

The Song of Lewes 1264

The Song of Lewes, 1264

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The book was originally written by C L Kingsford of St John's College Oxford and published in 1890. I've not reproduced the book though, it's just that it was a source for the original text.

The Author

We don't know who the author was. Historians are pretty sure that he was a Franciscan Friar, possibly educated at Oxford under the influence of Adam Marsh and Bishop Grosseteste with whom Simon de Montfort had close links. They would thus have sympathised warmly with Earl Simon and the constitutional cause. It's not impossible that he was attached to the earl's household

The overview

The whole Song contains 968 lines, which are divided into two equal parts; the first half consisting of a Song of Triumph for the Victory and the Praise of Earl Simon, the latter setting forth and defending the objects and aims of the barons, and expounding the true theory of kingship.

To be honest, it's not a particularly easy read, but there are a lot of very interesting passages, if you want to know about the character of Edward, or the theory of kingship, or how the rebels justified themselves.

Put as simply as possible, the author deals with the King's claim that he is above the law. His theory of kingship was that God alone is King in truth. But anyone else, God's anointed or not, are liable to error, and cannot stand by themselves. The Song puts forward the programme of the barons, namely that:

- The foreign councillors of the King are to be dismissed, and replaced by native subjects.
- Escheats and wardships are not to be given to foreigners.
- A Justiciar, Chancellor, and Treasurer, together with other ministers, are to be appointed, and they are to be responsible to the Common Council of the Realm.
- Sheriffs are to be appointed by a like authority, and justice is to be done without extortion or corruption.

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His tongue is the pen of the writer who thus readily writes, laudably blessing thee, O right hand of God the Father, Lord of hosts, Who givest prosperity to Thine own, when Thou wilt, at Thy nod ; in Thee may all now learn to trust, whom those, who are now brought to ruin, were desirous to ruin, whose head is captured, whose members are captive ; the proud people are fallen, the faithful are glad. Now England breathes again, hoping for liberty, to whom may God's grace grant prosperity! The English likened unto dogs were become vile, but now have they raised their head over their vanquished foes.

In the year of grace one thousand two hundred and sixty four, on the Wednesday also after the feast of Pancras, the populace of the English bore the shock of very grievous fight at the castle of Lewes; for to wrath yielded reason, life to the sword. On the day before the Ides of May they came together, they began the battle of terrible strife; in the county of Sussex was it done, and in the bishopric of Chichester. The sword waxed strong, many fell, truth prevailed, and the false fled. For the Lord of hosts withstood the perjured, and the shield of truth stood before the pure; the former the sword without and fear with of in has destroyed, the latter the favour of heaven has strengthened more fully. The feast of Victor and S. Corona renders testimony on behalf of this contest; when the Church honoured the said saints, victory crowned the true soldiers. The wisdom of God, that rules the whole world, has done marvellous things, and made a joyful war; has made the strong to flee, and the men of might to enclose themselves in a cloister, and also in safe places. Not by arms, but by the grace of Christianity, that is in a church, remained the sole refuge for the excommunicate; their horses abandoned, this plan occurred to the conquered.

And to her, whom previously they had not feared to profane, whom they ought to have honoured in the place of a mother, to her although too little worthy, they flee, and fortify themselves with the embrace of the word of salvation. Those whom prosperity made to scorn their mother, wounds compelled to honour their mother. At Northampton haying prospered by treachery they despised the Church; faithless sons they troubled the bowels of their holy mother with the sword, prospering they deserved not a prosperous war. Then did the mother bear her wrong patiently as though through indifference, but now she punishes abundantly this and the other offences which they afterwards added, for madmen they harmed many churches; and the monastery which is called Battle did the band of raging men, which is now disbanded, without mercy spoil of its goods, and in such wise prepared for themselves a battle. The Cistercian monks of Robertsbridge would not have been secure from the fury of the sword, if they had not given five hundred marks to the prince, which Edward commanded to be taken, or they would have perished. For these and like deeds they deserved to yield and fall before their foes. May the Lord bless Simon de Montfort, his sons no less, and his company! Who nobly exposing themselves to death fought bravely, pitying the mournful lot of the English, who trampled on in a manner that can hardly be described, and well-nigh deprived of all liberties, nay of their life, languished under hard princes, even as the people of Israel under Pharaoh, groaning under a tyrannical devastation.

But God beholding this suffering of the people, gives in the end of the age a new Mathathias, who, with his sons, zealous after the zeal of the law, yielded not to the wrong doing nor to the fury of the king.

They call Simon a misleader and deceiver, but his deeds test him and prove him truthful. The treacherous fail in time of need; they who flee not death, are in the truth. the envious man and plotter, whose evil eye is the disturber of peace:

' If thou praisest the constancy, and the fidelity, which flees not the instancy of death, or punishment, those men shall equally be called constant, who go likewise to battle, fighting in their turn, likewise exposing themselves to hazard, and subjecting themselves

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to a hard epithet'. But in our battle, wherewith we are now concerned, let us see of what kind is the difference of the case.

The Earl had few men tried in arms; the party of the King was swollen great, having the trusty warriors and greater men of England gathered together, and those who were called the flower of the knighthood of the realm. Those who were furnished with arms from London would be the three hundred preferred to the many thousands; whence they were contemptible to those men, and detestable to the experienced. The Earl's knights were for the most part striplings, novices in arms they knew too little of war. Now girt with his sword the tender youth stands at dawn in battle accustoming himself to arms; what wonder if a recruit so raw be fearful, and if the powerless lamb is wary of the wolf! Thus then are they inferior in knighthood who fight for England, and are also far fewer than the strong men, who were boasting enough of their own valour, so that they thought safely and without peril, as it were to swallow up all who rendered their aid to the Earl. For also of those, whom the Earl had led to the contest, from whom he had hoped for no small assistance, many presently withdrew themselves in terror, and as it were amazed betook themselves to flight; and of three parts the third deserted; the Earl with his faithful few never yielded. We may compare the battle of Gideon with our own; in both of which we see the few of the faithful conquer the many in number that have not the faith, like Lucifer, trusting in themselves. 'If I were to give victory to the many,' says God, 'the foolish would not give the glory to Me but to the foolish'. So if God had given it to the strong to conquer, the common folk would have given the praise to such men and not unto God.

From this it can be gathered that the men of war feared not God, whence they did nothing which may prove their constancy or fidelity, but on the contrary their pride and cruelty; wishing to confound the party which they despised, rashly issuing forth they speedily perished. Exaltation of heart is the preparation of destruction, and lowliness deserves the divine grace to be given unto us; for he who trusts not in God, the pride of this man does God break down.

We bring forward Aman and Mardocheus; we read that the one was proud, the other a true Jew. The gallows, which Aman had prepared for Mardocheus in the morning, the wretched man endures when hung thereon. The queen's banquet blinded Aman, the banquet which he regarded as a great privilege; but his vain hope is turned to confusion, when after the feast he is dragged to the hanging.

Thus did sorrow seize on the last part of his joy, when it associated the end of the banquet with death. Very dissimilar is the fate of the Jew, whom the King honours highly, God so granting. Goliath is laid low by the hurling of a pebble; whom God pursues, for him does nothing avail.

To the aforesaid divers reasons that the foul bawds had gathered to themselves so many strumpets, even seven hundred, whom they ought to have known to be guileful disciples of Satan for deceiving souls, and firebrands for inflaming them, treacherous sharp knives for shearing the locks of Samson, and bringers of the stains of disgraceful conduct on the wretched who are not stout-hearted, nor confirmed by the grace of the divine gift, spiritual beings given to the lusts of the flesh, prepared with the brutish filthiness thereof they ought not to be worthy of victory, who were defiled with the foul debauchery of the flesh; they diminished their strength by the stews which they made, whence they were unworthy of knightly things. Let the knight be girded with his sword upon his thigh, let there be no loosening, let there be no vile acts; the body of the new-made knight is wont to be bathed, so that he may learn to be cleansed from forbidden deeds.

They who had lately taken lawful wives, were not so fit for the Lord's war; the battle of Gideon is witness, much less are they, whom the furnace bad injured with the fire of debauchery. Why therefore should God aid the adulterers, and the greatest part of the

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realm would be put in peril; most grievous ruin would at once follow, which would not be repaired by the longest delay.

Stephen, by the divine grace, bishop of Chichester, sighing deeply for the boundless evils that were then already without fiction imminent, when the parties had been persuaded concerning the forming of peace, heard this answer from the Earl: 'Choose the best men, whose faith is lively, who have read the decretals, or have becomingly taught theology, and sacred philosophy, and who know how to rule the Christian faith; and whatever such men shall not fear through wholesome doctrine to counsel, or whatever they shall not fear to decide, what they shall say, that shall they find us ready to adopt; in such manner that we may not know the brand of perjury, but as sons of God may hold faith, hence can they, who readily swear and hesitate little to reject what they swear, who quickly withdraw though they swear what is lawful, and render not wholly their promises to God, estimate with how great care they ought to preserve their oath, when they see a man flee neither torment nor death, for the sake of his oath, which was offered not rashly, but for the reforming of the state of the English nation which had fallen, which the treachery of an envious foe had violated'.

Behold ! Simon obedient scorns the loss of property, subjecting himself to penalties, that he may not let go the truth, proclaiming openly to all men by deeds more than by words, that truth has no communication with falsehood. Woe to the wretched perjurers, who fear not God, denying Him for the hope of earthly reward, or fear of prison or of a light penalty ; the new guide of the journey teaches us to bear whatever the world may have inflicted for the sake of truth, which is able to give perfect liberty. For the Earl had formerly pledged his oath, that whatever the zeal of the wise had provided for the reformation of the royal honour, and the shunning of wandering error, in the parts of Oxford, that he would firmly preserve, and would not change the law of this decision; knowing that such canonical constitutions and such catholic ordinances for the peaceful preservation of the realm, on account of which he had previously sustained no slight persecution, were not to be scorned, and that, because he had sworn, they were to be stoutly maintained, unless the most perfect teachers of the faith should say, that those takers of an oath could be absolved, who had previously offered such an oath, and that what they had sworn was not to be attended to.

Which, when the said bishop recited to the King, and the artificer of fraud was perhaps standing by, the voice of the throng of the arrogant is raised on high: 'See! now is a knight subjected to the sayings of clerks. Knighthood put under clerks has become of little esteem.' Thus was the wisdom of the Earl despised; and Edward is said to have answered:

'Peace is forbidden to them, unless they all bind themselves with halters on their necks, and bind themselves over to us for hanging or for drawing.'

What wonder if the Earl's heart was then moved, since no penalty save that of the gallows was provided. He offered what he ought, but he was not heard; the King, forgetful of his safety, rejected moderation. But as the issue of the event on the morrow taught, the measure, which he then willed not, was not afterwards found.

At even the devotion of the Earl is derided, whose charge on the morrow will be felt to be victorious. This stone long refused by the enemy, was afterwards fitted to the two side- walls. The division of desolation of England was on our borders; but for a defence against division was present a corner-stone, the wholly singular religion of Simon.

The faith and fidelity of Simon alone is become the security of the peace of all England; the rebels he humbles, he raises those lying in despair; the realm he reconciles, repressing the proud; and in what manner does he repress them? Certainly not by jesting, but the red juice he presses out by hard fighting; for truth compelled him to

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fight, or to abandon the truth, but he chose prudently to give his right hand to truth, and by the rough road that is joined unto probity, by the short and toilsome path unpleasant to the proud to obtain the reward which is given to the forceful, rather than to displease God by shrinking, and to advance the aims of the wicked by flight. For certain men had aimed to blot out the name of the English, whom they had already begun to hold in hatred; against whom God opposed a remedy, when He willed not the sudden ruin of them.

Hence may the English learn to call in foreigners, if they wish to be exiled by strangers; for they who wish to increase their own glory, and would wish their memory to stand for ever, are eager to associate many of their own nation with themselves, and soon to place them amongst the greatest; so the confusion of the natives increases, indignation increases, bitterness of heart increases, when the chief men of the realm feel that they are oppressed by those who make themselves equal to them, taking away what ought to have been theirs, growing by the things by which they were accustomed to grow. The King ought to honour with escheats and wardships his own men, who can aid him in divers ways, who, the stronger they are in might, are so much the surer in all chances. But if those, who brought nothing are endowed with his goods, if those, who were of no account, are made great, such men, when they have begun to grow, always climb on until they have supplanted the natural subjects; they are eager to turn away the heart of the prince from his own people, so that they may strip of glory those whom they wish to fall. And who would be able to bear such things patiently? Therefore let England learn prudently to take care that no such perplexity further befall her, that no such adversity touch the English.

The Earl was eager to obviate this evil, which had grown too strong, as it were a great sea, which could not be dried up by a small effort, but was to be crossed by the great assistance of God. Let foreigners come but quickly to withdraw, as though for the moment, but not to remain. One of the two hands helps the other, neither taking away the grace which more truly belongs to them both. Let each by keeping his own place aid and not injure, by so coming let the French be of service by doing good to the English, and by not misleading him through a sophistical countenance; and not the one by withdrawing the goods of the other; nay, rather by bearing his own burden.

If it was his own advantage which had moved the Earl, he would have had no other zeal, nor would he have sought with his whole intent for the reformation of the realm, but a designing for lordship would seek its own advancement alone, and he would set before him the advancement of his own friends, would aim at the enrichment of his sons, and would neglect the safety of the community, and would veil the poison of falsehood with the cloak of duplicity; thus he would abandon the faith of Christianity, and would subject himself to the law of a terrible penalty, nor would he escape the weight of the storm.

And who is able to believe that he would give himself to death, would be willing to ruin his friends, that he might thus exalt himself? Those who hunt after honour, and those who are always meditating how to escape death, cloak themselves cunningly; no men love the temporal life more, no men choose the station that is not of death more. Those who thirst for honours, dissimulate their aim; cautiously they make for themselves the name which they aim at; not so does the venerable Simon de Montfort, who, like unto Christ, gives himself to death for the many; Isaac dies not when he is ready to die, the ram is delivered to death, Isaac to honour. Neither fraud nor falsehood moved the Earl, but the divine grace which knows whom it may help.

If you recall the hour and place of the conflict, you will be able to find that it promised him to be the conquered rather than the conqueror; but God provided that he should not succumb. Not by night does he steal down of a sudden in secret; nay, when the day has returned he fights in the open. Thus also was the place favourable to his enemies; so that hence it is clear to all that it is the gift of God, that victory yielded to him who does

not trust in himself. Hence may the knighthood, which praises the exercise of the tournament, that it may thus be rendered ready for battle, learn how the party of the strong trained men was here crushed by the arms of the feeble and unpractised. In order that he may confound the strong places, God promotes the powerless, that he may strengthen the weak places, he lays low the powerful. So let no man now presume to trust in himself, but if he know how to place his hope in God, let him take up arms with constancy by doubting nothing, but by helping, since God is on behalf of justice. And thus it became God to help the Earl, without Whom he could not overcome the enemy.

Whose enemy shall I say? The Earl's alone? Or shall I recognise the enemy of the English and of the whole realm? Perchance too of the Church, therefore also of God? Because if this is so, what manner of grace would be fitting for him? He failed to deserve grace by trusting in himself, and by not fearing God did not deserve to be assisted. Therefore falls the boast of personal might. And evermore be blessed the Lord God of Vengeance, Who gives help to the destitute of strength, to the few against the many by crushing the foolish with the might of the faithful, Who sits afar in heaven on His throne; and by His own might treads upon the necks of the proud, subduing the great things beneath the feet of the less; He has subdued two kings and the heirs of kings, whom He has rendered captive as transgressors of the laws; and the pomp of the knighthood with its great following has He given unto shame; for the weapons, which the barons in their zeal for justice had taken up on behalf of the realm, they employed on the sons of pride, until victory was given from heaven with great glory which was not expected; for the bow of the mighty was then overcome, the assembly of the weak was made firm with strength.

And we have said from heaven, lest any man glory; but unto Christ Whom we believe, let all the honour be given! For Christ at once commands, conquers, reigns; Christ delivers His own, to whom He has given faith. We pray God grant them, that the proud spirit of the conquerors kiss not their own hands, but that, what Paul advises, be observed by them: 'He that rejoiceth, let him rejoice in the Lord.' If any of our party be glad with vainglorying, may the Lord be indulgent, and not wrathful! And may He make our party cautious against the future; and that the doing may not fail, let them make themselves a wall! May the power of the Almighty complete what He has commenced, and may He restore the kingdom of the English nation! So that there may be glory to Himself, peace to His elect, conducted under His guidance until they are in their country. Read this, ye English, concerning Lewes' fight, under the protection whereof ye live defended. Because if victory had yielded to those who are now vanquished, the remembrance of the English would have been vanquished and become worthless.

Whereunto shall the noble Edward be compared? Perhaps he will be rightly called a leopard. If we divide the name it becomes lion and pard; lion, because we saw that he was not slow to attack the strongest places, fearing the onslaught of none, with the boldest valour making a raid amidst the castles, and wherever he goes succeeding as it were at his wish, as though like Alexander he would speedily subdue the whole world, if Fortune's moving wheel would stand still for ever; wherein let the highest forthwith know that he will fall, and that he who reigns as lord will reign but a little time. And this has, it is clear, befallen the noble Edward, who, it is agreed, has fallen from his unstable position. A lion by pride and fierceness, he is by inconstancy and changeableness a pard, changing his word and promise, cloaking himself by pleasant speech. When he is in a strait he promises whatever you wish, but as soon as he has escaped he renounces his promise. Let Gloucester be witness, where, when free from his difficulty, he at once revoked what he had sworn. The treachery or falsehood whereby he is advanced he calls prudence; the way whereby he arrives whither he will, crooked though it be, is regarded as straight; wrong gives him pleasure and is called right; whatever he likes he says is lawful, and he thinks that he is released from law, as though he were greater than the King. For every king is ruled by the laws which he makes; King Saul is rejected because he broke the laws; and David is related to have been punished as soon as he acted

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contrary to the law; hence, therefore, let him who makes laws, learn that he cannot rule who observes not the law; nor ought they, whose concern it is, to make this man king.

O Edward! thou dost wish to become king without law ; verily they would be wretched who were ruled by such a king ! For what is more right than law, whereby all things are ruled? And what is more true than justice, whereby matters are decided? If thou desirest the kingdom, reverence the laws; the attacking of the law will give rough roads, rough and impassable roads which will not lead thee through; if thou dost guard the laws, they shine as a lamp. Therefore avoid and abhor treachery, be zealous for truth, hate falsehood. Although treachery may flourish, it cannot bear fruit; this let the psalm teach thee: ' My eyes/ says God, ' are on the faithful of the earth, whom verily I wish to sit with Me in the end of the world.'

See what now avails the treachery of Northampton, nor does the heat of deceit glow like a fire. If you wished to compare treachery to a fire, you would have been careful to feed such a fire with straw, which as soon as it has burnt up, ceases to blaze, and when it has scarcely begun comes to an end. So passeth away vanity that hath no roots; truth that is rooted undergoes no changes. Therefore desire only that which is lawful, and let not what the double-minded man shall say please thee. 'A prince will think what is worthy of a prince ' ; therefore take upon thyself the law which shall render thee worthy of the rule over many; worthy of the office of prince, of the assistance of many, of a great company. And wherefore dost thou not love those whose king thou dost wish to be? Thou dost not choose to profit them, but only to be over them. He who seeks no-one's glory but his own, through the pride of that man, whatever he rules perishes. So has all that which thou didst lately rule, perished; the glory which alone thou didst seek has passed away.

See! We touch the root of the disturbance of the kingdom about which we are writing, and of the dissension of the parties who fought the said battle; to different objects did they turn their aim. The King with his party wished to be thus free, and urged that if deprived of a king's right he would cease to be king, that the magnates of the realm had not to heed, whom he set over his own counties, or on whom he conferred the wardenship of castles, or whom he would have to show justice to his people; and he would have as chancellor and treasurer of his realm anyone soever at his own will, and counsellors of whatever nation, and various ministers at his own discretion, without the barons of England interfering in the King's acts, as 'the command of the prince has the force of law'; and that what he might command of his own will would bind each.

For every earl also is thus his own master, giving aught of his own in what measure and to whom he will — castles, lands, and revenues, he entrusts to whom he will, and although he be a subject, the King permits it all. Wherein if he shall have done well, it is of profit to the doer, if not, he himself shall see to it; the King will not oppose him whilst injuring himself. Why is the prince made of worse condition, if the affairs of a baron, a knight, and a freeman are so managed? Wherefore they intrigue for the King to be made a servant, who wish to lessen his power, and to take away his dignity of prince ; they wish to thrust down into wardship and subjection the royal power made captive through sedition, and to disinherit the King, that he may not have power to rule so fully as hitherto have done the kings who preceded him, who were in no wise subject to their own people, but managed their own affairs at their will, and conferred their own at their own pleasure. This is the King's pleading, and this allegation protects the right of the realm.

But now let my pen be turned to the opposite side. Let the proposal of the barons be subjoined to what has already been said; and when the parties have been heard let the statements be compared, and after comparison let them be closed by a definite termination, so that the truer part may be clear; the people are more prone to obey the more true. Therefore let the party of the barons now speak on its own behalf, and let it

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duly follow whither it is led by zeal. Which party in the first place openly makes protestation, that it devises naught against the royal honour, or seeks anything contrary to it; nay, is zealous to reform and magnify the kingly state; just as, if the kingdom were devastated by enemies, it would not then be reformed without the barons, to whom this would be proper and suitable; and he who should then falsify himself, him the law would punish as guilty of perjury, as a betrayer of the king. He who can contribute aught of aid to the king's honour, owes it to his lord when he is in peril, when the kingdom is deformed.

The king's adversaries are enemies who make war, and counsellors who flatter the king, who by deceitful words mislead the prince, and with double tongues lead him into error; these are worse adversaries than the perverse, they make themselves out to be good, when they are misleaders, and they are procurers of their own honour; they deceive the unwary whom they render more careless through pleasant words, whence they are not guarded against but are looked on as speaking useful things. These can deceive more than can the open, as they know how to feign themselves as not hostile. What, if such wretches and such liars should cleave to the side of the prince, full of all malice, fraud and falsehood, pricked with the stings of envy they would devise a deed of wickedness, through which they might bend to their own ostentation the rights of the realm; and should fashion some hard arguments, which would gradually confound the community, crush and impoverish the commonalty of the people, and subvert and infatuate the kingdom, so that no one might be able to obtain justice unless he were willing to foster the pride of such men by means of money amply bestowed? Who would endure so great a wrong to be imagined? And if such men by their aims were to alter the realm, so as to supplant right by unright; and after trampling on the natives were to call in strangers, and were to subdue the kingdom to foreigners; were not to regard the magnates and nobles of the land, and were to put mean men in the highest place, and were to cast down and humble the great, were to pervert order and turn it upside down; were to abandon the best be urgent on the worst; would not those who should do thus, lay waste the kingdom?

Although they might not be fighting with weapons of war from abroad, yet would they be contending with the devil's weapons, pitifully violating the state of the realm, although their manner was different they would do no less damage. Whether the king consenting through misguidance, or not perceiving such deceit, were to approve such measures destructive to the kingdom; or whether the king out of malice were to do harm, by preferring his own power to the laws, or by abusing his strength on account of his opportunity; or if thus or otherwise the kingdom be wasted, or the kingdom be made utterly destitute, then ought the barons of the kingdom take care that the land be purged of all errors. And if to them belongs the purging of error, and to them belongs provision the governess of customs, how would it not be lawful for them to take foresight lest any evil happen which might be harmful; which, after it may have happened, they ought to remove, lest of a sudden it make the unwearied to grieve. Thus that none of the aforesaid things may come about, which may impede the forming of peace or good customs; but that the zeal of the skilled may come in, which may be more expedient to the interest of the many; why should not improvement be admitted wherein no corruption is mingled? For the clemency of the king, and the majesty of the king ought to approve endeavours, which so temper baleful laws, that they be milder, and while less burdensome, be more welcome to God. For the oppression of the people pleases not God, nay rather does the compassion whereby the people may have leisure for God.

Pharaoh, who thus afflicted the people of God, because he was scarcely able to hearken to the prophecy which Moses declared, was afterwards thus punished; he is compelled to let Israel go against his will, and he who trusted to catch him whom he had let go, was overwhelmed whilst he thinks to run through the deep. Solomon was unwilling to crush Israel, nor did he compel any of the race to be a slave; because he knew that it was

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God's people whom he ruled, and feared to injure the seal of God. The Father of Truth both praises mercy more than judgment, and peace more than punishment.

Since it is agreed that all this is lawful for the barons, it remains to reply to the reasonings of the king. The king wishes, by the removal of his guardians, to be free, and wishes not to be subject to his inferiors, but to be over them, to command his subjects and not to be commanded; nor does he wish to be humbled to those set in authority, for those, who are set in authority, are not set over the king, nay rather are men of distinction who support the right of the one; otherwise the king would not be without a rival but they, whom the king was under, would reign equally. Yet this incongruity which seems so great, may, with God's assistance, be easily solved. For we believe that God, through Whom we thus dissolve this doubt, desires the truth.

One alone is called, and is King in truth, through Whom the world is ruled by pure majesty, Who needs not assistance whereby He may be able to reign, nay nor counsel, Who cannot err. Therefore all-powerful and knowing He excels in infinite glory all, to whom He has granted to rule His people under Him and as it were to reign, who are able to fail and able to err, and who cannot stand by their own strength and overcome their enemies by their own valour, nor govern kingdoms by their own understanding, but go badly astray in the pathlessness of error; they need assistance that supports them, yea and counsel that keeps them right.

The king says: ' I agree to thy reasoning, but the election of these men falls under my choice; I will associate with me whom I will, by whose defence I will govern all things; and if my own men be insufficient, have not understanding, or He not powerful, or if they be evil-wishers, and be not faithful, nay perchance be treacherous I wish thee to make right to be constrained to certain persons, and the power to get better assistance. The reasoning of the king is quickly declared, if it be considered ^ylm^ of the king is. All constraint does %&* ,fty, nor does all restriction take away po^P>. All princes wish for free power, those that ait ' 1 ^ HRt wretched slavery. To what purpose do*\$ ttytigs to be bound ? That they may not be aW\$ u tfaff tV***** > 'V_ aT1 adulterine law. And this constraining is not of slavery, but is the enlarging of kingly virtue.

So is the king's child preserved that he may not be hurt, yet he becomes not a slave when he is so constrained. Yea thus also are the angel spirits constrained, who are confirmed that they be not apostate. For that the Author of all is not able to err, that the Beginning of all is not able to sin, is not impotence but the highest power, the great glory of God and His great majesty. Thus he who is able to fall, if he be guarded that he fall not, is aided by such guardianship to live freely; neither is such sustenance of slavery, but is the protectress of virtue. Therefore let the king like everything that is good, but let him not dare evil; this is the gift of God. They who guard the king, that be sin not when tempted, are themselves the servants of the king, to whom let him be truly grateful, because they free him from being made a slave, because they do not surpass him, by whom he is led. But whoever is truly king is truly free, if he rule himself and his kingdom rightly; let him know that all things are lawful for him which are fitted for ruling the kingdom, but not for destroying it. It is one thing to rule, which is the duty of a king, another to destroy by resisting the law. Law is so called from binding which is so perfectly described as the law of liberty, as it is freely served.

Let every king understand that he is the servant of God; let him love that only which is pleasing to Him; and let him seek His glory in ruling, not his own pride by despising his equals. Let the king, who wishes the kingdom which is put under him to obey him, render his service God, otherwise let him truly know that obedience is to him who denies the service by which it is held of him know that the people is not his own but may be profitable to it as a help. And he who rules well over the people, is soon closed in marble and hi lb* *\rth. Let him make himself among them as we regard David dancing with his handmaids unto king David may succeed, a prudent ruler may not wrong his own; verily

one who woV-' ^ 'Ofc^pl* that was under him, but would spend o^^^t^gUK of love, and would seek the profit of his own salvation; him the commons would not allow to suffer loss.

It is hard to love one who loves not himself, hard not to despise one who despises himself, hard not to resist one who forsakes himself; it is natural to applaud one who supports himself. It is the part of a prince not to crush, but to protect; it is the part of a prince not to oppress, but to earn by numerous benefits the favour of his own, even as Christ by His grace earned the love of all. If the prince has loved, he ought to be loved in return; if he has reigned rightly, he ought to be honoured; if the prince has erred, he ought to be called back, yea to be denied by those whom he has unjustly burdened, unless he is willing to be corrected; if he is willing to be improved, he ought at the same time to be raised up and assisted by them. Let a prince hold this rule of reigning, so that he may have no need of not calling his own subjects; ignorant princes, who confound those under them, will perceive that the unconquered refuse to be thus conquered. If the prince shall think that he alone has more of truth, and more of skill, and more knowledge than the commonalty, that he more abounds in grace and more in the gifts of God; if it be not presumption, nay be so in truth, then his own true instruction will shine through the hearts of his subjects with light, and will inform his own people with moderation.

We put forward Moses, David, Samuel; each of whom we know was a faithful prince. Who endured many things from their own subjects, yet did not for their deserts cast them off, nor set strangers over them, but ruled through those who were their own men.

' I will set thee over a greater people, and will slay this people says God.

' I would die rather than that this people should perish,' let the kindly Moses, worthy of his office of prince, reply.

And thus the wise prince will never reject his own men, but the foolish one will disturb the kingdom. Whence if the king be less wise than he ought, what service is he for ruling the kingdom? Shall he of his own proper understanding seek by whom he may be supported, by whom his own lack may be supplied? If he alone choose, he will be easily deceived, who has no knowledge of who may be useful. Therefore let the community of the realm take counsel, and let that be decreed which is the opinion of the commonalty, to whom their own laws are most known; nor are all the men of the province such fools as not to know better than others their own realm's customs, which those who are before bequeath to those who come after. Those, who are ruled by the laws, have more knowledge of them; those, in whose use they are become more experienced. And because it is their own affair which is at stake, they will care more and will procure for themselves the means whereby peace is acquired. They can know little who are not experienced, they will profit the kingdom little except they are steadfast.

From this it can be gathered that the kind of men, who ought rightly to be chosen for the service of the kingdom, touches the community; namely those who have the will and knowledge and power to be of profit, let such men be made counsellors and coadjutors of the king; men to whom the various customs of their country are known; who may feel that they themselves are injured if the kingdom be injured, and guard the kingdom, lest, if harm be done to the whole, the parts may grieve suffering along with it; let them rejoice with it when it rejoices, if they be lovers of it. Let us put in our midst the noble judgment of king Solomon — she who shuddered not at the cruelty of the division of the child, because she grieved not with him, and had not motherly affection, showed, as the king witnessed, that she was not the mother; therefore let the prince choose such men as may grieve with the commonalty and have a motherly fear of the kingdom suffering hardship. But if there be one whom the ruin of many move not, if he alone obtain the pleas which he wishes, that man is not fitted for the rule of many, since he is wholly

given to his own order alone. The man of common feeling is agreeable to the community, but the uncompassionate man whose heart is hardened, cares not if hard fortune come upon the many; such walls alone are no defence against misfortunes.

If therefore the king has not the knowledge to choose by himself men who know how to counsel him, it is hence clear what ought then to be done; for it concerns the community that wretched men be not made guides of the royal dignity, but the best and chosen men, and the most approved who can be found. For since the governance of the realm is the safety or ruin of all, it matters much whose is the guardianship of the realm; just as it is on the sea, all things are confounded if fools are in command: if any of the passengers placed in the ship, or if any of those belonging to it, misuse the rudder, it matters not if the ship be prosperously governed. Thus let care be given to those who ought to rule the realm, if anyone of the realm does not rule himself rightly, and goes in the wrong way, which perchance he has chosen. The affairs of the commonalty are best managed if the realm is directed by the way of truth; and moreover, if the subjects seek to waste their own, those set over them can refrain their folly and rashness, that the power of the realm be not weakened through the insolence or stupidity of the foolish, and courage against the realm be given to its enemies. For when any member of the body is injured, the body is made of less strength; thus, granted that it may even be lawful for men to misuse their own, although it be harmful to the realm, many will soon follow the injurious liberty and so multiply the disgrace of error, as to cause loss to the whole.

Nor ought that properly to be named liberty which unwisely permits the foolish to have dominion; but let liberty be limited by the bounds of right, and when those limits are despised let it be deemed error. Otherwise thou wilt say that the madman is free, although everything prosperous be hateful to him. Therefore the king's pleading concerning his subjects carried whither soever they will at their own pleasure, is through this sufficiently answered, sufficiently invalidated; while whoever is a subject is ruled by a greater, because we say that it is not lawful for any man to do whatever he wishes, but that each man has a lord to correct him in error, help him in well-doing, and raise him up whenever he falls.

We give the first place to the commonalty. We say also that law rules the dignity of the king; for we believe that law is a light, without which we infer that the guide goes astray. Law, whereby is ruled the world and the kingdoms of the world, is described as fiery, because it contains a mystery of deep meaning; it shines, burns, glows; fire by shining prevents wandering, it avails against cold, purifies, and reduces to ashes, some hard things it softens, and cooks what was raw, takes away numbness, and does many other good things. Sacred law supplies like gifts to the king. This wisdom Solomon asked for; its friendship he sought for with all his might. If the king be without this law, he will go astray if he hold it not, he will err shamefully. Its presence gives right reigning, and its absence the disturbance of the realm. That law speaks thus: 'By me kings reign, by me is justice shewn to those who make laws.'

That stable law shall no king alter, but through it shall he strengthen his changing self. If he conforms to this law he shall stand, and if he disagree with it he will stagger. It is commonly said, 'As the king wills, the law goes'; truth wills otherwise, for the law stands, the king falls. Truth and charity and the zeal of salvation are the integrity of law, the rule of virtue; truth is light, charity warmth, zeal burns: this variety of the law takes away all crime. Whatever the king determines, let it be consonant with these; for if he do otherwise the commons will be rendered sorrowful. The people will be confounded, if either the king's eye lacks truth, or if the prince's heart lacks charity, or does not always moderately fulfil its zeal with severity; these three being in support, let whatever pleases the king be done, but when they are in opposition, the king is resisting the law. But kicking against the pricks hurts not; thus does the instruction of Paul from heaven teach us. So there will be no disinheritation of the king if provision be made in accordance with

just law. For dissimulation will not change the law, the firm reason of which will stand without end. Whence if anything useful has been long deferred, let it not be reprehended when it is late preferred. And let the king prefer nothing of his own to the common weal, as though the safety of all gave way to him who is but one; for he is not set over them to live for himself, but so that the people which is put under him may be secure.

Thou wilt know that the name of king is relative; thou wilt also understand that his name is protective; whence it was not lawful for him to live for himself alone, who ought by living to protect many. He who wishes to live for himself ought not to be in command, but to dwell apart and be as one alone. It is the glory of a prince to save very many; with trouble to himself to relieve many; let him not therefore allege his own profit, but his regard for his subjects by whom he is trusted; if he shall have saved the kingdom, he has done what is the duty of a king; whatever he shall have done otherwise, in that he has failed. From this is the true theory of a king sufficiently plain, that the position of king is unknown to one who is at leisure for his individual interest. For true charity is as it were the contrary of self-interest, and an indissoluble bond to community; kindling like fire everything that is at hand, as happens in wood which gives increase to the fire, the passive to the active, and decrease when withdrawn in the contrary manner. If therefore the prince, so far as he may, is fervent with charity for the community, he will thus be anxious for it to be rightly ruled, and will never be glad if it suffer loss. Whence if the king loves the magnates of the kingdom, although he alone, like a great seer, knows what may be needful for ruling the kingdom, what may become him, what must be done, he will not conceal that, which he has prudently decreed, from those without whom he will be unable to bring to effect that which he shall ordain; therefore he will discuss with his own men those things which he will not think to do by himself. Why will he not communicate his plans to those from whom he will as a suppliant ask for aids? Whatever allures his people to kindliness, and makes them friends, and fosters unity, it becomes the king's prudence to declare to those who are able to increase his glory. The Lord shewed all things to His disciples, distinguishing from servants those whom He made friends; and as though He were ignorant, He often asked of His followers what they thought, which He assuredly knew.

Oh! if princes would but seek the honour of God, they would rule their realms rightly, and without error. If princes had knowledge of God, they would show their justice to all men. Knowing not the Lord, as it were blinded, they seek the praises of men, delighted with vain things. He who knows not how to rule himself, will rule many badly; if anyone is willing to examine the psalms, he will read the same: how Joseph taught himself to teach princes, for which cause the king wished him to be preeminent; and how David in the innocence of his heart and by understanding fed Israel.

From all that has been said above, it will be clear that it is the duty of the magnates of the kingdom to see what things are convenient for the governance of the kingdom, and expedient for the preservation of peace and that the king have natives at his side, whether as councillors or as the greater men of the realm, not strangers nor favourites who supplant others and the good customs. For such discord is the step-mother of peace, and brings in battles, devises treachery. For just as the envy of the devil brought in death, so does hate divide the court. The king shall keep the natives in their rank, and by this management shall rejoice in ruling. But if he have sought to degrade his own men, have overturned their rank, it is in vain that he will ask, why when so deranged they do not obey him; nay, they would be mad if they were to do so.