

Plpa anno ad regē dacie nicolau
 de passione glōsissimi canuti regis
 principum duci precipuo. & miris
 nobilium p̄micerio. patrie pa
 tricio pio. inuicto. magnifico.
 dacie p̄ursori serenissimo. tam specie quā
 & nominis dignitate illustrissimo regi
 nicolao. diuini officii ministroꝝ infimꝝ
 anothus. cancia angloꝝ metropolitana
 urbe editus. iam ū dacie partibꝫ quatuor
 q̄nquennis & bis fere binis annis de
 moratus. hostium utres uirtute diuina
 subuerit. concumatiū colla potentie pe
 de p̄terere regni iura decent disponere.
 pacis securitate p̄frui. & post decur
 temporalis imperii. sempiternē
 tatis beatitudine ditari.

Clementiā mansuetudinis glō
 cut p̄uuis quilibet & imprudē
 seu uecoris detestat. sic p̄uidus q̄s q̄
 bitatis



potentia. sic iam beatis spiritibꝫ associatus.
 glōsioꝝ uirtutū effulget magnificentia. Cui
 ego p̄sumptuose gestoz simul & certami
 num insignia explicare aggressus. impite
 lingue infacundie ignosci deponso. ut si q̄d
 inane seu ueritatis uacūū ponde uisus
 aspectantiū offendit. n̄ sup̄ ducto p̄tinus
 sup̄cilio pharisaica condēpnet inuidia. s̄
 sincere discretionis articulo extimandis
 sublatis. inferant̄ pbabilia. Siquidē moda
 cis inuidie morbum q̄ uersus exiguitatem
 inbecillitatis n̄re inidum solet assurgere.
 haud in̄ extinguentū immo exp̄giscendū
 utimo. cū euentilatū cineribꝫ ignem fru

appositis sumuoma licet flamma
 ante incendius aptare contendo. S̄
 in sicula saliente gallus atria plu
 & sub tecti culmine anbeliti tauri
 aera uerberans p̄r̄f̄eat. & cū compa
 ad acutis calcareibꝫ bellum etamnis

The History of King Sweyn Estridsson and His Sons
 and of the Martyrdom of King Canute the Holy

(Gesta Swenomagni Regis et Filiorum eius et Passio gloriosissimi Canuti Regis et Martyris)

enī uniuoz qu
 nū fortissimus
 at eundē etiā patientem & longanime
 cē declarat. Et cui honorem iudiciū dilige
 insinuat. ei se misericordiam cum iudicio de
 cantare manifestat. Cuius uīa excellen
 tia pietatis modū p̄ modulo mortalibꝫ
 concessio exequens. & iusticie seueritati
 mansuetudinis lenitatē p̄ferens. eius ob
 hoc ipso optulante glō compos efficietis.
 cui hic uicem tam dignitate quā & no
 minis participatione exequeris. Ipse q̄p
 pe potentes de sede deiciens. humiles &
 in p̄senti exaltat. & in p̄petuū sempit̄ne
 beatitudinis honore magnificat. Illius
 ut credi potissimū est grā preciosus fr̄
 tuus germani canuti. iam indubitan̄
 beatus cognominandus ex apice tēp̄alis
 impi glām nactus decoris p̄petui. sicut
 int̄ mortales regni glōsioꝝ

es dar
 non
 umbo
 comemo
 nis. et deo
 q̄; sexus
 & ordinis referentibꝫ agnouit. religiosi ha
 bitus uiris ihu ibidē insigni q̄ triumphato
 ri deseruentibꝫ obn̄re suffragantibꝫ poste
 rum memorie reseruanda ap̄tibꝫ concūdi.
 ea pietati maiestatis uīe rēp̄sentans. ut &
 de tanta germani gl̄ificatione pleni exhi
 laret. & ad eiusdē uirtutis insignia emu
 landa sup̄no p̄ursori aspirante ardentius
 inciter. Quis q̄ ceptis pacis simul & pace
 p̄ursor solita pietate faueto. & que de opi
 natissimo p̄gentore uīo. glōsoꝝ q̄ germa
 noꝝ tuoz tempibꝫ ad hec usq̄ presentia.
 magnificentie uīe tēpota exarando p̄st̄n
 xi. regio dignare confirmare decreto. ut
 habeat dignitas regia tam p̄p̄riū quam &
 p̄cedentiū exercitū monum̄ta posteris de
 ferenda. Ambiguitatis ū scrupulū de p̄
 de quo opis n̄ri

Epistola

Ælnoth's Letter to King Niels of Denmark on the Passion of the Most Glorious King and Martyr Canute

To Niels, most noble king of the Danes, guardian of the realm and protector of peace, illustrious in both dignity and name: Ælnoth, least among the ministers of divine service, born in Canterbury among the English and long resident in the lands of Denmark, prays that by God's strength you may overcome your enemies, govern the kingdom with justice, preserve the peace of your people, and after the course of earthly rule attain the blessedness of eternal life.

The reckless and foolish despise the mercy and restraint of prudent rulers, but wise and honorable men praise them. For the judge of all things, whom Scripture proclaims both mighty and just, is also patient and long-suffering. And he who loves justice also joins mercy to judgment.

By choosing compassion over severity and mercy over harsh punishment, Your Majesty shares, with God's help, in the likeness of him whose authority you bear on earth. For God casts down the proud from their heights and raises up the humble, glorifying them both in this life and in the life to come.

So too your brother Canute — now rightly to be called blessed — has passed from earthly kingship into everlasting glory. As he once stood above other men in royal dignity and strength, so now among the blessed he shines still more brightly through the greatness of his virtues.

I myself have dared to set down the deeds and sufferings of this man, though my tongue is unskilled and unequal to so great a task. If anything in these pages seems lacking or imperfect, let it not be condemned in arrogance, but corrected with honest judgment. For envy delights in attacking weakness, just as smoke rises before flame; yet even a fire buried beneath ashes may grow stronger when stirred.

But let others sing of Troy and of Greek fleets crossing the sea, or of heroes meeting in battle beneath the walls of ancient cities. I write instead of what I have learned concerning a devout king and glorious martyr from trustworthy witnesses of every rank and station. These things I commit to memory for future generations, encouraged by faithful men devoted to Christ and his triumph in this land.

I present this work to Your Majesty so that you may rejoice more fully in the glory of so great a brother and be moved to imitate his virtues with even greater zeal.

Therefore, guardian of the realm and defender of peace, receive this undertaking with your customary kindness, and let royal authority preserve the memory both of your forefathers and of your own age for those who come after.

And if any doubt remains concerning the sanctity of this man, let every faithful person cast it aside. For God, who knows and ordains all things before they come to pass, is able to raise the humble from the dust and glorify those who fear him. He who once brought water from the rock

through Aaron's rod has likewise chosen to make a martyr from a king and a citizen of heaven from an earthly ruler.

Whoever denies that the Almighty can accomplish such things should remember the words of the Apostle: in every nation, the one who fears God and does what is just is acceptable to him. And if God is able to raise children of Abraham from stones, why should he not also raise from among this people a righteous ruler and faithful servant of justice, worthy to be numbered among the saints?

Therefore rejoice, most noble king, that you possess so great an advocate before God. Rejoice that your brother has been received among the blessed, joined to the company of angels and martyrs, and now accomplishes through heavenly intercession what he once could not fulfill through earthly rule.

For through him God grants sight to the blind,
restores speech to the mute,
strengthens the lame,
drives away sickness,
and reveals his power through signs and wonders,
so that his saints may be glorified both in heaven and on earth.

Therefore may Your Majesty honor the precious relics of so great a martyr, adorn the holy church with fitting gifts, and strengthen those who serve there in divine worship. And may God, through the intercession of blessed Canute, preserve your kingdom in peace, subdue your enemies, strengthen justice, drive away famine and pestilence, and grant you, after the course of this earthly life, entrance into the eternal kingdom.

May your reign flourish under divine mercy, and may our own weakness likewise be sustained through the grace of God and the protection of royal favor.

Chapter 1

The northern kingdoms, hidden away in the far reaches of the world, long remained devoted to pagan practices, until divine mercy drew them out of the depths of error and unbelief. For after almost all the kingdoms of the West – those which Julius Gaius, son-in-law of Pompey the Great, had once brought under Roman rule – had bowed their necks to Christian law, the peoples who lived on the opposite, northern side of the Frankish, Gallic, and Saxon lands adopted the signs of faith much later. These were the Swedes and the Goths, the Norsemen and the Isōnian peoples. They were slower to receive Christianity because teachers of the faith were reluctant to travel there, both because of shortages of food and supplies and because of the savagery and stubborn hardness believed to be native to those peoples.

The Danes, however, who appear to live closer to the Franks and Saxons, are therefore regarded as superior to the aforementioned nations. They inhabit land more suitable for basic needs, and they accepted belief in the Trinity earlier than the others. Through the strength and counsel of noble kings, they adorned their territories with churches of God, established day by day in all

directions by bishops and ministers of divine worship alike. And the faith they once accepted, they have preserved with faithful devotion to this day.

To recall one example from ancient tradition: from the time when Bishop Poppo, of venerable memory, carried glowing iron in his bare hand and walked unharmed across red-hot iron plates with unburned feet, thereby proving by clear evidence that Christ, the Son of God, is the true and only God — from that time onward, with Christ's favor, the Danish people have striven to preserve and guard intact the faith they received.

The Swedes and Goths, by contrast, when circumstances go according to their wishes and prosperity follows prosperity, seem to honor the Christian faith in name alone. But whenever a breath of adversity arises — whether through barren land, dry air, violent storms, enemy attacks, or destructive fire — they not only abandon in practice the faith they claimed to honor in words, but actively pursue it through persecution of Christians and the faithful, and attempt to drive it entirely from their lands. For this reason Bishop Eskil, of blessed memory, who came from the noblest parts of England and proclaimed the gospel of faith to those fierce and untamed peoples, was cut down by barbarian savagery and madness as a witness to the truth. Carried out of this fleeting world, he passed into the heavenly realm, where angels rejoice, to live forever.

The northern peoples, known as Norsemen because of their location, and the Isørians — called “The Icelanders” in their own lands as well as in Danish and Norse speech because of the harsh winters and long-lasting ice there — do observe the rites of the Christian religion. Yet because of the barrenness of their land and the scarcity of food, they defile that same faith by eating forbidden foods on the solemn fast days and during the season of Lent.

For from the north, as the Lord declares through the prophet, evil will be unleashed upon the face of the whole earth. Therefore these nations, long bound by ancient unbelief and chilled by its cold, are scarcely ever set ablaze strongly enough by the heat of faith to become firmly established, so that they might be completely freed from the bonds of unbelief. Instead, they attempt — something not granted to mortals — to subject the mysteries of faith to human reasoning, to place their own laws above God's justice, and to excuse themselves from abandoning ancient customs, whether religious or irreligious, by invoking a misplaced sense of reverence for divine fear.

But lest I linger too long on these matters: whatever may be lacking — whether among these peoples or among all the faithful — in the fulfillment of God's commands, may the south wind come when the north wind rises, that is, when the cold of spiritual numbness and injustice is driven away. May it blow through the garden of the faithful Church, so that its fragrances may flow. Let the warmth of spiritual grace come and pour into the hearts of believers, so that through true profession of faith and the fragrance of good works shining forth, our light may truly shine before others — before those who love the world and seek not what is eternal but what is passing — and that they may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

And so, that we may fittingly pursue what we have set out to do, may we be aided by the favor of the One who created us to exist and renews us to be restored.

Chapter 2

How Sweyn Estridsson obtained the kingdom of the Danes after the death of Magnus the Good and the expulsion of Harald Hardrada from Denmark

After many attacks and clashes of war between Magnus the Good, ruler of the northern and western lands, and Sweyn Estridsson — also called Magnus — leader of the eastern and southern regions, both fierce opponents; and after the memorable battle at (Nissan by Halmstad) between Harald Hardrada and the same Sweyn Estridsson over control of Denmark — when Magnus had departed this life and Harald had been driven from Danish territory — Sweyn Estridsson gained rule over his native land and governed it with great distinction for as long as he lived.

Like the famed hero of the Trojans, the illustrious Priam of old, he possessed an appearance worthy of kingship. As Scripture says, he was wise in mind and strong in body. With God's help, and through his own strength and prudent counsel, he vigorously defended his people against attacks by foreign nations. Once peace had been restored on all sides, he made Denmark formidable to the surrounding peoples by arms and by military power.

Nor was he lacking in cultivated learning or ignorant of divine writings. He did not neglect the promotion of religion. On the contrary, he strengthened existing churches by royal authority, founded new ones where none had existed before, and took care both to support and to honor the clergy and bishops. He provided royal stipends for orphans and widows, the poor and strangers, and especially for impoverished clerics. In this way he strove to make friends for himself out of worldly wealth, trusting that through them he would be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

And not to dwell on everything:

*He was gentle to the humble, but fierce and harsh toward the proud;
the lowly he soothed with mercy, the arrogant he subdued with power.
He fed the poor, clothed the naked,
supported some so they would not fail along the way,
and sheltered others so they would not perish from bitter cold or burning heat.*

But what in human affairs is blessed in every respect?

For God our Lord — alone truly good and alone truly blessed, equal and eternal with God the Father — came in the fullness of time as a human being. Just as he was born from a spotless and untouched virgin womb, so he lived among us without burden or stain of sin and departed from this world. He left this world, I say, through the humanity he took upon himself for us, in us, and from us — he who through his divine nature promised his faithful eternal presence.

We, however, who are conceived in wrongdoing and born amid fault and suffering, though cleansed of original sin by the saving washing of baptism, are weighed down by the frailty of the body and the added burden of mortality. We slip back into the mire of sin, and unless the Spirit from above lifts us up, we would all be swallowed by eternal destruction.

Yet the one who said to the first human after the taste of evil and the breaking of God's command, "You shall surely die," promises eternal life to those who believe in him and obey his commands. And the same one who once imposed the harshness of the Law now comes bringing mercy, so that legal severity might be softened by gospel compassion: where the Law judges people worthy of punishment, the Gospel invites them to seek forgiveness.

For the Law declares that one person must be cut off from the people for this crime, another crushed with stones, another condemned to death. But the Gospel proclaims that the kingdom of heaven is opened to those who repent, and that every guilt is forgiven except blasphemy against the Spirit – that is, despair of eternal salvation.

For how can someone be forgiven, if they scorn the grace of forgiveness itself through despair? And the one who believes that the weight of their crimes outweighs the blood that flowed from Christ's side, and who thinks the multitude of their sins cannot be overcome by the grace of spiritual forgiveness, and who persists to the end in unbelief or despair – such a person, deprived of mercy, departs bound by every crime. Condemned by the very salvation they rejected, and judged by Christ himself, they are cast into the abyss of eternal damnation, assigned to burn forever.

But whoever hears the Lord's voice and asks for the grace of true forgiveness so as to receive it, seeks pardon for their sins so as to find it, and does not cease to knock persistently at the door of eternal mercy with prayer, will find the gates of unfailing compassion opened to sincere confession. Through them one comes into the courts of the heavenly kingdom, where God of gods is seen in Zion – that is, in the vision of eternal peace.

Chapter 3

Amid these works of piety, Sweyn Estridsson, like the bravest of kings and the most eloquent of prophets, David of old, stood forth as an example. David, as a figure of the true shepherd, crushed the jaws of wild beasts with a strong hand and thus foreshadowed how Christ would rescue the Lord's flock from the attacks of its enemies. And when he struck down the foreigner Goliath – who, like the Antichrist, assailed God's camp, challenged it to single combat, and exalted himself against God – with a stone – the cornerstone, the rock cut from the mountain without human hands, which is Christ – and then killed him with his own sword, David foreshadowed how the Antichrist would be destroyed by the breath of God's mouth and by the splendor of Christ's coming.

With enemies defeated on every side and hostile plots crushed, Sweyn enjoyed the happiness of kingship and the security of lasting peace. Yielding too readily to the temptations of pleasure, he fathered a numerous offspring, destined to inherit the rights of the kingdom. Some of his sons he devoted to the study of divine learning; others he entrusted to noblemen in different regions to be raised under their care.

When he himself departed this life at a place called Søderup ("the muddy settlement"), having passed beyond all hope of return, those responsible for his royal remains prepared him for burial with kingly honors. They carried him to a coastal island called Zealand, so named in the Danish

tongue because it is surrounded by the sea, and to a prominent place long known as Roskilde (“Ro’s spring”). There they laid him to rest with due ceremony in the church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity and Saint Lucius the Martyr, a stone church built by Bishop Sweyn, who then presided over that see.

This took place in the year of the Lord’s incarnation 1074, which was the twenty-eighth year of his reign, on the fourth day before the Kalends of May, while Jesus Christ, Lord and ruler of all, reigns forever.

Chapter 4

On the Death of King Sweyn Estridsson and the Elevation of King Harald

Thus the illustrious King Sweyn Estridsson, having secured peace for his people on every side and having seen churches of the Lord magnificently raised in many prominent places through his own devotion, while older foundations were fittingly adorned with royal gifts and enriched for bishops and ministers of divine worship alike, at last laid aside the affairs of mortal life and entered the stillness of long rest.

To the heirs of his kingdom he left not so much the wealth of royal treasures as the security of rule made possible by peace firmly established. He also left them living examples of conduct, urging them to imitate diligently the wisdom of his virtues.

But when the royal sons — Harald and Canute, already destined to be known by that name — fell into dispute over the right to rule, Harald, being both the elder in age and appearing more moderate in character, was chosen by the will of the whole people and raised to the kingship. He was proclaimed king of Denmark amid hopes for a long and prosperous reign.

Although Canute bore this decision with deep displeasure, he nevertheless chose to yield out of brotherly restraint rather than, like the royal sons of ancient Thebes, plunge both himself and his brother into destruction through rivalry for power. For, though he did not yet know it, he awaited the help of God, by which he would later be raised to a glory far greater than he could then imagine.

For the Lord our God, who dwells on high yet looks upon the lowly and knows the exalted from afar, was reserving the hour of exaltation for his chosen servant, whom he destined to honor not only with temporal rule but with everlasting dominion.

To continue our account: Harald, having gained his ancestral kingdom, was eager to comply with the wishes of the people. He sought by royal authority not merely to impose laws and rights according to his own will, but rather to confirm and preserve for future generations the laws which the people themselves had chosen. For this reason, the Danes to this very day demand that these laws be upheld by the kings they elect, and they praise and honor Harald as the giver of peace and liberty because of the laws he established.

In the sixth year of his reign, Harald departed this life and was laid to await the resurrection at a well-known place called Dalby in the Danish tongue. There he was commended to the earth and buried with reverent rites.

Chapter 5

Here Begin the Deeds of the Glorious King and Martyr Canute

Leaving the shelter of the coast behind us, and with our eyes already satisfied by the sight of shores and neighboring lands, let us now turn our ship toward the open sea. Let us carefully seal the seams of our vessel, so that no hidden current of the treacherous ocean may overwhelm those who sail within it. And once the mast of the Lord's cross has been raised, let the sails of virtue be spread high, so that, with our ears closed to the songs of the Sirens and a swift east wind blowing, we may be carried by the merits of our hero into the harbor we seek. There let us cast the anchor of our hope in divine mercy, so that the ship laden with spiritual treasures may not be wrecked upon hostile rocks, nor the joy of reaching land be turned to lamentation while its scattered riches drift away upon the waves.

But may He who said, "Open your mouth, and I will fill it," guide both the lips of our understanding and the words of our speech, so that we may proclaim the praises of His soldier in a manner worthy of His majesty.

Chapter 6

The illustrious offspring of the glorious King Sweyn Estridsson, though all his children strove by natural wisdom to emulate their father's virtues, was surpassed by Canute, our own prince. He was later declared worthy of sainthood by the Apostolic See itself, under the authority of the supreme pontiff, with many bishops and men of the religious orders in attendance – whether because of the maturity of his judgment, the purity and brightness of his life, or because it was divinely ordained that he should be numbered among the saints.

Like a glowing carbuncle shining among precious gems, Canute sought not only to imitate the pursuits of his ancestors, but also to leave behind celebrated deeds of his own as an example for future generations. In him grew a prudent concern for honorable conduct together with the vigor of youth. At last, through the providence of divine mercy, he was raised to the heights of royal power.

He was keen in intellect, worthy of rule in appearance, bright-eyed, resolute in arms and spirit, and his disciplined mind revealed itself in eloquent speech. And since it is not the one who wills or the one who runs, but God who shows mercy – and since from the beginning of the world the chosen are destined for eternal dwellings in the palace of the everlasting Father – the Lord was shaping in him a noble servant for Himself, one whom He would raise from royal dignity to companionship with the heavenly host and to martyrdom.

Chapter 7

After the passing of his brother, Canute was raised to royal authority through divine providence. He bound himself in faithful service to the Lord of kings, so that by God's protecting help he might be defended against enemies both earthly and unseen.

He cared for the hungry and the poor, clothed the naked and the cold, showed generous compassion to orphans and widows, and supported travelers and the needy with merciful provision. Men of religious life he honored – some as lords, others as fathers – and he adorned the sacred treasuries of divine worship with gifts from the royal treasury.

He was a constant and devoted presence in the holy churches of God, attending daily to the sacred offices of worship. Whatever he absorbed there with attentive hearing, he stored away in the treasury of his noble heart. To all these works the Spirit of God urged him onward, so that his memory might endure forever.

Chapter 8

Unlike many kings – and even Solomon himself – Canute avoided the sin of lust, the fault for which Solomon's descendants were later stripped of ten parts of the kingdom and scarcely judged worthy to rule even two under God's anger. Instead, on the advice of wise men, Canute chose for himself a wife of the noblest imperial lineage. She was brought from the western lands and, true to the meaning of her name, was called Adela – that is, "noble." Receiving this noble woman with fitting honor, he rejected the shameful embraces of concubines and was content with marriage to her alone, with Jesus Christ and His angels as witnesses.

Like blessed Job, he also made it his practice to investigate with great care matters of public concern not immediately known to him. He discussed these matters frequently with prudent and devout men, constantly reflecting on how the Christian faith might be strengthened day by day within his kingdom. For he perceived with keen judgment that many practices handed down from earlier times were still being observed, practices which ought rather to be corrected according to divine justice than tolerated for the sake of popular approval. Inspired by heavenly grace, he resolved to restrain these abuses – but the savagery of an untamed people and the stubborn hardness of their nature repeatedly delayed the fulfillment of his will.

And because, as Truth itself declares, everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds be exposed, those who preferred to cling to corrupt habits and willingly lie in sin rather than abandon unjust customs when confronted with righteous judgment complained in their private gatherings that he was pursuing empty schemes and wasting effort on strange and unheard-of innovations. As a result, they began plotting how they might cast off the yoke of his rule from their wild, long-unbending, and hardened necks – not inflamed by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, but puffed up by the prompting of another spirit.

For the worldly-minded could not grasp what the Spirit of all wisdom was pouring into a heart fitted for royal rule. While he strove to free them from slavery to sin and lead them back to the liberty of justice, they listened without understanding and saw without perceiving. They regarded him as a destroyer of their accustomed peace and as a robber of their former freedom.

Therefore they gathered wickedness to themselves and went out from among the righteous. They went out when, preferring their own customs to divine justice, they refused to submit to the law of God. By this they were cut off from the company of the just and cast outside their bounds, assigned instead to the fellowship of the wicked, because they had willingly made themselves slaves of sin. And so, falling into the snare they had laid for innocent feet and plunging into the pit they themselves had dug, they proved themselves imitators of the Jews, unable to endure one who rebuked their vices.

But leaving the account of their destruction to its proper time, let us return to the unfolding of the noble virtues of our great hero.

Chapter 9

As reverence for God continued to grow in the servant of God and faithful king – for to serve God is to reign, and to rule over one's vices is to exercise true dominion – he carefully examined his past actions, his former ignorance, and the sins of his youth. Opening his heart in humble and sincere confession to devoted religious men close to him – at that time chaplains of the royal court, later to be revered as bishops, namely Gerold and Arnold – he submitted the devotion of his soul so completely to divine mercy that, astonishing as it may seem, he did not refuse even corporal discipline inflicted upon him by their hands alone, with God as witness and they as keepers of his secret.

For he had heard – and in hearing, understood – that the more the outer flesh is worn down, the more the inner spirit is strengthened. And since those who desire to belong to Christ do not shrink from crucifying their flesh with its vices and desires, he practiced this discipline as well.

On solemn fast days and on private days of fasting alike, even when seated at the royal table on Fridays and Saturdays, while those dining around him supposed he was enjoying wine or mead, he drank only pure water – something known only to his trusted attendants and to God, the observer of hidden things. The delicacies of royal feasts, though placed before him and carried to his mouth, he distributed partly among those seated around him and partly sent to the poor. He himself sustained his body with dry bread and a little salt, not so much nourishing it with pleasures as afflicting it by refusing even sufficient food.

For he did not wish his deeds to be displayed openly before men, but to be approved by the One who searches hearts, so that the left hand might not know what the right hand was doing. He sought not human praise for these acts, but the reward of the Father who sees in secret.

Chapter 10

But since, as Truth itself says, a city set upon a hill cannot be hidden, and the light of a lamp ought to be placed high rather than concealed, the fame of the noble prince's virtues – his steadfastness and wisdom – spread ever more widely. He was renowned not only among the Scots, the Orcadians, and the Irish, who inhabit the furthest reaches of the western world, but

also among the English, the Franks, and the Saxons. Nor was he unknown in the lands of Italy. Even among the French — whom many also called Romans — a people fierce in war, his name was spoken not merely with admiration, but with fear.

Chapter 11

For the noble people of the English — who, according to the account of the venerable priest Bede, historian of that same people, trace their origin back to the ancient Saxons — had long been cruelly oppressed under the rule of those same Romans or Franks. This followed the death of their bravest king, Harold, who was slain by William, duke of the southern Normans, through the fortunes of war, after which William seized the kingdom of England by force.

The English therefore came to believe that the only way to restore their former freedom was to bring the most illustrious prince, Canute, together with the strength of his army, to the shores of Britain — both to avenge the killing of his kinsman, the former king Harold, slain by those same Romans, and to challenge their domination.

For their renowned dukes and counts, governors and nobles of many ranks, had been partly cut down by the sword, partly thrown into prison, some stripped at once of ancestral wealth, rank, and inheritance, many driven from their native land, and the rest crushed under a condition little better than slavery. They could no longer endure the ferocity of that tyranny. Seeing no leader left among them either to recover or even to hope for freedom — such was the foresight of their enemies — they resolved to seek help from abroad.

And so, through frequent embassies, they begged the aid of the outstanding prince Canute, preferring to fight alongside him against their enemies for control of England rather than endure any longer the savage domination of those tyrants.

Moved by their suffering and appeals, the most merciful prince resolved to come to their aid — both to restore a noble people to their former freedom and to punish the arrogance of the Romans or Franks by avenging the death of his kinsman. He therefore ordered a vast fleet to be prepared and proclaimed that his men should hold themselves ready for every eventuality.

But He who orders and judges all things — whose judgments are a deep abyss and whose counsel no mortal can fully comprehend — frustrated human plans. Whether to delay the correction of that people for a time, or to reserve the glory of martyrdom for the noble prince's own people rather than for foreigners, God hindered the journey. For He intended to make Canute a protector of the Danes and, from a king, their first martyr.

I call him the first martyr because no ancient account tells of anyone from that people having been honored with martyrdom before him, nor of anyone among them having suffered in such a way for steadfast justice. Therefore, crowned with glory and honor, he remains seated at the right hand of the eternal King. But these things are known to God.

Chapter 12

Meanwhile the fleet was prepared day by day, and all haste was made — by nobles and commoners alike — toward a land rich in harvests and abundance. But as news of their expedition quickly spread throughout Britain and filled the whole English realm, William, skilled in the arts of war and an experienced commander, took measures for his defense. He fortified camps and towns, surrounded strongholds with walls, ditches, and ramparts, repaired city walls, maintained constant watches in the towns, and stationed naval guards at various ports.

He also assembled an army drawn from Franks, Bretons, and men of Maine, so that private homes in the cities were crowded with soldiers to such an extent that their inhabitants scarcely seemed able to remain by their own hearths. As for the English — since he had learned that the arrival of the Danish army was eagerly desired — William ordered them to shave their beards, arm and clothe themselves in the Roman fashion, and in every way make themselves resemble the Franks, whom we also call Romans, so as to deceive the eyes of the approaching force.

Few, however, obeyed this command. But that belongs more properly to another part of the story.

Chapter 13

With the fleet ready, the Danish army was brought to the western coastlands, their sails curved and spread before the wind, and there they waited day by day for the arrival of the royal fleet. The king, however, remained at a notable place called Hedeby, named either after its former lady Ethe or from its broad and level terrain — rendered from the Danish tongue as “the settlement of the plain.” There he conferred with prudent and wise men, considering how the undertaking might, with the help of Jesus Christ, reach a fitting outcome for the benefit of many.

But just as the people of Israel once, while Moses delayed in speaking with God, demanded that Aaron make them gods to lead them through the wilderness — and for this were deprived, in God’s anger, of both the sight and the use of the promised land — so here the crowd, impatient with the delay along the coast, complained that the waiting was harmful to their domestic concerns. They cried out repeatedly either to be allowed to return home, or to choose another leader for the expedition while the king was occupied elsewhere, or to send messengers urging the king to hasten with his fleet.

Stirred by the constant noise and daily shouting, the leaders decided to send envoys to the king to lay the complaints of the assembled army before him. Olaf, the king’s own brother, undertook this mission — though not with fortunate results. He approached the king with his companions, delivered the army’s demands, and freely explained the reasons for their grievances.

After long and careful consideration, the king sent that same brother away to Flanders, to be kept there by Robert, the most noble ruler of the western lands and the king’s kinsman through his daughter, Queen Adela. To the army, meanwhile, the king sent word through intermediaries of his intentions.

But as autumn drew near and the envoys had returned, the entire host pressed him urgently to dismiss the army so that they might attend to their domestic needs, promising that in the spring the whole fleet would be ready wherever he directed. With the king's consent, supported by the leading nobles, they tore their anchors from the sandy seabed, struck their tents, raised their tall masts, spread their sails to the winds, and set out upon the open sea – wishing the king success as they cut through the waves and carried their longing homeward.

Chapter 14

After the army had returned to their homes, the devout prince continued, as before, to devote himself to works of piety. He sought to elevate reverence for divine worship, to strengthen the rights of the clergy, and – by royal decree backed with penalties – to enforce the observance of holy days and prescribed fasts, as they were practiced throughout the Christian world. He also strove, as far as he was able, to restrain everything openly opposed to God.

He ruled that freed slaves – those manumitted by their masters or redeemed at their own expense through the labor of their own hands – should be admitted to full legal freedom. He further decreed that foreigners and newcomers from any land, who until then had been subject to no one, should be regarded under law and justice as equals of the native inhabitants. This policy, though hateful and troublesome to the Danes, was, as we believe, not at all displeasing to God.

At the same time, he sought to suppress the stubborn resistance of those who rebelled against divine and lawful institutions and to tame their unruly necks with the rod of royal justice.

Chapter 15

These actions provoked the enemy of piety and the adversary of truth. Fearing that the number of those obedient to him was steadily diminishing, he set loose a web of deceitful schemes. Determined to disrupt a time of such devotion and to drag a people who were finally being led toward God by a devout ruler into the jaws of his own malice, he set his cunning devices in motion – like a roaring lion prowling about in search of someone to devour.

Just as he had once stirred up the chief priests, Pharisees, and teachers of the law against the very author of truth, using the poison of envy so that the simplicity of the crowd would be incited to condemn the giver of life, so now he stirred up men of greater age and influence, prominent in power and ready through eloquence and audacity to act without regard for right or wrong. By the goads of ancient wickedness he incited them against the devout prince – inciting them, inflaming them, and, once inflamed, bending them toward every crime.

In this way he armed nobles and commoners alike, provoking them through familiar temptation to wipe out entirely the memory of a righteous man. As a result, almost the entire populace of the land, infected with the poison of his injustice and ensnared by the traps of his malice, was made ready for every crime. With minds turned away and faces cast down to the earth, they

avoided looking upward, lest they turn aside from the path of wickedness and become companions of those whom divine wisdom declares to have driven God away from themselves.

Chapter 16

To continue the account: the executors and collectors of royal business pressed matters beyond what was just. They exaggerated charges, increased weights on the scales, devalued goods of every kind, and – put plainly – scarcely reckoned an ounce to be worth even a fraction of its proper value. They perverted judgments, as is reported, and sought to oppress nobles and commoners alike through force and power.

Provoked by their insolence, many people were embittered. Elders, inflamed by anger and envy alike, resolved to rise against the king himself with counsel and arms. Messengers were sent far and wide, calling for what they believed to be the public redress of grievances – both against the king and against his officials.

Thus the agents of impiety and madness rushed about, not only urging on those already inclined toward crime, but also stirring up the minds of the simple and innocent, so that accomplices to wickedness might multiply and the rule of truth and justice be overturned everywhere.

Alas! Lawlessness rose in abundance, while love grew cold and weak. What was right was trampled down, and what was wrong was exalted. The people were driven toward every crime and, like a beast prepared to devour, thirsted to be filled with royal blood. They strengthened their arms with weapons and sharpened their spirits with cruelty. And – horrible to say – they feared only that time might fail their crime, and that their fury might cool before every work of wickedness had been fulfilled.

But what comes of this, O madness, and where does such violence lead?

*That the people should rise in rage against their king?
Look, insane crowd – what will flow from this upon you?
Plague will come; herds will fall to disease,
So that the ox fails and the cow yields nothing.
The fields will return a thin, barren, and cursed harvest;
Hardly any land will repay seed with fruit.
Acorns will fail in the forests, shoots in the fields;
You will lose an abundance of milk and the sweetness of honey.
Livestock will perish; fish will die in the waters;
Harsh famine will strike down people as they waste away.
And you – who now disdain to bow your neck
To your rightful ruler – will lie beneath the rule of Hell.*

Chapter 17

After completing his customary royal business in the southern regions beyond the waters called the Limfjord, the king traveled to the coastal district known in the Danish tongue as Vendsyssel, a name interpreted as “the changeable land.” There he decided to reside for a time at a royal estate called Børglum, named after a former lady of that place, though now with its vowel altered, together with his royal retinue, while he entrusted the king’s officials with carrying out and investigating the necessary affairs.

At the news of his arrival, both nobles and common people were stirred up. They gathered in assemblies of impious counsel and urged one another toward wrongdoing, considering it shameful to submit to royal ordinances or to regard themselves as inferior to royal authority. Thus, while they plotted against lawful power, they opposed God himself; for, as the Apostle truthfully teaches, whoever resists authority resists the ordinance of God. By this they were counted among the company of him who, because he refused to be subject to God, was cast down from the highest seats of heaven into the deepest abyss of hell.

Chapter 18

The place is called Pontus Cornicus, where the entire multitude of wickedness, poisoned in mind and armed in hand, assembled. By night and by day they held councils plotting against the devout prince, united in their resolve either to drive him from their land or – horrible to say – to cut him off from the land of the living.

On a set day the king advanced with his men to observe the gathered crowd. When he recognized the stubbornness of their will, he withdrew to consult with his own followers. But since only a very few of the measures he had proposed could be carried out, because of the raging insolence of the people, and wishing both to calm the fury of the assembled and conspiring multitude and to safeguard himself and his companions, he resolved to yield the place. Following the Lord’s command, “If they persecute you in one city, flee to another,” he decided to depart quietly, so that no greater turmoil might arise.

Chapter 19

Leaving the northern regions behind, he proceeded toward the western regions. He sent the bulk of his followers ahead to the place long known, according to ancient usage, as Aggersborg (“the fortress of the fields”), while he himself remained nearby with the most reverend Bishop Henrik, staying at the bishop’s estate with a considerable company.

Once the king’s departure became known, bands of looters rushed to invade the royal estates. They drove the stewards of supplies from the buildings, searched everything with greedy eyes, seized whatever lay nearest at hand, overturned everything like swine rooting in filth, and trampled underfoot what remained of the royal provisions – those things they could not consume outright.

And what more? As it is written of David, when the plot of wickedness had been firmly agreed upon, the whole multitude set out. Some followed the king's tracks on foot, others on horseback, declaring openly that they would either wipe out entirely the memory of the devout prince or drive him from his royal authority.

The most reverend bishop, who at that time — as we have said — was with the glorious king, upon hearing of the sudden approach of the raging host, went out with prudent men to meet the rebellious ranks. With calm speech he urged them to restrain themselves from their reckless and ruinous purpose, and, lest they bring disgrace upon the whole world, he argued eloquently, laying out right and wrong before them.

Chapter 20

But those whom the enemy of truth and adversary of piety had filled with frenzy had been abandoned by the Spirit of God; and upon the restless and swollen in spirit that same divine Spirit could not remain. And just as the Jews of old, unable to endure Stephen as he reproved them, were cut to the heart and gnashed their teeth at him, so these men, raging against the sound counsel of the venerable bishop, roared with mad shouts and rushed forward, already eager to fall upon him.

They hurled their spears into the sandy shore, assaulted the air with their cries, and — lest the crowd should heed one who spoke truth and offered sound counsel — opposed him relentlessly, stirring up every kind of hostility to turn the people away from his words.

Chapter 21

But in order that the fulfillment of their wicked resolve might be completed, the exhortations of that illustrious man were scorned and his pious persuasion set aside. The accomplices of violence multiplied along the roads, and the rebellious host — reckless and headlong toward every crime — hurried swiftly to the aforementioned fortress, where the keepers and stewards of the royal treasury were stationed, determined that the fame of their begun insolence should spread throughout all of Jutland.

And why linger on the telling? You would be astonished at the frenzy of their assault. Some men were dragged naked from their beds and strangled at their own doorways; others were thrown headlong into the river. Even leading men were hunted down wherever they were found — here escape was blocked by weapons, there the enemy and the sword stood waiting at the door.

Thus both sides fought: the attackers from outside, the defenders within, striving to protect themselves and what was theirs. But as the numbers of the attackers kept swelling, some defenders — stripped even of their clothing — rushed out naked to fight; others fell wounded, as if torn apart by wild beasts. Some fled from houses already being torn apart and sought the nearest hiding places; others, taking to ships, yielded to the fury of the attackers, while the king and his companions had already crossed beyond the river, removed for the time being from these tumults.

Once all the royal officials and household members had been driven out, every furnishing was overturned, bedding was carried off, private quarters were ransacked, guesthouses searched, and even courtyards dug up. Whatever each plunderer, greedy or starving, seized or devoured became a matter of dispute among the thieves themselves, as reckless greed fought with greed. Thus the low-born and rapacious enriched themselves, while nobles were stripped of their possessions by hostile bands, and some were robbed even of goods they had once acquired at the cost of wounds.

Chapter 22

Driven on by such stubborn frenzy, the crowd pressed forward to drive all authority from its rightful place. They sought to leave no refuge anywhere for the devout prince, and to spare no survivor who might rebuke their vices. The agents of their madness, with the demon accompanying them on every side, swept through the land like storm winds.

But just as the teacher of piety once wept over Jerusalem and her children – who, by the counsel of the Pharisees and the urging of the scribes, repeatedly conspired against the very source of enduring mercy – so now a herald of piety might rightly weep for you, O Jutland. For because of the insolence of those who dwell within you, and who persecute the man of God at the instigation of the enemy of righteousness, he could foresee the calamities about to come upon you – though still hidden from your eyes – and lament that you believed only what stood before you, refusing faith in what was unseen and yet to come.

Therefore it is fitting to address you with these complaints:

*Why do you, a people hostile to what is good, lie in wait for the righteous?
Why, driven by fury, do you bind yourself to the demon's pact,
So that, as he was cast down in pride from the heights of heaven,
So you too cast blessings from your own land,
Becoming both frenzied and stripped of all piety?*

*Tell me – why did you drive your protector from your world?
And if you dared to attempt it, why did you not complete the deed?
Then the glory of the righteous man, growing after his death,
Would have crushed you and lifted you up through your fall,
So that, when you beheld the clear signs of his power –
His honor, his renown, his manifested holiness –
You might recognize your own guilt, stumble barefoot in humility,
Enter the sacred doors with a contrite heart,
Cast off the old rags of corruption, take up renewed integrity,
Lift your hands upward, wash your face with tears,
Strike your breast, bend your knees, and beg forgiveness for your crimes,
Condemning your own wrongdoing while giving thanks for the martyr's honor,
And lamenting the deeds you once committed.*

But what you, proud Jutland, have scorned to possess,

*Behold – bright Fyn has taken as your rival.
And although she completed the wicked deed you began,
She now rejoices in the honorable signs that followed those acts.
She constantly beholds and frequently visits him
Whom she denied as he was dying,
Now imploring him with shaken heart, downcast face,
Tear-filled eyes, clenched fists, and wounded spirit,
With bent knee, sorrowful for the crime once committed,
So that he may be appeased toward her and show mercy,
And through constant prayer wash away every trace of former guilt.*

*She herself is enriched with gifts of golden splendor;
Here shine ornaments of gleaming metal,
Precious silks and saffron-hued fabrics adorned with jewels.
The people gather here; the crowd finds holy joy here
And rejoices that it has received a sacred patron.
Organs sound with pipes in sweet harmony,
And lyres are struck with the plectrum in splendid song.*

*All these things you, in your rage, have driven from your shores;
She is raised up by possessing what you lost through rejection.
Thus the order of events is rightly preserved:
That rewards are given according to deeds,
In their proper times and places.*

Chapter 23

There is a renowned place situated almost at the center of Jutland, called Viborg in the Danish tongue. The name is explained either by its elevated position, or by the frequent sacrifices or battles once held there, or by the memory of a once-famous idol worshiped there, called Wig. Hence the place is known as “Wigberg,” meaning “the height of Wig,” or “the hill of battle,” or “the hill of sacrifice.”

From all parts of Jutland, large crowds frequently gathered there to deliberate on common affairs and to examine and confirm the authority and force of the laws. Whatever was decided there by the common consent of the assembled people could not be set aside with impunity anywhere else in Jutland.

When the illustrious hero arrived there with what remained of his retinue, he searched to see whether he might find anyone still loyal to him. He found not only no such person, but instead discovered that traps of treachery had been laid for him even there. For the northern populace, as we have already described – driven by infernal fury and recognized as the authors of the crime – had already spread the signs of their madness far and wide and left the devout prince no place of escape.

And alas – while foxes have holes and birds find nests for themselves, those who serve the Son of Man, that is Jesus Christ, have nowhere to lay their head. From there he went quietly with his followers to the harbor of the river called the Schlei, intending to travel by ship to Fyn, since his companions were now worn out by the journey over land.

Chapter 24

Once the ships were swiftly prepared and supplied with what was necessary, the magnificent prince – leaving behind both the rage of the Jutlanders and Jutland itself – set out with his household companions and young retainers, now to be tested in a new trial, and crossed the restless waters to the shores of Fyn. There, though he sought the security of present peace and did not find it, he instead won the crown of eternal happiness and the lasting memory of a glorious victory.

For you, ancient deceiver, accomplished all this through your malice and instigation, with God permitting it and ordering all things toward a higher purpose. You who were once radiant and splendid, but were cast down from the heights of heaven because of the arrogance of your immeasurable pride, and who later appeared in the serpent to deceive our first ancestors with promises of divinity – it is no wonder if now, within the bounds of a single kingdom, you stretch out the engines of treachery against a man of God. For daily, throughout the whole world, you hinder the path of the faithful and heap up companions for your own damnation, to be burned with you in eternal fire.

Proceed, then, in your wickedness, so that the greater the cruelty of those who lie in wait, the more glorious the memory of the victorious triumph of this illustrious prince may become.

Chapter 25

When news of the king's arrival spread, so that what divine providence had ordained might not be delayed, messengers ran night and day in every direction, urging with all haste that the devout prince be driven from the land – or, what is a crime even to say, be deprived of life.

The prince himself went to a renowned place – destined to be the scene of his struggle, his triumph, and his rest – called Odense, together with his brother Erik, later the most glorious of kings, and the renowned Sweyn, as well as Benedict, his companion in labor and struggle, accompanied by members of the royal household. There he intended to await events and deliberate on what course he should take.

Meanwhile the rebellious multitude grew day by day. They sent not only messengers but also spies to the royal court, inquiring on all sides about the king's plans, and with relentless effort sought to overthrow him together with his companions.

Among those involved in this rebellion stood out the chief architect of the plot, a man called Piper – clever by nature, eloquent in speech, and highly placed among them. He deceitfully approached the innocent prince and, to lend credibility to his treachery, did not conceal the

furious resolutions of the senseless mob, though he claimed that many of these could be moderated if handled carefully.

Seated at the royal table close to the king – fulfilling the words of David, “He who ate my bread lifted his heel against me” – and finally filled not only with royal food and wine but also honored with gifts, he acted like Judas the betrayer. Just as Judas, after receiving the dipped bread and hearing the words “What you are about to do, do quickly,” betrayed his master with a false kiss, so this man, abandoning the light of day – that is, casting off the integrity of faith – entangled in the darkness of disbelief, went out to meet hostile bands. He did not report what he had heard from the king truthfully, but twisted it, urging them on and explaining how they might ensnare him by deceit.

Alas, wretched man – senseless, deranged, and empty of reason! In vain do you gather an army of impiety, for you will only increase the disgrace of your hatred by making the man you persecute ever more famous throughout the world. You had just been his table companion, and yet you were not ashamed to become the betrayer of his life.

Why, cruel one, did you not oppose the enemy standing at your side with the sign of the cross? Why did you not foresee the weapons already hanging over your own shoulders? And if neither the kindness of shared hospitality nor the honor of gifts received held you back from crime, why did the everlasting infamy and eternal disgrace of such an unspeakable act not occur to your sharp and calculating mind?

Your body was still swollen with wine, your eyes still bloodshot, your meal not yet digested – and already you were calling in the men to whom you would hand over your pious companion. O shameless man, stripped of piety and integrity, worthy to be condemned by the outcry of the whole world and assigned most fittingly to the shadows of the underworld and the jaws of Cerberus!

O most miserable of men! You became worse than Annas, more corrupt than Caiaphas, and more cruel than Pilate. Pilate at least, when the Jews cried out for Jesus to be crucified, took water and sought – by word and gesture – to declare himself innocent of righteous blood. But you, driven by savage cruelty and intoxicated by the poison of impiety, not only failed to restrain the violence of the ignorant mob, but sharpened it so that the work of evil might be completed more swiftly.

It was not fear of Caesar that drove you to this, but the prompting of the ancient deceiver, whom even the gaze of the one who sits on high and sees all from above did not deter you from serving. For just as Judas once revealed Jesus to the Jews by a kiss, so you drew the assault of the people against a man of God.

Therefore, just as Judas ended his life by the snare, so you too – later seized by the demon, your tongue torn out as you bit at it, your spirit abandoning your wicked body – were justly cast down to hell, to share in eternal punishment.

Chapter 26

The rebellious multitude, having followed the leader of their madness already mentioned, surged together in a mass toward the seat of royal authority, rushing headlong into every crime. The snorting of horses, the roar of the crowd, and the clash of weapons filled the sky; the running and charge of men shook the ground. Dust rose from the earth and spread high and wide into the air, so that, though daylight still remained, it cast a murky darkness like night, wrapping even those already blinded in mind in a fog of confusion.

As evening approached, the devout hero – preparing to attend the evening service and to entrust himself and his companions to the maker of all things – went with only a few faithful men, his companions in labor and, as it is right to believe, soon to be his companions in reward, to the basilica of the precious martyr Alban, situated not far away. The rest sought whatever hiding places they could find, concerned for their present lives.

The hostile host, however, closed in on all sides, storming and occupying both the royal residence and its surrounding courtyards. Some attempted to break into the sanctuary where the devout leader and his companions were gathered; others tried to smash the doors of the basilica; some sought to bring in fire; the rest pressed on either to seize him alive or to stand over the fallen.

But the fire was extinguished by the dew of heavenly power, and the steadfast young defenders inside took their stand at the doors, boldly barring entry with weapons and fighting most valiantly for their prince. Meanwhile the most devout king sought the eternal King – not with the deceit of Herod, but with the humility of David – confessing himself truly guilty of sin and confessing God as truly and wholly God. Persisting not only in sincere confession but also strengthening himself with the sacrament of the life-giving communion, he enriched the altars with gifts as if of gold and silver. His companions did the same, while at intervals others resisted the enemy with weapons so that no opening might be left.

At last, as the multitude of the conspirators rushed in from every side and pressed all around the walls of the church, the monstrous Piper stood outside before the doors. He called out the most faithful steward of the royal treasury as if challenging him to single combat, demanding that he face him if he possessed any courage or strength. When the man promptly came out from within, they struck one another with heavy blows and were both wounded. The faithful steward fell gloriously inside, while Piper survived a little longer, preserved for a clearer demonstration of divine vengeance.

For after being carried home, seized by a fierce demon, he attacked everything around him with bites and hands, tearing and smashing objects, foaming at the mouth, shouting hideously, uttering wild and unheard-of words, openly confessing his treacherous crime. At last, biting off his own tongue, he ended his life miserably and horribly, as his wicked spirit departed.

Chapter 27

But the enemy, persistent in stubborn insolence, pressed against the walls of the basilica and shot stones and arrows through every opening. The leader himself – like Stephen, battered with

stones, and like Sebastian, wounded by missiles – was struck, and the sacred building was drenched with the blood of him and of his companions, wounded and finally slain. And thus, one may truly say, it was consecrated anew by the preciousness of their martyrdom.

So that the devout king might become a true imitator of Christ's suffering, just as the Lord Jesus was placed on the cross between the wicked, so this man, standing amid the storm of the raging crowd, asked for water to be given to him as he thirsted under the rain of weapons. When a man, moved by compassion, drew water and handed it to him through a window, another thrust in a spear, knocking the vessel from both their hands and spilling the water. This denied the king relief from thirst for a short while, but did not deprive the compassionate man of his reward.

Not long afterward, the attacker himself, driven mad, leaned over a well to quench his own thirst. Lowering his head into the depths and grotesquely stretching his legs above him, he was dragged down by the evil spirit into the abyss. He left behind his lifeless body as a visible sign of divine vengeance for those who came after. In this way, he who had sinned against the servant of God experienced unmistakable retribution.

But what more is there to say? Should I speak, or should I remain silent? The full wickedness of the crime demands to be set forth, and the course of events calls for the deed – detestable to all ages – to be told. Up to this point, we have seen the glorious prince fighting like the most illustrious of heroes against his enemies, and we have almost stood beside him, supplying the weapons of devout affection. Now, as all earthly things turn toward their setting, and the time of harvest comes when the flowers are ripe for cutting, although human compassion grieves to announce that the presence of so glorious a man has been taken from this world, it nonetheless increases our greater joy to exalt him with praise, lifted to heaven after the course of his laborious struggle.

But what should one say of the rage and madness of the senseless crowd? When they rose against their earthly ruler, they did not hesitate to turn the engines of their fury against the Lord of all virtue himself. They had seen the fire set against the sacred building extinguished from above, so that the holy place was not burned. They had heard the most devout leader, amid clashing weapons and flying stones, offering sound counsel and promising peace. Yet, filled with the spirit of malice and emptied of the spirit of kindness, they were moved neither by divine wonders nor softened by human reason.

For the judgment of the heavenly arbiter was drawing to its fulfillment, calling his athlete from present turmoil into eternal rest. Thus, for him, an everlasting memory of glory was being prepared; for them, a perpetual infamy of condemnation. As was said of the persecutors of the Lord: had they understood, they would not have raised the weapons of their fury against so glorious a prince.

Chapter 28

When the bravest of the defenders had driven the hostile ranks back from the doors of the basilica, the attackers turned toward the eastern end of the sanctuary, where they had seen the most devout prince deep in prayer. With swords and axes they set about hacking and tearing

down the doorposts, and they cast to the ground the shrines containing the relics of the precious martyrs — Alban and Oswald — together with the holy cross set between them, as the collapsing doorframe gave way.

At that moment, as the heavenly bridegroom was already calling the king — soon to be made a sharer in divine mysteries — into the eternal chamber, the most illustrious ruler stood with both heart and face turned toward the altar. Then one of the impious mob thrust a spear through a window, piercing his side and staining the sacred building with the blood of the innocent.

Yet even after receiving the mortal wound, he did not forget Christ. Embracing his brother Benedict, his companion in struggle, who stood nearby grievously wounded, he exchanged with him the kiss of peace. Then, stretching out his arms in the form of a cross and laying his body upon the ground before the holy altar, as blood flowed from the wound in his side, he still had breath enough to call upon Jesus. Committing his spirit to his Creator, he left behind the precious ground, consecrated by his blood, and entered the hidden refuge of eternal mercy, there to rest forever from these tumults.

His steadfast companions, seeing their leader slain, did not yield to the enemy. Instead, they encouraged one another, summoned their strength, met those who burst in through the openings without hesitation, answered weapon with weapon, repaid blow for blow, and chose rather to fall gloriously than to survive after losing so great a prince. As the hostile crowd continued to grow in number, they were not merely struck down but overwhelmed in turn by the attackers. The sacred building was drenched with blood, the floor of the temple flooded like water, and the prophetic word was fulfilled:

*“The nations have entered your inheritance;
they have defiled your holy temple;
they have poured out the blood of your saints all around.”*

Therefore it is no wonder — as will be shown later — that they “became a reproach to their neighbors, a mockery and a derision to those around them, a shaking of the head among the peoples.”

For who would not detest a devout prince attacked and hunted by a profane populace? Who would not curse a king slain by his own people?

To recall a few examples from antiquity: Greece endured Agamemnon, harsh as he was, who for ten years and more held the Argives in war by land and sea. Spain tolerated Hannibal, ferocious and stained with the blood of nobles. Judea endured Herod, who persecuted the author of light and creator of all, made little of the crime of kinslaying, imprisoned nobles, and impiously slaughtered innocent infants torn from their mothers’ breasts. Rome herself, the head of the world, endured Nero, most cruel of all, who cut into his mother’s body with the sword, murdered his brother, set the city aflame, and destroyed senators and fathers of the world.

But Denmark could not endure a devout prince — one who practiced divine worship, proclaimed what was useful and honorable, and sought to restrain the common people from base and servile conduct.

O accursed pride! O detestable stubbornness! O stiff-necked people! Because you refuse to bend in the present, you are reserved to be bent and broken by eternal punishments. For when you drove from this life the one who rebuked your vices, you deprived yourselves of the hope of eternal blessedness. And you, who exalted yourselves above other peoples not by virtue but by arrogance, proved yourselves by these acts more faithless, more wretched, and more detestable than all.

For when you refused to submit to the authority of a prince set over you by God, you handed yourselves over to the dominion of the one whom Scripture declares to be “king over all the sons of pride.” But the one who dwells on high and looks upon the lowly, who sees the exalted from afar, cannot be deceived. He who strengthens the humble and threatens the proud also says in the Gospel: “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

And when Peter, the chief of the apostles, proclaims, “Fear God, honor the king,” with what face do you claim to fear God and honor the king, when you scorn to render the honor divinely commanded to royal authority?

Indeed, beyond any doubt, the rebuke once spoken by Isaiah against the ancient people – and repeated by the Lord Jesus against the Jews – is shown to apply to you as well:

*“This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me.
They worship me in vain,
teaching human doctrines and commandments.”*

For who does not know that you praise the Christian faith eloquently with words and speech, yet place your own statutes above divine law? And who is unaware that you do not merely disregard the faith and its teachers, but actively attack them with deceit, cunning, fraud, and envy?

For your faith, according to the witness of James, is dead without works. Even if you sometimes appear to perform deeds consistent with faith, it is evident that you do so no less for human favor than for the reward of the Father who sees in secret. Therefore, having received the praise of people and your temporal reward, you forfeit eternal recompense.

But having written enough about the faithlessness and misery of the wicked, let us return to the course of events we have set out to recount.

Chapter 29

With the most distinguished leader and his invincible companions slain within the sacred building – and with the sanctuary, stained with the blood of the slain, not so much desecrated as, as it may rightly be believed, consecrated anew – the band of the profane turned its attention not only to the royal residence but also to the holy places themselves. They searched the sanctuaries corner by corner, seizing the gifts that had only recently been placed upon the altars

and leaving nothing that had been brought there earlier or preserved over time. The sacred objects they tore from the altars they divided among themselves, to adorn their own weddings, so that the prophetic word was fulfilled even in a literal sense: “The stones of the sanctuary are scattered at the head of every street.”

Then, carefully searching the area around the royal seat, eager to ensure that no member of the royal line might remain alive as an avenger of the crime, they learned that Benedict — brother of the now precious martyr and king, and his companion in struggle — was still alive and being sheltered nearby. Rushing upon him in frenzy, they found the young noble grievously wounded and — horrible to say — dragged him by the feet into the midst of their impious assembly, so that, as the Apostle says, he might be made a spectacle to the world, and through them every work of wickedness might be completed.

As they debated how and by what death they should destroy him, they tore him apart limb by limb, like hunters quarreling over their prey, leaving nothing of cruelty unfinished. Some pinned his noble body to the ground with spears, others struck with axes, others with swords. So that none of the profane might be free of guilt, each one joined in with whatever weapon lay nearest to hand. They left him dead after a thousand wounds, his body cut to pieces, thereby heaping disgrace upon their own brutality and making themselves forever detestable to the whole world.

As the prophetic king declares, “They are corrupt and have become abominable in their practices,” for “there was none who did good,” none who sought to restrain the wicked. Instead, through the monstrous force of greed, cruelty, and malice, “their throat was an open grave; with their tongues they dealt deceitfully, and the venom of asps was under their lips.” How could their mouths not be “full of cursing and bitterness,” when they urged others to share in their crimes and themselves carried out the worst and most unspeakable deeds? Their feet — and even more their hands — were eager to shed innocent blood. Though they knew God, they neither feared his judgments nor troubled to call upon him. Those whom God commanded them to honor and fear, they devoured with impious savagery “as one eats bread.”

They turned away both their minds and their eyes, refusing to look toward heaven or to remember righteous judgment. “There they trembled with fear where there was no fear,” afraid that if they left any survivor to correct their wrongdoing, or if they obeyed authority imposed by God and remained subject to it, they might become equal to the surrounding nations and thus lose what they imagined to be their former freedom. Refusing to submit either to divine law or to royal authority, they strove instead — through audacity and defiance — to appear greater and more powerful than other peoples. In doing so, they became detestable to God, abhorrent to the world, hateful to humankind, more contemptible than any other people, and by the enormity of their crime were judged no less guilty than the persecutors of the supreme Truth itself.

Therefore, “destruction and misery are in their ways,” for turning aside from the path of peace and placing the awareness of God’s judgment behind their backs rather than before their eyes, they fell into the scandal condemned by the Gospel — choosing to carry out the vices of human wickedness rather than to abandon them. Who, then, would dare suppose that the one cannot be deceived who declares that a servant who knows his master’s will and does not do it will be beaten with many blows?

From the moment the frenzied multitude poured out the rage of their madness upon the devout prince, the land became barren of crops, the meadows thinned of grass, the forests scarce in acorns, and the waters poor in fish. Pestilence consumed the herds; disease weakened people; famine grew heavy, wearing down the noble and wealthy and killing the weak outright – according to the words of Jeremiah: “They fainted from hunger at the head of the streets,” and elsewhere, “The storehouses are laid waste, the granaries broken down.”

Fear of enemies also seized the whole region. Men and women alike trembled daily, expecting the imminent arrival of hostile forces, until at last the precious worth of the slain prince shone forth, revealed by divine signs. The enemy of virtue was brought low, and a peaceful ruler arose, lifted to the throne by God himself, while even the elements, so to speak, rejoiced and gave their favor.

But these matters must be set forth more fully in their proper place.

Chapter 30

When the disturbances already described had subsided and the agents of impiety withdrew from the divine temple and from God, the devoted clergy there, joined by the faithful, carried out their duty of compassion. They tended to the bodies of the slain, placing the royal remains and those of his brother within the basilica itself, each in its own resting place, as befitted the site of their struggle. The bodies of the glorious warriors were committed to the earth in the courtyard of the same basilica, toward the western and northern corners, to be kept there until the day of resurrection.

Chapter 31

The venerable and prudent queen, beloved of God, showed nobility of spirit even amid the pressing dangers, and gave careful thought to her own situation. She resolved to rescue the precious remains of her dearly loved husband from the unrest surrounding his persecutors and to carry them back to her native lands, intending to lay them with due honor at Ghent, in the monastery of Saint Bavo, consecrated to the prince of the apostles.

When all preparations had been made and the necessary equipment obtained, she went by night with her attendants to the basilica where the body had recently been buried, intending to carry out her plan and move the noble remains to what she believed would be a more fitting resting place. As they opened the doors and entered, before midnight a light sent from heaven filled every corner of the church, illuminating the courtyard and the surrounding area as brightly as the midday sun.

A great fear seized the venerable queen and her companions. They were held back from continuing by both awe and dread at the growing brilliance. For the providence that orders all things – having decreed that this place should be distinguished by the preciousness of his martyrdom – did not permit it to be deprived of its patron, as these signs made clear.

The most prudent queen, perceiving the divine wonders with discerning insight, though she remained sorrowful at the loss of so great a husband, nevertheless rejoiced at the clarity of the sign. She now trusted that she had an advocate before God, recognizing this as a mark of his sanctity. Yielding to divine power and giving thanks – her face lowered, her body bowed – to eternal mercy, she fell prostrate before the noble tomb of her husband, pouring out frequent tears upon the ground. She commended herself and all that was hers to the supreme Lord, earnestly praying that Christ would order everything with mercy.

After shedding many tears and rising with her heart filled with both sorrow and joy, she turned away from the holy cross and the sacred objects with reverence – her face lowered, her knees bent again and again – pondering many things in her prudent heart. Leaving behind what was most dear to her, she departed in body, though not in spirit.

Chapter 32

King Canute, beloved of God and illustrious martyr, rested in that place for eight years and nearly nine months while Olaf, his successor, ruled the kingdom. During this time, as the fame of miracles steadily increased, a common decision was reached by clergy and people alike. All the bishops assembled with a great multitude of clergy, and after the holy bones had been examined by fire, the body was raised from the earth and solemnly transferred to the southern basilica – built from its foundations with notable stonework, though not yet fully completed, and later dedicated in his name. There he was placed in a stone sarcophagus and laid to rest in the crypt.

When he had been lifted from the ground and unmistakable signs declared him to be a saint of God, King Olaf, whom we have mentioned as his successor – during whose reign famine, pestilence, disease, and fear of enemies had afflicted the lands of Denmark – was struck by illness and departed both life and kingdom, as one not chosen to witness such virtues. Immediately thereafter, by the unanimous choice of the army and the acclamation of the people, the most distinguished Erik was raised to the rights of kingship, God promoting him and even the elements favoring his rule. By the shared will of all, he obtained the monarchy and rule over all Denmark.

As soon as he was elevated to power, the times themselves seemed transformed. Crops were abundant, wealth flourished, and the security of peace gladdened everyone, as in the days of Solomon of old. For he appeared strong in prudence and foresight, both to neighboring kings and to powerful rulers.

In these times, when peace provided the opportunity, divine wonders multiplied at the relics of the precious martyr, and the power of the heavenly King daily increased the renown of his soldier. Sight was restored to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute; withered hands were healed, the lame regained the use of their legs, diseased skin was cleansed, and to all who sought help in the name of Jesus were granted both healing and the aid of heavenly mercy.

As the fame of these miracles spread more widely, crowds of the faithful gathered from every direction to seek his intercession – so that those who had once provoked him through

persecution might now be helped by his patronage, earnestly seeking forgiveness for their crimes through faithful devotion.

Chapter 33

The most prudent king, mindful of the common good, sent envoys to the Roman pontiff to make the deeds that had taken place widely known and to request apostolic authority in support of the devotion of the faithful. The pope, having gathered the bishops of the surrounding regions and many venerable men of the religious orders, all assembled in synod and deliberating on matters of God, imposed silence and instructed the envoys to present their mandate and display the signs of their mission.

When the written accounts of the events were publicly produced and read aloud, and the royal requests eloquently presented by the messengers, all gave immense thanks to Almighty God, who reveals and glorifies his chosen ones in many parts of the world. Then, by common counsel and unanimous decree, they decided that the once-glorious king should be joined to the company of the blessed martyrs already in heaven, with the dignity of his name enhanced by the glory of martyrdom. Thus he who had previously been called Cnut, as by a name not yet brought to fullness, was now to be called Canute, on account of the maturity of his judgment, the fullness of his deeds, and above all because he was now judged worthy to be numbered among the saints.

For just as Abraham, when entering into covenant with God, received an expansion of his name as a sign of divine intimacy – so that he who had already been known to God for the probity of his faith would now also be known among men with greater glory and dignity – so too the precious martyr, beloved of God, Canute, was fittingly honored with the enlargement of his name. Received into the bosom of Abraham, he was clearly shown by evident signs to be enjoying the blessedness of eternal rest.

Chapter 34

The envoys, strengthened by papal authority and supported by the testimony of so many great and illustrious men, after venerating, honoring, and imploring the patronage of blessed Peter and the saints as they had desired, received the pope's instructions to be delivered to the glorious king. Having been granted the apostolic blessing, they joyfully departed from the lands of Italy, accompanied everywhere by the merits of the now undoubted Saint Canute, who preserved for them a prosperous journey.

Upon entering the long-desired regions of Denmark, they were received everywhere with affection until they reached their destination. After paying due honor to the royal majesty with their greetings, they conveyed the words of the apostolic blessing, announced the pope's mandates, and joyfully reported the responses they had received. At this, the most magnificent prince was filled with great rejoicing; the nobles were gladdened, the bishops and clergy gave thanks, and the entire people exulted with the greatest joy at the arrival of the messengers of this new peace. All praised with constant devotion the maker of all things, who by divine mercy had provided such patronage for his faithful even in the farthest regions of the world.

Thus the unbelief of the unfaithful was cast down and confounded, while the devotion of the faithful was raised and strengthened. Churches were built and dedicated to the martyr, lands were donated, and resources suited to sacred use were assigned, so that just as all had once conspired together for the death of the religious prince, so now in every place he might be honored by the united devotion of all.

Chapter 35

As reports of his miracles and the confirmation of apostolic authority spread ever more widely, not only from nearby places but from surrounding regions as well, great multitudes of nobles and common people gathered each year, bringing tokens of their devotion and faithfully seeking his intercession.

Queen Adela, most prudent of women and, as previously noted, his noble wife – now, beyond the borders of Italy, the consort of Roger, the illustrious duke of Apulia – having heard such great and long-desired news concerning her beloved husband, returned due thanks to the supreme author of all good things. She adorned the precious relics of her beloved with costly gifts sent from afar, so that she might honor with fitting offerings him to whom she had once been joined in chaste marriage, and whom she now recalled in spirit as removed from the world and joined to the saints, even though she could no longer honor him in person.

From these contributions, preserved by royal authority and with the counsel and assistance of Bishop Hubald of that same see, a sacred shrine was fashioned for the holy bones – made in an ornate design of pure, shining gold, beautifully adorned with blue and golden stones – so that the holy relics might be fittingly enclosed.

Chapter 36

In the sixth year of the reign of the magnificent King Erik, all the bishops of Denmark were assembled together with a great multitude of clergy and an innumerable crowd of the people. The precious relics of the blessed martyr were taken from the stone sarcophagus and brought forth from the crypt where they had been kept until then. With solemn praises and great joy accompanying the procession, they were placed – on the third day before the Kalends of May – by the same Bishop Hubald whom we have mentioned, into the shrine already described. We ourselves beheld them with sinful eyes: white as snow, wrapped in fine silk, and accompanied by an epitaph composed in these words:

*Now safe in heaven with the highest King,
Canute the martyr, once a king, is laid in a golden shrine.
Slain unjustly for the sake of justice,
As in life, so in death he confesses Christ.
Betrayed by his own servant, like God himself,
He suffered the blow of weapons while asking for drink.
His side is pierced by a lance, as was Christ's,*

And dying, he is joined to the holy spirits among the stars.

When the holy bones and inscriptions had been honorably set in place, the treasure of this heavenly wealth was enclosed within the precious shrine and set before all who seek his patronage as a vision of the banquet of life. Thereafter, the signs of miracles performed there became manifest to those present and proven to those who sought help in faith.

Epilogue

These things I, Ælnoth, the least of priests – born in the land of the English but long a pilgrim in the regions of Denmark – have written for you, most noble king and precious martyr. I have composed an account of your struggles to hand down the conflicts of your trials to the memory of future generations; and though I, like a poor painter, may have depicted a beautiful man imperfectly, I have nonetheless raised a monument more lasting than bronze – one that neither the force of waves nor devouring fire shall destroy, but which will endure until the end of all things and preserve the memory of your praise through the ages.

Come then to my aid in my misfortune through your prayers before Jesus; have mercy on my afflictions, relieve the miseries of my distress, support my weakness, and lighten my frailty. Enveloped in the thick darkness of my sins, enlighten me with the splendor of your virtues. Lift me up as I sink beneath the burden of my offenses; raise me when crushed by the weight of my sins. Like the wounded man left half-dead by the robbers of the Gospel, admit me to the help of mercy; heal the wounds of my scars with the balm of your intercession, cleanse the rot of my vices, and lead me into the shelter of divine reconciliation.

So may I, even if only for a little while, be admitted into the eternal dwellings to behold you among your companions and at least stand at the threshold of the kingdom. And since I, dark and impure, have dared to speak of what is bright and holy, pardon the boldness of my tongue and forgive my audacious lips. Reconcile all the faithful to the Word by whom all things were made, whose majestic power does not cease forever.

To him, with the Father and the co-eternal Spirit, be blessing, honor, praise, and thanksgiving, now and for all ages.

Amen.