap it in an alb¹⁵ and linen that had been blessed and, when it was wrapped, to place it again upon the bier. And they whose business it was took off the martyr's coat and the shoes from his feet and prepared to wash him as is the custom with the dead. But while they were washing him, behold, this wonder, this more astonishing than all wonders, happened. For although thirty-two days had passed since his death, he was found to be unchanged and without corruption in any part.¹⁶ For, while he was in the hands of those who carried him, his fingers, arms, and other limbs seemed so pliant that you would have believed him to be sleeping rather than dead. But what was even more wonderful, while they were washing his face, fresh blood suddenly issued from his nostrils, so that the company of those present were amazed. As the blood kept flowing drop by drop, those who were helping at the service caught it in linen cloths, and when it ceased they again washed his face. But they who were present at the wondrous sight afterward assured us that, both while they were washing him and especially while the blood was flowing, so strange a fragrance of exceeding sweetness greeted their nostrils, that the perfume itself made clear to them that the giver of all sweetness had truly come to honor the holy body. For what else could the sweetness of the divine presence have intended to signify to us except that in this way He was openly declaring how great were the martyr's merits in the sight of Heaven? We also learned from the report of these same men that they discovered sure and obvious indications of martyrdom in him. First when his head was washed and their hands carefully passed over it, among the numerous punctures of thorns they came upon pieces of the actual thorns. They extracted these and took care to preserve them with utmost rev-

erence. Next, while they examined one by one all the portions of the sacred body, they found evident signs of martyrdom in his hands and feet and side. Moreover there were plain indications that he had been doused with boiling water. At last after washing the body they clothed him in an alb, wrapped him in linen, and put him back upon the bier.

While these things were being done, a search was made through the whole city for a sarcophagus in which the martyr's sacred body might be laid, but none could be found. So a grave was dug in the cemetery at the foot of the wall of the chapter house, where the body might be entombed in a wooden coffin. But while they were digging, strange to tell, a sarcophagus was actually found there resting upon another. Both were clean and pure inside because no corpse had ever been placed in them. Indeed this discovery was immediately accepted as a miracle, since among the great men of the church and its first founders not one was found who remembered these sarcophagi, or who had brought them, or when they had been hidden there. Consequently we conjecture that divine providence had preserved these intact and unused for such a long time for St. William.

(19.) Of his entombment in the monks' cemetery.

When these things had been accomplished as we have related and his soul had been commended to God as is customary with the dead, the glorious martyr was taken into the inner cemetery to be buried with the whole convent of the brethren going before in procession with Psalms and praises. The cemetery was filled with thousands of people who entered by the gate on the other side, and the area was hardly large enough for those who kept coming in. On the one side were the clergy and the monks who were celebrating the funeral service with songs of praise; on the other were the laity who were standing by with the greatest of joy. But although they who were present differed in grade and in sex, they were all of one mind in wishing to see the sight. At last, after the service had been properly celebrated and the sepulchre had been decently prepared at the entrance of the cemetery on the side next to the cloister, the body of the most blessed martyr was taken from the bier and laid within it. And as it lay in the sepulchre it was exposed to view for a period of several hours to those who were permitted to look upon it, wrapped in an alb. But to those who happened to be standing near, as I was informed afterward by some of them, it was granted to sense there the sweet-smelling fragrance that I mentioned before. Lastly, instead of a slab, because no slab was to be had, the concave half of the other sarcophagus was placed over him and stone was fixed to stone with cement. When all was finished, leaving the Lord to watch over him, the convent of monks returned to the church chanting, but the rest returned to their homes glorifying the wonderful works of the Lord.

NOTES

1. Celibacy for priests had been an ideal in the Western Church since Antiquity, but in the Early Middle Ages clerical marriage was common. Since the mid-eleventh century, papal reformers had legislated against the practice, but a century later it was still common in England. The priest Godwin Sturt, an important figure in the events following William's

death, was married to the boy's aunt, and Bishop Eborard of Norwich also had a wife and children.

2. This feast commemorates the ritual purification of Mary on February 2, forty days after Jesus' birth. The day was called Candlemas in English because its celebration included a candlelight procession.

3. A vigil was the day before a major festival, of which the best known example would be Christmas Eve. William's fasting on vigils demonstrates that he was unusually pious.

4. In the manuscript, the entire expression of the date ("in the year—March") is written in the margin in the hand of the scribe who copied the text.

5. Good Friday, the Friday before Easter, was celebrated as the day of Christ's death. The rituals of the day included the adoration or veneration of the cross as the instrument and symbol of Christ's passion.

6. Thomas here refers to the Jew as *Deus-adiuvet* (May-God-aid), a Latin translation of the Hebrew name Eleazar.

7. Neither of the other witnesses was legally competent. William's young cousin who supposedly saw him enter the Jew's house (see Chapter 5 above) was too young. Similarly a Christian maid in the house (mentioned only in Book 2), who claimed to have caught a glimpse of William during his torture, was disqualified because she was employed by a Jew.

8. Jews, being generally regarded as the killers of Christ, were expected to remain indoors on Good Friday, when the Christians commemorated Jesus' death on the Cross. At the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Jews were prohibited from showing themselves in public during the three days before Easter.

9. The Jews of England were directly subject to the king, and the sheriff was the king's representative.

10. There is a blank in the manuscript where the priest's name should appear.

11. Eborard (or Everard) of Calne was bishop of Norwich from 1121 until 1145.

12. This discussion took place on Holy Saturday, so the third day—by Latin reckoning—was Easter Monday.

13. The dean of a cathedral was the bishop's assistant.

14. Aimar was prior of the Cluniac monastery of Lewes in Sussex. St. Pancras (Pancratius in Latin), to whom Aimar's house was dedicated, was martyred at Rome in the early fourth century, reportedly at the age of fourteen.

15. An alb is a white garment made of linen, worn by priests at Mass and by monks for important festivals. Its whiteness symbolizes purity.

16. Thomas states that William died on March 22 and that his body was translated from the wood to the cemetery on April 24, but those dates are more than thirty-two days apart. In fact, following the Latin convention of counting the days at both ends of a specified period, thirty-two days before April 24 was March 24, which in 1144 was Good Friday.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY