

THE CHRONICLES OF FRIAR BRENDAN OF DUBLIN

Translated by:
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The Chronicles of Friar
Brendan of Dublin
A FRANCISCAN'S LIFE
(1295-1385)

Terrence P. McGarty

A NOVEL

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PREFACE

This work was a translation of the record left by a Franciscan Friar, one Brendan of Dublin, who resided frequently at Greyfriars in London during the Fourteenth Century. It is a translation from Middle English in a style similar to that of Chaucer who seems to have been both a contemporary as well as a close acquaintance. The Friar does not appear in any Royal documents and one gets the impression in the translation that such an anonymity was deliberate. Apparently he was a physician as well as Franciscan priest but he also performed a multiplicity of delicate missions for the King, several of the Popes, as well as other Royal actors during this period. He seems to go under the name of "man in the shadows" and in translating this document one can get the impression of a man who was following a religious mission with a strong secular bent.

One also gets the impression that he established a strong bond with certain Royalty, such as the dowager Queen Isabella, with whom he had gone on several diplomatic missions. The Queen left a substantial set of gifts to the Franciscans at her death and she was ever buried in Greyfriars, the convent where Friar Brendan resided when in London.

The most interesting part is the relationship with William of Ockham, one of his fellow Franciscans as well as a teacher at Oxford. Although Friar Brendan is not a philosopher nor a theologian, he was trained as a physician, one sees the dialog between Ockham and Brendan as well as many others such as Wyclif and Brendan.

I have tried to seek out confirmation of these claims made in the document but to little avail. The Friar contends his position was always and deliberately in the shadows and even though there are references to a certain Franciscan Friar in many documents the name seems always omitted. I have examined many of Edward III's records only to find the elusive Franciscan Friar. Queen Isabella's grants are to Greyfriars, and she thanks certain Franciscan Friars but no more. One would have expected something some reference from Petrarch, but alas none. Petrarch announces the least of his contacts but the events historically confirm Petrarch's presence and again at best a Franciscan Friar. Likewise for King Charles and the records I have examined at Prague.

Also the document was written in the same style of Middle English as Chaucer. Thus stylistically is seemed consistent. Chaucer decries physicians and friars, and this combination seemed strange until one sees the relationship with Gaunt in the document.

Terrence McGarty
Dublin Ireland
January 2019

*Sur le pont d'Avignon,
L'on y danse, l'on y danse,
Sur le pont d'Avignon
L'on y danse tout en rond.*

*Les beaux messieurs font comme ça
Et puis encore comme ça.*

*Sur le pont d'Avignon,
L'on y danse, l'on y danse,
Sur le pont d'Avignon
L'on y danse tout en rond.*

*Les belles dames font comme ça
Et puis encore comme ça.*

*Sur le pont d'Avignon,
L'on y danse, l'on y danse,
Sur le pont d'Avignon
L'on y danse tout en rond.*

Les officiers [ou les soldats] font comme ça...

Les bébés font comme ça ...

Les bons amis font comme ça...

Les musiciens font comme ça ...

CHAPTER 1 (1307-1308) LEAVING IRELAND

My mother was a convert. Converts take their new religion more strongly than multigenerational believers. They have become something they were not, by choice, and they spend the rest of their lives justifying that choice. I on the other hand had little choice, being baptized seven days after my birth, whilst, as I gather, my mother was still a heathen, and then being what may be perceived by many as my mother's gift to God, my being sent to the Franciscans in England.

I was born in Ireland in 1295, of an Irish father with a long history of his family in Ireland. My mother was the daughter of a Jewish merchant who had come from France and who traded in imports in Dublin. I remember my mother's father with his fine head of white hair, and his somewhat silent manner, as most Jews, I gather, had to have to prosper in a Christian land. Ireland, I was to learn later, was much more open and accepting of Jews, since, as I understood it, the Irish were either scholars or poets or warriors or kings. They were either studying or fighting, often telling each other tales of some bygone glory. The English were our titular owners and rulers but as even their Lords knew, no one could control an Irishman, or worse yet, an Irish woman. Thus my mother was by birth a Jew, by choice a follower of Christ, and by disposition Irish. That was a combination that could strike fear even in the heart of Satan himself. It did me.

One must remember that as a result of the recent edict of King Edward I, the Jews were expelled from England in 1290. Ireland, under the King's domain, was slow expelling the Jews, and one way around this expulsion was to convert. Some conversions were real, some pragmatic, some just a front, so that a few of the remaining Jews managed to remain faithful to their old ways by hiding amongst the Irish or just removing themselves beyond the pale of English influence. The Irish in general were all too often fighting amongst themselves as well as with their English overlords. Unlike the Scots, who Edward was so often at war, the Irish just fought themselves and at times the English. Thus perhaps my mother's intent to donate her son to the Church was also a way to get me out of Ireland and its wars.

At twelve years of age, by some means I never understood, my mother, now a devout believer, sent me off to the Franciscans in Oxford to study. I was, as the first born, to become a servant of the Lord and at the same time demonstrate my superior intellect, whatever that meant. So off I went across the channel. My grandfather had an associate who gave me a passage on his small boat, amidst a storm that sent my twelve year old stomach retching for the entire passage. Our ship set out to the East towards what was Wales and then down the Welsh coast, never getting too close. The Welsh were warlike but were not as good sailors as the Irish. For we Irish had the great Ocean on our West and the channels to our South and the brutal seas to our North. We had to learn to sail in the worst of conditions.

We landed on what was England, in a small town called Bristol by sailing up the mouth of what may have been a river outlet. I remember the day with other ships around, bright sun, and seagulls flying around those ships which carried in fish that they had just caught. The noise of the gulls stayed with me for many years. Dublin was not on the coast, and at best it had a river, and we saw gulls but never the screeching that I saw here, noise and massive birds in flight.

Then I set out to find a Franciscan assemblage, the place where they all gathered, for further directions. I had letters of introduction and a contact name. But that is all. The Franciscan Friary was founded in 1230 in Bristol and a new set of buildings were completed in 1250. The Friary was on the outskirts of the town. Bristol was a busy port with many people and it was somewhat secure being up the river from the sea. In a sense it was a bit like Dublin, so that I was familiar with it. The people looked almost the same but their local language was unfamiliar, as I suspect would be mine to them. One could communicate in a Vulgar Latin form, a few hundred words, but enough to get directions to the Friary. Local dialects and pronunciations were often difficult to master quickly.

I walked to the market from the wharf and asked for directions to the Friary. As best I could understand they sent me to the Friary in short order but when I got there I found it was the Dominican one. I made the mistake of both the wrong Friary and then telling the Dominican Friar at the gate that I was to be a Franciscan. It was as if Satan was at his door. It would be only later that I would learn of the conflicts. He snarled and pointed to the West and told me to be off in his best Latin. It was then that I could retort in my better Latin, and he slammed the door in my face. Not all of “God’s Chosen” are pleasant folk. Lesson learned.

Then farther West and I came to the Franciscan Friary. The door was open and the yard was filled with Friars all robed in grey and with their open sandals, moving from one spot to another. Unlike the Dominicans they seemed happy, smiling yet busy. Local people were coming and going and the Friars were interacting with them. As I came through the gate I asked the first person I met, clearly a Friar, where could I meet the Prior.

It was then that I met my first Franciscan, Friar Dismas. He was tall, of some age, kind, and told me he could assist me. He asked me who I was and why I was there. I told him of my mother’s wish, my journey, and my intent to become a Franciscan and go to Oxford. That I recall I did in one complex Latin sentence. Upon its completion his burst out laughing. He turned to his colleagues and announced:

“Brothers, we have before us our answer to Abelard and Aquinas, another Duns Scotus, a scholar from across the sea, an Irish Scholastic. Let’s us all welcome our new entrant. The soon to be Friar Brendan!”

It was if a party had been called, as from every corner the Friars came forth laughing and welcoming, and I was surrounded with well-wishers. My fears were dissipated in no time. They asked if I was hungry, and in short order we had a small feast assembled. They were all amazed by my Latin, a bit more formal than theirs, but we managed. After the meal I again asked what I was to do next, for I had been told to meet the Prior, whomever that was. Dismas smiled and said that he was that person. Until that point I had no knowledge of his position. Now all became clear. It would be Dismas that would be my guide. We went off to the hall of the Friary and sat down to talk. He told me I would have a space to sleep, one to study, and that within less than a week would start off to Oxford, and he would accompany me. For he also had to go there to see some fellow Franciscans.

Now I had some schooling in religion but I had never heard of a Saint Dismas so I asked the good Friar. He told me that Dismas was the “good thief” when Jesus was on the cross, the one that Jesus said would be with him in heaven that day. So I began to gather the facts. I had with me a book my mother had given me when I left, *The Confessions*, of some person named Augustine. As a young man Augustine also had a strong mother, Monica, who despite his profligate life managed to continue to press upon him the need to convert to Christianity. Reading through Augustine and his *Confessions* as a young man, I came to dislike this man intensely, and perhaps that would be the defining focus on my later excursions into theology and the people about whom I would gather. Mothers, it appeared to me, even at that early age, could have such a strong influence, on the person, and in turn on so many others.

Friar Dismas was a kind man and also seemed quite intelligent. He wore a grey robe and about his waist was a rope that tied his robe about him closely, and he wore sandals with no other coverings upon his feet. That intrigued me since his feet appeared quite clean from such exposure. He invited me into the small facility shared by him and several other Franciscan friars. There was Friar Louis, Friar Thomas, and Friar Martin. They all dressed the same. Each had the rope about their waist and each had three large knots in the rope. I was to ask about that latter.

I was given a small room, it was a stone walled shelter, a few hundred yards from the river leading to the dock area in Bristol, adjacent to a small chapel. It was as cold at times as it was in Dublin. Bristol was about the same size as Dublin, a city not quite on the coast but relying on the seas. I knew something of the Franciscans but in the next few days I was to learn quite a bit more. Why my mother chose this order I do not know but I was comfortable and was treated quite well. We had a dinner as a group and the Friars were all quite amiable. They read from the Bible and we said our late evening prayers. I then went to rest.

I was awakened somewhat before dawn, to go down and attend Mass. We did so in the Chapel and there was nothing but the cold stone upon which we knelt. This was a bit different than Dublin where people brought their own pillows upon which they knelt. Here the Friars have little. Friar Dismas said the Mass and after Mass we went to have our breakfast. The Friars were mendicants, in that they relied upon the kindness of the people of Bristol. Yet they also taught the local school and had a small farm on which they grew crops, which they used for themselves, and they ministered to the poor, sick and aged of the town.

I soon got to know Friar Dismas quite well. He was of middle age and he had fought as a Knight with King Edward in the Crusades in the 1270s. One could see his strength which even as he aged he maintained. Friar Martin was the youngest and he was the one who told me of Friar Dismas' past. Dismas had been to Jerusalem and Acre and saw the collapse of the territories then controlled by Christians. Friar Dismas had learned Arabic, both to speak and read, and had been able to translate many of the works of Arab physicians. Yet Friar Dismas did not speak of his past. Friar Martin suspected he had joined the Franciscans after his Crusade experiences and upon the death of his wife and children from disease. The small Franciscan abbey was also supported by a grant from the King, since it was alleged that Friar Dismas had personally saved the King's life in battle. This, of course, was not spoken in any manner by Friar Dismas.

Friar Dismas was also the Prior of the Franciscan monastery. I was corrected, it was not a monastery but a Priory. In fact it was also called a convent by many. The name monastery was a place for monks, namely those who no longer went into the world. Monks lived alone, often in a solitary existence. The Priory, in contrast, was open to the world and this order I was being assigned to was one where its members walked the same paths as all others, except with the constraints of being part of this order. As of this point I could not yet understand what a Friar and Prior were and how all these related to me. As with many things I was soon to learn.

I soon began to learn about the Franciscans and the order into which I had been sent. Its members were members of the Order of the Friars Minor, OFM. It was clear that some of the Friars had come into the order as I had by family actions and others by choice. Friar Dismas was a clear example of the latter. I spent two weeks in the Abbey and each day learned more about the order. My Latin was quite good, and I also knew Irish from my childhood, as well as Greek and Hebrew from my grandparents. I did not know then how much I had already acquired. Perhaps it was this core of knowledge that impressed Friar Dismas and led him to personally escort me to Oxford.

The day came for me to leave. We would ride by horse to Oxford, which was a bit uncommon for Friars since generally we would walk, as I had found out. Friar Dismas had many books which he was to bring to Oxford for the benefit of others, books which he had translated from Arabic. He showed me the original Arabic and I was interested in the letters of the language, and since I already had exposure to Greek and Hebrew, I had no great problem starting to absorb them as well. I shared with him some of my knowledge of Greek, and we came to see that much of what was in Arabic had come from the Greeks. I shared some Hebrew, and for that he was amazed. Like Arabic, it went from right to left, like Arabic, it did not have the vowel sounds, but unlike Arabic, it was a block set of letters rather than the flowing of Arabic. Little did I know but how far this set of observations would carry me. I could see now that even a little knowledge had value, and could be appreciated by the right people. This could become a key to life.

We set out in early August. The sky was a bright blue, and Bristol seemed a great deal more pleasant than Dublin. We were to go to the town of Bath first. Our first day was comfortable, Friar Dismas in his Friar's cloak and I in my mufti from Dublin. A strange combination we must have appeared. We had two horses, an uncommon thing for a monk, but after all we did carry a mass of books to go to Oxford. The vellum books were heavy, the leather bindings added weight and they were protected from any weather by more leather enclosures, all roped together across the backs of the two horses. I had ridden before in Ireland so this was not new to me. What was new were the roads, the old Roman artifacts still etched in some places. I wondered who all the people were who had built them and what they were doing over a thousand years ago. After a long day's ride, we arrived at Bath.

Along the way we spoke of my experiences in Ireland. It was clear to me that Dismas had some knowledge of Ireland but being so young I could not truly ascertain the details. We continued to converse in Latin, using many common phrases, and I had come to be comfortable in the language for conversing. As we went on he asked me if I had any knowledge of French. I did not. He let me know that to be accepted in the right places that I must gain the knowledge and do so quickly. He said my Latin would help and he would help me on this trip. Thus began my

French. It was clear that Latin was no longer the single key. Local languages were exploding. The words of the locals in Bristol were incomprehensible, and as we stopped several times on our journey for water I heard them again. Every so many miles the words seemed different. Words for such common things as "water", "where", "here", "there", and the like. I wondered how these folks communicated. Latin amongst scholars, French at Court and amongst the upper classes, whatever that meant, and this English tongue which seemed to change every ten miles or so. How many languages must one deal with?

Friar Dismas had told me on the way the history of this town. Bath was a small but busy town. It had rebuilt several of the old baths that were of Roman era and had established a form of hospital for the sick and infirmed. It was the first time that I had seen such a collection of the sick outside of their homes. There were still a collection of old Roman buildings. Some were just crumbling and others retained some of their glory. It was clear that during the Roman times that this must have been a significant spot. I wondered how people had gotten here, but the roads were much better then I supposed.

We first called upon the local Bishop, a call I suspect was politically important. Friar Dismas had great political skills and I was impressed by how he was well received by the Bishop. But no sooner had we arrived at the Bishop's residence than he was informed by an aide to the Bishop of the death of King Edward. He clearly showed on his face that he had lost what must have been a friend in the King¹. This may not have been the best way to start a meeting with a Bishop. I knew little of this King, but I had heard tales about his battles with the Scotts, who unlike the Irish managed to keep the English at a distance. I never understood the details. Little was ever spoken about such things while I was around.

The Bishop's name was Walter Halshaw, and Dismas told me that he had been Bishop since late in 1302. In England, I gather like many other countries, the King has significant power in who gets appointed Bishop. Bishop Walter was the Bishop in title of Bath and Welles. I gathered that it covered a large area. The Bishop met us in a garb befit his position. Yet he appeared aged and frail it was clear to me that his life was without strain. It was clear that he and Dismas knew one another, and quite well I suspected. The Bishop greeted Dismas as an equal, and it was only my second meeting with a Bishop since I first met the Bishop in Dublin. I had met the Dublin Bishop, Richard de Haverings, just before my departure. He was new, having replaced the Bishop Richard de Ferings, who had died late in 1306. They were both of Norman heritage, and we rarely had Irish bishops since the time the English took control. At the time I little understood such things but they too would soon become clear.

The Bishop also showed concern on the demise of King Edward. He shared this with Dismas as both men knew the King well. The Bishop asked us to join him for dinner and to rest at his residence for a while. Again I noticed how deferential the Bishop was to this mere Friar, who clearly was more than just that.

Friar Dismas agreed and we first went to the bath, to wash from our day's journey. Dismas took me to the old Roman bath, a beautiful location with columns, a roof, and a large pool or bath.

¹ Walter Haselshaw was a medieval English Bishop of Bath and Wells. He was elected 7 August 1302 and consecrated 4 November 1302. He died 11 December 1308.

Dismas and the Bishop spoke for a brief while. They did so in what I assumed was French, and I gathered that it was regarding the death of the King. Both men seemed to be concerned not only over the death but it appeared over the new King as well. I gathered the new King was Edward II, the son of the now dead King. Of this man I knew nothing. But at this point I was eager to start learning.

Dismas said he would go to the baths, the old Roman baths, which still operated in some limited manner. We walked towards the baths, which were near St John's Hospital, which Dismas told me was constructed around 1180 by the then Bishop Reginald Fitz Jocelin. The reconstructed bathes were built around warm springs which people frequented in the belief of their healing properties. I wondered what those properties were and if perhaps it did less healing and more just feeling better. I started to question more and more.

The baths were strange to me. Large long and filled with many men who had come to not only bathe but to spend time talking with one another. I had seen such gathering places in Ireland but around drink not bathing. It was a social gathering. Friar Dismas went in and he removed his grey frock and I removed my now quite dirty clothing. We went to the large bathing area, with large old Roman walls surrounding it. The water was warm and we entered this almost lake sized enclosure like bath. It was then that I saw the scars on Friar Dismas. Long slices of scars across his back and down his side. These were wounds of war, and I suspected that it was when he had been with King Edward in the Levant.

As we sat there, Dismas turned and from a small cloth he unwrapped a round object, a pale purple colored ball, the size of a modest rick, and proceeded to rub this across his shoulders and face creating a form of white foam, and exuding an interesting odor, quite pleasant, almost flower like.

I turned and asked him:

“Friar Dismas, what is that stone you are using?”

He handed it to me and said:

“Use it on your face and shoulders, it will help clean the dust from the road.”

As I did I could see the brown soot from our trip come off my head and hair, and at the same time the smell became ever so more strong. I asked:

“Friar Dismas, what is this material?”

He replied:

“It is soap. I first used this type when returning with King Edward when we passed through Italy and then again when we were in Marseille. They have soap makers there who make this fine

soap, and I gather they add the scent of many local flowers. I learned that cleanliness is respect for God's gifts to us and unlike many I have adhered to this tradition."

I replied:

"How do they make this soap?"

He turned and smiled:

"Ah young Brendan, that question tells me more than anything else that you will be a challenging student. You see some young men just ask where they can get this, some ask how much it is, some ask even to have my small portion. You my young friend ask the most important of questions; how to make it?"

As we sat in the bath and soothed our sores from the ride, I, as a child I guess, asked Dismas of his life before being a monk.

"Friar Dismas, may I ask what you did before becoming a Franciscan?"

I feared he would take affront and berate me for my arrogance to ask. But to my surprise he answered:

"Brendan, I had a full life, a wife, two fine children. I had my own land. As you may know, because all seem to speak of it, I did accompany King Edward to the Holy Land to fight the Muslims. Our battles were many. We left England in 1270. I was then a young man, my early 20s, and I bid my family farewell, kissed my wife, my mother, my two children. All of whom I would never see again. We set out in August of that year, a beautiful bright clear August day. I remember the color of the sky, even brighter than what we saw this August day. We spent time going through France and then by ship to Tunis to meet up with the French King, Louis IX. But alas, when we arrived, King Louis had died of plague, his army was in total disarray, and they abandoned their commitment. It was the first time I had seen such disloyalty and Knightly dishonor."

He continued, with his head now leaning back on the edge of the bath, eyes staring up to the cloudless sky. He stated:

"Then we went on to the Holy Land. Edward was committed to go to Acre. To free it from the Muslims. Thus we went forward, one thousand Knights, the Queen, an equal number of Squires and aides. What we thought was a massive army of Crusaders, men who we assumed could easily defeat these savages. Our leader was Otto de Grandson, a close friend of the King, a fine and honorable man. Alas, I wonder what he feels this day that Edward is no longer with us."

Dismas raised his head and looked somewhat blankly forward to the distant wall. He continued:

"Now I recall as if it were a week or month ago.... We sailed on, across the Sea, stopping for supplies from place to place, until we finally landed on the shore of the Holy Land and the port of

Acre. It was so strange, so much different than what we have here in England. What I first noted was the heat, the intense heat of the mid-day sun. Near the water, one could get some relief, but go in any farther and one starts to feel the baking in one's body." We had been at sea for a long while and it was Fall, but here the summer seemed incessant."

I somewhat foolishly asked:

"Were there any Muslims there when you arrived? Did you go to battle right away?"

He smiled and said:

"No Brendan, the residents were just glad to see us. There was an Arab chief called Sultan Baybars. He had been taking one Christian stronghold after another and when we arrived he had started to move on Acre. Acre as you see was both one of the few remaining strongholds and a significant trading center."

"Thus we had to prepare to do battle with Baybars. However, the heat, it was unbearable. Men could not go in armor, and into battle. Our horses could not bear the heat. The Muslims were smaller, with no real armor and on smaller horses which were able to bear the heat. I saw our horses drop in less than an hour, dead from the heat. Older Knights lost their strength from the heat. It not only lasted in the day, but the nights were unbearable as well. One could not sleep. The food was poor, we did not eat well, and for drink, some wine but the water was undrinkable. We must have to find other ways."

At this point I was enthralled by this tale. All of this time spent on a journey, and it seemed that the simple fact of the heat was defeating them. I felt warm in England but what Dismas described seem like the gates of Hell. I then asked him:

"What could you do? Did this Baybars attack? Were you getting weaker as the days went on?"

He got out of the bath and dried himself and dressed. I did likewise. We went to the garden next to the baths and sat beneath a large oak tree. I awaited the rest of the tale. He said:

"I see you are enthralled as every young man with this tale. You see Brendan, glory and victory does not always come as quickly as we would anticipate. As much as I thought I was on God's mission I was also seeking glory in battle, recognition by the King, and pride can be very dangerous. Well we needed alternatives, we needed if not allies at least someone who would also be an enemy of Baybars. There was one, a mighty one, the Mongols. These tribes had come from the East and they were brutal. They wanted to eliminate all the Arabs, Muslim, Christian, and anyone else in their way. So we tried to seek a mutual accommodation. So Edward and Otto sent me as an emissary to the Mongols. I was to travel, not as a Knight, but as a Royal Emissary, from King Edward to the Mongol leader. I set out to the East, to Persia, to meet them and seek a means of cooperating."

I asked him:

“How does one speak to a Mongol? Do they speak Latin, Greek? How did you manage?”

He laughed and replied:

“Ah, Brendan, you ask the simplest of questions. You should have asked how did I know where to go, who to speak to, how to defend myself. But to your question. We had guides from Acre, and they spoke our language and Arabic. That is how I learned Arabic, for when you spend day after day with them, you learn almost fifty to a hundred words a day, and in fifty days you can speak. In seventy days you can read. Not well mind you, but one can survive. Then we would get a new guide, a new tongue, and repeat that every some many hundred miles, until after almost seven hundred miles I met the Mongol leader. He was short, with large muscles, a great amount of facial hair, black string hair, piercing eyes. His name was Abagha. He was the Khan or king, I suppose. By this point I had a small sample of his language, a critical fact, for he was both surprised and pleased. I spent almost two weeks at his camp. He agreed to send his forces to defeat Baybars. I was pleased but I had to return to King Edward to tell him. And hopefully Baybars was still waiting.”

He continued:

“Then I repeated my trip, but this time I started to record what I learned in each tongue. I had some parchment and ink, given me by Abagha, items he had looted from his conquests and for which he had neither use nor interest. This was the beginning of my development of Arabic and Persian. It would come into great importance later. I returned via a similar route, avoiding the Arab tribes, and in fact I began to dress as an Arab as well. You see they wear very light robes and head coverings and drapes to fend off the sun. Abagha had also give us camels, large animals which can go many days without water. One learns, each new person adds to our knowledge.”

I asked:

“What type of animal is a camel?”

Dismas laughed. He replied:

“I tell you of new people, dangerous journeys, and you ask about the animal! Well it is like a horse but with a longer neck, a thinner head, and a large bump on its back. It lives on the deserts. It is harder to ride than a horse and worse is that it spits. As you ride it from time to time it spits and it blows into your face. Frankly Brendan it stinks. Thus the Arab wears long flowing robes that cover their faces, keeps them somewhat clean. It was after these trips that I began my bathing, the dirt and smells became overbearing!”

He then continued:

“Well upon my return I told Edward and Otto, and it was clear that the Mongols would attack the Arab Muslims. We waited and soon we heard that Baybars was under attack from the East. At that point he assumed that the Mongols would prevail and that jointly we could defeat the

Muslim army. But alas, the Mongols uncharacteristically retreated. The Mongols remained in place and thus a stalemate. We sat in Acre. It was now more than a year that we were there. There were some small battles but nothing ever was a definitive event. Then in April 1272 Edward was informed that the other Christian groups had entered into a ten year truce with the Muslims. He was furious. All his time, effort, loss of men, was now wasted. He and the Queen were frustrated, there would be no victories, all was for naught. Then on June 17, 1272, on the Kings own birthday, he was visited by an emissary from Bayabar. The emissary asked for a private meeting so alone with the emissary and the translator, much to the objections of Otto and myself, the King met, and in just a few moments the emissary took out a knife and stabbed the King. There was a shout and we entered, Otto to the King and I to the emissary, whose head I promptly removed. The Queen entered, the King was bleeding, and we all knew the treachery of the Arab, the knife was most likely poisoned. I went over to clean and cut the wound, Otto himself tried to suck out the poison, cleaning his mouth with heavy wine, and then I took a hot poker and singed the wound to prevent any further incursion of whatever poison there may have been. We let the King rest.”

I stared at Dismas transfixed in this tale of Knightly honor, for this was not only my first Knightly tale but one told by the very Knight himself. The man before me with the tonsure and grey robe with the rope know, was now see at a gallant Knight saving the life of his King. I had only slightly heard of such tales. I did not know if I had the strength to do such. I also thought of the tales of Augustine which I had been reading, and he was not such a brave man, and I wondered which God valued more. I then asked:

“The King lived, didn’t he?”

He again smiled, as he was wont to do, and replied:

“Yes, although he was ill for a while, but by September of 1272 we left Acre, disappointed and much for the wear. We sailed to Cyprus and then on to Italy, where the King wanted to meet an old friend who was now Pope, We went to Orvieto to see Gregory X, who had been Cardinal Ottobuono when the King had first known him. Orvieto was a Papal dwelling north of Rome. It was there and then that the King was told of the death of his father and that he was now King. It was then that he decided not to return to England but to resolve his problems in Gascony. I on the other hand had decided to return and had also been told of the death of all my family. The Pope consoled me as did a local Franciscan, a Friar Eduardo. It was then that I decided to become a Franciscan as well, and try to help those in need. That young Brendan is what you should know for other do and you may hear many things, but since we are to travel together, the tales should come from me first.”

He continued:

“Now my young man, we will dine with the Bishop. Listen carefully, you are entering the world of politics, the Court, and possible intrigue. This will be a lesson. The Bishop was aligned with the King, now that the King is dead he must see what alignment he must adjust. The problem will be my young friend, the next King, Edward II, of whom you will hear more than you most likely should. I know this new King but slightly, and as a Franciscan I am protected by Rome.

But Rome is being pressured by the French, and war may come our way again. So listen and learn, be careful of your words, for nothing is what it may appear to be, never as such, in any Court.”

We left and went to the Bishops residence.

Dismas looked then sternly at me and stated:

“Brendan, you now know what great deeds King Edward did. But you also must beware. You are young and have not yet developed the skills of a politician. You also have two stains on you; you are Irish and you can be considered a Jew, by some. Only I know the latter fact. No others. The King had a strong hatred of all the Celts, the Scots, the Welsh and the Irish. He also despised the Jews, and expelled them in 1290. I never understood the intensity of his hatred. As I became closer to God he it seemed became a man who despised those around him. So I advise you Brendan, speak not of your Irish heritage and speak never of your Jewish roots. Our trip to Oxford, I sincerely hope, will assist you in that task. You must seek solitude and the silencing of your speech. Volunteer nothing, except to your Confessor. Amongst your Franciscan brothers you can find some peace, but beware for all walls have holes and beyond those holes are the ears of many who would do us harm. We shall speak of this again on our journey. Now let us dine with the Bishop. Be particularly careful there my young friend. Although we may appear to be of close friends in our Lord, he is beholding to the King, whereas we are to the Pope, and ultimately to God. Let us be off.”

We then set off to the Bishops residence. The sky was now dark, and the residents of Bath were within their residences, what few there were. One could hear the sounds of a few horses prowling about and the streets were a mix of dirt and old Roman stones, an uneven surface which one must venture across with care. We entered the residence of the Bishop, also known as a priory. That made me think that perhaps Dismas, as a Prior, was somehow the same as the Bishop who lived in a priory. Words were starting to flow around, new words and relationships of words with the way people acted with and towards one another. In Ireland I was not used to what was call a class, namely everyone here in England has some way of knowing just where they fit relative to their king, and I suspect the Pope and ultimately God. I wondered if words make people or people the words. Does the title Bishop make a man something more than a Priest. Is a Prior the same as a Bishop. What am I, I began to wonder. Where do I fit in this structured world I am beginning to get a glimpse of? I recalled my grandfather and his chess board. I never was interested in the game, but now I am seeing the players and their “ranks” play out in the real world. I now am dealing with people who dealt with Kings and Popes. What, I thought, would that mean for me?

We entered the Bishops residence, and were welcomed by a Priest, whose name I did not recall. Then we went to meet the Bishop in his large dining room. He again was attired in a regal fashion, dark red cloth, some purple, white lace. His clothing alone must have cost what a small town in Ireland makes in its sale of vegetables in a year. In contrast Dismas still had his grey linen garb, with simple sandals. We sat and a prayer was said, by the Bishop, in Latin. He blessed everyone at the table, which included a Priest whose name was Father Alexander.

The meal was served. I had never seen such a feast. Wine, fruits, cheese, and there were many meats, and I watched what Dismas would do before I did anything. I said nothing, just smiled when necessary. They spoke of the old King and briefly of the new. They spoke of the old Pope and now of the new one. Clement V it appeared had aligned himself with the French King, Philip IV, and this new Pope was considered less of an ally to England. These were new concepts, Popes, Kings, allies, enemies. The flying of terms that I had never heard before. Then the Bishop asked Dismas:

“What is your opinion of the new King, you have met him?”

Dismas responded in what I believe was French, the first time in the dinner. It seemed clear that the Priest did not understand or at least he pretended not to understand. Whoever this Edward II is it seems that he is not thought of kindly. The conversation lasted a while in French. It was my first time to try and understand it somewhat, but the intensity of whatever they were saying intrigued me.

The following morning Dismas said Mass just after dawn and we then broke our fast before heading towards Oxford. We had stayed two full days, and Dismas and the Bishop had several more meetings. I had the chance to explore Bath a bit more, and I enjoyed walking about the old Roman ruins. The type of craftsmanship was amazing; I had never seen such before. The stone carvings, the size of the buildings, the amazing water works, flowing and transporting water everywhere. They had sewers, underground ducts to transport the night pots, the stench one often smells in towns was not as strong here. I managed to see and grasp things I had never seen before. I also spent time reading Augustine. I really did not enjoy it. I did so only to obey my mother’s request. I could understand sin, and the lives people may live which were sinful. But in my small world, now expanding very rapidly, I do not believe I had yet seen evil, true evil. Also this Augustine seems to be trying to justify his life, his bad acts. This impression of Augustine would last my entire life.

Off we went, having given our thanks to the Bishop, two horses, loaded now with even more books. We went again towards the East, and a bit North. It was another full day. We would go on small roads, some going through deep forests, with trees so dense one could not see ten yards into the growth. Dismas told me to stay close. There was a concern of thieves in the forests, and being a clergy or not, made no difference. So I became very aware all about me. By mid-day rain began. I had been used to Irish rain, but English rain, forest and all, was drenching. It rained for four hours straight until we came into a clearing, and one could see a small town ahead, nothing more than a set of shops with a church. As we approached I asked Dismas what town this was. He replied:

“Swindon, not much but we will stay here this night. We have no Bishop this time Brendan, so we must just make do. I will see if we can find an inn, and it will not be the best but we must get in from the weather.”

It was still raining but more lightly. We found what was called an Inn, a long stone house with thatched roof, with what appeared to be a horse stable on the side. We entered, and there was a

fire, even though it was August, but the rain cooled the air. Dismas got us a space, and alas it was in the barn. He smiled and told me:

“Brendan, as a Franciscan we are mendicants, and seek from the people since we have no things of our own. We received but our benefit is limited to straw and the company of our horses. For that Brendan I am happy since this will allow us to protect the volumes we are carrying. God provides in strange ways. We will guard our books carefully. Let us go to our resting area, tend our horses and then we can eat and rest. Are you well Brendan?”

I replied:

“Yes Prior, very well, and each day I am learning about life as never before. Must we hide the books as well?”

What I was learning was that the more you went into this society the more chances that you would meet those who would do you harm or take from you. So much I thought of the Commandments.

Dismas replied:

“Yes my young friend, in the horse stable under a pile of straw while we eat. One never knows what a thief will steal. The books are unreadable to them but they may find value in the covers. Alas we must beware of everyone. Another lesson for you.”

We did our tasks and then entered the Inn for our meal. Thus far I had eaten with religious, and thus far the food was quite good. This night I was to learn what the people ate. We sat down in the front room, with the fireplace simmering with embers and we were served a bowl of some green mushy soup, with what appeared to be chunks of fat from some animal, and pieces of potatoes. The green color was a pale green, the smell was a bit overpowering. We also got a loaf of bread which was like a stone, it must have been sitting about for quite a while. Then to drink was a tankard of what was called ale. I had never seen this before. It was a dark brown thick drink, warm but not hot, with some slight grey foam atop. I looked at the Prior and he must have sensed my apprehension. He said to me:

“Brendan, this is a soup of peas, well cooked, very well cooked, with some bacon, fat from a pig. The drink is ale, a form of fermented barley, and it is like a wine, though much heavier in taste. Try the soup with the bread, break off a piece, dip it in the soup, it will fill you up.”

I tried the soup. At that point I truly despised peas! Truly. But to appease God and Dismas, I managed to consume almost half of it. The ale was another story. It was a strong taste but after a few sips it became much easier to down. I slept quite well that night. Yet upon awakening I had to run to the privy, for the results of whatever was the combination I consumed managed to return itself to the Earth. That was the one few times I had ale. Henceforth I tried to avoid ale.

After about two more days we approached Oxford. We came from the south along what the locals called Grandpoint. The road appeared well travelled and the river Thames wandered back

and forth. There were several stone bridges, all seemed in good repair. As we approached Oxford I could see more and more people on the road coming and going. I was surprised as to how many people were here, I had expected a somewhat monastic type location but it appeared almost market like. One could see other Franciscans in their grey mufti and then there were Dominicans who had black cloth, and Augustinians, and a collection of non-religious as well. People were walking, talking, and there was a growing mass of humanity. We approached South Gate, the portal which went through the wall to the city. To the right was St Frideswide's road as we entered to the left was St Aldate's. Just before St Aldate's we turned to the left, heading west a short distance and then along the wall we found the Franciscan Friary, my home for the next few years.

Oxford appeared to be in the process of continual construction. I spent the next day wandering about, Dismas had sent me on my own to see the city. It had a dimension almost that of Dublin so I was not too overwhelmed. I went down to St Aldate's and then crossed over St Frideswide's and back over to Merton College, the place where I was to study. It was a three sided building with a large green, not as green as Ireland but bright and sunny. The buildings were about three stories high of stone. The yard was filled with people, religious and others, coming and going, I then walked up to High Street and through the main part of the city. What truly amazed me was the number of small merchants, I had never really seen this number, selling food, clothing, books. It was a larger scale Dublin and even more dense than Bristol. I wandered to the North Gate and then back to the Friary. There were Carmelites, Trinitarians, and friars of forms and types I had never seen.

But the thing that struck me the most was the tanners and candle makers. The tanners were processing their leather and the process exuded the worst of odors. It made one's eyes water. They dumped their noxious mess into the stream that flowed on the outskirts of the walls of the town, so that the water flowed a dark blackish mass and this mass was combined with the human waste that was being removed from the sewer flows as well. One could see that this flow was almost a bubbling mess and the vegetation along this stream was dead, at the height of summer. The same was true of the candle makers, rendering the fat from cows and pigs to make a tallow for candles. Unlike the beeswax candles used in churches, these were less expensive and used by those unable to afford the cleaner beeswax variety. I wondered what one drank and more so where one bathed. This corrosive water was penetrating every pore of one's being. Each new place I recounted as a mix of new smells. Stinks actually, all made from human commerce of sorts. Smoke filled the air at some sights of commerce and effused at others.

I spent time watching the tanners at the town's edge. They took large hides, from deer and cows, scraped off the fur on the outer side and the muscle and fat on the inner. These hides had been in large vats of some type of salt it appeared. There were also large vats that they were then placed in. I saw piles of what appeared to be oak bark which they threw into these second vats. From these second vats they took the hides, now bleached and almost clean, and laid the skins in large piles outside the walls. I wondered how secure these were but I could see that these even required more fine hand processing. But no matter where you were, the smell was overpowering.

I thought it so strange to have such a town with studies and tanning, a contrast, the thinking and the smells.

The town itself looked like a mass of moving costumed characters. The religious were each in their own special outfittings, more than a dozen different ones, the non-religious students also outfitted in clothes the likes of which I had never seen. The flow of people was interesting, each religious group, in their own garb, flowed in small clusters in and around each other. They did not interact. The grey, the black, the brown, the white, the mottled mix of bland color. Behind these scholars were the folk of the town. On the outside were the tanners and candle makers but in the center were shops upon shops. I had never seen so many.

Thus began my time at Oxford.

CHAPTER 2 (1308-1312) OXFORD BEGINS

I managed to settle in at Oxford, which at first was difficult. Life was very structured. Prayers at the assigned hours and Chapel twice a day. At dawn, we arose, went to Chapel for daily Mass. As one of the youngest, we were to stay in the back, and we had to kneel upon the roughhewn stone floors. That in my memory was the worst part of the stay. One wiggled their knees to attain a small notch where the top of the knee would find a safe place, where the discomfort, just short of real pain started, would be the least. I was starting to understand this life as a Franciscan, whatever that meant. There were three other boys my age who also had entered. They were all from England, and one, a boy named Geoffrey, was from some family where the parents had what they called Titles. Namely he was the third son of a Earl, a title of which I had at the time no knowledge. We spoke little, being more concerned to fit in rather than to socialize. Frankly even to this day I never recall having any social contact with these three. All would disappear over the next time span of a few years, not remaining either at Oxford or in the Franciscans as best I could say.

After Mass we had a breakfast, often limited to some fruit, a warm porridge and there was conversation, unlike what I had anticipated. This was not a silent place, in fact there was always talk of some issue or another. In my first few months, I had no idea what these issues were. They were often Theological complexities that went far above my limited understanding. The ideas discussed relied on the use of language, precise and often what I perceived as an arcane approach to ideas. There were terms in complex Latin and long and what appeared to be subtle differences. One thing I did note was the differences at times in Latin pronunciations.

In the first week I also assumed the garb of a Franciscan novice, a grey overgarment with a hood, called the habit, and about my waist the white rope with the three knots of three turns each signifying the wounds of Christ and the stigmata of St Francis. I felt somewhat now part of something, for I could walk about Oxford with an identity. In a sense I now had a belonging to a community. Yet I still had no tonsure and had made no vows. My clerical and academic future was still being determined. Somehow I also sensed that there was a clear ranking of people, even amongst the friars who were to be humble and seek a vow of temporal poverty.

Prior Dismas was still about and he met with me often along with Prior James of the Oxford Priory and Friar Robert, a friar who would be my Master or tutor. As was usually the case, we spoke Latin, and here it was always somewhat accented differently than what I had learned in Dublin. I began to more closely listen to the accents, since they could tell you a great deal. At times Dismas and James would switch to French, which I was slowly trying to learn. This was my first task, learning French. I would go around asking what this and that was in French. I learned to count, to ask simple questions, to get scraps of vellum, and some ink, and begin to copy words in French and their Latin equivalents, for there was no such record readily available. I would latter find that such cross references were abundant in the libraries. Yet people would argue at length the subtle differences in meanings.

More disturbing to me was trying to communicate with the locals who spoke neither French nor Latin. These were the people of England; the leather tanners, the millers, the blacksmiths. Yet,

these too I had tried to begin some form of communication. Their English language was distant from either Latin or French, and in fact their accents were often mind numbing. Whereas Latin and French were smooth and soothing to the ear, this English was sharp and at times they sounded like a cat being pulled by the tail. Worse yet, was the fact that again and again I saw that the language could change from one town to another, not a great deal but often in key words or phrases. This place soon became a Tower of Babel, with languages being so diverse. Of all my challenges I realized that I must master several at the same time. Latin was my only common ground, but it was not enough.

To add to this complexity Dismas on my third week introduced me to a visitor from the south of Spain, a Muslim named Mohammud Ibn ab Issn. He was dark skinned and I gather not an Arab but a North African, and he lived in Spain, just where I had not yet found out. He and Dismas spoke in Arabic, and this was another tongue even more confusing. But Dismas had become fluent on his Crusade and afterwards and the contacts he had made allowed him to be quite proficient. He was working with Issn on the translation of texts on Medicine, Arabic texts, which described both Arab contributions as well as Greek and Asian.

Each morning for several weeks Dismas and Issn and I spent three to four hours going over texts. I started to learn the script, a cursive script which is closely tied to the pronunciation. Arabic is a flowing text, from right to left, like Hebrew, yet a script that lends itself to the flow of the inks across that page. Letter by letter, I wrote then down as Issn described them, and then word by word I began to obtain the basics. Learning a tongue as this was easier with one who speaks it and his patience was essential. At first the letters took a week, then the words, not as simple as Latin, but one learns the first hundred, then context, then after four weeks, I could read some simple text. Dismas was to go back to Bristol but he said he would return in about two months, and he asked Issn that I spend time each day as we translated the texts. There were words I had no understanding of, and in some manner Dismas set me the task of being the source of Latin for Issn and he the source of Arabic for me. Again there we started to write these down. Latin to Arabic, and then Arabic to Latin. Long lists, page after page. Sometimes we would argue over the meaning which sent us to one of the Friars who was a scholar and ask what he thought. That often was a mistake, for we just sought a simple answer and what we got was a long erudite lecture, following which we were both more confused. The one thing I was learning was that scholars like to show you how much they think they know no matter how little you are interested. I began to fear what my studies would do to me.

Before he left to return to Bristol, Dismas sat down with me and we spoke at length. He said:

“Brendan, this is much of a challenge for you. James will help you and Robert will be your guide at the academics. Yet Issn will be a challenge as you learn both Arabic and a new culture. But I leave you one important piece of advice. Again, keep your heritage to yourself. As far as people are concerned you are just Irish, a Christian, and from Dublin. Tell no one of your family other than the simplest details.”

I replied:

“Is that because of my mother’s birth faith?”

He replied:

“Partly, but only a small part. Always tell the truth but only the amount least necessary. Here at Oxford you will be exposed to a wide variety of people with many agenda, and they may from time to time seek to use you as part of that agenda. Even in our own order we are facing struggles of meaning, and I fear that the Pope himself may soon intervene. Also, and this is most serious, make no comments, observations, or inquiries about the new King. Edward II is a complex King and even though we have Church protection, life can become quite complex if we even venture near that path. You will be on your own going forward. I believe you can do quite well, learn your Arabic, your French, and yes as you are also trying the local English tongue. I will be back in two months, so good luck and I will pray for you.”

He then left and I was alone wondering just what these warnings were all about. But it is better to be warned and be careful than to be naive and in danger.

My days were now very structured. After Mass and breakfast, I spent three hours with Issn, then I walked to see Friar James to begin my lessons. For that I had to learn Latin as required for the future studies, more structured than what I had learned before. It required readings of both classic authors such as Cicero, who was elegant but a bit stilted in style, to some writings of Augustine. I had already completed Augustine and his Confessions but this was reading on Original Sin. I was learning the style of writing, structure, and also of thought. I found Augustine then and even now a bit pretentious and self-serving on his interpretations of Scripture. I did ask James once about Augustine’s lack of Greek. His response was:

“Brendan, Augustine could rely on the word of God in Latin from the Fathers. Greek, Aramaic, Latin, they all speak to a single truth.”

Following the advice of Dismas I kept still, since I was now learning that no matter how close one tries to make it the words in one language convey different ideas to people, and that may lead to differing actions. At this point I had many ideas swirling in my head, many tongues, but being young I managed to extract the kernels necessary to make one step after another.

My days became more and more involved in both languages and new ideas. After about a month of working with Issn I asked him why he wanted me to help him. His response was interesting. He replied:

“Young Brendan, Prior Dismas thinks highly of you, and he does not think that way of very many. He was a warrior, and now a priest. We Muslims admire him, for he has demonstrated strength, love of God, and most importantly he seeks to understand us, we who at one time were his enemy. You see young Brendan, one learns of a people by learning their tongue. You, Dismas sees, is one who is comfortable with that task, in fact you seem to enjoy it. I also see that you have learned much of our language. I see what Dismas sees, but alas I suspect he sees even more. So tell me young Brendan, what is your family like, how did you come to learn languages so easily?”

I immediately thought of Dismas and his warning. “Tell the truth, but tell as little as possible” and did so even with Issn, who I had learned to be friendly with. I said to him:

“My family were in shipping, we had vessels which we brought back and forth to these lands and also onto the open seas, even down to Spain. So we must become learners of tongues as well as of customs.”

He continued his interrogation:

“You also know some Greek, what other tongues have you heard and learned?”

Here I was to very cautious. Here I knew that I must answer with the truth, but with as small amount of the truth that I could deliver. I said:

“I have Latin, our own Irish tongue, some Greek, and Dismas has me learning some French, you some Arabic. And of course that tongue of the natives, the English. I find that the most challenging. They all use words in strange ways and even more so they speak with sounds that hurt my ears!”

He burst out laughing. He said:

“Yes, they sound like cats being pulled by their tails! The speak in a crying shout! Worse, they speak a different dialect from town to town.”

I replied:

“Yes, indeed. Irish is that way also. But Latin, and I suspect Arabic, is more stable, because we have our Holy Book in Latin, you your book in Arabic, and in the East, they have the Holy Book in Greek. Thus people learn from the Book, they read and pray from the same Book, and thus speak the same.”

Issn replied:

“So true and so brilliant young man, I now can see what Dismas sees. Perhaps as your Arabic improves I shall let you see our Holy Book, in secret I suspect.”

I continued:

“At time it all so seems like a mass of strange tongues, then there are times that they blend, I try to find in my mind some similarities. But I am so young Issn, and have so much to do. But what I find most of interest is what we call the accents. My Latin is not the same as that of Dismas, and yours is also different. I can hear the same words, but they are different. What difference is there? I hear your words as short and crisp, I hear Dismas as long and flowing, mine I guess is in between. The same words, but very different sounds, but somehow we can understand them.”

Issn replied:

“Very astute, I have noticed the same myself. In Spain where I grew up as a young man, we learned Latin from some of the merchants. Then we also learned the local tongue, like French but different. Then we have our Arabic language, which by writing and prayer we make more universal.”

Then Friar Richard came in with a large book, heavy and bound in ornate leather. He looked at the two of us and said:

“I have just received this manuscript. You two may find this of some use. It is a copy of Balbi’s Catholicon. We just received this from Paris. It has glosses from the friars there as well as from those in Lyon. Also young Brendan, there are glosses in French that may help you as well.”

Issn thanked Richard and we carried the Catholicon over to a large table and opened it up. It was bound between two heavy leather covered wood plates and the pages were finely made vellum. The letters were of a form that I had seen before but I knew it would take time to identify them, but understanding the Latin would greatly assist. My mother forced me as a young man to read and write in what she called the Greek manner, namely letters that were carved into stone and thus had few strokes and great simplicity. An “A” had but three lines, and an “E” but four. An “O” a simple circle, often four lines, and so forth. The writing in these manuscripts had become a totality unto themselves.

Issn turned and spoke to me:

“Brendan, it will be your task to process the Latin, you understand it better than I and you can use this to determine the correct words. I can go through the text and discuss it with you in Latin, then when we have some description needing an explanation you will use Balbi to choose the best of the phrases.”

I looked at some of the pages, there were thousands of Latin words, generally arranged in the order of the Latin alphabet. I scanned a few pages. I saw tunica, which he explains is an under garment, and then I saw turbellae, or a disturbance. That is when I saw that turbellae was tur and bellae or one could see the word war, bellum, but with a female ending. I remarked this to Issn and he burst out in one of the loudest laughs I have ever heard. He said:

“Young Brendan, you are much wiser than your years, the twist of the word, not bellae as beautiful, but bellum, but not for a man but bellae as a war and as for a woman, a disturbance!”

He again laughed. Thus I started to see not just the words but the connections, turbellae was a bit of a war, not a full war mind you, just a small disturbance. From this point on I not only want to see the word and its meaning but from whence it came.

I told Issn this and he remarked:

“A wonderful observation young Brendan, but as you learn more Arabic you will see that we have words ordered along those lines much better than your Latin. Take book, and that as the core word we have all of its derivatives including library, book seller.”

Words were starting to take on a life of their own. Latin, Greek, French, Arabic, even my old Hebrew, which I kept secret. The more I worked on words the more I started to see patterns. The more patterns the more questions, and clarity became easier.

Along the way we were translating a section of Galen and certain Arabic commentary. I had to find the proper Latin for lifeless or bloodless, and it was *exsanguis*. Next to the entry was written in a commentary on the French term which meant the same. It was *senz sanc*. I was interested in the connection. First I saw that *sanguis* was blood, that I had known. So in Latin it is without or out of blood. Simple I thought. Then this French, *sanc* meant blood, but it was spelled differently. Why I wondered? Issn came over and said:

“It’s the way they talk, that "sanc" is sounded out the same as we would sang, the French speak through their noses, like the English sound like feverish cats!”

I laughed and turned to Issn and remarked:

“And what do we Irish sound like?”

He smiled and just shook his head. But now I had another key, how it sounds is as important as how it is spelled. So "sang" was blood, and what of "sen"? The pronunciation did not help, it must mean without, or out of, or the like. So here I had a word a part of which if sounded correctly meant almost the same as the Latin and another word that I had yet to comprehend, it was a new word pair.

At first I was just assisting Issn on the translations, from Arabic to the right words in Latin. Each day I learned more Latin, more Arabic, and surprisingly more French as I read through Balbi and the writings placed by other friars over the years, from Paris and now at Oxford. Nameless contributors, and Balbi also included a grammar section describing how Latin is structured. That I had never seen before, the structuring of the language, the use of words to convey ideas. I wondered if every language had the same way to convey ideas. At my young age all of this came as a flow of questions, each of great importance and each without an answer.

I was learning letter in Arabic, slowly, since it was more complicated than my Latin. The shape of the letter depended on where it was placed. My first word was book. Or *ktb*, three consonants, somewhat thrown together. Issn pronounced it again and again, until I could hear the trill in his voice, the insertion of the vowels, not in the word but in the speech. He said to me to look at the three letters, k and t and b and in Arabic:

ك ت ب

Then he said that when you put them together, they must flow, flow like the sands of the desert, not the stone of the mountain, flow like a song, not a command. The he wrote:

كتب

I saw the change in the k, the flow of the t and the smooth ending of the b. Now I was starting to understand. Each day was a new set of words, 100 Arabic, 50 French, and at least 50 new Latin words. Issn often wondered how I could feel so comfortable with Arabic, right to left and not left to right. I dare not tell him, for Dismas had made such a stern warning, so I let him just think me smart. I wondered then if I were sinning by omission, but later knew Dismas had given me wise advice.

After a month, I was becoming somewhat productive and I could start to see that not only did I understand the words, and I could actually translate some from Arabic to Latin. But I was starting to be interested in the ideas of Medicine, not just the translations. For me Medicine was previously just for old people when they die and for rich people who just wanted to linger longer in their wealth. As one who would be taking a vow of poverty, the latter case made no sense and the former I was much too young for. But somehow I had begun to develop a strong interest in these works. Galen was fascinating. I had but a small collection of his work, which at the time I was told was monumental. Here was a man who somehow had managed to understand the total scope of human disease and the means and methods to manage them.

As I translated the Arabic to Latin along with Issn I soon started to see a preponderance of Greek, words in Arabic mimicking Greek terms. Of Issn I asked:

“Does Arabic have many Greek words?”

He asked me in return:

“Why do you ask?”

I replied:

“As I now can understand words and spellings I see that many of the Arabic words seem to be Greek, especially those relating to specific medical terms. Did these documents of Galen first come from the Greek to Arabic?”

Issn replied:

“Yes they did, many years past we obtained Greek texts and then we translated them to Arabic, and also made notations to make them more clear and add what we had further understood beyond Galen. Can you see that in your readings?”

I answered:

“Yes, it is easy at times.”

He then asked somewhat confused:

“How well do you understand Greek?”

I answered now knowing that perhaps I was falling into a trap:

“I learned from my grandfather in Dublin, as I learned Latin, I also learned to speak some although I do not know if I say the words correctly.”

Issn then replied:

“Young Brendan, you continue to amaze me, no wonder Dismas left you off here!”

Hopefully I had answered his concerns. We continued day by day. I could see the other new postulants like myself as they struggled to learn Latin while I sat with this Muslim day by day working on documents that were I was too soon find well beyond their abilities. I was also interested in the daily prayers of Issn, as we prayed so did he, but his were alone and always facing to what he called Mecca. We prayed in the chapel, facing the altar, and the altar I guess had not special direction. We prayed as a group, he alone, but I guess being the only Muslim in Oxford being alone was his only alternative.

Also I was interested in his feelings towards my religion as well as what were in his. I also wondered how we Christians fought the Muslims, I guess the Arabs, for the Holy Land while Issn had immunity here in Oxford. His dress had become that of a local peasant, not in any way fancy like some of the people coming from London, but it had a plainness that exceeded even the most plain. In his trying to blend in I guess he had gone just a bit too far.

His eating also was interesting. He ate no pork and drank no ale or wine. We often had pork meals and wine was common, I think because the water was so foul from the remnants of the tanners. But Issn had his own supply of water which he heated and mixed with some local herbs. His understanding of the plants were akin to that of some of the old Druid followers I had heard of back in Ireland. This was another area that struck my interest.

I was being flooded with new facts and ideas each day. An overflow of them in fact. After about six weeks of working together, and after practicing Arabic speech, I could not actually ask a question and make a statement, I dared to ask Issn about his faith. I said:

“Issn, excuse me if I am asking too bold a question, but what is your faith, how does it differ from ours?”

He smiled, sat down before me and began almost to preach:

“Young Brendan, my God is your God, Allah, praise be to him. Allah presented himself to Muhammad, our Prophet, and to him he gave wisdom, the words of Allah. It is written in our holy book, the Koran, which I hold dear to me and from which I pray praise to Allah each day,

five times. For all good comes from Allah and my life must conform to his wishes. We hold the other people of the Book, such as you Christians and the Jews as well, as brothers of the Book.”

I then boldly asked:

“Then do you consider Jesus your God also?”

He smiled and replied almost in a fatherly manner:

“Only here in this site amongst the Franciscans can I say this, because your founder the good Holy Francis did himself go to Alexandria to understand us, we look to Jesus as a Prophet, like Abraham, like Muhammad. Holy men each, men of Allah, but there is one God, and it is Allah. We did not get into the conflict that has all too often gotten your faith into trouble, that of three persons, one God, and all of that.”

I had understood some of these issues but at such a young age I had yet to deal with the deep philosophical issues he was raising. We spoke for a long while, and as he explained his faith he seems more at ease as the words flowed out. I began to see how complex theology would be. I liked medicine, it was here and now, I found theology a complexity that I wanted to avoid.

After two months having been back at Bristol, Dismas returned to Oxford. I recall the day of his return, winter was slowly coming on and unlike Dublin where it just rained more here one saw the sight of frost and even some light snow. I had never seen snow before, and this was an experience, I went out and felt the small icy snow crystals slipping between my bare feet, at first exciting yet soon quite uncomfortable. That is when I started to question the idea of sandals, and that if Holy Francis found them acceptable in Italy it must really have been much warmer there.

When Dismas and Issn and I met again he laid before us a new set of documents. He said:

“These are the writing of Ibn Maymun, I have gotten them from a ship that docked at Bristol, they have come from Spain, Issn have you seen these before?”

Issn took the documents gently and laid them out. The script was Arabic but with the flow one sees in Spain. He replied:

“Yes friend Dismas, I have seen one years ago, as a young man, and as I recall Ibn Maymun was a famous Jewish writer of both scientific as well and religious works. There are many such Jews in Spain.”

Then Dismas laid out the next document, also from Ibn Maymun. I was shocked, it was in Hebrew, at least the letters were simple Hebrew. I did not know what to say and thus kept my silence. But Issn sparked up:

“Ah, the Talkhis, what we call an Abridgement, of Galen. This too is Maymun, I can tell, he did many using Hebrew letters, but unfortunately I cannot read them.”

Dismas smiled and said:

“I know some who can assist Issn, and will get them to you. But it is also of Galen and by Maymun, discussing healing. Do you wonder why he wrote this in Hebrew letters, do not all read Arabic in your lands in Spain?”

Issn replied:

“Yes but the Jews write for themselves as well. It is not that it is some secret code, but that they enjoy their own tongue, it is used both for knowledge and prayer. As we do with Arabic.”

I sat without muttering a word. Then Dismas indicated that perhaps he and I could take a walk and discuss how my studies have been proceeding.

Issn stayed behind to examine the new documents. The pile was extensive and just where and how Dismas got them was always a surprise. As we walked he started by saying:

“You did well young Brendan, you kept silent even though you knew what the writings said. I am impressed. All too often those with some wisdom are all too anxious to show it off, and it is in that process that they all too often equally get themselves in trouble. Keeping one’s wisdom to one’s self is not only a virtue but it will be a necessity, especially in the world of politics. You will see. Now to where you have progressed. I gather you have adopted well to Arabic and that you and Issn have accomplished much in converting the Galen to Latin for our use. I also gather from my brothers that you work quite hard, quite hard, and you are attentive to your prayers, but you speak little to anyone other than Issn. That you must change, the other brothers here will wonder what you are doing, so feel free to tell them of what you do, at least a degree, be not too expressive of your work, be humble, but explain, it is important.”

We discussed many other matters. He asked how my other work was going and he gave me a set of letters from my mother. For that I was so grateful. Yet by working so hard every day I had almost forgotten them. That startled me when I realized what was happening. I was living in the present, my past, what little there was had become the past. I saw no future because the present was so much a part of what I did each day.

He then asked:

“Brendan, are you willing to try to translate the Maymun text? It would be important.”

I replied:

“I can try, you see I understand the Hebrew letters and when I looked at it the writing appeared to be Hebrew letters with Arabic words. However there was a sentence that stood out, when the Galen translations in Arabic use Allah, this one used the Hebrew Yahweh. That was just one example of what I saw. But Prior, when and where can I do this privately? I do not have access.”

He replied,

“I have spoken with Prior Richard and he has agreed to allow you to “study” with him, and you will have the privacy of his office. Moreover he has copies of the Greek and Hebrew Grammars prepared by Roger Bacon, one of our late members. Bacon did a splendid job on preparing these and I would suggest you feel free to annotate them as needed. From there you can place the translation onto a vellum prepared. I understand you will use your Irish calligraphy, somewhat simple yet identifiable. We shall keep the translation to ourselves until we are satisfied it can be used. Prior Richard will be your guide. You can trust him well in this effort.”

I was amazed that here I was in the midst of some secret mission. Just what was in that translation and why was it to be kept so secret even from Issn, who had seen it already.

Back with Issn we three also examined the other manuscripts that Dismas brought with him. Issn laid before us one of which he was especially interested. He stated:

“Dismas, here is a work of Ibn al-Nafis, who writes on the work of Ibn Sina and the Canon of Medicine. It looks as if it is a complete manuscript. Ibn Sina understood Galen well but Ibn al-Nafis I am told disagreed with Galen especially on the flow of blood, from the heart to the lungs. Ibn al-Nafis was the one who held, unlike Galen, that the blood flows from the heart to the lungs and back to the heart. Galen conjectured that the two sides of the heart sent blood back and forth, but Ibn al-Nafis disagreed, this has led to extensive discussion. I am told that there are those who have cut open dead bodies and tried to find these small passages but to no avail, thus questioning Galen.”

This was my first time hearing of such controversy. Galen was accepted almost equally as were the four writers of the Gospel. But questioning such an authority starting my thinking, namely perhaps all of these authorities could be wrong. I knew that I must keep this to myself since such a discussion on religion could be fatal.

At this point, we had before us volumes of Arabic text, and secretly my one Hebrew text. I knew that my religious training would be far from the usual.

As the months went by I began to gain substantially in Arabic and Greek, my Latin also improved as I had to convert these others into acceptable academic Latin. While my peers struggled with their Latin, doing so by rote memorization, I was accomplishing much more by being involved in actually doing the translations. I could question why such a word was appropriate, and do so as an equal, whereas my peers had to subject themselves to authority. With Prior Richard I managed to work through the Hebrew document, using an Old Testament in Hebrew and a Latin one, side by side, as a check on spelling and at times on words. My quarters in the Prior’s room became a pile of manuscripts, almost my own scriptorium.

After two years I had become somewhat proficient. My French was still a bit crude, but I could survive. My English was poor, some several hundreds of words, enough to get directions and thank an individual for their donations.

Education was by doing, a tactic not used amongst the other students. Prior Richard had me learn Grammar by translating. That was an amazing task, since grammar reflects culture. Latin grammar is not English grammar is not Greek grammar and none are Arabic or Hebrew. I "learned" Hebrew through studies with one of the Friars at Merton. There was in the library a Hebrew to Latin dictionary, and there were some grammar texts. I took Dismas' advice and pretended I knew nothing of Hebrew and yet in three months I was readily translating. My instructor took pride in his technique. Little did he know but I was actually teaching him; by my carefully worded questions. Whenever he said, "That is a good question." during a Hebrew lesson, I knew he did not know and that when I posed the question he had just learned something. The game worked.

CHAPTER 3 (1308-1312) ARTS DEGREE

In the Fall of 1308, I was now thirteen and as such formally began my studies for my Bachelor of Arts. I was told it would take four to five years. I would be assigned a Master under whom my studies would be guided. Unlike my peers, who all had spent the past two years learning Latin, I had spent my time translating from Arabic to Latin and in a strange way learning Latin better than my Masters. Prior Robert sought out a lay Master, one Michael of Canterbury, a Master who had been at Oxford for over twenty years. He was quite my elder and he was quite respected for his knowledge of Greek and Hebrew and was proficient in Aristotle as well as many of the Church Fathers. He was also friends with Dismas and this linkage would be beneficial as time went by.

I would study under him along with five others, all non-religious. I stood out for a variety of reasons. I was tall, I had grown several inches in the last year. I was a religious by dress, my Franciscan habit. I was Irish, it was obvious with my accent. And finally, unlike my peers, I was not of royal lineage in any manner, I was thus a true commoner. This was my first full introduction to the English and their view of Class, namely not who you are as an individual, but you as a descendent of some clan. In Ireland clan association can be beneficial or deadly. There has always been clan warfare. But position in society at large was not by clan. In England class position made a person who or what they were and I gather what they could become.

Yet, thanks to Dismas, Michael deferred to me in certain areas. My studies were typically one on one with Michael but once a week we would have a session with all of Michael's students. In that session, I clearly stood out, obviously because of my habit, my class, but equally well my style. We would meet in Michael's rooms at Oxford's Merton College, which was a short walk from the Convent and just behind the beautiful gardens. Merton was laid out at the time in a three sided green and Michael's rooms were at the end of one of these arms on the second floor overlooking the gardens. In the Fall the sun was brilliant and the colors almost overpowering. I recall being both excited and somewhat terrified being out of the Convent, and now being with others, all of whom were non-religious.

I still spent mornings with Issn on the translations. I had become proficient in Arabic and French and Dismas was pleased each time he returned. As usual his return included a collection of new manuscripts, almost always medical. I also was becoming somewhat knowledgeable of the Medical world, at least by reading. I had read a great deal of Galen by this point and many of the Muslim commentaries and individual works. At this stage I would hardly call myself an expert, perhaps just dangerous enough to espouse on things which I had read but did not understand. Medicine, as I would learn, is grasped at the bedside of the sick, not in the pages of books. Yet both the ill and the knowing must be balanced.

GRAMMAR

My first classes, if such be the name, were in Grammar. For me this was strange since I had managed to grasp several languages, becoming facile in moving from Arabic to Latin, making talk in French, and expanding my Greek and even Hebrew. My treatment of them was like the

task of assembling a puzzle. I knew the pieces and I assembled them until I was comfortable with the results. I had never considered the underlying structure, the meanings of how I assembled the words. For me. Grammar was eye opening. Michael used Aristotle to present Grammar. Yet it was Aristotle translated into Latin, and from what before that I did not know, whether it was from the Greek or via Arabic. I knew well the risks of translations, and if from Greek to Arabic to Latin then one was subject to vast reinterpretations. Reinterpretations occurred not only between languages but in a single language over time. Thus as I had seen a Greek text from say 100 BC when translated to Greek of 1000 AD, and then to Arabic of 1000 AD to Arabic 1300 AD and then to Latin of now, well one wondered is the original meaning even existed!

For example, Michael knew Greek but no Arabic. Michael knew what was acceptable Grammar, what the Academics had come to see as the approved course of instruction. Yet Michael did not question, he explained. I was thus there to accept his explanations. Not to question his core presentations. That often seemed to be the nature of instruction with the Academics. One did not question, one just absorbed.

My Arts education started with the Trivium. Grammar is but one part of the Trivium. The other two would wait until later in my education, but not much later. These others were Logic and then Rhetoric. Grammar was to teach us what words meant, how a sentence was structured. Logic was to show us how to combine the facts in sentences to reach conclusions. Finally, Rhetoric was to show us how to use Logic to present our arguments to others. At the completion of this Trivium we were then considered educated. Educated at a basic level.

Grammar I found interesting. Unlike all the other students had spent the prior two years studying Latin grammar. Thus they had a framework unlike mine, they had one language, and a language they used at Oxford, to communicate. They had been trained in Latin translations, including Cicero and Terence, oration and comedy. In fact, they knew Terence so well they could make jokes of his plays. I had never read Terence, and had at best scanned Cicero. Thus there were many common points of reference that we did not share. My Latin was clerical, theirs academic. My accent was more fluid, spreading my vowels softly in a rapid manner, their accentuating the vowels, and I also noted that I had adopted an almost Arabic accentuation of syllables.

The other students had rooms which they were assigned in the third floor of Merton, and there were two per room. Meals were served in a Commons, with the Masters at the head table and the students by descending rank in the room. Meals were served sitting. A brief prayer was said, not to the extent that we prayed. I rarely ate there since I could easily return to the Convent where I felt most comfortable. That is until one day Prior Robert called me aside and said:

“Brendan, you are very much part of this Convent but as Franciscans we have a duty to go out into the world. We are not cloistered. You should feel comfortable at the Commons meals at Merton. You should be there and your presence should spread the word of God. That is what Francis wanted, unlike the monastic orders we Franciscans should be amongst people. Take your time, your home is here, but become comfortable with the people, you will always be living amongst them and I am certain administering to their spiritual needs.”

From that point on I took on the presence of a Merton College student, albeit in my habit. I ate at Commons, prayed at the Chapel, and spent time with my fellows discussing our efforts. I was becoming comfortable with being with them and them with me.

Grammar, the study of words, and Aristotle's Categories. This would be the first time I had rigorously attempted to understand language. I entered the study a bit apprehensive. I knew Greek, I knew Arabic, and I knew Latin. I also knew how difficult it could be to translate from one to the other, the nuances of phrases. For me it had been somewhat easy since Issn and I focused on medicine. We were not trying to translate ideas as much as we were trying to translate facts. I did know that in the Muslim translations there were strong changes when it came to dealing with Greek gods or in having causes other than at God's hand interpreted. The Arabic translation was indeed a reflection of their Muslim faith within the bounds of explaining medicine. Yet for the most part a heart is a heart and a tumor a tumor. They somehow do not translate differently from one language to another. Yet when speaking of broad meanings and worse, philosophical terms, we would expect the language and the culture to have a strong effect. I was prepared for that.

I recall my first introduction to Aristotle. The issue was essence. What was essence. Now as both a young man with limited views of the world yet having spent the last two years with adults delving into the depths of medical lore, I knew a heart, I knew blood, I knew muscles. I further understood disease, that is what the disease was, I knew how to treat the disease if at all. I was no physician but I had been exposed to a multiplicity of things, facts, observations. Now I was asked to lift that up and examine the essence. I recall thinking; what is the essence of a foot? What is the essence of leprosy? Does everything have an essence?

Somehow my fellow classmates were not being bothered by these questions. They were just recording the facts to be recited back. The second difficult discussion was on causes. For Aristotle there were four types of causes. The first was the material cause. Thus if I had say a statue then the material cause was that which it was made, say marble. The second cause was the formal cause, that which it appeared to be, in this case the Virgin Mary. The third cause the efficient cause, or that which effected the marble to assume the shape of the Virgin and specifically the sculptor. Finally, there is the final cause, the reason for which the statue of the Virgin was made by the sculptor was to honor the Virgin. Somehow I saw this as a long winded way to explain things. Why, I kept asking, are we calling this a cause. The marble was not a cause, it was but a means, a medium, that was transformed. Causes, I argued, are agents that make something happen. The marble is not an agent, it is just something that was available. One could have used bronze, wood, or something else. Perhaps the sculptor is an agent, but the desire to make a statue of the Virgin is not an agent, it is an intention.

Now, here I was having this argument with my Master. Needless to say he was on the one hand annoyed and on the other hand amused. His response to me was:

“Brendan, you are here to learn Aristotle, not to critique Aristotle. When you become a Master of Arts, a valid Master, then perhaps you can become a critic, you can write your own views of the Philosopher. But I strongly advise you, learn what Aristotle says, for the others that may argue with at some later date will be using that tool. If you come to the debate with the wrong tool, to a

battle with the wrong weapons, you have no chance to survive. Whether you like what Aristotle says is correct or not, you must understand his style, his technique. There are Franciscans who differ. But they differ knowing what Aristotle says and means. They have a basis for differing. You have the approach of youth. You just think your opinion is better. I have seen this before. It will not benefit you. ”

That fact struck me as a significant truth. If one seeks to win a battle of the minds, one must be skilled in the ways of the current thought before one can attempt to develop a new thought. Thus learning Aristotle is essential, even though I may find him to be less than reasonable. In addition, I saw that as a youth, even if my ideas were of merit, my standing was not. I must carefully walk through the path others have followed, understand well the way and reasons and then when accepted as a peer, then and only then can I opine my view.

I responded having not only accepted his admonition but fully understanding its value:

"Master, I fully understand. For that I am most grateful. Let us continue, and permit me from time to time to engage an alternative so that I may understand the Philosopher."

We then proceeded to discuss the Categories. Having learned on the issue of essence and especially cause, I kept my critique silent. For Aristotle had ten categories, and these were to be interpreted in statements. Thus one could say that:

John is a man

Or

Johannus homum est

Ιοαννης αντροπος ενα

Man then describes John. That was say in contrast to:

John is a cat

Well we clearly know that this John is a man and that John, may actually be the name of a cat, a dog, or whatever else we ascribe the name John. John is just a name, we can ascribe it to anything. But man, we know what that is, it is a class of creatures like us. But what if I say:

John is smart.

Do I also inherently mean without saying it that John is a man? Because only humans, namely man, can be smart. Or is there a smart cat?

After a month of this my head was spinning although my mouth was shut. The other students were just taking the statements in as fact. We did not discuss anything because discussion could

reveal lack of knowledge or worse that we had different thoughts. We were being indoctrinated, as if we were learning the core elements of faith.

Thus did we go with the Categories. We followed Aristotle in detail, element by element. The reason was that in understanding the categories, we would understand the sentence and its meaning, thus the essence of Grammar. Yet to reach to the level of Logic, what would be following, we had to understand the structure that Aristotle placed upon Grammar, the simple statements we make as matters of fact. The categories classify our words into our knowledge of being. Thus:

1. Substance, the prime category, is that which exists in itself. I found that a bit circular, but a sword is made of steel, and steel is a substance. The sword is what the substance is transformed into.
2. Quantity, is the determination of the matter in substances, giving them a distinction such as one sword or two swords.
3. Quality is the nature of the substance. Thus we could have a red apple or a green apple. We could have a long sword or a short sword.
4. Relation is a reference of a substance or its accident in relation to another. The swords are near one another.
5. Action is the capability of the substance to cause an effect, thus one would look at its sharpness. But here I started to fade. Could this not also be a quality, or even a relation, namely sharp and sharper. I was careful not to go back to the argument, after all Aristotle was The Philosopher and I was but some Irish friar. It was less a question of what Aristotle meant than the issue that he may very well be wrong. For where did these categories all come from? I read through his works, I found no justification, no basis.
6. Passion, is a complex category. It is what happens when a substance is acted upon by some agent. It is how the substance responds to an action, so when someone tells a joke, I laugh.
7. When is a measure of the temporal duration or location of a substance. We pray at sunrise.
8. Where is the position of a substance in relationship to bodies surrounding the substance. For example, the book is on the table.
9. Posture is the relative position. Such as leaning on the table.
10. Habilitment is a clothing, ornament, or the like that a human uses to enhance themselves.

Each day we would discuss one of these categories. We would examine the writings where authors used them and the distinction they made in presenting ideas. How the ideas could be examined by reducing them to categories, and how the ideas may be wrong or in error because of how the language was used. I started to see how words could often get the writer into trouble. Not because they wanted to do so, but because the rules we were to use were not applied properly.

It was at this point that I slowly began to see the study that the theologians were going through. The non-religious studied philosophy, a few medicine, a few even law. But for the religious it was theology. And understanding the proper use of the tools of Aristotle and the others was essential. For not only would one have trouble if one misinterpreted the Scripture or worse

suggested something askance of the scripture but severe penalties lay afoot for those who presented the proper ideas with the wrong words. Thus the study at this stage was delivering the proper tools to do battle with the mind. Somehow I wondered how the poor Apostles who very likely could not even read, not less write, manage what they did.

Master Michael had us read Aristotle and in our one on one meetings discuss it back with him so that we demonstrated our understanding. When we met as a group in our weekly meeting we went over a reading, each of us sequentially reading and commenting. Master Michael used these sessions to examine us as a group. Looking back I did not realize then how well I was doing in the languages. Grammar for me had now extended over four or five languages. Aristotle was a source to memorize when necessary but real languages and especially through translations one obtained better insight to the way human think and also act.

We also spent time on general grammar, which I was told was the relationship of ideas to reality. General grammar was the window to logic, or so we were told by Master Michael. We learned types such as substantives, attributives, definitive and connectives. These concepts extended the basic grammar which was often more specific to a language, these concepts were to be generalized. Here I wondered if we were still speaking to ourselves. Were these concepts Greek and Latin, yet I could use my Arabic to start to see them there as well. I wondered if what we did in grammar was merely categorize things, give them name. Were we to become able to gain new knowledge from this techniques, or just put the past in its place, as defined by some previous thinker. I started to wonder just who this Aristotle was and why we listened to him some two thousand years later. Why were there no long line of Aristotle's, why just him?

We studied verbs and introduced tense, the very nature of verbs being the reference to a specific time. Tense and thus time is an accidental, it may not have to be present. The statement, fire burns, is an example of a statement without time, for fire burns all the time. It is if you will an accident of fire, fire and burn are connected. We discussed Aristotle in the Organon where he states that a verb carries with it the notion of change. Yet as we had just seen this is not the case unless of course we do not allow the statement to have a verb. Namely if we say "always burns" is an accident and not a verb. Here we began the verbal altercations to justify what may have been a mistake. Yet one did not question Aristotle, especially at such a young age.

We also discussed moods. I had begun to understand this across several languages. Indicative, potential, interrogative, imperative, subjunctive, and a list of subtle changes. It is a way to define how we are asserting something via a verb. I also had seen it as a cultural difference. French had much more subjunctive than English, much more conditional. It was a style of speech, a cultural way of communicating. I could see my English classmates, raised often in higher class than the religious, speaking in a manner which ordered. Did they mean that expressly, for they spoke that way between themselves.

For example the simple difference between French and English. The French would say:

"I would like..."

whereas the English say:

"I want..."

The first is conditional, it allows rejection, the second definite, demanding a response. I wondered is the language reflects the culture or the culture is reflected in the language. Not one of my Masters or fellows even understood what I was asking. Ibn did however.

Grammar was becoming a way to see cultures. How they spoke with one another, and it was a window that opened for me but alas for none of my other classmates. I was translating, I was moving words from one language to another, and now I questioned whether I had to incorporate cultural changes.

We completed our Grammar studies on classification of terms. Here is where I started to have problems. We were told that an empirical term was a specific example. Then we were told that a general term was a universal and it represented the essence of the genus, those collections which was identify by the word of the universal. Let me explain. If I draw a square, then this embodiment is a specific example of the universal square. I said; no, this is a specific square. You define a square as any object having four equal and parallel sides. It is the attributes of equal and parallel that make it a square not some unseen universal. That set off my first talking down by Master Michael. I was denying the validity of universals and becoming a critic of Aristotle, the Philosopher. I indicate quite the contrary, I was merely stating a fact, that a square is defined by measurable attributes. In fact I can examine any geometrical figure and ask:

1. Does it have four sides. If yes then I would continue. If no then I stop and say it is not a square.
2. If the previous is true then are the lengths of the four sides equal? If so then I can continue. If not then I stop.
3. Are the angles right angles at all intersections of sides? If yes then I have a square.

Master Michael said that was a form of dichotomy, and was inherent in Aristotle. In fact Porphyry had developed such a dichotomous tree that allowed for closer classifications of genus and species.

I replied:

"Master Michael, I am not using any universals as observables. I am actually observing. For me parallel means that over the length of the geometric figure, if I were to take a ruler, a measuring rod, as we now do with land, and measure the distance and the measurements are the same, then phenomenologically the lines are parallel at least in this small portion of space. If I were to extend the lines a greater distance more, then I would not know unless again I measured. My point is that it is not some universal I depend upon but a measurement."

Master Michael replied:

"Brendan, you sound all too much like Master Roger Bacon, God rest his soul. For he too sought reason through experiments, through measurements. Yet one must be cautious to use that reason too far. For reason and faith may be contradicted by the error of measurements. For, do we not at times deceive ourselves in measuring. If we measure a land and it crosses a river in between, we may not be able to determine the distance directly, we may then use our knowledge of Geometry, of the universal in Geometry, to determine the values."

I kept silent. I could see that there was rules, rules on what was allowed to be thought, and perhaps I was getting too near the edge of these rules.

LOGIC

Logic, the combination of facts to reach new conclusions, or at least that was the way it was presented. The key to all logic was the syllogism.

We began Logic where we left off in Grammar, statements. We examined the attributes of statements. We were told that they were three; quality, modality and value.

For quality they either affirmed or denied. All dogs bark or No cat is a dog. This was a battle between subject and predicate, or did the entity exhibit or not exhibit an attribute.

For modality we saw necessity or contingency. Necessity meant that the attribute was an essential part of the subject. Contingent was an attribute that may be a part of the subject. Thus all birds have wings versus some ravens are white.

For value we had true or false. Master Michael said:

"If we say a circle is not a square, we are stating a true statement wherein the falsity of the modality is the negation of squareness to a circle. The essence of a square is lacking in a circle."

Here I again got myself into a bit of a problem. I replied:

"Master Michael, as we discussed, my view of square and their measurable attributes, likewise a circle has similar attributes. Namely, if one were to go out on the ground and place a stick at some point. Then, if one were to then tie a string on that stick, and take another stick, and tie it at a length of, say, one foot, again using a ruler, then scratch on the ground by rotating the loose stick at is one foot distance from the string, then one draws a circle with a radius of one foot and a diameter of two feet. Equally one could now draw a square of side two feet outside the circle. The difference is the means of construction as determined by the process of constructing and validated by measurement. Thus, essence appears to become what we impart upon the object not what the object has in and of itself. Essence, as you phrase it, appears to be a result, a consequence, or even as Aristotle states an accident."

As I had expected, Master Michael lectured me for a good half hour in front of the other students. Unfortunately the other students just wanted to collect the facts and read them back and

then have lunch or something. After the session Master Michael called me to the side. I had thought I would receive some punishment but to my surprise he handed me Gorgias by Plato. It was in Greek, and he knew of my growing expertise. He said:

"Brendan, you argue well but with little sophistication. Read Gorgias, it is one of Plato's dialogues on Socrates. Here he argues against rhetoric, but that is less the issue. Look at the style, see the way the argument is led. You argue via a frontal attack, it is worthy but may alienate your adversary and not leave room for an opening, an acceptance of your view. You should learn subtlety, you should learn how to convert your adversary. Remember your Saint Francis went to the Muslims and tried to convert them, his approach was subtle but direct, he was accepted as both a holy person and an honest one. You must gain such talents, even if you do not become a theologian. Being a theologian can at times be dangerous since you are treading on God's word, and being aggressive in questioning, albeit valid and worthy, may open doors you wish were kept closed."

I listened and I learned. It was then that I clearly knew that I would not be a theologian, but philosophy had as many traps, law demanded careful articulation, so I began to think of medicine. My first choice in life.

We proceeded to learn types of propositions. There were essentially four types; totally affirmative, totally negative, partially affirmative and partially negative. From there we moved to simple syllogisms. We learned the simple statements such as:

Subject is Middle
Middle is Predicate
Subject is Predicate

But we also learned that it is not any Subject but all Subjects, and the same for Middle. But we had our AEIO forms to incorporate.

A meant all
E meant none
I meant some are
O meant some are not

Thus we examined how these can be placed in syllogistic form. We learned of the various forms of fallacies, those of the enthymeme or a logically abridged syllogism, and we discussed induction versus deduction. I then asked:

"Master Michael, let us assume we take a ball and hold it out and drop it. If we do it a thousand times can we say that balls always drop from the hand. Or that all balls when released from the hand will drop. Or is that just a set of observations, and that the reasoning is inductive, and not deductive. It is akin to saying that based upon the fact that all the crows we see are black, but then we see a crow which has white feathers, that such a bird is not a crow. Then what makes a crow. What Master Michael is the role of measurements, of induction in reasoning. For all logic appears to be deduction. But deduction assumes the initial facts are universally valid."

He replied:

"Deduction is the statement of essential facts. All birds fly. The crow is a bird. Therefore the crow flies."

The I said:

"Thus suppose we have a crow with a broken wing and cannot fly, does it no longer remain a crow. Is flying necessary as an attribute to be part of the essence and if it is removed does the essence change?"

He replied:

"You are playing with words. The crow you mention has the essence of crowness and as such has the capacity of flight but has an accident of a defective wing. It retains the essence of a crow. Now for the white feathered crow, if we say that black feathers is the essence of the genus crow then the having of white feathers is not part of that essence. Thus we can say. All crows have black feathers. This bird has white feathers. Therefore this bird is not a crow."

I replied:

"Yes but Master Michael, say I get this bird from a crow's nest, from a crow's egg, from the mating of two crows, and yet it has white feathers, can crows mate and yield non crows?"

It appeared that he was a bit flustered. I knew what he was to say next:

"That is not possible."

I replied:

"Then look out the window, that white crow I saw come from a crow's nest a week past, what do we say of that?"

His answer was swift:

"It is not a crow, some other bird must have placed its egg there."

I continued:

"Back to induction if possible. In deduction we deal with incontrovertible facts. We align them, we then use our rules of logic to connect them and from that we obtain conclusions. Now in induction we observe events, and if those event occur very frequently than there may be causal relationships, logical subject predicate relationships. Yet we cannot state them with the certitude we have with deduction. What is we measure a degree of certainty, can we then make statements where we can say such things as "almost always" and the proceed with our argument?"

His answer was clear:

"No."

I had not finished with induction but had only begun. My concern was that induction had merit and that deduction was all too often a tautology.

RHETORIC

Plato and his teacher Socrates disliked rhetoric. Gorgias was a classic attack on rhetoric. That I had learned from Master Michael's exercise on Plato. Thus I entered Rhetoric with some foreboding. I saw Rhetoric key to Law, somewhat to Philosophy, and a careful addition to Theology, but what good was it for medicine, or the natural sciences in general, now that I saw them as my path. For in them we dealt with facts. The patient would live or die, that was prognosis and based upon prior facts. We cannot argue the facts, we at best can present them and our basis for the conclusion. Little did I know then how much proper rhetorical skill would be essential, depending on who your patient is.

As Aristotle notes in his text on Rhetoric:

Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic. Both alike are concerned with such things as come, more or less, within the general ken of all men and belong to no definite science. Accordingly all men make use, more or less, of both; for to a certain extent all men attempt to discuss statements and to maintain them, to defend themselves and to attack others. Ordinary people do this either at random or through practice and from acquired habit. Both ways being possible, the subject can plainly be handled systematically, for it is possible to inquire the reason why some speakers succeed through practice and others spontaneously; and every one will at once agree that such an inquiry is the function of an art.

He continues:

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself.

Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided. This kind of persuasion, like the others, should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak. It is not true, as some writers assume in their treatises on rhetoric, that the personal goodness revealed by the speaker contributes nothing to his power of persuasion; on the contrary, his character may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses.

Secondly, persuasion may come through the hearers, when the speech stirs their emotions. Our judgements when we are pleased and friendly are not the same as when we are pained and hostile. It is towards producing these effects, as we maintain, that present-day writers on rhetoric direct the whole of their efforts. This subject shall be treated in detail when we come to speak of the emotions.

Thirdly, persuasion is effected through the speech itself when we have proved a truth or an apparent truth by means of the persuasive arguments suitable to the case in question.

We examined the many rhetorical forms and their purposes. We were told that good Grammar guaranteed the correct wording, good Logic assured the proper reasoning and good Rhetoric allowed for a successful presentation.

Now from Gorgias we have:

Soc. Now I think, Gorgias, that you have very accurately explained what you conceive to be the art of rhetoric; and you mean to say, if I am not mistaken, that rhetoric is the artificer of persuasion, having this and no other business, and that this is her crown and end. Do you know any other effect of rhetoric over and above that of producing persuasion?

Gor. No: the definition seems to me very fair, Socrates; for persuasion is the chief end of rhetoric.

Soc. Then hear me, Gorgias, for I am quite sure that if there ever was a man who-entered on the discussion of a matter from a pure love of knowing the truth, I am such a one, and I should say the same of you.

Gor. What is coming, Socrates?

Soc. I will tell you: I am very well aware that do not know what, according to you, is the exact nature, or what are the topics of that persuasion of which you speak, and which is given by rhetoric; although I have a suspicion about both the one and the other. And I am going to ask- what is this power of persuasion which is given by rhetoric, and about what? But why, if I have a suspicion, do I ask instead of telling you? Not for your sake, but in order that the argument may proceed in such a manner as is most likely to set forth the truth. And I would have you observe, that I am right in asking this further question: If I asked, "What sort of a painter is Zeuxis?" and you said, "The painter of figures," should I not be right in asking, What kind of figures, and where do you find them?"

Gor. Certainly.

Soc. And the reason for asking this second question would be, that there are other painters besides, who paint many other figures?

Gor. True.

Soc. But if there had been no one but Zeuxis who painted them, then you would have answered very well?

Gor. Quite so.

Soc. Now I was it to know about rhetoric in the same way; is rhetoric the only art which brings persuasion, or do other arts have the same effect? I mean to say; does he who teaches anything persuade men of that which he teaches or not?

Gor. He persuades, Socrates, there can be no mistake about that.

Thus for Plato, and I assumed Socrates, Rhetoric was the "art" of persuasion. It made nothing, contributed nothing, it just attempted to persuade. Thus for a lawyers it was a valuable art. But for a theologian was this powerful? We examined Aquinas and his Summa. As Rhetoric could be oral it also was part of the written word. For the approach of Aquinas was classic to his school, he first started out shown all the objections which could be raised and then rebutted them one at a time. From that point he made long arguments as to each of his positions. I always felt that there were too many words, too many diversions into small corners with little light. Aquinas was a Dominican and I had gathered that there was great truss in him for the Dominicans yet uncertainty amongst us Franciscans. Strange how small things lead to massive divides.

We also read Augustine, especially his treatise on Evil and on The Trinity. I found the argument and his approach on Evil interesting and in The Trinity he had an innovative means to use the Scripture as the source for his argument. In effect in the Trinity he laid out his argument and then integrating elements of the Scripture he used these each as a basis for each step in his rhetorical argument. Unlike Thomas Aquinas, who dealt with objections up front, and arguing for their elimination, Augustine somewhat sidesteps them in his way.

Strange that Augustine looks upon Cicero as a source for both rhetorical support and for philosophical inspiration. Although Cicero was a superb rhetorician, he wrote to preserve, not so much to introduce, his arguments. Cicero spoke in the Roman Senate and his words have the tone of a great orator. Augustine was not a speaker, he wrote out his arguments and then circulated the results.

We studied various rhetorical techniques from the written word. We also studied rhetorical writers, yet many were now of a written form. We were advised that upon completion of our studies we would be tested by a dialectic, a debate, in which we were to be tested by the Masters, each having a chance to pose a problem and seek our opinion and then to refute our presentation. That meant that as rhetoric was studied in a form of reading it was performed in a form of real time debate. For me I felt little concern, of course depending on the topic

GEOMETRY

Having complete the Trivium, somewhat quickly I gathered, I was sent to the Quadrivium. Namely the study of Geometry, Arithmetic, Music and Astronomy. I started with Geometry and I found it was an interesting introduction to logic applied to shapes and reality. Our instructor here

was Master Gregory. He was a Dominican and I was fearful of some concern across orders. He was a rather rotund Friar with a good humor who unlike the other Masters whom I had known stood at the podium and lectured, he would walk about the desks, looking us directly in the face when he lectured and then asked for our recitation back. He had the habit of leaning back when asking a question and he rather large stomach stretched out to almost meet our faces, then he would bend inwards and down to our face so that we were almost face to face and then he would finish his questions in a flare of speech. I rather enjoyed the act, it had merit. The other students were often terrified.

We used sections of Euclid, with some commentary by Oxford Masters over the prior century. Geometry is the art of taking assumptions and seeking progressive conclusions. The assumptions are primal to Euclid. The line is defined as the locus of all points including some initial two points and a circle was the locus of points equidistant from a single point. We consumed all of Euclid and his followers, from plane and solid geometry. Most of the work was via proof, namely taking definitions, using constructions and then utilizing the information to validate a proof. Unlike Logic which was a concatenation of simple syllogisms one could have extensive proofs in Geometry. When calculating areas or angles it had some interest but for the most part the material was merely a regurgitation of what the set of ancient proofs were.

Our studies were classic from Euclid. One learned the approach of definition, then theorem and then proof. My thoughts were that these were logical proof techniques yet they were more than syllogisms. The syllogism was the statement of two facts albeit connected which resulted in a third fact. I always wondered if the result was nothing more than a tautology, a fact that was already in the offered facts. The concern I had was that the facts in logic and the syllogism were already facts in existence.

In Geometry the facts were definitions. A straight line was a given fact. Euclid provided a set of facts. These facts when combined resulted in a conclusion wherein they used the facts and prior theorems to prove the new theorem. I often wondered what would happen if the fact were not true. What was the basis of the fact. What if two straight lines always crossed somewhere.

My main concern about Geometry was that at best it could say things were of equal length, but what was that length? If I measured something, how did I measure it? One used to measure with a foot, a step, a rod, some form of measure, but my foot was not someone else's foot. This I gathered was a real problem in that property was measured and property had value.

ARITHMETIC

Next we started with Arithmetic. Numbers were now coming to the fore but the notation was cumbersome. Arithmetic was first just understanding numbers, but what numbers? The Master gave us a wonderful introduction of the Arabic number approach and this was enhanced by our understanding and usage of the abacus, that device that allowed for the addition and multiplication of numbers. For the first year we studied basic arithmetic approaches.

Numbers, and their representation were discussed at length. I had been used to Roman numerals as they were often used in the texts I had been working on. However, I had also become quite

familiar with the Arabic system Issn and I had used in many of the Arabic documents. My fellow students were unfamiliar with the forms. Again I had also become familiar with many of the other forms such as Greek and even central Asian. What do we need numbers for was an oft stated phrase. I recall driving the discussion amongst my fellows regarding the importance to measure; land, flour, gold, distance, time. Each measurement entails a number. The response of my fellows was a bit crass.

They often, as sons of prestigious families, stated that such tasks are left to tradesmen, and not men of position. I argued that even men of position must understand the numbers that are presented to them. After all if one sells land at so many pounds of silver how does one really know the size of the land, its value, and the receipt of true value in silver. Can these students then lay all trust in those tradesmen who performs such a task or is it not incumbent upon them to independently verify the result. For that I was criticized as a Franciscan who had taken a vow of poverty to even consider money. My response was always I deal with facts, and facts can be measured, and measurements require numbers. My point seemed never to take hold especially the higher the class of the student.

The Roman form was a counting system of ones, fives, tens, and so forth. I was akin to counting on one's fingers, one hand at a time. Greek used letters, the first ten letters, including the letter digamma or F. Thus for Greek we had:

I= α =1

II= β =2

III= γ =3

IV= δ =4

V= ϵ =5

VI= ϕ =6

VII= ρ =7

VIII= σ =8

IX= η =9

X= ι =10

There was also a zero, standing for none or in Arabic cypher, empty. This numeral allowed Arabic to use the basic nine plus zero again and again. Unlike Roman or Greek, one merely kept adding the ten symbols, creating tens, hundreds, thousands, and the like. We often discussed how large could one make the numbers.

In arithmetic we used the work of Sacrobosco entitled *Algorismus Vulgaris* which enabled us to do many primitive calculations such as adding, subtracting, multiplying and dividing. Much of our second year was devoted to calculations using a variety of symbols. My concern was always to see this applied. The steps were convolved and one must just remember them.

What did someone do with these. It was at this time that I began to befriend the merchants in the village and at one time a certain flour merchant named William introduced me to his brother Joseph, who was a buyer and seller of herbs and spices from afar.

Joseph told me that the merchants in Italy, especially Genoa and Venice, kept very complex records of their transactions and that many of them used the Arabic system because of its simplicity. They also had means to calculate very large amounts to maintain their ledgers and further they loaned money from the local Jews to finance their purchases and had to repay with interest. The interest was a certain percent, another way to describe a fraction, which was calculated on some period of time such as a month or even a day. Thus the merchants had a great need for buying, financing and selling their goods and the keeping and processing of their books was a critical element in the practice of their business. I started to see the importance. Numbers started to appear everywhere in my world.

Before seeing the application I saw numbers merely as some esoteric study with no real attachment to reality. After understanding the use of them in a complex set of transactions I saw numbers in the acres of land, the gallons of milk, the numbers of eggs, the speed of the boats, each entity I deal with was also describable as a collection of numbers. Then there was time. The numbers would depend on time, the distance a boat travelled on the Thames, the time to bake a cake or bread, the time money was lent to another. I often tried to think how numbers could depend on other numbers, the position of a boat, its movement or speed measured by the knots of the trailing rope, and its distance moved. I wondered how best to sort these. Without tying these numbers and calculations to a reality one was just left with some abstraction. Connecting the numbers as a measurement of a reality allowed for usage.

There was also the discussion of types of numbers. Fractions were integral to division of anything. One could have a loaf of bread and one could halve it. One could third it. Using Geometry one could bisect a line and thus a loaf of bread. But using a measuring stick, say a standard foot stick, one could bisect the measuring stick and mark the bisection. Each bisected could in turn be divided in half. Thus we could have one foot, then two half feet, then four quarter feet, then eight equal pieces and so on.

Thus I brought this issue to a discussion with the Master and the fellow students. I asked them to consider a simple problem, what I called a thought problem. It had its basis in reality but I tried to make it simple. If a boat sails one mile in one hour, then if I halved the time I would halve the distance. Likewise, if I halved the distance I halved the time. Thus logically time and distance are related by some common factor.

All agreed. The logic held. Then I said if I halved the halves the same relationship held. Again all agreed. Then I said that I could continue the halving forever, getting smaller and smaller distances and proportionately smaller and smaller times. I then asked if there were some limit, some point, some time, at which I could no longer accomplish this process. How small can I make time or distance?

I apparently had entered a war ground. I was told by the Master that one of my fellow students, a cleric by the name of Thomas Bradwardine had been examining the issue in detail. The Master stated that Bradwardine considered ultimate continuity, even to the extent of the universe. The others held for the position of indivisible lines, an atomistic view. I was also told that a certain similar person, a William of Ockham had taken a similar position on the continuum. Ockham's position was limited to the fact that lines and figure are mental constructs and as such are

divisible. My thought was that this mental pictures, experiments if one will be so kind, helped reflect reality.

I went to seek out Bradwardine and found him lecturing a class of Masters students. He invited me in and he was discussing the continuum argument. He stated:

No continuum is made up of atoms, since every continuum is composed of an infinite number of continua of the same species.

His argument follows Aristotle's views fairly closely. I presented to him the view that such a perception may be good for a thought based example but we lack phenomenological evidence that nature fails to have what could be termed an atomic structure. I said:

"Master Thomas, your idea has merit as long as we consider it as a concept. However Nature all too frequently surprises us when we examine it in detail. As Master Roger Bacon had stated; *we must be able to measure and experiment, and until we have sufficiently done so we cannot make such statements other than mental experiments.* They may help to explain the phenomenon but they are not necessarily the fact. How am I in error?"

I could see that I may have struck a sensitive chord. He was a bit older and of English ancestry. He could tell from my lingering accent that I was not English and generally we Irish were still held to be somewhat less on the human scale. His reply was interesting:

"Do you know Master William of Ockham? You Franciscans must all think alike. He on the one hand will agree with the conceptual existence of a continuum but he like you questions the possibility of atomic limitations."

I replied:

"Master Thomas, I mean no disrespect, I was told to speak with you to gain understanding not to counter any of your thoughts. I do not know Friar William and am still working towards my Bachelor. My plans are to study medicine and my thoughts may have wandered far afield, my apologies. I meant no disrespect Master Thomas."

Bradwardine smiled in a somewhat sneering manner and turned about and walked away. When I had the chance to recollect this with Dismas he laughed. His response was:

"Bradwardine is a brilliant man but he is not of any Order. As such he can be much more flexible. I would not worry. Just be cautious, good questions do not always elicit good answers, especially amongst academics. As to Ockham, you and he are much alike, and I hope someday you two meet."

Little did I know then but that Bradwardine and I would cross paths again and again. He the politician and I the physician.

Back in the arithmetic class towards my final year we discussed movement again. We let the continuum problem lie dormant. Yet by the end of my Bachelor year in Mathematics I found myself again with Bradwardine. He was my Master. I walked into the smaller room with other students and he as did I express surprise. His comment to me was:

"Ah, the Franciscan and the continuum, the doubter. Perhaps, ah Brendan is it, we should call you Thomas as well?"

That was not an auspicious beginning. But after the completion he and I had become somewhat friendly. We discussed the problem of motion at length. This time I proposed another problem one not of constant velocity or motion but one of increasing velocity. I suggested the following:

"Master Thomas, if I may use a thought example. Consider six men in a boat with oars. They begin down there on the Thames with no motion, but then they stroke in unison. The motion increases from zero, I shall use the Arabic term for no motion, and after the end of the first stroke they are going, let us assume we measure in knots, they are moving one knot."

He replied:

"Fine let us see what you propose."

I continued:

"Then they stroke again, going from the velocity of one knot to two knots. They continue until they are going at twenty knots. I realize that may take a bit of effort, but it is a mental example, and we of course leave a bit of reality on the table. Then I ask how far do they go?"

He smiled and walked about the lectern. He said:

"I am beginning to like your thought examples. Let us see. Each step is an example of an atomic like movement. Correct Brendan?"

I replied:

"It is just a thought example, we could always change it, but grossly Master Thomas, that is what we have. The point is increasing velocity measured by the knots trailing behind the boat. I have no experiment to prove this but alas we could all go down to the Thames..."

He laughed and stated:

"No Brendan, there is no need if we are but thinking, for that is what we do here. No need to get wet, besides the Thames as you may note is Frozen, It is January!"

The other students all burst out laughing. I believe that helped. He then thought a bit and started to reply.

"Here we can look at a collection of slowly increasing velocities. Each has some mean value. Together they also have a mean or average velocity. If we can calculate that, we can then determine the distance. We know that if we have a simple mean velocity then we can state that distance is time multiplied by that constant velocity. But here the constant really depends on time. We note in the first stroke we could determine a constant. Yet in the second, the constant is increase and we can show the increase is itself proportional to the extra time. So the average of two segments of the velocity is 2 times the first. Now, we do this again and again and we find the average velocity is itself proportional to time also. Therefore, we know that distance is velocity multiplies by time and here velocity is some constant itself multiplied by time so that distance here if velocity multiplied by time multiplied by time!"

I sat back amazed. He solved this standing up! I then said:

"This Master Thomas, if we increase velocity equally each interval then we can concatenate the result to show that distance is some constant time the square of time?"

He now showed he was master of the answer. He replied:

"Friar Brendan, yes exactly. We have a powerful result. That is an excellent problem young man."

I replied:

"That is a brilliant solution Master Thomas."

From that point on we became the closest of friends. I believe that it also set him thinking more as to the continuum and less on the atomistic way.

We also began a study of algebra, and focused somewhat on what on the works of Diophantus. What became of interest was the use of what were called equations. Namely they had symbols for these processes such as the following:

Δ^r is the unknown times itself once, namely 2 times 2 or 4.

K^r is the unknown times itself twice

$\Delta^r \Delta$ is the unknown times itself three times

ΔK^r is the unknown times itself four times

$K^r K$ is the unknown times itself five times

I wondered what these equations represented. I had become fixed on always trying to see the connection between the abstraction and reality.

We commenced a study in my third year of Diophantus and his work on equations. These detailed the structure, manipulation and solution of a variety of symbolic equations. We then proceeded to study the book Liber Abbaci by Leonardo of Pisa, also known as Fibonacci.

Fibonacci had spent time in Arabic North Africa and his work provided insight to the techniques of Arabic Algebra, or the manipulation of numbers via symbols.

We then started to use the abacus, a device with small round bits with holes in the center. Two on top and five on the bottom. We were taught to add and subtract and the principles of multiplying and dividing.

After three years of Arithmetic I had come to understand numbers and their manipulation. Solving equations was not my ken, they were just too cumbersome. Finding numbers was what I lived for.

Then also was the ability to lay out a proof. For Geometry we could use Euclid and the step of progressive statements of fact and syllogistic conclusions which in turn became new facts. However one new idea had come upon us. Namely proof by contradiction. Aristotelian logic stated that every sensible statement has a truth value: TRUE or FALSE. Then if one can demonstrate that a statement A could not possibly be false, it therefore it must be true. On the other hand, if one can demonstrate that A could not be true, then perforce it must be false. This became a proof by contradiction. We sought ways to utilize this.

A DIVERSION ON NUMBERS

I had gotten to know many of the merchants in town. One always benefitted from knowing and helping the common folk. Most of the non-religious students looked upon them as peasants but I saw them as fellow humans, we were all trying to survive, and possibly prosper in some manner. They in a financial manner and I in a religious one.

One of my closest contacts was Francis the Baker, Francis Baker for short. One day as we discussed his trade he sat back and said:

"Friar Brendan, I pose to you a problem, not some great theological problem, but one of cakes and bread. You see I make cakes and bread. I sell bread for three shillings and cakes for five shillings. But each day I wonder how many of each I should make so that I can make the most money. My customers are willing to pay the no matter but they will pay no more than what I have said. I also know that no matter how many I make I can sell them all."

I thought that we could apply our arithmetic analyses to this problem. He thus told me the following:

He used flour, milk, eggs, honey, fruit for the cakes and no fruit for the breads. He gave me the amounts used for each portion of cake and of bread. He then told me the costs of the ingredients. He then told me the prices for each ingredient. I could see that I was able to calculate the profit for each and thus if I knew how many he sold then the profit. This was akin to what I had learned from the seller of spices and what they merchants did in Venice and Genoa. Now I also asked him how many of each he could sell a day. That he told me for both bread and cakes. He felt there was a maximum of each. The question then was what number of each should he make for say a fixed amount of flour.

Now I knew how to do this by calculating each case and examining the results. I saw that I could create a table for each amount of bread made and cake. I laid out the calculations but there would need for twenty such calculation each taking into account the details of costs and price. Now I did have other things to do and could not accomplish this on my own.

It was then that I thought of going to the Franciscan Sisters, the Clares. I had met Mother Rosita who was the head with Dismas and she appeared to be friendly. I would give it a try.

I then called on Mother Rosita. She invited me in and asked in a friendly way:

"Well Brendan, it is good to see you, how is Prior Dismas, do you see him a great deal. How are your studies?"

I replied that all was fine and my visits were frequent. As with almost all these Sisters there is a long dance of words as they try to figure out why you are here so I thought I would be direct.

"Mother Rosita, I have a problem and am seeking the help of the Sisters here for a day or two."

She seemed surprised and said:

"You want all of the Sisters to help you on some project for several days? What is so important and does Prior Richard know?"

I figured that I would not waste any time. I replied:

"Well no, the prior does not know. Here is my problem..."

I explained that I needed twenty Sisters to get trained on an abacus, that was one day and then to use the abacus to calculate the data for the tables and to check each other.

She turned several shades of white. She replied:

"Let me understand this, you want to take over the entire Convent, take the Sisters and turn them into human calculators, no let's call them computers, and then calculate the profit for the baker so he can make the most money selling bread and cakes?"

I replied:

"Exactly!"

She then replied:

"Brendan, I have been a Franciscan for forty years, I have seen disease, persecutions, death, war, famine, but never anything like this!"

I was distraught. I said:

"Then it won't work, sorry I asked."

She stopped me and said:

"Nonsense, this is the greatest challenge we have ever faced and the Sisters will help you in any manner. Will we get some free cakes, I really like those with raisins, and lots of honey!"

I was astonished. I answered yes and went off to speak with the baker. The next day I could train the Sisters and it was not too difficult. Then I had to wait until Monday to get them to calculate. Then finally I had the answer. I saw that we had actually the best number, the maximum profit. I then ran off to the baker with my result.

He saw me and said:

"That's great but today they changed the prices on everything, could you do it again?"

My lesson was learned. Either I got all the Sisters full time, and managed to increase that number weekly, or find some other approach. The Sister approach was unworkable so I sought another approach!

MUSIC

Music, this was not a subject I thought a great deal of. We learned how to read, how to sing out chants. We learned the instruments. There were a great many hymns, yet I was not a good one with songs. In fact during services I often did not remember the words and managed to just mumble along. It would be good that I would never become a priest and have to lead a Mass.

We discussed tones, instrument resonances, the nature of music and its structure. We read sections of Boethius on De Musica, and were told of the relationship between the harmony of music and that of Geometry, of the elements of the universe as we saw in astronomy and music. For our Master, Master Guillaume, all of the elements of our existence was music. Again I was a poor student here and tried my best to do as little as possible as I examined the other areas. I truly did not understand why if I were to study medicine that having music was essential. I was to later discover its beauty and value. Yet not when I was a student.

What I did discover, and apparently my peers did not seem to notice, is that music for the first time lent substance to the reality of the physical world and our thoughts. Music was the result of some vibration of a string, or the resonance of some horn, and then its impact on one's ears and then how the human processes these physical phenomenon and reacts to them in different ways.

I thought of how armies are driven by drums, how the Scots have the awful sounding instrument which I am told is a sheep's stomach, filled with air by blowing and its release through various reeds, akin to an organ but sounding like the devil emerging from Hell. The music in our prayers and the solace one can get by listening to both the sounds and the words. Unlike the other

elements of the studies, this is the only area where we see such a reaction on the part of any human, educated or uneducated.

Yet there were two things that I could not see answers to. First, just what is music, what is the basis of this sound we make. What is the cause of the noise and how in turn does it go to our brain via our ears? The second is the question of; what is our brain responding to. Some physical phenomenon of yet to be determined nature impacts our body and in turn our brain responds in a variety of ways. Perhaps understanding music would then be a way to understand many, man as bit a physical element in the sensory world about us and man as a thinking being. I also wondered what animals think of music, or are we the only species with such a response. I had learned however that one should not ask such questions of a Master whose interest is so focused. Not only would he most likely not know but the questions would be considered an affront.

For Boethius, harmony is everything. The world functions, when it does so properly, in a realm of harmony. For Boethius music is an expression of the soul. That is why humans and not animals create and appreciate music. By now I had begun to understand Francis, our patron saint. For him harmony was in nature and songs he listened to were those of the birds as well. Does that mean that birds can sing, create music, and thus have a soul. Or that bird sounds are mere Aristotelean accidents of birdness and it is the human soul that hears the music, that for birds there is no music. Again these were questions that I dare not pursue. I was the only Franciscan in the Master's class and he was so intent on explaining and building on Boethius.

We further discussed Boethius. For him the interval was the distance between the high sound and low sound was called consonance. Again I wondered what was a high or a low sound. What made them, how could you measure them. Can every human distinguish high from low? How high is high and how low is low. For example an old husband often can hear his dog but not his wife. If his wife is a high sound, not loud, but high, and he no longer hears her, then what is the cause? Why can he still hear the low sound made by his dog. Reality kept coming into my trying to understand music. I could memorize the facts of Boethius but could not rationalize them, there was no nexus to reality.

Consonance, that above named interval between high and low was a major factor. There were many types of consonance. A diatessaron was a 4:3 consonance. Thus there is a high and low sound. But Boethius explains them in a very inadequate manner. For him a high sound speeds ahead of the low sound. What did this mean. It moves faster and what is it that moves? He uses so many words with so few facts. For Plato consonance was the use of like sounds and for Boethius it was different sounds. In that was he was like Aristotle in his Nicomachean work. Boethius sees the sense of hearing receiving the sound and reason in the mind integrating and appreciating it. I wondered what basis in fact he has to justify this. I was beginning to translate certain anatomical works and had some mild understanding of the ear and the brain, I could see the connections, but how did it work? That I had no idea.

Boethius then presented the concept of ratio. Ratio is the two musical numerical terms against themselves. Thus an octave is a 2:1. Boethius calls it the diapason. A diapason plus a diapente is a 3:1 ratio. A diapente is a perfect fifth or a 3:2. The diatessaron is 4:3. Ratio and sound are mutually dependent say Boethius. I struggled, what was the 2:1 referring to. Master Guillaume

played a small harp. From that we were to better understand the ratio principles. What was the 2 to 1 referring to, the string lengths, the sound and if the sound what part of the sound? One could take a small harp with 8 strings. Pluck one and then another, the shorter the string the higher the sound. What did high mean and why? None of these were answered. We were just lectured to about what others have said about these ratios.

ASTRONOMY

The heavens were our gateway to heaven. At least that is what many thought. Astronomy was understanding the skies. I recall discussions with Issn as to the heavens. His first comment, said somewhat critically, was:

"Brendan, you study the heavens, you do so through your books, your skies are filled with clouds so that you rarely see anything. It is like your medicine, you read books, but never see sick people! When I was in Morocco, I could see the skies, star by star. I could see them every night, I could see their movements, their motion, even in a single passing of time. Here, why study astronomy? You never see anything!"

I had to admit he did have a point. It became just another exercise in memorization to demonstrate something that perhaps I would never use, or that is what I thought at the time.

BACHELOR OF ARTS

At the completion of my studies, which also included extensive studies in simple theology, including the New Testament, book upon book, I had to appear before a group of Masters for my defense via a dialectic. I had before me Bradwardine, Master William, and Master Richard. In addition any of the students seeking their Masters or even Doctors degree could appear and ask me to defend a proposition. I worried about Bradwardine. Yet his questions were quite appropriate. Some Masters students questioned me on Grammar and Logic. There I was comfortable. Then there was the question on music. I have no idea who asked the question but I managed to stumble through it and to my surprise Bradwardine came to my defense.

Unlike many of the Bachelor candidates I had taken studies on the quadrivium as well as the trivium. Although I was not sitting for a Masters, I was proceeding on to my studies in Medicine, which would require me to have some understanding of these issues. I was asked to present my views on several topics. The most difficult was discoursing on Augustine and The Trinity. My disputation was to explain why Augustine was philosophically correct as well as theologically correct. Not being a theologian nor a philosopher I wondered why I was asked such a question. Yet recalling Dismas and the nature of intellectual traps, I carefully gave as benign an answer as I could. It was my poorest showing but adequate.

Bradwardine then asked that I opine on the solution to cubic equations. I had gained expertise there and knew what approach to take. My success was that I had done the translation from Arabic of some recent work in the area and in the process engaged him in a positive discussion. He was satisfied.

Finally, Master Michael asked me to expound on the theory of induction and its place in logic. Did I believe that induction had any place in logic. I knew whence he spoke and was careful since the audience contained several Master Theologians. Speculation could be a sin. My answer was not to answer. A trick learned in rhetoric. One always starts out by saying:

"Master Michael presents an interesting question...."

Then I spent a long time defining induction and describing the difference between it and deduction. I referred to Master Robert Bacon and his work on experiments and that induction is often found in experimental works. Finally I sought to show that deduction was truth and induction supposition. I said:

"Consider if you will a man throwing dice. There are six possibilities on each die and there are twelve number possible with the two die. If a man throws a six and then throws another six, would I have any confidence that on the next throw there is another six? After all I have two sixes already and if I were to use inference I would be somewhat secure in expecting a third. Yet I know that the two die can yield a 2 in only one way, two ones. Yet the dice can yield a six in many ways; a three and three, a four and two, a two and four, a one and five and a five and one. Thus there are five ways to achieve a six. Yet only one way to achieve a two. Yet one can achieve a two, yet not as frequently as a six."

My conclusion is that induction is thus subject to error. I saw Bradwardine making notes on a piece of small paper as I spoke, intensely. This clearly sparked an interest in him which we would later explore.

This lasted two days. Upon its completion I was told I had been successful. Frankly I had no idea if I had failed but I suspected that some students had done so over the years.

In June of 1312, at the young age of seventeen, I believe the youngest in my group, I was awarded a Bachelor of Arts. The ceremony was limited.

CHAPTER 4 (1312-1314) FRANCISCAN

At the same time as I was becoming proficient in Latin, Arabic and Greek, I also was absorbing the Franciscan way of life. Because of my daily duties and my close association with Issn, I did not absorb the Franciscan way in a manner of my peers, my absorption was almost that of a visitor to a new land, not one who was born and raised there. Strange practices remained somewhat strange. My view of Franciscans was to see Dismas, a former Knight, friend of the King, collectors of non-religious manuscripts, and secretive of many things. I saw the dress, the religious services, the nature of the community, but of Francis and the order I gathered a little at a time. Unlike my peers who actually were indoctrinated into the order and were awaiting the progression ultimately to priesthood, I seemed more likely to just take each day as it came, with no teleological goal, just an anticipation of what new challenge would drop upon my doorstep.

I wondered just who this Saint Francis was and how did this order in less than one hundred years get to be so large and with so many men and women of such brilliance. Then I also wondered why there was such competition between the Franciscans and the Dominicans, almost at times acting as enemies despite the fact that they were both religious orders. Then I wondered what the Pope did, for he was clearly some all overpowering personage. There were times I saw the Pope as the King of Kings, God's representative on Earth, and at times I could hear the grumbling about the men and their weaknesses who occupied the office of Pope. At twelve I accepted anything, now at fourteen, I began my clarion call, why!

In 1309 the Church itself was shaken. The Pope moved the Papacy from Rome to Avignon. To me at the time it was a significant event. Admittedly the Pope had always been the Bishop of Rome, and with my yet simple logical mind, Avignon was not Rome, the Pope was now abandoning what was to have been his specific location. Clement V was Pope, a Frenchman, and his residency in Avignon was unheard of. Rome was abandoned to the hordes who remained. The Eternal City was left to rot.

It was then that I began to wonder about both the Church and the Order to which I belonged. Who was Francis and what were these friars doing to keep his vision alive. I wondered if the Order was what Francis wanted or was change just the natural course of things. Francis had died in 1226, just some eighty years ago, and here I am with a collection of friars seeking to expand knowledge at Oxford, and I was to become part of this clan. I wondered if I was truly to be a Franciscan, was Dismas the leader of such a life, what of Robert and the other friars. Some of the older friars were clearly devoted to Francis and poverty. They sought nothing except to serve those amongst whom they lived.

My first question then was; who was Francis and what was his Rule? Was I living this Rule and did I want to live the Rule. Did I even have a choice. Augustine and Divine Grace rattled in my head. Did God already have things sorted out and was I not just a mere actor playing a part ordained in Heaven. Individual choice was a key question. Did I have any or was I just following a path of least resistance?

My first education on the Franciscans came from Prior Robert. Robert was unlike Dismas, less a man of war and the world, but a true thinker and knowledgeable man, a man who considered learning as important as holiness. Robert had been a Franciscan for over forty years, joining the Order when he also was just twelve years old, and now he was the Prior at Oxford. He also was a Doctor of Theology, having studied in Paris as well. He had many students over the years who have gone on in the Order to strengthen its position in the field of Theology as well as following the mission of Francis.

We would spend time each day before evening prayers discussing Francis, his works, the Church, and the role of Franciscans. My time with Robert was single, he spent the morning before mid-day prayers with all the other young novitiates. Since I was busy with Issn then he decided that later in the day would be better. The ability to do so one on one was very enlightening; I managed to master my ability to ask questions during these sessions.

I first learned of Francis and his life and his calling. Francis upon hearing the Gospel telling the Apostles to abandon their possessions and preach the good word to all set the Saint afire. It was from that the Order arose. Men and women, a different way to proceed, ordained and lay people, following the rules laid down in the Gospel. Francis went so far as to preach to the Muslims. This I had learned from Issn, but the description of Robert was more detailed, and I suspect less correct. As I learned, one must be suspect of hagiography. I learned of Francis and his early followers, their approaching the Pope in Rome for approval, the vision of Pope Innocent II and his approval of the Order. Francis was never ordained a priest, and as Robert told me, many of the friars are that way even to this day.

I knew that Dismas and Robert were priests, but many of the friars are not, they merely serve the community in various ways, helping the poor and the sick. Many of the friars here in Oxford study theology to prepare them to preach at the highest levels. Some of the friars study philosophy and even some study Canon Law. Robert looked at me one day and asked what I was to do. My daily work was translating the Arabic and now Greek documents, almost all in Medicine. I thus told him that I would be a physician, many a friar is trained to heal the soul, but there is also a need to care for the sick and incapacitated. It was then that Robert almost blossomed forth with joy.

Robert said to me:

“Brendan, that would be wonderful. We need not only to deal with the spiritual needs but we need to deal with the sick and poor, they suffer but as Christ himself spent so much time healing, we also should take upon ourselves healing of soul and body. I am happy you have made such a choice. This may be a long road but the start here is essential.”

He then continued to teach me about the Order and its growth as well as about theology and the important points I must know and understand. I was glad that I had made a choice, and a choice that would please both the Order and myself. I had wondered if Dismas would also be pleased.

During this period I became aware of four things. First, that Saint Francis was truly a holy and dedicated man and his faith was based upon the Biblical statements. Second, that as anything

grows and which involves humans, the process ultimately leads to various forms of misinterpretation and conflict. One could see that in the early days of Francis. Third, the Pope was a power that all had to bend a knee towards and yet there was disagreements and confusion that led many to question the Pope's position as leader of a Church and the role of God's representative on earth. Namely Kings were Kings and the Pope was not a King, yet Kings paid deference to the Pope.

Was this always the case, clearly not in the time of Rome's rule. If not then, when and why did this arise.

Fourth, religious orders such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans were more like ruthless competitors than simple followers of their founder's beliefs. The Franciscans had a vow of poverty but they had use of mass amounts of land and assets. Was this a conflict? In addition, how complete was the vow of poverty. I had just become aware of these vows. Just what was poverty? I could understand chastity, and still being young it was at the time of no concern. But poverty, just what were the boundaries. If we owned nothing, then how did these buildings get built?

The most difficult vow to understand was obedience. I understood that there was an order to life. The serf obeyed his Lord, the Lord the King and sometimes the King obeyed the Pope. We then assume the Pope obeys God. But if there were evil Popes did God even want to associate with them. That was my youth thinking, I had yet to truly study Augustine and the Franciscan brothers.

Friar Robert, the Prior, would speak with me from day to day, slowly increasing my understanding but at the same time as I would later understand test my resolve as a Franciscan. One of the first things I had discovered was that I was what was called a *studentes de debito*. All the others students with me, about five if I recall were *studentes de gracia*. The latter were sent by their local Convents and were supported by the Convent itself. I on the other hand was supported, as best as that could be described, by the Order, by the Franciscans themselves. There was no Convent in Dublin and I also understood that somehow it was Dismas personally who had singled me out. I suspected it was my ability with languages but only time would tell.

As Robert and I spoke, I understood Francis and his life. I was amazed that Francis had come from such a wealthy family, had himself gone off to battle, and then decided to leave into a life of lay preaching. The enlightenment to Francis came from the New Testament and one of his insights comes from Matthew 10:9-10 where Mathew states:

“Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts. Nor a sack for the journey, or even a second tunic, nor sandals or even a walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep.”

So I asked Robert what this meant. His version was that Jesus had told the Apostles to spread the word that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. He also said that in the same verses, which we read, Jesus had ordered the Apostles to wish peace upon each house they entered, and this is why even today as a Franciscan goes into a home they first wish Peace upon the Dwelling, as Jesus

had asked the Apostles to do. It was this request to take nothing and to rely on others to provide as they spread the word of God that the Franciscans adopted the vow of poverty.

I spoke at length to Robert about poverty. I asked him:

“What does poverty mean? For here we are in a large Convent, we have stores of food, gold chalices, vestments made of the finest silks, a collections of rare and important documents. When it is cold we have wood for our fires, and light for our studies. So what does this poverty vow entail?”

His reply was less than comforting:

“Brendan, you have not yet taken any vows, but I and the older Friars have. We own nothing, what we have is by way of use not by way of ownership. The property is owned if that be the word by the Pope and we have use of it but not ownership.”

I replied:

“But if one were to be true to Matthew, then we would not even have this, we would sleep where those who wanted to hear us gave us rest. We would have food only by those same people who would give us a meal. We would preach the word of God, and we would pray that Peace is upon each house that takes us in. Why now do we have Convents like this, and I have heard we have well over 1,000 such places, in many lands. What then is poverty. Moreover, Prior Robert, if one takes a vow, does not one fear the breaking of that vow, and thus commit a mortal sin? If so, then what act, what specific thing, makes the sin occur? I can see chastity if we define it as laying with a woman, but it too has the sin of thought, of deliberate desire. How do I know what the limits are?”

Robert was a bit surprised. I had been here but two years and now was apparently challenging the Prior. He settled back and look at me sternly. His reply was not what I had expected:

“Brendan, your question is a serious one, and one which we as an order are struggling with this very day. There was a friar, one Friar Olivi, from the south of France. He too struggled with this very same question. He had even studied at Paris, and had been a respected theologian, albeit not yet a Master. He basically asked what is poverty and what is not. At what point do we as takers of a vow step across a line, an action, that results in us breaking the vow, and thus being in mortal sin?”

Robert continued:

“Now Olivi wrote extensively on this trying as best he could to explain the issue. The idea became the *usus pauper* versus the *usus dives*. Or simply the poor man’s use of a thing versus the rich man’s use. The approach Olivi took was one of gradation. A person under *usus pauper* would say have a glass of wine, not any special wine, just what the peasant may drink. Whereas under *usus dives* the person would seek out the best of the vintage and even go as far as to store up casks of the wine. Then the issue is; what is poverty and how do we know we observe it. We

may not own anything but we may possess it, it may have been given to us by some means. Thus poverty may entail not just ownership but the use we make of something. On the one hand a vow of poverty does not mean we deprive ourselves to our physical detriment. On the other hand we must not enhance our use of what is given but not owned.”

I sat there trying to absorb this complex issue. Chastity I think I had gotten, now poverty was getting more complex as I started to have it unveiled before me. I asked:

“What happened to Olivi, Prior Richard?”

He leaned back against his hard wooden chair and shook his head back and forth slowly. He then recounted:

“He is with God now, but his path was quite steep and subject to falls. His work came into dispute. You see what Olivi and his followers saw was that the Bible binds us to certain things. We cannot murder, we cannot steal, we cannot lie, we cannot worship false gods. Then the Bible also suggests certain things. It suggests humility, it suggests giving to the poor, helping the sick. There are thus commandments, a few, and many suggestions, very many. Poverty as Olivi saw it was one of those many suggestions. Francis saw poverty, lack of ownership, as a model laid forth by Christ and followed by the Apostles as well as Christ himself. It was an ideal. Francis then vowed to follow this suggestion. When you vow to follow a suggestion such as poverty then if you break the vow you commit a sin, a mortal sin and put your soul at risk.”

I replied:

“Then Prior Robert, I am confused. The vow of poverty is an emulation of Christ and the Apostles. We know that from Matthew, Mark and Luke. They all state that fact. We also know that Pope Nicholas III, as you had stated, in 1279, in *Exiit qui seminat*, confirmed this belief. Then Olivi raises what appears to be a reasonable issue and gets condemned. What was he condemned for?”

Robert laughed:

“Brendan, you have been here two years now and already you sound like a scholar. You have been reading as much as you have been translating. I feel sorrow for the Master you shall work under this Fall. He shall have his hands full at Oxford. Let me try to answer in one word; politics. Somehow, it is my view, Olivi had two faults. First he had crossed the Dominicans. They were in charge of the Inquisition in southern France. Second, and this may have been more dangerous, he had started to gain a following, always a dangerous thing, especially in an Order. Thus his work was reviewed by a Commission and condemned, but what specifically was not stated. Thus he was not only let free but his followers were strengthened.”

I was at this point getting more confused. What was this vow of poverty. The Pope owned everything but the Order got to use whatever it wanted without asking the Pope. I thought I would ask about Obedience.

“Prior Robert, if there is this much conflict over Poverty, how did Francis deal with Obedience, is it obedience like a Serf to a Lord, a Knight to a King, what is it?”

He again laughed. I was now seeing that the laugh was a prelude to a discussion that led to more confusion, in me at least. He stated:

“Brendan, to explain obedience I must take you back to the Rules of the Order, from Saint Francis forward. We have had two Rules. The First Rule of 1221 was what Francis wanted and was presented to the Pope. It was simple. The Pope orally accepted it but ultimately we needed full Papal acceptance so we could preach without being attacked by local religious. The Second Rule was in 1223. Pope Honorius III confirmed this Rule and as such the Franciscans became an accepted Order with protection of the Pope and having a Cardinal as our intercessory.”

He continued:

“Francis on obedience was not as clear as a Knight obeying a King. For Francis the friar must obey his superior unless he felt the superior was making him do something that was immoral or against the laws of the Church. The individual must not blindly obey, there should be no obedience because of position or authority, there should be obedience in harmony with God’s laws. Francis left the choice up to the person. If the individual refused then he could suffer the consequences, whatever punishment, but he could not be condemned for his refusal. That was an understanding in the First Rule of 1221. Yes, Brendan, like poverty, like the Olivi gray line, this too put the burden on the friar. In the Rule of 1223, the Second Rule, obedience was limited to those things which the friars have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against their souls or our rule.”

That is when I questioned him.

“Prior Robert, let me understand the last thing you said. If one vows to obey, a vow of Obedience, then as you say of the Second Rule, obedience is to those things that one vows, then we have to obey to obey? That seems circular, confusing. Yet it is again limited by the individual.”

He replied:

“Ultimately we make a vow, we do what we believe is in concordance with that vow. That is the core of the vow.”

I replied:

“Fine, can we now discuss Chastity?”

He stood, and walked me towards his door saying:

“Today we have covered much, at a later time we shall discuss Chastity. You have prayers and you are assisting with the evening meal also, correct?”

I replied:

“Yes Prior”

I walked down the long stone hallway thinking. I cleaned and cut the potatoes thinking. I fired the oven thinking. I skewered the chickens thinking. Work allows one to think.

CHAPTER 5 (1312-1316) THE STUDY OF MEDICINE

Upon completion of the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1312, both Dismas and Robert suggested I proceed to study Medicine at Oxford. The Medical program of studies was small but it did afford the training and learning necessary to have a basic understanding. I was the only Friar doing such. I was also raised to a sub-deacon, not yet with a tonsure, and was basically amongst the other Friars an equal, not just a student. It was the Fall of 1312, and I was to spend three years finishing my Masters in Medicine and perhaps go on to a Doctor level of study. Dismas told me that most likely I would proceed to study at Paris or Bologna. Issn had strongly suggested Montpellier. Not having travelled anywhere I saw all of these as almost other-worldly.

Medicine at Oxford was, and frankly still seems to be, the study of texts. We read Galen, Avicenna, Gordun, and others. I had the good fortune to have from Dismas a copy of Galen in Greek as well as Arabic. There also was a Latin translation from Arabic. I set about seeking to translate several of his books directly and seeing what differences would result. Issn was also quite interested in that process since he knew that the Arabic version I used was at least two centuries old.

THE MASTERS

I began Oxford now as a Bachelor but focusing on Medicine with John of Gaddesden as my Master. He was well known even at this early stage in his career. He was born in 1280 so that he was 15 years my elder and had been at Oxford for this period. Our works to be studied were Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna, Gordun and the recent work of Gaddesden himself, called the Rosa Medicinæ. He named it such since Bernard de Gordun of Montpellier had called his work Lillium Medicinæ. Gordun's work appeared in 1305 and at Merton we had received a copy in 1309. We had two other copies prepared by the time I had the opportunity to study it. Gaddesden lecture from what were his notes on Rosa, and also heavily relied on the Galen translation.

I was the youngest in the class and others were mostly not in any religious group. I was the only Franciscan Friar at that time and there were two Dominicans and an Augustinian. Gaddesden was initially remote and would not engage the class a great deal. This was true of the first two years with the non-religious students and I suspect given his friendliness latter was due to his intent on determining the quality of the students.

Yet Gaddesden seemed to take kindly to me. I suspected it was that Dismas perhaps had spoken with him already. Yet the real reason frankly I may never know.

MY FIRST HUMAN ANATOMY EXERCISE

June of 1312 I had just began my studies under the direction of Gaddesden. He was famous even then for the work he had been doing integrating Galen and the Arabic medical studies. I had known him somewhat as a result of my translations and had done a few translations from Avicenna. I had been with him but two weeks when there was an abrupt commotion. Several

Dominicans came to the Priory where we were and Gaddesden was involved in the discussion. He then came over to me looking a bit concerned and said:

"Brendan, we have a task, and it shall be your first lesson in anatomy, a bit of a brutal one, but a good lesson none the less."

The Dominicans stood outside all somewhat ashen. Their black robes in contrast to ours. Gaddesden then went to the butcher shed and collected a set of the sharpest knives we had and also large white aprons that the butchers wore. He sent me to collect from his shed a bottle of distilled wine with the wax seal and we went off to the Dominican Priory. In the barn on a table was to my shock a head and the remnants of a dismembered body. It was already in a state of decay and the clothes were rich and of a royal like nature. I had never seen such a body before. In addition to the dismembered head the body had been so slashed that the internal organs were protruding and even hanging to the side.

Gaddesden then turned and said to me:

"Brendan, let us first remove the clothes. We must work quickly. We will cut the rest of body cavity to release the gas from the decay which is already under way. We can then remove the decaying organs to preserve what is left. We will then reattach the head to make the body as complete as we can."

He continued and took out a small pottery cup which had what appeared to be a grease, and smeared it under his nose. He gave it to me and said to do the same. It was a grease of some type filled with strong mint like odors. It overpowered the stench from the decaying flesh, and especially from the vapors when he cut through the remainder of abdomen, which almost exploded in his face.

I saw the Dominicans depart, not wanting to be a part of what may be considered by some as desecration. I gathered one should not separate the body parts if one seeks resurrection. I had not yet thought through the process so this reason still made some sense. It would be only later after many observations that I realized that the body decays, animals eat parts, scatter then, the earth rots everything. Thus this concept of desecration by separation was, if anything, a religious folklore. This was the first time that the reality of the world contrasted with the constructs of the theologian. Medicine deals with individual facts not rational generalizations.

We opened the abdomen and indeed the smell was overpowering. The skin had become bloated and a greyish color. There was no blood since the organs were no longer functioning. Gaddesden cut from the top of the chest and a long slice where the bowels almost exploded out of the body. He removed them by hand and placed them in a bucket which had been filled with a strong vinegar, It did reduce the odor. Then he removed the other organs noting them as the liver, the spleen, the bile ducts, then the stomach, the heart and then the lungs. One after another he pointed them out to me by name showing me each as he removed them. He seemed to be learning as he did so, following the rules taught by Galen. Having a real body with the ability to see the parts leaves an impression much more powerful than the words on paper.

The cavity was now empty and he washed it with vinegar and filled it with a rough wool cloth so that it may again be closed and appear yet complete. We then examined the head and he pointed out the spinal columns and the nerves. It was an anatomy lesson as if one were trying to drink from a waterfall, one fact after another as if this were never to happen again. Yet I saw in this process the value of examining a real body. I had wished that I had been better prepared. We then sewed the head back upon the body after carefully washing it. Upon completion we then washed the body down with more vinegar. I asked why we could not use soap and Gaddesden said vinegar was a better preservative. We then washed the table down and Gaddesden took the container of condensed white wine and we washed our hands and arms. We then removed our stained coverings and went outside. The senior most Dominican spoke with Gaddesden. I could hear him say something on how best to keep the body until the King was informed. Gaddesden then came back and told me to take up the bucket with the entrails, cover it with our used cloths and follow him.

We then returned to the Priory. Silent and somewhat sullen and me with my bucket of entrails sloshing back and forth. When we returned he sat down briefly. The smell from my bucket was an amalgam of vinegar and decaying flesh. The latter odor was overpowering and would linger forever. Gaddesden spoke softly but firmly:

"Brendan, take the bucket across the river. Bury the contents as deeply as you can and then cover the hole with some heavy rocks so animals cannot get to them. Then return here. clean up and we shall talk."

I proceeded to do as I was instructed. Across the river, still sloshing flesh and vinegar, still smelling both and not at all understanding what this was about. At one point I was tempted to examine my package just to get the chance again to see a real heart, lung, liver. But I continued. I found a desolate spot, and it was towards sunset. June was always a long day but it must have been quite late. I managed to dig the hole, deep and along the river edge, then emptied my contents, filled back the dirt, and covered it with stones. Now without any content I came back but the smell and taste lingered. Decaying flesh has a unique smell, one of the worst one can imagine. It seems to permeate all that we are, a reminder of our own mortality.

I washed again, this time with the soap Dismas had provided. I bathed I believe three times trying to wash out every pore of my being. I had a clean tunic and returned to speak with Gaddesden. My first question was:

"Master Gaddesden, who was this person, why so secret, and why not just bury him with all the rest"

Gaddesden look as exhausted as I felt. He replied:

"Brendan, the man was Piers Gaveston, the Earl of Cornwall, and let us say a close friend, let us even say the closet friend of King Edward."

I was set aback. I knew of the King, but at my age and since I was a religious, I had no interest in any of these details. I had heard talk of Edward and his strange ways, but Gaveston I had not paid any attention. He continued:

"Gaveston was excommunicated, thus he was denied a Church burial, or any treatment by the Church. Yet he was the fondest friend of the King and the Dominicans wanted to preserve his remains and let the King have the last word. Yet this being the summer season, and the man having been beheaded, they needed to prepare his body to be retained subject to some decision from the King. The Dominicans had no expertise and thus they called upon us. You my young friend must now keep this to yourself. Since he had been excommunicated we had no choice in disposing of his entrails. We will let the Dominicans deal with the King and we shall keep our trust and not to speak of this. But you did well, Dismas was right, you do have a knack for this work. We resume our studies on the morrow, but we shall speak no more of this day."

I was exhausted and thus sought sleep. A deep sleep, albeit with the smells still lingering in my body, which I washed every day going forward to rid it from any lingering odor. I wondered if the daily washing by Dismas may have also been a result of seeing death in his Crusade battles. I soon did as Dismas, daily bathing, often to the consternation of my fellows who felt bathing was a weakness of the flesh.

THE MILL

Now Dismas, Issn and Gaddesden had more work to translate. I was an educated Bachelor but not a Master of anything special yet I had developed a reputation as a fast translator, and somewhat good at it as well, yet my translations were done with block letter upon the vellum or parchment, whatever was available. The materials were expensive and also difficult to work with since they were processed animal hides. They were also quite costly as I had experienced in my dealing with the tanners just on the outskirts of Oxford.

Translation is a difficult art. One may know the languages well but one must also be careful with the subject. The classic example is the translation in the New Testament of the Lord's Prayer from Greek to Latin. For those of us well trained in the art this translation showed us the problems of going from one language to another. For example, the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:11 uses the aorist imperative in "Give (δός) us this day our daily bread", in contrast to the analogous passage in Luke 11:3, which uses the imperfective aspect, implying repetition, with "Give (δίδου, present imperative) us day by day our daily bread." Latin does not have an aorist tense. It has an imperative, and one can demand, now or in the future or in the past. The subtlety of repetitive giving is more than just a phrase change, it very well changes the command. How many other of these are there. In addition, the Greek was a translation which came from what I was told was an Aramaic original, and which itself is more complicated with a totally different set of cultural norms.

Gaddesden gave me a copy of Friar Roger Bacon's work *Opus Majus* and had me read his discussion on languages. Bacon was a quite revered Franciscan here at Oxford and Gaddesden and Dismas thought very highly of his work.

Bacon wrote:

... it is impossible for the Latins to reach what is necessary in matters divine and human except through the knowledge of other languages, nor will wisdom be perfected for them absolutely, nor relatively to the Church of God and to the remaining three matters noted above. This I now wish to state, and first with respect to absolute knowledge. For the whole sacred text has been drawn from the Greek and Hebrew, and philosophy has been derived from these sources and from Arabic: but it is impossible that the peculiar quality of one language should be preserved in another. For even dialects of the same tongue vary among different sections, as is clear from the Gallic language, which is divided into many dialects among the Gauls, Picards, Normans, Burgundians, and others...

That struck me as so true. I had struggled in getting the correct Latin word, phrase, or even intent as I read many Greek and Arabic texts. Worse when one translates from Arabic to Latin, and the Arabic is itself a translation from Greek, I would ask; what have we missed? In medicine it may not be so complex, yet there are problems, but in philosophy, I fear no good would come of it, and in the Holy texts, then one must tread very carefully. The Muslims never translate their holy book, prayers are in the tongue of the Arab and from the time of their prophet. If God spoke thus, then we must listen perhaps in his word as spoken.

Bacon continued:

For let anyone with an excellent knowledge of some science like logic or any other subject at all strive to turn this into his mother tongue, he will see that he is lacking not only in thoughts, but words, so that no one will be able to understand the science so translated as regards its potency. Therefore no Latin will be able to understand as he should the wisdom of the sacred Scripture and of philosophy, unless he understands the languages from which they were translated.

Secondly, we must consider the fact that translators did not have the words in Latin for translating scientific works, because they were not first composed in the Latin tongue. For this reason they employed very many words from other languages. Just as these words are not understood by those ignorant of those languages, so are they neither pronounced correctly nor are they written as they should be.

Thirdly, although the translator ought to be perfectly acquainted with the subject which he wishes to translate and the two languages from which and into which he is translating, Boethius alone, the first translator, had full mastery of the languages; and Master Robert, called Grosseteste, lately bishop of Lincoln, alone knew the sciences.

Grosseteste was a formidable Franciscan scholar of the last century, another brilliant mind and one learned as a philosopher and translator. The warning that translators must not only know the languages but the work in which they translate bring a further burden on what I was doing. My focus on medicine meant that not only would I be studying medicine, reading from the ancients, but turning their words from the past into a language of the present.

The fourth reason for this condition is the fact that the Latins up to the present time lack very many philosophical and theological works. For I have seen two books of the Maccabees in Greek, namely the third and the fourth, and Scripture makes mention of the books of Samuel and Nathan and Gad the seer, and of others which we do not have. And since the whole confirmation of sacred history is given by Josephus in his books on Antiquities, and all the sacred writers take the fundamentals of their expositions from those books, it is necessary for the Latins to have that work in an uncorrupted form. But it has been proved that the Latin codices are wholly corrupt in all places on which the import of history rests, so that the text is self-contradictory everywhere. This is not the fault of so great an author, but arises from a bad translation and from the corruption by the Latins, nor can it be remedied except by a new translation or by adequate correction in all fundamental points.

Bad translations are not the fault of the translator qua translator, but of the translator as one lacking in understanding. It is akin to one translating Greek poetry to Latin. The sounds are different, the tone is different.

Likewise the books of the great doctors like the blessed Dionysius, Basil, John Chrysostom, John of Damascus, and of many others are lacking; some of which, however, Master Robert, the aforesaid bishop, has turned into Latin, and others before him translated certain other works. His work is very pleasing to theologians. If the books of these authors had been translated, not only would the learning of the Latins be augmented in a glorious way, but the Church would have stronger supports against the heresies and schisms of the Greeks, since they would be convinced by their own sacred writers whom they cannot contradict. Likewise, almost all the secrets of philosophy up to the present time lie hidden in foreign languages. For as in many instances only what is common and worthless has been translated; and much even of this character is lacking.

The seventh reason why it is necessary that the Latins should know languages is particularly false interpretation, although the text be absolutely correct. For in both theology and philosophy interpretations are necessary, especially so in the sacred text and in the text of medicine and in that of the secret sciences, which are too obscure owing to the ignorance of interpretations..

Interpretations! Indeed, that is what we were doing. We were making judgements, which verb, which tense. Did we suggest, commend, or just retell a tale? As I learned more I felt I understood less. We translated as if we knew what we were reading, as if we ourselves were now the author, perhaps we did not, worse yet, perhaps the author did not. It was at that point I started to see that re-examine everything based upon facts at hand would be key to understanding.

As Bacon had said:

I now wish to unfold the principles of experimental science, since without experience nothing can be sufficiently known. For there are two modes of acquiring knowledge, namely, by reasoning and experience. Reasoning draws a conclusion and makes us grant the conclusion, but does not make the conclusion certain, nor does it remove doubt so that the mind may rest on the intuition of truth, unless the mind discovers it by the path of experience; since many have the arguments relating to what can be known, but because they lack experience they neglect the arguments, and

neither avoid what is harmful nor follow what is good. For if a man who has never seen fire should prove by adequate reasoning that fire burns and injures things and destroys them, his mind would not be satisfied thereby, nor would he avoid fire, until he placed his hand or some combustible substance in the fire, so that he might prove by experience that which reasoning taught. But when he has had actual experience of combustion his mind is made certain and rests in the full light of truth. Therefore, reasoning does not suffice, but experience does.

Further he noted:

Since this experimental science is wholly unknown to the rank and file of students, I am therefore unable to convince people of its utility unless at the same time I disclose its excellence and its proper signification. This science alone, therefore, knows how to test perfectly what can be done by nature, what by the effort of art, what by trickery, what the incantations, conjurations, invocations, deprecations, sacrifices, that belong to magic, mean and dream of, and what is in them, so that all falsity may be removed and the truth alone of art and nature may be retained. This science alone teaches us how to view the mad acts of magicians, that they may not be ratified but shunned, just as logic considers sophistical reasoning..

Yes, indeed, one must be able to verify and validate by physical observation. Yet combine that with the problem of translating, one sees the following. Namely that physical validation demonstrates a fact in any language. If water boils with the application of heat, it does so whether we speak Greek, Latin, Arabic or even French. The facts speak for themselves. If the heart of a human is of a certain structure then we should see that structure first hand, not read what it looks like through a book which itself may have poorly worded translations.

But first, if I were to translate, I needed material upon which to write, more than what I had with parchment. Again to my rescue comes Issn and Dismas. They had obtained material from Spain called paper, made from a mash of common materials and which was easier to write upon and much less costly than vellum or parchment. As it was I had become rather less fond of the tannery and its vellum and parchment producing, and I gathered that paper would be better. Dismas and Issn set about setting up a paper producing facility up river from the city. First they needed a mill stone, a large round stone with a hold cut in the middle. This they obtained from a seller in London who sent it by barge up the Thames to a site outside and west of Oxford. The mill stone would be used to grind barley and rye for bread. But apparently it would also allow the construction of a large mill wheel which would turn the mill stone for grinding. The wheel would give the power to also work the paper mill.

I had the opportunity to work with them and the local men in building and assembling the mill, first the grinding. The logic of connecting flowing water to a wheel, then the wheel to a shaft, then the shaft to gears, large wooden cylinders with strong teeth to transmit the power from one to the other. One could readily reset the mill speed by selecting different sets of gears, and the larger the gear the slower the grind. I could now see all my geometry coming to life. I could calculate the rotations, using the arithmetic and numbers Issn had taught me. In just six weeks we had the mill working. Flour was being made, and before long we had a wonderful supply of rye, for tasty rye breads.

Then we went to the paper grinder. Unlike the mill stone which went round, at varying speeds, the paper masher went up and down mashing the paper material, a combination of tree fibers and cloth. We created what Issn called a cam, a round odd shaped device that changed the rotation of the water wheel to up and down motion of the masher. So we could place the materials under the masher, start it off, and keep water in it as it mashed the contents into a soup like mixture. Then we put the mixture in bags that we hung along the edge of the mill down into the river for a week, until they were clean.

We then took the bags out and left them in a warm out building and allowed them to ferment, like the fermenting used in generating beer. After about two weeks we removed the fermented mash and placed it on fine cloth where the water leaked through it and then compressed it in a larger press for another week. Then we could remove it from the press and cloth and we had paper, rough, but a slight yellow white sheet. Finally we had to cut it and apply a coat of a mixture of pine resin and boiled down resin from tree tumors. It gave the surface a writing capability. It took almost a month for our first paper, which we folded several times and using a knife created about sixteen pages. Issn smiled and gave it to me and said:

"Now, Brendan, change the world!"

GALEN AND HUMORS

We began our next set of studies with Galen. Our introduction began with the humors. They were the yellow and black bile, the blood, and phlegm. Balance of these humors were essential to a good health. At least so said Hippocrates and Galen. This was the beginning of my questioning. Gaddesden lectured and if Galen had said it then it must be fact. However, since I was translating Galen from the original Greek, and I had access also to the original Galen translation in Arabic, one could see that there were differences.

Also as one who is copying these works, I also note that I could make mistakes. It was often tedious work, and I used at times reference to Greek and Latin dictionaries that even I had questions as to their consistency. I dare not share this concern with Gaddesden, for his was quite formal in his talk. In addition, as I noted, he was an Augustinian and I a Franciscan. Neither of us had taken full Holy Orders but there was always a sense of competitive stress. Thus hearing Galen in Latin from an Arabic text, I could sense and even check the differences when I had directly translated it. Even at the very beginning.

The four humors were given as:

Blood: For Galen this was produced by the liver. These were the mass of reddish materials that one could see in the fluid taken from the cutting of the pigs neck.

Black bile: This is the dark thick fluid mass. It was thought by Galen and others to be the cause of melancholy. The Greek *μελαινα* is for black, thus melancholy. A darkness that possess some persons.

Yellow bile: This is the yellow portion of the fluid, and a measure of the aggressiveness of the person. Too much yellow bile and the person becomes agitated, aggressive, and angry. Thus for Galen reducing this part of the fluid brings back a calmness.

Phlegm: This is the collection of white like mass that can be seen in standing blood. It was thought by Galen and others to be the source of an apathetic behavior, one who cares little, who is not social and engaged.

As Gaddesden said:

The humours (compositiones) are four in number: namely, blood, phlegm, reddish (yellow) bile, and black bile. Blood is hot and moist, phlegm is cold and moist, reddish (yellow) bile is hot and dry, black bile is cold and dry. Of phlegm. There are five varieties of phlegm. There is the salt phlegm, which is hotter and drier than the rest and is tinged with the biliary humour. There is the sweet phlegm belonging to hotness and dampness, which is tinged with the sanguine humour. There is the acrid phlegm belonging to coldness and dryness, which is tinged with the melancholic humour.

He then continued:

Of reddish bile. Reddish bile exists in five different fashions. There is reddish bile which is clear or pure and hot, both by nature and substance, of which the origin is from the liver. There is another which is straw-coloured, from which the origin is from the watery humour of the phlegm, and pure reddish bile, and therefore it is less hot. Another is vitelline. It is similar to the yolk of an egg rid it has its origin from a mixture of coagulated phlegm and clear red bile, and this is less hot. Another one is green bile, like the green of a leek, and it arises generally from the stomach or the liver ; and there is another which is green like verdigris, and which burns after the fashion of a poison, and its origin is from too much adctstio, and it possesses its own proper colour and its own energies, both good and evil.

Of black bile. Black bile exists in two different fashions. In one way it may be said to be natural to the dregs of the blood and any disturbance of the same, and it can be known from its black colour whether it flows out of the body from below or above, and its property is cold and dry. The other kind is altogether outside the course of nature, and its origin is from the adiustio of the choleric quality, and so it is rightly called black, and it is hotter and lighter, and having in itself a most deadly quality and a pernicious character.

He then continued:

The colours of the skin are of two kinds ; namely, those due to internal causes and those due to external. And the internal causes again are two in number; namely, excess or equality of humours. From equality comes that tint which is composed of white and red ; from inequality proceed black, yellow, reddish, greyish, and white. The reddish, black, and yellow set forth the ruling humour of the body: yellow by itself signifies reddish bile ; black by itself, black bile ; reddish by itself, abundance of blood. White and greyish signify an excess of coldness ruling the body ; greyish arises from black bile (melancholia) and white from phlegm.

Certain colours arise from external circumstances, such as from cold among the Scots and from heat among the Ethiopians. And there are many others from other causes.

There are also special or spiritual colours, due to fear, anger, grief, or other affections of the mind.

Of the Colours of the Hair. There are four colours of the hair — black, reddish, greyish, and white. Black is due to an excess of over-heated bile or blood ; reddish to a superfluity of a rather lower heat (caloris non adusti) — this is always the cause of reddish hair ; greyish arises from an excess of black bile, and white from a deficiency of the natural heat and the operation of putrid phlegm, and is therefore chiefly found in the aged.

Of the Coats of the Eye. The eye has seven coats and three humours. The first coat is the retina, the second the secundine. the third the sclerotic, the fourth the spider's web (tela aranea), the fifth the uvea, the sixth the cornea, and the seventh the conjunctiva. And of the humours the first is the vitreous, the second the crystalline, and the third the albuveinous which is in front of the uvea.

Of the Qualities of the Body. The qualities of the body are five in number ; namely, excess or grossness ; thinness or tenuity ; ' synthesis ' (wasting), squalidity, and the mean state (aequalitas). There are two kinds of grossness, the one consisting of in excess of flesh, and the other in fat. Excess of flesh arises from excess of heat and humours ; but fatness from cold and intense humidity ; loss of fat or thinness arises from heat and intense dryness. Synthesis arises from cold and intense dryness ; squalidity either from cold and intense humidity, or from an intensity of both together. And the mean state arises from a proper proportion of the humors. These are the appearances of the body.

Thus I sought to see if one could observe these humors. To do so I went to the pig house and it was there that some of my better learning occurred. Steven of Oxbridge was the owner of the slaughter house and preparer of meats. I thus came to know Steven well, and I would say that after a while we became good friends. Now the pigs were brought in from the country side to be slaughtered and cut for sale in the town. Every day there were six or seven pigs, and the University was one of the major buyers of the meat. First the pigs were corralled in a single cage and they were tied about the hind legs. This could be a very dangerous task since the pigs were powerful animals and they could kick and push the person about. Many times we would see the pig tier become injured and this also became my introduction to minor surgeries.

I then set about trying to understand these humors. I could not take samples from humans so thus began my daily trips to the slaughter house and my understanding of pigs. As Galen had done with animals thus so also did I then try my hand at the same efforts. But unlike Galen I tried to introduce some new methods; measurements. Galen's works was a qualitative effort, I tried to be more specific. Thus first the humors.

To see this I watched as the pig was raised by the hind legs and the throat cut with a large knife, the blood pouring forth like that from some waterfall. The blood fell into a large wooden bucket where it was collected for later and used for some foods such as blood sausage.

I was able to collect the blood and to examine it. I first did so with a large pottery jar, and I then transferred it to a clear glass goblet and let it settle. After many hours, often a day, one could see the four layers as described by Galen, the black bile at the bottom, on top the red blood, then the yellow bile, and finally atop a with like phlegm.

It was then that I thought that just seeing this was not enough. If one were to justify the logic, namely the characteristics of what the humors bring forth on the individual, albeit here a pig, then one had to measure something. Now I was initially at a loss. Measure what, for I wanted to compare one pig to another. I had the four humors, they separated easily but then how did I compare one pig to another? Also I asked why they separated as they did, what made for such separation. I was to learn again and again that asking "why" could be a dangerous but essential question.

Then it occurred to me. Since the time of Magna Carta measurements were to be made certain. That meant one could measure length, one could measure volume, and one could measure weight. The length of a piece of cloth, the weight of a set of coins, and the volume of a barrel of wine. They were all made of common measures, almost. But I needed one other measure, time. That was also simple, I had a simple hour glass and it could be made for an hour, one day, or any time I so desired. Thus I could make measurements of size, weight, and time.

Thus on subsequent days I went and measured the same volume from the pigs, and let it sit the same time, and measured the height of the different layers of the four humors. My question was; did the humors change and if so did they reflect anything as regards to the pig? After several weeks of performing such measurements, I saw no difference. Pig after pig yielded the same measure of humors, and in fact as I let the mixture sit over time, and measuring the humors by amount and over time I saw no difference.

Perhaps pigs are not at all like humans. Perhaps the humors are constant. Perhaps Galen was wrong. For that question I must exhibit the greatest of care. I had carefully recorded all the results on a single sheet of paper from the mill, then I deposited it in Steven's shed, in the closet where he kept his best and sharpest knives. I recalled Dismas' words; be cautious with new ideas.

I found a time after a few months to speak with Gaddesden regarding humors. His lectures were just a recantation of the authors. I had tried to see for myself, actually trying to replicate what Galen had done. Thus one day I stopped him and asked to speak of the Galen examinations of animals and if others had repeated them. His reply startled me:

"Brendan, I myself tried that at your age, but to no avail. I could but find a few sheep, not worthy of such examinations. Why do you ask?"

I tried to reply with utmost care, not knowing what furies I may unleash. I replied:

"Good Master John, perhaps there are other means, say with pigs, for there are many pigs used each and every day."

He smiled and said to me:

"That is a good approach, but it is a young man's task, for I could not be seen amongst the sows, covered with filth and then be expected to treat my patients. Would you dare to do this, for it may be of great value."

I was shocked, for now I had what appeared to be an open door, yet again this equally could be a trap to see if I may have already broken some unspoken law. Thus my reply was paced:

"Master John, would such be permissible for someone such as I to do such work? Would it not also detract from my studies."

He laughed and said somewhat kindly:

"Well, you smell no worse now than when you return from your pigs, so continue your efforts."

I was stunned, he apparently was aware all along. I thus replied:

"Master John, I was just trying..."

He sat down and said:

"Sit Brendan. You are quite smart, quite adventurous. It must be your Irish blood. You have been careful and discreet yet you must also know that Oxford is so small a place, people know everything. Your butcher's helper speaks to the tavern keeper who speaks to the vintner who then speaks to the maker of parchments who then speaks to Friar Andrew and who then speaks to me. I just awaited when you also would speak with me. So tell me Brendan what have you ascertained, was Galen correct?"

From that question I was not at all prepared. I replied:

"Master John, I have made many measurements, seeking to see if the humors could be measured and to see if they demonstrated differences. After dozens of such animals and over many weeks now I see no difference, each animal has the same levels of humors. I measure them in volume and in time, and record all to compare. But alas, no difference."

Gaddesden replied:

"Well would one not expect such from healthy pigs, they are all pigs without disease. What if we had sick pigs, we would not want to eat them. Is that not a good enough reason."

He continued:

"But you made measurements, what do you mean by that?"

I replied:

"Master John, what I did was to use the cylindrical glass to collect the blood. Then for each glass I collected a quart, I used the measure that we have prepared for the King, the small wooden vat that the King desires for weights and measures. Thus I had a constant amount. I then placed that into the glass cylinder that we had made, a perfect round glass of equal diameter. I measured the diameter to be 2 inches, where again I used the King's measure of an inch to be three barley corns. Then I poured the blood from the half gallon into the glass cylinder, and it reached about 5 inches. Then I let it settle. You see I also know that the volume of the blood was 5 inches, times the area of the cylinder, which we know from Euclid to be pi times 2 times 2, or 12 or about 60 "three inches". That is important. Then I let the blood settle to get the four parts. I did so for three days each time, and six times each day, at selected hours, using the hour glass, I measures the thickness of each layer. At first, it was all blood, then slowly it separated as one would expect with the humors. I have written down the results here."

Gaddesden then looked at the results. My small piece of paper with columns and numbers, some blood stains, but complete. He turned and spoke softly:

"Brendan, you remind me of Friar Roger Bacon, and Prior Grosseteste, they too did such work, but not to this detail. Your results show common answers. But your work, as detailed as it must be, present just well animals, you have no sickness, no difference in humors. Indeed you have results worthy of humors, they are the same."

"To make this worthy for reference you need sick animals, and animals whose sickness you can identify. Then you may be able to make such an exam. But there is a greater problem, You must do this on humans, and that is where you need blood."

I replied:

"Master John, but that is the point. We often bleed our patients, thus why not collect that blood, and we can use the theory of ratios to analyze them. Namely, even if we have different amounts of blood from each patient, then we can examine the ratio of each type and use that along with our diagnosis to see if we may be able to extend and improve or diagnosis."

DIAGNOSIS, PROGNOSIS, TREATMENTS

The practice of medicine we were told was three fold; diagnose the disorder, generate a prognosis, and treat if possible. Careful diagnosis relied upon a combination of reading and understanding the masters and applying our understanding of grammar and logic. Observing the patient and then seeking out what the disease was.

Prognosis was the most critical. We must diagnose correctly and then inform the patient of what we have understood and what they can expect. The problem is to tell a patient they will be well when in fact they are near death is unacceptable and will result in a reputation being destroyed.

Treatment is based upon what is accepted a practice. We were told not to be innovative, innovation, even resulting in a cure can subject us to criticism and may very well harm the profession. Namely we had rules, and strictures to work within and we had the ancients and current Masters to adhere to.

FEVERS

There were many types of fevers. Fevers were of special concern since in the young they often lead to death as well as in the old. They also may be of the type that lead to plagues and if this be the case then they must be caught quickly and isolated.

Gaddesden lectured on various types of fevers using Galen, Avicenna as well as Bernard de Gordun. Gaddesden seemed to see a consistency of opinion. Thus we saw fevers as:

1. Ephemeral: Those lasting half to a full day and then abating.
2. Putrid: A fever that lasts and remains at a very high level.
3. Tertian: A cyclical fever arising ever two days.
4. Synochus: A fever of a continuing duration.
5. Quartran: A cyclical fever arising every three days.
6. Quotidian: A fever which cycles daily.
7. Hectic: One which occurs each day.
8. Pestilential: One resulting from a plague like illness.

We discussed each of these. The three and four day fevers I had not understood. Gaddesden explained that they were common in the Mediterranean and not in England. I asked about plague, what was it and how was it transmitted. I also asked if all plagues were the same. Gaddesden had answers yet they were all incomplete. Plague was simply a disease that spread across a large population area very quickly. Yet when I asked how, the answers were vague at best.

As usual I asked many questions during the lecture. Specifically, I asked:

"Master John, when we speak of fever, how do we know that such exists. By our touch, by the patient's complaint. If by our touch, then do we each not have different sense that may lead us to see the fever differently. To one of us it may be mild yet to another it may be strong. Is there not some measure we could use to determine how strong the fever is?"

Gaddesden replied:

"Friar Brendan, a good physician should be able to make the determination based upon his training. When we see clouds can we not say that there may be rain, when we see rain, can we not say that we may get wet. Are not these sensations and observations that each of us would reach independent of some abstract "truth" that we would have?"

I replied:

"Master John, I am certain that trained physicians can generally make common assessments. But if I were to convey to another the size of a tumor, would it not be better that is say it is five inches, some fifteen barley corns, in length, rather than my assessment of it being large. If the other does not see it, then what they may consider "large" may very well differ from what I consider as "large". Thus using measurements, as I gather Friar Roger Bacon, and even Prior Grosseteste used care and most likely should be used."

Perhaps I had gone a bit too far. But to my surprise Gaddesden followed through:

"Brendan, yes it would be beneficial to have a measure. But as you know we now have measures for length, for area, for volume, for weight. The King himself has asked us here at Oxford to improve and maintain and even to send out those standards so that corn, wine, oats and even land is properly measured. We have a measure of time. Yet we have no way to "measure" a fever. Nor do we have a way to measure pain. Thus for those things we have ways to measure we can thus measure, for those things we have no such means we train. Thus becoming a physician we become trained."

I understood his claim, but continued to think about how to "measure" temperature. I often wondered if it would be better that instead of just reading the authors we had the chance to actually examine sick people. Gaddesden would just sit at the front of the room and read through Galen or others and comment, from time to time we would ask questions, but for the most part the other students were passive, just trying to absorb facts. Some has small wax tablets upon which the copied key facts, six or eight small tablets, which they could resume the next lecture. The students would be seen walking around the quadrangle of Merton like monks saying the prayers, memorizing their facts.

I had the advantage of being the translator and I had absorbed the facts since I was the translator from Greek or Arabic into Latin. Thus unbeknownst to many they were reading my words and not all of Galen. It was not that I had any pride in that, for indeed it often worried me. Did I translate with accuracy and veracity, for translators are all too often inserting their own words and words are truly ideas. A turn of the phrase, a pause, the use of the wrong Latin verb, could that have an effect on the lives of real sick people.

URINE

One of the classic areas of examining a patient was to collection of their urine. For it was its color, consistency, odor or smell, sediment, volume, and even taste in certain areas that would assist our diagnosis. Gaddesden held up a clear glass pitcher, called a matula, which was used to examine the urine for the elements being examined and to assist in the diagnosis. We would also all have our own matulas, each to be the new symbol of our training.

Gaddesden also discussed the recent work by a Byzantine physician, Joannes Actuarius, whose work on the urine not only collated the observations of his predecessors, but subjected them to a severe critical examination and added to them knowledge obtained by many personal observations. According to Actuarius the changes that the urine undergoes in the diseases of various organs is explained on the basis of "sympathy." Actuarius distinguishes some twenty

colors of the urine, takes note of the sedimentum, of the suspensum and the nubecula and, after many special observations, draws his conclusions on the humoral basis of pathology.

Actuarius used a vessel made of white glass, which was divided into gradations. The sedimentum occupies the four lowest markings, the suspensum (sublimia) the sixth, seventh and eighth, and the nubecula the tenth and eleventh. The fifth and ninth form the interspace between sedimentum and suspensum and between the latter and the nubecula.

Actuarius, whose monograph consisted of seven books, contrary to the prevailing opinion did not attach to water-casting the value of a universal means of diagnosis, but emphasized the necessity of examining the pulse, the respiration, the sputum, the feces, and other diagnostic emanations from the patient. In general, it is stated, no single method suffices in arriving at a correct diagnosis and prognosis.

Actuarius also stated that it was necessary to supplement uroscopy with examination of the pulse. By means of the pulse one could determine the condition of the internal heat and of the vital force, while the urine indicated the quality and quantity of the humors, and the excreta nature of the digestion. The method of most value in a particular case depended on the nature of the disease.

Gaddesden then proceeded to examine what Hippocrates and then Galen said about the use of urine examination in the areas of diagnosis, prognosis and treatment. Some of the more memorable were as follows.

ON DIAGNOSIS

It was classic to use urine to diagnose. Some of the specific approaches in Hippocrates Aphorisms are:

[4.70.] When in fevers the urine is turbid, like that of a beast of burden, in such a case there either is or will be headache

The question I asked was; is the fever the cause of turbidity or is there a secondary illness we should examine for as well. Furthermore, what is the turbidity, what does it consist of? Are all turbidities the same? What is the physical cause of the turbidity?

[4.71.] In cases which come to a crisis on the seventh day, the urine has a red nubecula (cloudy) on the fourth day, and the other symptoms accordingly.

This statement seems to indicate that a crisis is something that leads to the resolution of the disease. But blood in the urine means that there is some lesion, some breakage of the compartment of the blood that it does not remain where it should. What is the cause of this effect, thus is this a diagnosis or a prognosis.

[4.72.] When the urine is transparent and white, it is bad; it appears principally in cases of nephritis

A kidney disorder could be ascertained by examining the urine as follows. Ironically I wondered how many Medical students had seen a kidney as I had. Or even examines a pigs kidney, where the blood enters and leaves, where the urine come out to a bladder and then drained.

[4.76.] When small fleshy substances like hairs are discharged along with thick urine, these substances come from the kidneys.

One could see these small substances for they often fell to the bottom as if cast away from the fluid. To some degree I suspect they were like scales. These were thus from the kidney. We had studied the anatomy of the kidney from Galen and we understood it to be divided on both sides of the back, and that if a gladiator were in a battle and struck heavily in this area that blood may be seen in the urine. I had never seen this but for Galen it was common. But the materials discussed here seem to be growths that are sloughed off from a kidney in some state of duress. The cause again was unknown.

[4.77.] In those cases where there are furfuraceous (bran like scales) particles discharged along with thick urine, then the bladder has scabies [is “scabious”].

The location was different if the scales were like bran, for it then was the bladder.

[7.31.] When there is a farinaceous sediment in the urine during fever, it indicates a protracted illness.

[7.32.] In those cases in which the urine is thin at first, and the sediments become bilious, an acute disease is indicated.

[7.33.] In those cases in which the urine be-comes divided there is great disorder in the body.

[7.34.] When bubbles settle on the surface of the urine, they indicate disease of the kidneys, and that the complaint will be protracted.

Galen elaborated on this Aphorism: “Bubbles are created when the liquids are stretched by air. And usually this happens when the liquid contains something sticky. In which case the bubbles don’t break easily and become permanent...”

[7.35.] When the scum on the surface is fatty and copious, it indicates acute diseases of the kidneys.

This we had seen. Gaddesden had brought a sample from a patient. One could see a fatty like substance. This then was from the kidney. My question was then prognosis and treatment if any.

[7.67.] We must look to the urinary evacuations, whether they resemble those of persons in health; if not at all so, they are particularly morbid, but if they are like those of healthy persons, they are not at all morbid.

[4.78.] In those cases where there is a spontaneous discharge of bloody urine [... where they are urination bloody urine], it indicates rupture of a small vein in the kidneys.

I asked just what type of blood, was the urine colored or was it clotted? Gaddesden indicated a uniform coloring with blood. For that it was the kidney. He then discussed how and why the difference. The bladder follows the kidney and if the source is the kidney it would be mixed in the bladder and thus be uniform. If the bladder then there may be no mixing and thus it may keep the shape of a clot. The logic made sense to me based on the anatomy of Galen. Moreover the anatomy of Mondino also supported this conclusion. I could see how Logic would be of use in diagnosing and prognosis.

[4.79.] In those cases where there is a sandy sediment in the urine, there is calculus in the bladder.

[4.80.] If a patient pass blood and clots in his urine, and have strangury, and if a pain seizes the hypogastric region and perineum, the parts about the bladder are affected.

These helped us to diagnose. I understood these to be the words of Hippocrates and we saw the same in Galen, but the persistent issue of why these were to be believed were still with me. I kept thinking of the mill. For there I knew I had a river with power, a large mill wheel turned in the water transferring the power into the mill house, there by means of sets of gears I could obtain great forces are whatever speed I chose, and could grind corn or mash paper. Was not the body the same, a sequence of parts with functions so that if one function failed than I could from the resulting consequences identify the point of failure.

[7.39.] When a patient passes blood and clots, and is seized with strangury and pain in the perineum and pubes, disease about the bladder is indicated.

Locating the disease by pain was part of diagnosis. That meant however that one see the patients. Gaddesden made a point here that seeing a patient was sine qua non, and further asking the patient in many different ways was also important for often patients failed to describe properly and also Gaddesden noted that patients are also common in deceiving themselves as well as others.

[4.81.] If a patient pass blood, pus, and scales, in the urine, and if it has a heavy smell, ulceration of the bladder is indicated.

Again we discussed this aphorism as to clot versus coloration.

ON PROGNOSIS

Once we understood a diagnosis we then must proceed to a prognosis, or understand the potential course of the disease. From the Aphorisms regarding the examination or urine Hippocrates recommended:

[4.83.] When much urine is passed during the night, it indicates slight retreat of the disease.

[6.6.] Diseases about the kidneys and bladder are cured with difficulty in old men.

Galen states that the reason the elderly are cured with difficulty when they suffer with diseases of the genitourinary tract is because they also suffer from other diseases as patients usually have more than one disease and most of these diseases tend to affect the deteriorated renal function and prostate hypertrophy (in men) and mild immunodeficiency, make the cure of renal diseases far more difficult in the elderly than the young. Hence, this aphorism is correct.

[6.11.] Hemorrhoids appearing in melancholic [those with increased black bile] and nephritic affections are favorable.

[6.28.] Eunuchs do not take the gout, nor become bald.

This I found interesting. I had not known eunuchs but when explained I wondered if the testes provided some added humor that caused this.

[6.29.] A woman does not take the gout, unless her menses be stopped.

Again I wondered if the same applied. If a woman is like a eunuch then perhaps a woman has a humor or lack thereof.

[6.30.] A young man [boy] does not take the gout until he indulges in coition.

[7.36.] Whenever the aforementioned symptoms occur in nephritic diseases, and along with them acute pains about the muscles of the back, provided these be seated about the external parts, you may expect that there will be an abscess; but if the pains be rather about the internal parts, you may also rather expect that the abscess will be seated internally.

It was always essential to identify mortal diseases. Failure to do so would lead to loss of credibility and a great sense of distaste by the family of the patient. Understanding the fate of a patient is essential and communicating that is equally important.

[7.47.] If a patient with dropsy, one with swelling of the tissues, be seized with hiccup or a cough then the case is hopeless.

On this prognosis there was much discussion. Why, several asked, would the cough and lungs have such an effect on of be affected by the kidney or bladder? The discussion was an opportunity to discuss anatomy and that if the cause be the kidney then the kidney could become enlarged and press upon the lungs thus effecting a cough. If the kidney were to be so enlarged it would also soon cease to function and thus death would be imminent.

[7.81.] In the discharges by the bladder, the belly, and the flesh [the skin?] if the body has departed slightly from its natural condition, the disease is slight; if much, it is great; if very much, it is mortal.

For this aphorism the intent was to demonstrate degree. Namely, as was discussed, slight disturbances can be corrected by the body, large disturbances may very well lead to death. Gaddesden used this opportunity to discuss what he called homeostasis, namely the natural stability of the body as a whole. Our goal as physicians regarding that is twofold. First if we see disturbances then to use our skills to right the body if we can. Second, to instruct our patient in ways they would naturally do this as a matter of their lifestyle.

At this point I raised an issue with Gaddesden. I asked:

"Master John, when we advise patients in ways to live a better life, what if that patients is poor and has no means to improve their life, if they are without, if they have no intention to do so?"

It was clear to me that such a question would never have occurred to the other students, for theirs was a practice of Medicine to make them famous or rich or both. For me, however, I saw many poor and many uneducated, that was my mission, how then did I care for them?

Gaddesden replied:

"Friar Brendan asks a good question. For those of use ordained to work with and care for all mankind, then it is our duty to reach out when and where we can. The Oath of Hippocrates does not put that duty on us but the words of Christ do. Whereas Friar Brendan has an affirmative duty to so act you all have an equal moral duty, if you can."

I found that answer of mixed blessings. On the one hand he did establish a duty yet on the other hand he gave them all an excuse.

ON THERAPY

We then commenced on therapies. Here I again was wont to ask; why. We started with some of the suggestions from Hippocrates which were:

[6.36.] Venesection cures dysuria; open the internal veins of the arm.

[7.29.] When strong diarrhea supervenes in a case of leucophlegmatia or swelling of the abdomen due to excess of white phlegm, it removes the disease.

[7.48.] Slow and painful urination and dysuria are cured by drinking pure wine, and venesection; open the vein on the inside.

[4.82] When tubercles form in the urethra, if these suppurate and burst, there is relief.

Most of the students would just memorize what they had learned. Yet this is where I started to ask my now infamous question; why? Why were these aphorisms of Hippocrates correct. Why did Galen follow through with Hippocrates. I had found the writings of Johannes Actuarius who questioned these statements. What evidence did we have of their correctness. Were they tested?

People were starting to not just accept the statements as if they were from God, but since they were from men they may be wrong, yet if correct, one should ask why.

Moreover many physicians would diagnose and prognose and even recommend a therapy by just examining the urine, never having seen the patient. Should not one worry if there is a fever, is there is a tumor. Is not the ultimate state of the patient told by seeing their eyes, feeling their skin?

CLOSER EXAMINATION

Thus I found the examination of urine to be of interest. Yet as with my examination of blood, a practice I had continued with Gaddesden's support, I also started to examine urine. As with Bacon and Grosseteste, numbers are important, one must measure, the size, the volume, the weight and the changes with time.

I also found that separating the parts of blood and urine could be accomplished with the aid of some of the techniques we used at the mill. I had small cylinders, less than half an inch in diameter, and drawn with rounded bottoms. I took them and encased them in some fine ropes and had a long set of ropes extending from them. I initially could swing them about my head and do so for a long period and start to see separation. But I realized I could use the power of the mill, the paper mill, to spin the glass cylinders using the power of the water. For this I had the mill wright make a small mill wheel of wood, and upon which I could place the small glass vials containing blood or urine. I then could connect the small wheel to the mill wheel in the stream and it turned the table at a high speed, separating the fluids, blood and urine.

To my surprise, I found that the rotation on my small mill did separate blood into layers and with certain urine it left a residue on the bottom, for later examination.

But I struggled with trying to examine these separated substances. I looked through them in the sun, over candles, and in many ways. Then Gaddesden explained to me that both Bacon and Grosseteste had worked with lenses, and Friar John Pecham had further studies these extensively before he passed on in 1292. He had a successor a Friar Andrew who could help. We went to Friar Andrew, and he made lenses for reading, he had the ability to make small letters appear larger, and I thought perhaps we could see the substances I was separating better.

Friar Andrew was a lens maker. He took glass which he made from clean sand, and then using a rotating mill, like what I had done at the river mill, but one powered by his foot, to smooth and shape the glass. It gave a curved surface, and he did so on each side. He managed to do this with very thin lenses and they gave great magnification and clarity. I could hold one lens up from a page and make an item look larger, or at times blurry.

I took a book, and looked at a letter. It was larger. Then I moved the lens away from my eye and repositioned the letter to make it most clear and the letter appeared bigger. I thus wondered how large I could make it and if I applied this to the sediment in the urine, and even the parts of the humours, what else I would see. Could there be things yet to be seen that could add to diagnosis, prognosis, treatment?

Then I took two lenses, and moved them in relation to my eye and each other, that was when I was surprised. At certain distances I could see further enlargement beyond what I saw with any single lens! I had now seen a many fold enlargement. That is when I called upon Gaddesden. For I was somewhat fearful of seeing something not seen by man before and I needed to be certain that such a sight did not result in some religious affront.

The next day I brought Gaddesden into the small room which I had been using off the main Hall at Merton. He had been there before so things were not all new. I took him to the table where I had produced small samples of urine sediments. I first asked him to examine the sediment visually. That he did. Then I gave him a single lens, and he examined it again, this time seeing more. I then said "Take the two lenses, hold them at a distance, first the closest lens and fix it to see the best magnification, then atop that put the second and adjust that."

As I helped him move it he began to look amazed. He saw what I had seen small crustal like pieces, never seen or commented on previously. I then said:

"Now wait, come to the bench."

There I had a candle, and a set of iron legs above the candle, and atop that a slab of clear glass. I then took the glass, and with a sharp pointed knife slit the tip of my finger and placed the drop of blood upon the slab, and with my knife spread it out across the slab. It dried quickly and then I placed it atop the iron holders and said to Gaddesden:

"Now take the lenses, and as you did with the urine, look down upon the blood on the light."

As he managed to get the most magnification with one and then with both he looked and then stepped backward. He said:

"What are the small dots across the sample? There are hundreds, like small spheres, and lots of empty space."

I replied:

"Master John, I believe that the humors are in the blood, but that they are made up on small particles, almost like what Democritus had said about elementary particles of nature. But what is an even bigger question is; what will we see if we magnify it even more!"

Gaddesden then looked concerned. He said:

"Brendan, this is of great interest but like anything seen now by perhaps just us two, the world and learned men may take affront, we must slowly introduce this to the world. Keep working and keep your notes. We can address this as we proceed."

That was just the beginning.

WOUNDS

Gaddesden commenced on wounds by saying that just a few of us would see serious wounds. Most of those wounds would be from accidents, accidents on workers or farmers, and thus they may be severe but not as brutal as Galen had seen with the gladiators. For Galen had actually spent years tending to gladiators, keeping them fit. For despite what many had thought, gladiators were infrequently killed, they were too expensive and the displays, although open to severe wounds were intended for entertainment. Gaddesden also remarked that real wounds are treated by military surgeons who accompany armies. I suspect he could have been referring to Dismas and his crusades. Little did I know then but that I would see more wounds than almost all physicians and surgeons combined. But that is a tale for latter.

Gaddesden relied heavily upon Galen. He made the point that wounds must be:

1. Cleansed with good wine and any remnants of dirt or any contamination should be removed.
2. Wounds must be sealed from the inside out.
3. Wounds must be sutured to repair from the inside out. The sutures are fine threads soaked also in a strong clean wine and the muscle, ligaments and nerves resewn together.
4. Wounds must be finally stitched at the surface, keeping it clear and washed with fine wine as well.
5. Wounds should be kept moist with an oil and wine, the oil first heated almost to a boil and applied after a coating of wine.

We also discuss trepanation, the drilling into the skull to release excess blood. I asked if any had seen this and the answer was that none had, but it was more common in war.

CANCER

What was cancer? Gaddesden spent time discussing what he and the ancients called the spreading disease. Because it had the propensity to spread out from the point in which it started. It was called the crab (cancrena), cancer, also because it was often round, with the long crab like tentacles and would crawl across the body.

The classification was thus:

1. *Tumores secundum naturam* (tumours according to nature, e.g., breast growth during puberty)
2. *Tumores supra naturam* (tumours above nature, e.g., abscesses and inflammations)
3. *Tumores praeter naturam* (tumors beyond nature)

Of the latter there were three types:

a. *Onkoi (lumps or masses) generally immobile and often painless masses felt beneath the skin*

b. *Karkinos (malignant ulcers) areas of often bloody masses.*

c. *Karkinomas (nonulcerating cancers) masses upon the skin which also spread within the body.*

I thus questioned Gaddesden upon the latter three. I asked:

"If there be three types, and of the three the onkoi do not spread, but the karkinos do and are ulcerated, and the karkinimas are like the karkinos, but not of ulcerating types, then lesions of the skin, which may ulcerate and spread, are they cancers as well? For example, we see in leprosy a spreading of the disease across the body, massive lesions. Is that a cancer?"

Gaddesden replied:

"Leprosy does indeed spread and it may at times even ulcerate. Yet it is not a cancer. It stays on the skin, it is not systemic. Cancers will grow within the body, they are almost always fatal, and they progress with great speed."

Cancer was, according to Galen and others, a result of an imbalance in humors and moreover was a systemic disease not just a local disease. Its cause was the imbalance of the black bile. However as Gaddesden stated it was generally believed that a cancer could be removed by surgery and thus curing the patient if and only if it were done some early in its progression. Otherwise it would always be fatal.

As to treatment Galen said:

"If you attempt to cure cancer by surgery, begin by cleaning out the melancholic tumor by cathartics. Make accurate incisions surrounding the whole tumor so as not to leave a single root. Let the blood flow and do not check it at once, but make pressure on the surrounding veins, so as to squeeze out the thick blood. Then treat as in other wounds."

I asked Gaddesden if we see cancers only upon examination of the patient or are there hidden cancers say within the viscera, the heart or lung, or stomach, areas where we have no clear observation of their existence. He responded:

"Cancers we believe may be across the body, even the brain, yet those that we see are as classified above."

I then asked:

"How do we clearly identify a cancer? Must we examine the humors and see if there is an excess of black bile, is that a way. If death is inevitable, do we tell the patient?"

He replied:

"Careful examination of the patient is always the first step. If there are tumors examine them in detail. Ask when they started, how they progressed. Ask also what other pains they may have since such may show where the cancer has already spread. If it is early then one may have some chance to operate and try as Galen states to remove the tumor. Yet as I have noted, Galen was an expert surgeon, he had operated on the likes of gladiators and nobles, pigs and monkeys. He was a genius of anatomy, knowing where and when to cut and when not to cut. Thus leave the operation to an expert if you are not yet one."

"Now as to identifying the tumor type. If the tumor is red and tender it may most likely remain local. If the tumor can be readily moved and has not grown rapidly then it most likely is not a cancer and can be removed by a good surgeon. If the tumor is hard and imbedded, especially in the neck, arms, groin, then it may very well be a cancer. If the tumor is on the breast of a woman, then all too often it is a cancer. If the tumor on the breast is small, then surgery is recommended. Yet we have seen that one should on a breast remove it totally to preserve life. Yet unfortunately that also does not work."

We continued the discussion of this disease at length. It covered young and old, men and women, rich and poor. My problem was that all throughout this study we saw no sick people, we treated no one. Out of lecture I remarked this to Gaddesden. He agreed but he also noted that this is the academic period, we shall see many sick later. For that I was concerned if books and true disease would merge properly.

MONDINO AND ANATOMY

Galen made it clear that one need to understand the anatomy of the human to treat the sickness. We did so by studying Galen but then from Dismas in 1315 came a copy of the work by Mondino at Bologna. We discovered that at Bologna they did actual dissection of human remains, several times a year and that Mondino recorded these results in a text used by his students and now available to others.

For Mondino, the wall of the stomach is composed of an internal coat, the seat of the sensations, and an external or fleshy coat which performs the act of digestion. It was not clear to me what the process of digestion was. I had by this time been examining pigs, and had tried to see what the process was. One could feed a pig some specific matter, something we would not expect to be digested. Then upon slaughter and examination of the stomach I could track how long each eating before the slaughter the process took. Did it get to the stomach, through the stomach, into the long set of narrow tubes, into the larger tubes or excreted. It appeared that Mondino failed to look at time, for his anatomical studies were at death.

Mondino, after a discussion of the position of the spleen and of the liver, describes with great accuracy the vena cava which always played an important role in the anatomy of the ancients. This is a large vein going through the liver. Many thought the liver as an organ of generation and its failure led to the failure to generate blood. However I had begun to palpate livers with Gaddesden on patients who had been heavy drinkers, and the liver was enlarged yet the blood

was poor. Perhaps the liver had a role of cleansing rather than generation. That being the case one wondered where generation occurred.

His description of the male genital organs is far more detailed than that of the female genitals which seem to be based on the anatomy of animals exclusively.

Mondino tried to give an exact or, at least, an approximate description of the organs. Mondino still relied on the teaching of Galen, however, on whom he also relied for his physiology. The liver has five lobes, as in many animals; the stomach is described as spherical. The yellow bile is secreted by the gallbladder, while the black bile has its origin in the spleen and reaches the stomach by channels, the description of which is purely imaginary.

The heart is described by Mondino as having three ventricles; in the right ventricle are two orifices, the larger one directed towards the liver, because through it the heart draws the blood from the liver, while the other is the opening of the arterial vein towards the lung. The left ventricle also has two orifices: one with three valves and the other with two valves through which passes smoke-like vapor from the lungs. The third chamber is described as consisting of various small cavities in the septum, where the blood crossing to the left ventricle may be utilized.

The anatomy of Mondino is to a large extent an attempt to teach anatomy from personal observation, justifying the Galenic assertions with imaginary descriptions when they appeared erroneous. Galen was the authority from whom there was no appeal. He was often read in an Arabic translation, and as there were frequent errors in the translations there were also many difficulties in interpretation—difficulties which, as we know, persisted until the time of Vesalius. Whenever actual facts could not be brought into accord with the statements of Galen, it was customary for the anatomist to state that the text of Galen had been changed by the Arabs, the translators, or the copyist. The idea that Galen himself might have made a mistake could not be entertained.

Part way through the discussion on Mondino, Issn brought to me a copy of the work of Ibn al Nafis, a physician in Alexandria of great respect. It was of course in Arabic but we quickly translated it. For al Nafis he saw the lungs and the heart to be interconnected. Instead of three ventricles as Galen had said, and indeed as Mondino had said, he prognosticated two atria, like the initial rooms in a home and two ventricles, each as a pair, one pair of atria and ventricles coming from the lung and one pair coming from the soma or body. Then they went to the other. Thus one pair has its source from the lung and its destination the body and the other just the opposite. He insisted that there was no passage between the two sides of the heart. It was what I had seen in pigs, but it was not Galen, and it was not Mondino. Indeed al Nafis said the right part of the heart took the blood in from the soma and sent it to the lungs where it was mixed with air. Likewise the air in the left side was sent to the soma. He stated something that to me for the pigs I saw firsthand. Why was Galen wrong, why did Mondino disagree? Gaddesden and I had a long discussion. Facts are made by observation, Bacon taught us that. Did Mondino have different facts. We did not do dissection in England, they did at Bologna. Sooner we must send someone to Bologna, but to do so, we must be certain. Gaddesden said he could not be the one, the King would not allow it nor would his order. Prior Robert looked at me. He said:

"Brendan, as a Franciscan you will be accepted, but you need more than Medicine from Oxford, those Italians and especially those Bolognese will try to destroy you. We will work on it, but Brendan, sooner than latter you will be to Bologna."

That was another pledge that would change my life. Pigs and Egyptians, and Issn and Dismas.

THE SPINE

I had also read of Willian of Saliceto in Bologna who as a surgeon had used the knife to cut and repair. Unlike the Arabs who did not use the knife but only cauterized wounds, he took to it as a surgeon and managed to repair wounds and even parts that he called nerves. The nerves were those fibers which he alleged felt touch, pain, and even did the opposite, allowed the hand to move. These nerves were part of what Galen understood. Galen saw nerves as being those elements attached to the brain which bring sensation into the brain and carry actions outward. It was not clear just what the mechanism of that action was. Galen understood the nerves to flow back and forth to the brain, and that they carried their messages, if such is a useful metaphor from and to the brain by some fluid within the nerves. As we can identify the blood as within the veins we should be able to identify this unknown fluid inside the nerve. Saliceto managed to reconnect these nerves and make them function again. Did he reconnect the flow or was there some other mechanism.

Avicenna, who we had studied, wrote in the early eleventh century that "Nerves are one of the 'simple members' -- homogeneous, indivisible, the 'elementary tissues' (others include the bone, cartilage, tendons, ligaments, arteries, veins, membranes, and flesh)." Avicenna offered a more precise physical description of them -- "white, soft, pliant, difficult to tear."

My interest was to see what part of these nerves controlled what part of the body.

Not only did I spend time with the pigs but also with cows, a much more difficult animal. Yet I knew cows quite well, for as a child I would spend time helping my mother milk our small collection of cows, and I also helped about with the milk maids who milked the many cows that were on the outskirts of Dublin. I also remember my first time dealing with sickness, my own. For after many of these cows I came down with a blistering rash on my arm. My mother was terrified. The milk maids told her not to worry, it was merely a cow pox and that she should be happy for it was said that one who had the cow pox would never become ill with the small pox. That was one of my first recorded medical facts. As I worked again with these cows I wondered if such an observation had merit with Galen and the others. I had not seen such.

THE BRAIN

The brain is a complex organ. Nerves come and go to the brain. Of all the organs, the brain appears to be the most protected. As Hippocrates states when discussing epilepsy, the Sacred Disease:

But the brain is the cause of this affection, as it is of other very great diseases, and in what manner and from what cause it is formed, I will now plainly declare. The brain of man, as in all other animals, is double, and a thin membrane divides it through the middle, and therefore the pain is not always in the same part of the head; for sometimes it is situated on either side, and sometimes the whole is affected; and veins run toward it from all parts of the body, many of which are small, but two are thick, the one from the liver, and the other from the spleen. And it is thus with regard to the one from the liver: a portion of it runs downward through the parts on the side, near the kidneys and the psoas muscles, to the inner part of the thigh, and extends to the foot. It is called vena cava. The other runs upward by the right veins and the lungs, and divides into branches for the heart and the right arm. The remaining part of it rises upward across the clavicle to the right side of the neck, and is superficial so as to be seen; near the ear it is concealed, and there it divides; its thickest, largest, and most hollow part ends in the brain;

The brain has been studied by many, and especially those surgeons in war often find themselves facing injuries that open up the brain to view. Trepanation is a surgical opening to the brain to release the buildup of excess fluids and it oftentimes saves lives. Gaddesden would read through Hippocrates and then on to Galen and then to Avicenna.

Galen saw the spinal cord as an extension of the brain which carried sensation to the limbs. He believed that the nerves controlled the actions of muscles in the limbs, and that the two principal functions of the nervous system, sensation and motion, were governed by two different types of nerves: respectively soft and hard. He further insisted on a curious anatomical feature of the nerves, imagining them to be hollow tubes.

Quite logically, he reasoned that this must be so in order for the animal spirits, the body's principal source of vitality in his system, to circulate throughout the body. As the Renaissance illustration here indicates, the investigation of the nerves after Galen also became an inquiry into the effect of the brain on the body. Many physicians, in agreement with Galen, believed nerves were offshoots of and controlled by the brain.

Avicenna had written that "Nerves are one of the 'simple members' -- homogeneous, indivisible, the 'elementary tissues' (others include the bone, cartilage, tendons, ligaments, arteries, veins, membranes, and flesh)." Avicenna offered a more precise physical description of them -- "white, soft, pliant, difficult to tear." Avicenna and his contemporaries began to describe the complex and varied arrangements of nerves throughout the body, attempting to differentiate further their functions. In the Canon of Medicine, he observed: "Dryness in the nerves is the state which follows anger." Such statements suggest that Avicenna also believed the nerves to be entangled with and responsive to the emotions, yet another sign of their strong connections to the brain.

In our studies, Gaddesden described how Galen described ten of the cranial nerves, the corpus callosum, the tectum, the fornix, the epiphysis or pineal body, the sympathetic chain, he also distinguished the roots of the spinal nerves. He described the recurrent laryngeal nerve, characterizing it as vocal nerve or nerve of the speech.

He described the ventricular system of the brain as the seat of the psychic spirit. In addition, Galen described the blood vessels of the brain and studied extensively the function of the spinal cord, emphasizing its importance for the movements of the body and limbs.

I had examined the spinal cord on pigs, by selecting parts and severing it to see what parts were disabled. Galen had seen the nerves emanating from the spinal cord as sending signals by some means to the muscles. I also expected that the flow could be in the same manner and return messages to the brain in the form of touch or pain. I had heard of patients, ones who had lost limbs, where the nerves were severed beyond a certain point, still sensing the lost limb or feeling pain. Thus I discussed this and Gaddesden had no clear answer. I wondered was there a fluid, a humor, that transmitted the signals to activate and to receive to the brain and were the ventricles some fluid storage medium.

Now we noted that Galen presented the function of the spinal cord and the structure of spinal column. Galen made detailed observations on the lesions of the spinal cord. Galen had noticed that on transverse sectioning of the spinal cord all the movements are abolished below the level of the section and total anesthesia is induced. Galen had proceeded to transverse sectioning of the spinal cord at various levels in animals and described the distribution of the motor and sensory loss in the body under the level of the lesion. On sectioning the spinal cord at the level of the fifth cervical vertebra, Galen described the motor and sensory loss in the upper and lower limbs, whereas the diaphragmatic respiration remained intact.

In a set of interesting examinations when Galen performed a transverse semi section of the spinal cord the voluntary motion is abolished under the level of the section ipsilaterally and the perception of the pain and temperature is lost in the body and limbs contralaterally. Galen noticed that in cases of hemiplegia, associated with ipsilateral facial palsy the lesion is located in the brain. In the contrary in cases of hemiplegia without involvement of the cranial nerves the lesion is in the spinal cord. Galen underlined that disorders of cognition and psychiatric phenomena are due to brain's dysfunction.

In cases of traumatic lesions of the brain Galen applied trepanation for draining the intracranial hematomas and decreasing the intracranial pressure. For the trepanation Galen used the "crown trephine" (φοινικίδα) for removing bone and the "drill trepan" (τρύπανον) for making perforations in the skull. He applied also trepanation for the treatment of hydrocephalus in childhood.

Galen studied hydrocephalus extensively and described three kinds of it, one between the brain and the meninges, one between the meninges and the skull and one between the skull and the skin. Galen thought that the anterior part of the brain is the seat of perception, volition, memory and reason though the posterior part, which is more solid than the anterior, plays an important role in the life and the vegetative functions of the man. He claimed also that defective perception and reasoning may provoke delusions and hallucinations.

THE SICK

Many time I was frustrated at Oxford. Gaddesden followed the texts. He would read, comment, quiz, and we would often have our dialectic, him challenging each of us regarding what we had learned. But unlike the mill, where I learned more by actually building the mill, which now made substantial flour and continued to produce paper, I had never really seen the sick. Gaddesden did not encourage that until well after we had completed our studies.

By my third year, well into 1317, Gaddesden asked me to accompany him to a sick child. The child was the son of a prominent land owner, a Knight, outside of Oxford. We walked most of the distance starting just after sunrise, and it took some three hours. The estate was quite large and the house was also more than I had seen before. The lord of the manor was Sir William of Blandon, and he was some minor lord and apparently he had known Dismas years before. We entered the manor, a large stone edifice with a quite wide and tall set of front doors, apparently of oak. Inside we were greeted by Sir William and his spouse. He greeted Gaddesden and Gaddesden introduced me to them. Strangely he called me his colleague, and I was but 23 at the time, too you I believed to be any such colleague but there I was.

We went into a great hall, there was a roaring fire and a large long table. On the walls were beautiful tapestries, with scenes I had never observed before. Sir William asked that we sit and then started to tell us the problem.

He said:

"Friar John, Prior Dismas and I have been friends for ages. He suggested that perhaps you could treat our young boy, he has been ill and there seems to be little we could do here."

Gaddesden replied:

"Sir William, let us see the young man and then we can tell you what we could possibly do. Friar Brendan and I will spend some time with the young man. What Sir William is his name?"

He replied:

"Arthur, Friar John, Arthur and he is only eleven years of age."

We went up to the second floor and down a hallway to a separate room. There was Arthur now with his mother. She was tearful and the young man was pale, appeared quite weak. At this point I began to try and remember all my Galen, my own records of Gaddesden himself, Avicenna, and the list went on. I felt overpowered with knowledge but devoid of any skill. I wondered if all Doctors were to have been this way. Gaddesden went to Arthur and touched his head. Then he took his wrist and felt for his pulse. He then examined his chest. Then he awakened Arthur to see how he responded. He then asked Arthur if he could give us a urine sample. This we put in a clear glass and examined it as we would have done for any patient.

Then Gaddesden went back and carefully put his hands on Arthur's neck, and asked me over. The mother was no longer in the room and Gaddesden said to me:

"Brendan, feel the neck, the glands, feel the nodules, the hard round balls. Try to move them, see that they are fixed. Now go to his arms, under the arm, feel again the same nodules. They have no pain, no movement, but are hard. Now feel the temperature, see the eyes, the pale skin. Now examine the urine, the light color, the sweet smell. What is this telling you?"

At first I tried to add up all the possibilities but the more I thought the more I jumped to a diagnosis. I replied:

"Friar John, I fear that the young man has a cancer, a set of tumors that we cannot excise. Also that the cancer has spread. I feel Friar John that there may be little hope, I truly hope that I am wrong."

He looked down at the child, washed the child's brow with a cold cloth and looked at me. He replied:

"Unfortunately you are right. It was also what I feared. There is no cough, no strength, there is a high temperature which has been steady and increasing. The nodules are the telling sign. If they were painful then with good care we could see him recover. With no pain and so many, and the fever, the weak urine, the weak pulse, I too feel it is hopeless. Now comes the most difficult part. We must tell the parents. I want you with me, this is often the hardest part of medicine. They will not believe, they will want hope, they will seek others, and often they will reach out and blame us. You will learn more about medicine today than in any day of your career. Let us go."

Indeed the telling was painful, they denied our opinion, they did lash out seeking another more "learned" physician, and then they just sat and cried. This was indeed my hardest day.

We left and walked back to Oxford. It was dark when we came to the walls. Some few lights shone otherwise we most likely would have had little moonlight. We both were silent all the way back. I had nothing to say. Gaddesden was praying, I was asking myself why God does this, but after all this was all too common an occurrence, especially amongst the common folk.

PLANTS AND MEDICATIONS

We also studied medications. Most were plants and many dated back to Hippocrates and many were not found in our lands. However, there were also many that were found. I recalled from my home in Ireland that the old Druids had many concoctions that they claimed were of value. Yet, Issn reminded me of Avicenna and his rules regarding any proposed medication. Avicenna had stated:

- 1. The drug must be free from extraneous accidental quality.*
- 2. It must be used on a simple, not a composite, disease.*
- 3. The drug must be tested with two contrary types of diseases, because sometimes a drug cures one disease by its essential qualities and another by its accidental ones.*
- 4. The quality of the drug must correspond to the strength of the disease. For example, there are some drugs whose heat is less than the coldness of certain diseases, so that they would have no effect on them.*

5. *The time of action must be observed, so that essence and action are not confused.*
6. *The effect of the drug must be seen to occur constantly or in many cases, for if this did not happen, it was an accidental effect.*
7. *The experimentation must be done with the human body, for testing a drug on a lion or a horse might not prove anything about its effect on man.*

We began by studying Dioscorides. The problem was that many of the plants he recommends were not readily available in England nor even in northern France. Some were and it was these that we focused upon. At the Bachelor level of study we read through many of his recommendations but it would not be until we were in our Masters courses that we would learn of the preparations and specific applications.

THE JEWS, THE MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS

As I was finishing my Medical education at Oxford, I had become much more close to Issn. Dismas was a frequent visitor but Issn was there always. We had spoken of ourselves slightly, always keeping distance as I suspect Dismas had told Issn as well.

I asked Issn as to how he came to know Dismas. The answer was a bit of a shock for he stated that he met Dismas on the field of battle, and despite being an enemy Dismas saved his life. He further told me that he was from Spain, near the coast of a Moorish family. His wives, yes he had two and all his children died of plague while he was in the Crusade. I then asked why he came here. His reply was enlightening:

"Brendan, for many centuries we Muslims had great wisdom, great honor, great courage. I still pray five times each day, read our holy Koran. Yet when I went to what you call your Holy Land, holy to us also, I saw that the Arab leaders of our faith were disavowing our learning, saying that we must be strict believers and that all comes from God and what we do must be accepted from God. If a man is ill, then it is God's will, if a man is poor, then it is God's will, if a man loses in battle then it is God's will. They took all from man and man him at most an instrument of God, and that was in sharp contrast to what I had seen in the old days when we were great scholars, great thinkers. For example, medicine could no longer be followed, for it was God's will if we survived. Was it God's will that all my family perished, or can we learn what happened and try to stop it?"

He continued:

"You Christians have a complicated God, a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit, yet you claim one God. You use the ideas from the Greeks, from Plotinus, from whatever source you can to explain all of this, you use your mind, you accept ambiguity, change, and frankly confusion. We Muslims have but one God, but one Prophet, it makes for us a simple religion. Yet in that very simplicity we have a rigid faith, a faith now where our religious leaders dictate that we go backward. If that were the case at the time of the prophet perhaps his words would never have left the desert. Dismas gave me a chance to both follow my faith while seeking to be a better person. Like you Brendan, I also can question, carefully of course, and seek wisdom, while also obeying the words of God."

I found his explanation enlightening.

Issn then began to discuss our own attitudes here in the Christian lands. He said:

"I see that here when you study and become quite wise that you bear no children. Whereas the wise Muslim manages to bear many children with many wives. Then again I have seen in the Jews another altogether different trait. Their wisest, called Rabbis, are married to only one woman and this woman is selected from the family of also the wisest. Now I had an uncle who bred horses to race. He took the swiftest male horse and bred it to a mare who also was swift. His father had done that and his father's father had one also. Thus it appears that proper breeding can result in superior stock. Yet you Christians do not breed your best at all, the Jew only breeds their best in a limited manner and we Muslims breed only our best stallions with any mare so to say. Why do you Christians not breed your best at all?"

I was somewhat stunned at this question. It had merit and yet I had never considered it in the least. Yet I had some understanding and would try and convey it.

"Look about here Issn and what do you see. Let me explain. We are scholars. We have no wives to bother us, ask for this and demand that. We also have no wives whose demands could lead to jealousy in others, we live in poverty and chastity is a simple way to avoid the stares of others. It allows us to do what we do for with a family we would have more obligations, most of them to the family before all others. Here our obligation is to God and our community. I learn medicine to treat the people, poor and rich alike. You speak of the Jew, and for the Jew, the Rabbi especially, he must attend to his prayers and his duty as teacher. I know not the Muslim, other than you my friend, yet we all have obligations to others, and with no wife our ability is to serve more. That is why I do what I do."

IRELAND AND THE SCOTS

It was during this time that I received some letter from my mother through Dismas. It appeared that Edward Bruce, the Scot, had managed to enter Ireland and convinced some of the local leaders in the O'Neill clan to try and separate Ireland from English control and move it under Scot control. Edward Bruce was the brother of Robert Bruce who was at war with Edward II the King. For most of the students at Oxford this was but a distraction but for me it was a concern since they had tried to work their way south towards Dublin and further by 1315 Edward decided to attack and reclaim what had been lost. I was finishing my medical education at Oxford and this war and the risk to my family, despite my having been gone some eight or more years was strong.

The Irish had been battling this English control since the later 1100s. It was then that King Henry II managed to get the Pope, then an Englishman himself, to use a document called the Donation of Constantine to bequeath Ireland to the King. Henry then made his son John the ruler of the land. John is the same John as King that was forced by the nobles to sign Magna Carta. John was despised as both an incompetent king and despicable human.

This document, the Donation of Constantine allegedly was a bequeathing of island territories, such as Ireland was considered, to the Christian overlords, such as England. The irony was that Ireland was Christian since the time of Patrick yet England did not become Christian of any sort until 600 and with the placement of Augustine as bishop by Saint Gregory the pope. It was a purely political and fraudulent accomplishment and the English just purloined Irish lands and sent the people into poverty. Yet the Irish leaders seemed always to be fighting, more amongst themselves that against anyone else. Ireland sided with the Scots, related by their Celtic commonality. Yet the Scots seemed more organized and managed to beat the English away whereas the Irish leaders seemed totally self-possessed and incompetent. The people suffered while the leaders were often disemboweled.

News on the campaign came from both Bristol as well as London and York. I was beginning to become aware of political issues and these were becoming more intense each day. I had known little of Ireland as an entity and had lived but some twelve years there. Dublin was under strong English influence and was a trade center and thus the conflicts were something I was unaware of. But amongst the fellow students at Oxford one began to speak of things beyond our day to day studies. King Edward II for example I had a brief passing with as a person when we were involved with the repair of Piers Gaveston remains in 1312.

At that time it was more of a curiosity and I knew little of the details of Gaveston and his assume relationship with Edward. But now there were many students, almost all who were non clerics, who knew of or gossiped about Edward. The King had collected a new male friend one Hugh Despenser the Younger for whom many the thought was that he was like Gaveston and the Kings interests were anything but those of a friend. The King it appeared managed to continuously aggravate the nobles and many of my fellow classmates were the sons or nephews of many of these nobles. Thus one heard tales of Kingly indiscretions that the normal folk would have no access to.

POLITICS

As time went by the awareness of the King and his behavior became an almost daily matter of discussion amongst the non-religious students. Many had family connections and the wars with the Scots, the Welsh and others became a more open issues. In addition, the problem that Edward had with his personal friends such a Gaveston and now Despenser were all the discussion. Apparently the relationship was more than just fellowship and this caused significant concern amongst the nobles. The reason was twofold. First the nature itself between the two men, something of which I had some remote understanding, but the second was the way the King allowed this "friends" to have power and control over the Kingdom. Edward II was not Edward I. The first Edward was a brutal and incessant taker of lands, whether it be Scotland, Wales or Ireland. Edward II was somewhat of a bumbler, failing to have any real success in the long term in any of his actions.

CHAPTER 6 (1316-1318) MEETING OCKHAM

It was the Fall of 2016. I was working on my Master of Medicine at Oxford, which involved mostly the reading of the texts and commentaries that I had spent a decade on in translations. Thus unlike many of my colleagues I knew them well, I had also been exposed to servicing the poor sick who sought help at our Convent and had been working with Masters who had been assisting in Oxford and the surrounding towns. It was clear that the reality of medicine was more than the words in Galen.

The summer of 1316 was unlike all others, so I am told. It never warmed and as a result the crops never matured, and when Fall came upon us, the corn was still half grown, with no growth on the stalks. All that it was good for was a poor fodder for the pigs. The people would face a difficult winter. I was concerned because sickness is one problem, famine another, and the cure for the latter is food which it appears we have very little. The sun was not out frequently, we have cold wet quarters and peasants with looks of total despair. I was afraid that if this were to continue we then would face 1317 again with no crops but with a weakened population.

In my first week Dismas came to see me. He was getting on but he still managed several trips a year from Bristol to Oxford. Issn had left back to Spain but he too would return from time to time. Along with Dismas was a short thin friar about ten years my senior. He was from our Convent in London, called Greyfriars. Dismas came to the common room in the Convent and said:

“Brendan, I want to introduce you to Friar William, Willian of Ockham.”

I smiled and we shared blessings. Dismas continued:

“I told William your studies are in Medicine but he is lecturing on Lombard and the Sentences and I thought that you may find them of value. Even though you are not a theologian, your insight may be helpful to William.”

Before I could respond Ockham said:

“I hear Brendan that you have the reputation of asking “why” quite often and then posing an alternative view which is insightful but at time inciting.”

I stood a bit nervous and said:

“Friar William, I may be just an over anxious student...”

Before I could say anything he continued:

“No, no Brendan, I am seeking such people. Your ideas are very much helpful. Don’t worry, I am sure we can learn from each other.”

I replied:

“But William, I am in medicine, I study to be a physician, not a philosopher and certainly not a theologian.”

Dismas laughed and replied:

“You see William, Brendan here could readily get himself and the entire Order under Papal restraint just by his asking of questions if we allowed him to pretend to be a theologian. Besides he is a good physician, at least he will be. We need that as much as we need those who care for the souls.”

Ockham was a short thin man, and he had apparently been at Oxford several years before me. He and Dismas were the best of friends and any recommendation from Dismas I felt was like the voice of God telling me to do something. Little did I know that I would be changing my life dramatically from this day forward. Here on the one hand I was setting forth on the study of Medicine, on the other Ockham was asking me to join his lectures on The Sentences, Lombard's long treatise on the scripture. I had eschewed theology after my Arts studies but here Dismas was throwing me back into the arena.

Ockham sat down at our large wooden table and remarked:

"I recall many hours of good conversation here when I was your age Brendan, many hours. Tell me why you chose Medicine rather than theology? I gather you have a very inquisitive mind, that would be a powerful tool in theology or even philosophy. So why Medicine?"

I had been at the study a brief while, albeit conversing with the learned teachers for a few years already. Thus I was not a tyro altogether and I had been translating parts of Galen from the original Greek as was my normal path with Dismas. Thus I replied:

"Brother William, it is for two reasons. First I truly believe that this will allow me to help people, to learn the disease and to seek the treatments, for God gave us insight and reason and by that means we should not just passively accept what occurs but use our talents to improve them. If a man is sick, then we should not just let him die, we should try to use our knowledge to seek a remedy, if a man I dying, and our skills are too little, then we should seek to remedy his pain. Second, medicine can be based on facts, facts that indicate a disease, facts that direct a cure. We can see the results of our judgements. In philosophy and theology one deals with words, ideas, no facts."

Ockham turned to Dismas and said:

"When have we heard this before?"

THE SENTENCES

I was to spend a good portion of my time now as a Bachelor of Medicine expanding my knowledge of the actual practice. Yet at the same time I had been prompted to spend time with this Ockham fellow, a short but intense man somewhat older than me, not yet recognized as a Master of Theology. Why my elders thought this was of value is beyond me but from time to time I succumbed to obedience.

Thus the beginning was to cover the Sentence of Lombard. Each candidate for the Master position in Theology was required to teach the Sentences. I suspect the existing Masters would assess his performance. It was not like medicine where I could see a patient and commence diagnosis, prognosis and treatment. Then on to the next patient. In theology, one had to opine on prior Masters and see where one could do correct misinterpretations, find where error arose, and then deal with criticism. Theology was a dangerous area. At one extreme the theologian accepted what was doctrine and repeated it. At the other extreme one looked for new insights, errors from old masters, reinterpretations. That approach I felt led to conflicts.

The Sentences by Peter Lombard was a long highlighting of key elements of the Testament. One could use it as a vehicle to understand what were thought to be the important points. The Sentences were a collection of glosses or marginalia, written by prior commentators, some significant, some marginal, who had read and opined on the text of the Testament. Some comments made or reach some conclusion some just posed a problem. Each student completing their Master degree in Theology would then take this collection of sentences, indeed they were a massive number of sentences, and then create their own commentary.

Thus did Ockham start in the Fall of 1316. He was preparing for his formal presentations in the following Fall, 1317, again at Oxford. For this time, we were to be his first attempt, a means to prepare his notes for his formal approach. Thus we would cover what was necessary, The Sentences, yet we were much more informal, we were to be as much as collaborators as students. I was the only exception in the class, the only student not studying theology. I was a practical student, one who did something rather than just thinking. All of my fellow students, Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, and others were there in anticipation of going forward as theologians. Some would go on to high positions in the Church. I was looked upon strangely since I was both younger than most but I had been a student of a lowlier area of study, medicine. I dealt with individual people, the poor, and the sick, I saw the suffering in life, death, disease, and for some of my fellows this may have engendered fear.

But Ockham's approach was, I gather, unlike any other. I had been exposed as a candidate for my Bachelor to the regular course of theology. I read through the Testaments, New and Old, I could quote various statements in all, and many came up again and again in our daily prayers and at Mass, I knew the basics of Church regulation and law, I even had a modicum of canon law, a subject I felt no attraction to. But when Ockham started on the Sentences I knew I was in for a different experience. He was not pedantic, he did not feign superior knowledge, he just set out facts and challenges.

Ockham would stand behind the lectern in the room with his Commentary before him. As he went through his Commentary on the sentences things did become alive. Some of his comments meant what they said, yet again he would be critical of those elements where he disagreed with a

philosophical of theological point. Most of the students were used to learning by rote. memorize and then recite. I too had some of it but medicine, unlike theology or philosophy, provided near immediate and observable results; a patient lives or dies. Our task as a physician is, if we can, heal, if not, console and try to remedy the pain. We use our books and our mind to assess the disease. Yet even there, I am learning to question the ancients, Galen and others.

Ockham, I gathered, was unlike many others who had commented on The Sentences. He saw Theology, and The Sentences were very much that, as separate from other studies. He further saw that Theology could be studied for its own sake and further that a Theologian could almost be a non-believer, for it was the use of Theological principles that made for Theology not necessarily a belief. Theology was an intellectual exercise for Ockham based upon what was revealed in scripture.

Ockham, in contrast, defined Science in a separate fashion from Theology. He stated:

"What is science? Science as distinguished from the other intellectual capacities as described by Aristotle in Ethics is evidence knowledge of necessary truth able to be caused by premises that are applied to such truth by means of syllogistic discourse."

Ockham saw that in science we could have sense discoverable truths. For example that water runs downhill. That is evident from our senses. Any person can walk upon a mountain stream and ascertain that. The same person can create a small stream separate from any location by use of a board, or a metal structure and re-examine that water flows from high to low. In contrast when one examines the Scriptures many of the things revealed are just that, revelations, non-reproducible revelations in the text itself. One cannot, as Ockham notes, find such in all of Theology.

In science when we collect these evident truths such as water flowing down hill, and that water has weight and that weight can cause a physical movement, then we can using science and syllogistic reasoning determine that a water wheel will perform some task. We do not know a priori that water will be useful in a water wheel. We deduce that through scientific facts and syllogistic reasoning. But the facts that are used in the syllogisms are all evident facts. We can measure weight, we can measure distance, we can measure time. These are all observables, reflections of the underlying principles we wish to demonstrate.

Now back to The Sentences and Theology. The facts are not so evident in Theology, and one example that Ockham used was the Trinity. Another he discussed was the Eucharist. He said:

"I say that God, on account of his absolute power, is able to cause evident knowledge of some theological truths, although perhaps not of others, in the intellect of the pursuer of the facts."

I was amazed as to the discussions. Suddenly I was seeing medicine in a new light. I understood that Galen recognized logic as a key element of medicine, syllogistic reasoning, but syllogistic reasoning meant that the underling evident proposition must be based upon repeatable realities, observations. Much of what we were doing were at best recollections and remembrances, no physician was either validating the "facts" or worse yet looking for new facts.

Ockham referred to Book VI, chapter 3, of the Nicomachean Ethics (Book VI, Chapter 3), where Aristotle had presented a list of five states by which the soul can grasp truth. These are art (techne), science (episteme), prudence (phronesis), wisdom (sophia), and intellection (nous). Aristotle states:

Let us begin, then, from the beginning, and discuss these states once more. Let it be assumed that the states by virtue of which the soul possesses truth by way of affirmation or denial are five in number, i.e. art, scientific knowledge, practical wisdom, philosophic wisdom, intuitive reason; we do not include judgement and opinion because in these we may be mistaken.

Now what scientific knowledge is, if we are to speak exactly and not follow mere similarities, is plain from what follows. We all suppose that what we know is not even capable of being otherwise; of things capable of being otherwise we do not know, when they have passed outside our observation, whether they exist or not. Therefore the object of scientific knowledge is of necessity.

Therefore it is eternal; for things that are of necessity in the unqualified sense are all eternal; and things that are eternal are ungenerated and imperishable. Again, every science is thought to be capable of being taught, and its object of being learned. And all teaching starts from what is already known, as we maintain in the Analytics also; for it proceeds sometimes through induction and sometimes by syllogism. Now induction is the starting-point which knowledge even of the universal presupposes, while syllogism proceeds from universals. There are therefore starting-points from which syllogism proceeds, which are not reached by syllogism; it is therefore by induction that they are acquired.

Scientific knowledge is, then, a state of capacity to demonstrate, and has the other limiting characteristics which we specify in the Analytics, for it is when a man believes in a certain way and the starting-points are known to him that he has scientific knowledge, since if they are not better known to him than the conclusion, he will have his knowledge only incidentally.

Now Ockham noted:

When it is said that the veridical intellectual habits are only five, I say that there are only five kinds of naturally acquired veridical habits, which the Philosopher enumerates in Book VI of the Ethics. This is because, according to the Philosopher, faith is not, according to its entire region, a veridical habit, because it can exist with regard to false as well as true [claims], according to him. Yet, beyond these habits there exists another veridical habit, because it cannot comprise anything false.

Such is faith with regard to the theological matters of belief, whether it be acquired or infused. In another way one can say that the Philosopher only speaks of evident and certain habits, and theology is not of such a kind with regard to matters of belief, because it is not evident, although it is...faith can be non-evident veridical truth and such is theology for the most part.

Thus as we went through The Sentences, as we progressed through the truth through faith it allowed me to see how unlike Aquinas and the Dominicans this understanding was. Ockham was to a degree infused with Bacon and his understanding but he had managed to take it even further. Not being a Theologian, however, I wondered whether he was taking this a bit too far. I saw faith as the road to God. Yet that posed a problem. Where did faith come from?

If one read Augustine and in turn Paul, one saw faith as a result of grace and grace was a gift from God. You either had it or did not. In addition you did not even know if you had been given grace. Grace meant salvation. Taking Augustine to the extreme, one can gain salvation by having grace and yet not live a good life, in fact good deeds do not count. I continued to have difficulties with that. In fact, the more I read Paul, the more I questioned to myself why he was even an Apostle, for he never was with Jesus when Jesus roamed. In my view, and heretical this may be, much of Paul was invented by Paul.

Further if belief required faith and one could not by reason alone seek religious truth then how did one convert people? Was faith necessary to believe, I gathered so. There seemed if one followed the logic of Ockham and Augustine an impenetrable path from grace to faith to salvation and perhaps human actions were irrelevant. I was now truly confused.

The Scholastics in Theology may have created a true set of conundrums. Aquinas had tried to push the limits of human reason to explain all the mysteries of the Scripture. Ockham basically said to forget all reason and rely solely on faith.

I approached Ockham and said:

"William, let me try to explain what I see as your reasoning. Science can be determined by means of our faculties. We, to use a phrase of Bacon, experiment and determine a fact. We perform another experiment and determine a second fact. They by use of logic and based upon the two facts we determine a new fact. In a sense that is what we do in Geometry, we have some basic observable facts and then by logic we can develop consistent new facts all reliant on the underlying set of premises which are universally observable facts. Is that not correct?"

He replied:

"Yes Brendan, you speak like a scientist but you are correct."

I then continued:

"Yet when it comes to theology, we may not be able to demonstrate all of the facts. We have them in the Scripture, and as such that is the sole source for many facts. Is that not correct?"

He replied:

"Again Brendan you are correct. Continue."

I did so:

"Thus, on the one hand, I can use these Scriptural facts and from them, with logic, ascertain conclusions, but as with Geometry, the conclusions rely upon the reproducibility of the facts. Yet since they are in Scripture I cannot but accept them by faith. Yet to have faith I must have been given the grace to exercise it, as Augustine demands, and thus faith is derivative from grace and grace is given not earned."

He smiled and replied:

"Be careful my fellow Friar, you are beginning to walk on a slippery slope. I understand what you say. Faith is required. That is my reasoning. However I have not taken up the cudgel of Augustine, the issue of grace before faith is a weighty weapon that can do harm if swung in the wrong manner. Leave it at faith, how man gets faith I have not pursued."

I replied cautiously:

"Then one last question Master William. Pelagius, the foe of Augustine, argued that man can by his own good deeds achieve salvation. Pelagius, if I stretch it a bit, denies Augustine. I seek no answer, just that I am happy even more so in medicine."

I thus left it thus. But this I saw as an opening of a new a significant debate in the Church. How did one get faith? Does God give all men the necessary tools to believe? The Scripture is present, yet many do not believe. What of the Jew, for the Jew is halfway there with the Scripture, yet they do not believe in Christ? What of the Muslim, my friend Issn, he believes Christ is a prophet, not God, he believes in one God, and yet not Christ. I like medicine, I could rely on my observed knowledge, theology was getting too messy for me. We finished Ockham on the Sentences. This was his first attempt. I believe he had kicked a hornet's nest with his approach. The older theologians had heard of his way of presentation, it was unorthodox, but his students loved it, the older Theologians, especially the Dominicans did not. That would be the beginning of his problems.

GRAMMAR AND LOGIC AGAIN

I continued my medical studies with Gaddesden and they were more intense and more detailed. To achieve a degree of Master in Medicine one needed to demonstrate detailed knowledge and an ability to defend one's positions with facts but also with the art of presentation, namely grammar, logic and rhetoric. Thus, in the late Spring of 1317, I spent more time with Ockham, for he began teaching those elements again, and unlike my previous instructions, instructions which often were by rote, these I became engaged in deeply. Gaddesden had warned me not to spend too much time there not because it detracted from my own studies but because it may stir thoughts and approaches that may be too extreme. His concern was that classic thinking would be expected and accepted, the "new" Ockhamist approach may create a unsettling demeanor to those who would later judge me. I was young but I took his advice to heart. I was becoming more aware of the strong political nature of all that we did.

Ockham began grammar by expressing his views on languages. He stated:

"Languages are expressions of ideas. We have first a mental language, the internal construct of the idea. That mental language can then be converted to a spoken language and finally to a written language. We do not make mental languages up as we mature we are born with them. They are part of our humanness. They are simple, devoid of the constructs we may place upon spoken and written languages."

I thought briefly and then regrettably at first asked:

"If such a construct exists, how then do we validate it?"

He replied:

"Ah our scientist. Better yet our doctor of medicine. Let me explain. You have seen young children, before they can speak and well before they can write. They recognize their mothers, they fear animals, they smile when smiled to. Wild animals do not show such reactions. We have not taught the child this. For they are just recently born. They express their mental language, they express what they are born with."

I then replied:

"Two issues Master William. First, as we discussed with The Sentences and evidentiary facts, incontrovertible evidence. What would we do with a child to elicit this mental language since your discussion is merely an expression not evidence of a presence. Second, where resides this faculty of the newly born? Is it a reaction say when we feel a hot or cold stimulus or is it some complex expression in the human mind, the brain?"

He retorted:

"Evidence is exhibited by consistent expression. Thus the child smiles at a mother, sucks at the breast, repels from a hot object, these are primal and are there at birth. As to the second, I leave the anatomical decisions to you physicians."

We then proceeded to discuss the Aristotelian Categories. I thought I had them memorized but as Ockham approached them they all began a different form.

First Ockham laid out the delineation across the ten categories and then downward through a Porphyry tree. Thus for substance we could see first material or immaterial. Then for material we see living or nonliving, then for living we could have plant or animal, then for animal we could have a large class of possible animals one being human, and finally perhaps we could have for example Augustine. But Ockham also stated that even human could be divided into finer and finer gradations such as male and female. In a similar fashion one could examine quality and divide it down to color, say of a flower, and then list the colors, including say blue. But then again blue is not always the same and as Ockham showed a color white is also a purveyor of ambiguity.

In this Porphyry tree like description, where for each of the ten categories we have further and further delineation, for an Aristotelian one may get down to an individual but each element above then exists with some form of essence. Thus there is an essence somewhere for a material substance, for a plant or for a human, without reference to any specific existing true entity. In effect they are all just words but against each word there is some parallel tree of existing essences. There is an essence of white of blue, of a lily or of a fern. There is likewise a specific embodiment.

Thus for Ockham as he stated:

"One can see a man, say Augustine, he exists or existed, we could speak with him. We say that not only is he the man Augustine, he is also in a class called animals. Yet we know that Augustine exists because we see and hear him, but the universal called animal has no necessity of existence. We can however collect a large group of people, Augustine being amongst them, and then say this class of individuals we claim to have some characteristic call humanness, although there would be no claim to the existence of a universal human or the existence of the human essence. Any explanation that would include this complexity would be structurally excessively complex. We must accept solutions which are minimally complex, we should not add additional complexity just for the sake of complexity. Thus universals do not exist, only individual embodiments."

I met with Ockham several times thinking about universals and nominalism. On one of my last times on this specific topic

I stated:

"Consider these flowers. They are all lilies. They each have three internal petals and three external recurved sepals. They have six pistils and one central stamen. They are yellow. Now each word I uttered was some Aristotelean categorical statement; a quantity of three or six or one, a posture or internal or external, a where of central, a quality of yellow, and so forth. Are each of these categories a universal."

"Take this dye, it is shall we say blue. Now take these ten flasks of water. Into the first I shall place one drop of the blue dye. What do you now call the color of this flask? Blue? Yes. Now place two drops in the second and so forth. Each flask is also blue. But you would argue that they are different shades of blue, yes? But blue. So you would argue that each has as part of its essence a blueness. But you then distinguish that blueness by say some category which would have shade, something we really cannot categorize. Shades do not have numbers, shades do not have names. We can say darker or lighter, use another category perhaps, but dark has no essence, since even there we have shades of dark. There! We just had a fully circular reasoning. We called shades dark or light but then said dark itself may have shades of darkness. Shades could be dark which could be a shade. So what is it. We keep adding these universals and dividing and multiplying them. In reality all we have is but ten different flasks, each one is an individual flask, there is no universal blue flask, there are each and every one an individual flask."

"Now walk into the field and examine the flowers. We see many lilies. Yet the term lily is merely a name, nomen, that we give to this collection of flowers, again just a name. There is not universal lily, no universal class of lilies such as daylilies. The term connotes something, By connoting it ascribes a set of predicates, like the number of petals and sepals. Again petal and sepal are not universals, there are no such terms, they refer to a plant part at a certain location; one on the outside called the sepal and one on the inside called the petal. Each lily is an individual, there are no abstract universals, thus they are names not existent entities in some world. Dealing with them as names we then call this nominalism, names only."

"We then reject the approach taken by those who claim the existence and necessity for universals. However in so doing, in being a nominalist, we recognize only individuals. That takes us to the next step regarding humans. If only individuals exist what then does that say of humans, it says we are all individuals."

Ockham replied:

"Yes Brendan, all individuals, and take it a step further, all equal."

I then replied:

"Now let us consider the class or collection of all humans who as we agree are individuals. How do we define that class or collection. How about the class of all pigs, all goats, and the like. I would then argue a simple fact, if two creatures can mate and produce a creature which can do likewise, all such creatures are in a class. Thus humans mate and reproduce with humans. Pigs with pigs, goats with goats. Thus the reproducibility is an empirical measure of belonging to such a class, and there is no other."

Ockham smiled and responded:

"Brendan, I think you may have put a capstone on the argument. But for the sake of our survival, let us keep this amongst us for a while. There are still many Aristotelians and advocates for Aquinas about. Keep thinking but alas keep quiet."

THE INDIVIDUAL

By the Winter of 1317-1318 I had spent a great deal of time with Ockham and his views. He was teaching The Sentences again and I gather he had become a bit more refined but as ever strong in that presentation. Having been through his discussions on universals and individuals I saw the concept of the individual as ever so more important. As one starting out in medicine, I dealt with individual. From birth, through life to death, my patients, as they were, were all individuals. I saw through his discussions in the Sentences the individual acceptance of faith and the issuance of grace.

Salvation for a Christian was individual, we did not save a group. Further each individual is treated equally by God, by Nature if you will. The poor are sick just as equally as the Royal.

Having my experience with the decapitated Royal, a close associate, if you will, of the King, his entrails were the same as any other entrail. Thus the concept of the individual and the equality of the individual was becoming almost self-evident. It was in contrast to that of belonging to and order. If I were to seek salvation it would not be because of being a Franciscan, it would be because of my actions, my belief, my failures as an individual. Kings and paupers are equal in the site of God, why not equally in the eyes of man?

Thus began my discussion with Ockham. The results of this exploration would lead to dimensions we had never anticipated. I could not look at the world in a way I had never seen before. The battle between Irish and English was just as much about the rights of the individual as it was some Papal allocation.

The concept of the Individual has evolved over the past millennia. It has been a complex process, moving from family and tribal identity to the ability to have an identity as a self, an individual. Along with that ability to identify with self, a single person and an individual comes many attributes. The Ancient world was a world of families and towns. Athens was a typical example of the Ancient World and the Platonic tales of Socrates were key to their understanding. Loyalty and identity were to the city of Athens, or later, to the Empire of Rome, via ones family. In Plato's Gorgias, Protagoras and Meno we see the loyalty to Athens and in turn to the gods as being the means to relate, the family being the linkage binding all to the city state. At no time in the past, as I could find personally or in conversation with others at Oxford, was the idea of the individual qua individual present. Yet with the more simple and humbler Friars, they would tell me that Christ in his Gospels spoke always of the individual, not the tribe or the state. It was the individual who was born, who lived, and who died. Silently they spoke of individual good works having value, fearing being called Pelagians, especially by the Augustinians.

Now as I saw it a great change did occur with Paul of Tarsus and the individualism of Paul. The "one" in Christ is a double edged sword. One is "one" as a group in Christ but one is also "one" morally, having an individual path to salvation? The concept of individual salvation or perdition is developed to its fullest in Paul. For it was with Paul that the "fusion marks the birth of a "truly" individual will".

Marcion and his heresy became an extreme view of Pauline individualism. The soul is individual in each person and salvation is an individual act and the communal nature of the Old Testament must be rejected with the individual responsibility of the New Testament. In fact, Marcion said all one needs is Paul's Epistles and Luke, and reject the rest of Scripture. For that massive excision of Scripture he was rejected as a heretic. Seeing the opening of the Church to non-Jews was in my view a recognition of the individual. Each person had equal worth in the eyes of God. Man, woman, free, slave, servant or Royal were equal in the eyes of God. One did not need belong to a tribe, to a group, in fact Christianity as an individual religion was a bit unique.

One can then examine monasticism and the martyrs in the process to building up to Augustine. An analysis of Augustine in the context of the individual is essential. It gave me a new view of the Confessions. It was the individual coming through, not some Jewish tribe or Muslim mandate. Sin was an act, a deliberate act. A deliberate and singular act of an individual. The Confessions is an articulation of individual sin and redemption.

Augustine was, on the one hand, a strong adherent to Paul, while also being imbued in the classic culture of the Roman Empire. In a sense, the author sees a strong flow of individual identity in the writing of the Confessions. Then there is also the Pelagian conflict, which in a sense is a conflict of the individual qua person and the individual qua grace. According to Augustine and inferentially Paul without grace man is doomed. Yet again according to the two man's actions alone cannot provide redemption, each individual must, according to Augustine; have grace given if he is ever to gain eternal redemption. One can see a stand for individuality in Augustine but the demand of grace as given and not earned has always sent a penumbra of concern. That to me was still a concern.

I also considered the early seventh century conflict between Gregory I and Columbanus. This could have represented an interesting point for contrast. Gregory was from a classic old Roman family and had even been the mayor of Rome before becoming its Bishop, even though before that he had been a Benedictine monk. Columbanus was an Irish monk, albeit more like a Friar being with the people, who established dozens of monastic institutions of study, and was in conflict with Gregory, albeit with respect. Columbanus as an Irish monk had never had his country subject to Rome, and thus in this interaction we could see the move from old Rome to the new non-Roman church.

I also considered natural law and natural rights. Natural Law is a vehicle to explain the basis for law extra the Church and Natural Rights becomes the cornerstone for what became individual rights.

In a sense I could see that individualism is a battle between Aquinas and Ockham, between Dominican and Franciscan, between group and individual, between Aristotle and the opening of new philosophical insights. I saw that possibly the Franciscan issue of property and poverty was another dimension.

For as we Franciscans believe the New Testament we must follow a life of poverty for that was the way of the Apostles and even Christ himself as man. Yet that did raise the issue of property and individual ownership. To follow Christ one must abjure one's property. To do such, one must have some nexus with the property as an individual in the first place.

I saw Ockham was a nominalist; namely he believes that universals were a fiction and that subjects were in essence individuals, not humans, but individual things. Thus, when we say; "The daylily is blue." we mean a specific daylily, the subject. Yet, Ockham would allow for the predicate "blue" to have some nexus to a universal called blue. Daylilies as a universal do not exist. A specific daylily like the one I may hold does exist, as an individual. But to extend this and say that the specific daylily is blue, do we mean as a predicate some universal concept of blue or blue like a coneflower? As we progress to a more scientific venue we may use a predicate like the spectrum of the blue we want, and then say blue like "this". Thus ultimately we do not use the construct of a universal but an individual for the subject and likewise for the predicate.

Where would this construct of individualism go? Despite my youth and inexperience I could see the ideal of individualism having far reaching possibilities, especially in such fields as politics.

Why, for example, should there be a King and servants if all are equal. If the Bible is our source of truth, what is the true basis for Divine rule? My thoughts were just stirring, and I wondered where this would lead Ockham.

TO LONDON AND THE QUEEN

In early 1317 Gaddesden came to me and said that he was off to London at the request of the Queen. He asked that I accompany him. She had given birth to the second child and had need of some medical advice, and that was all I had known. I had yet to go to London, and moreover I had never expected to meet the Queen. Just why Gaddesden asked that I accompany his I do not know but I suspect he needed to have someone he could rely upon and possibly give him a sounding board for his opinions. For one dares not make mistakes with royalty.

We managed to get there via the Thames, by boat, since we had a Royal calling. The trip was delightful, it was scenic and was just one long day's journey and the Thames flowed its way from a small stream to a wide river. We sailed past the city of London itself and past Greenwich to a crook in the river with a site called the Isle of Dogs. From there we descended onto waiting horses and rode swiftly to Eltham Palace, a large structure of recent design and it presented a regal picture for one like me who had never seen a real place before. We were greeted by servants, again for me a first, I had never met a servant, unless one considers me in my youth, and were escorted to the Queen's chambers. This was also my first time in a woman's chambers, no less a Queen. The rooms were enormous the walls covered by beautiful carpet like hangings, the furniture massive and all of the finest woods.

We entered the room and it was apparent that the Queen knew Gaddesden well and apparently he had been here before. Just why he wanted me was yet to be answered. I was a Bachelor of Medicine and no Master yet and clearly not a Gaddesden. But I greatly appreciated the opportunity to see what the problem was and if Gaddesden could manage to assuage the Queen's fears.

The problem was the young Prince. He was five years old and a handsome young man but he appeared feverish and weak. Gaddesden greeted the Queen and introduced me as his assistant. That was the first time I had any title of any sort. I had guessed as a sub Deacon I had some standing but now as Gaddesden's assistant I had moved up in some order. Gaddesden asked the Queen what the problem was, how long he had been this way. Apparently he had a fever for several days, was not eating and was just staying in his bed. She was clearly greatly concerned.

Gaddesden then asked that I examine the Prince while he observed. Perhaps now I knew why I was there, in the event that there were any problems I could be sacrificed. The Queen came close and watched as I set about examining the Prince. The Queen was quite an elegant person dressed in some of the most costly clothing I have ever seen. I was glad I had been clean as usual and presented in an unoffending manner.

I first tested the Prince's fever, which was high but not too excessive. I then tested his urine, that took a short while since he was in a loss of water from the fever. The urine was a dark yellow from which I could determine a long fever. I then checked his pulse, it was slightly elevated but

strong. I then checked his neck for lumps, and it was then that I discovered enlarged glands on each side of his jaw. I asked him to open his mouth while I had him face the open window so the light would shine in. Indeed the glands inside were quite enlarged as well. They had white spots. I recalled first Hippocrates regarding the tonsils, and this was indeed tonsils. Hippocrates warns of a fever, but the fever is low and Hippocrates says if they appear to resolve and are in the fourth or fifth day they will resolve fully. I felt more comfortable. Dioscorides suggests pepper or ginger, both of which we could obtain. I could also use an extract of white willow to reduce the fever and swelling.

I spoke to Gadsden and he confirmed my diagnosis, my prognosis and my treatment. He then spoke privately with the Queen while I stayed with the young Prince. I was quite nervous and I believe I may have lost 5 pounds in sweat from my first real trial as a physician.

The Queen seemed relieved and while they spoke I chatted with the young Prince. He could speak after I administered a broth and he asked who I was. I replied that I was Master Gaddesden's assistant from Oxford. He asked if I were a priest and I said I was a Franciscan and studying at Oxford. He then asked why I spoke so strangely. That was the first time I had ever been commented on, we were speaking French, and although I used it at Oxford I never paid a great deal of attention to pronunciation. The Prince spoke what was perceived as perfect French, mine was what could best be called "market French", the language spoken at the market. I started to absorb this environment quite quickly.

What surprised me was that after just about a half hour with the Queen, along with her personal physician, there was a strong noise and entering the room was a smiling and what appeared to be over dressed man, leading a group of followers who were fawning on him. Everyone bent down except me, for I was too busy examining what seemed to be an overdressed peacock. His voice was high pitched and almost chorus like. Then Gaddesden kicked me in the foot and I saw that I must bow and rapidly responded. By this time the man dressed like some bird was in the center of the room and said:

"Well, my queen, what have we have here? Friars, are they seeking more of the Crown's funds for their prayers."

Isabella replied:

"No my Lord, Friar John of Gaddesden is a physician from Oxford, and we have sought his opinion and service on some small issues regarding our son. And Friar Brendan of Dublin is here to assist him, he also is from Oxford."

Then Edward II, the now pompous effete king, came and walked up to my face as I stood, suddenly recognizing that I was quite a few inches his taller and a bit more sturdily built in my cleanest cloak, and he said sarcastically:

"Ah, Irish, I thought all of you ruffians wore swords, unkempt beards, and bathed never. What do you do to not be so Irish?"

Again Gaddesden kicked my foot, this time with the greatest intensity. I knew the best answer is none, so I bowed my head down and said nothing.

The King went to see his son, and examined him as if he were a piece of ham. Yes, I thought, he still lives.

I did not like this man, but I knew better than make any remarks, no matter what Papal protection I may have had, for I was certain it went just so far. Being Irish by birth, I started to see my streak of independence. I was latter to learn of the recent battle the King had with the Irish. That too would return at a latter moment.

MEDICINE CONTINUES

The core of my studies were still medicine. At the Master level we focused upon treatment, and patients. We had spent four years understanding diagnosis, prognosis and the general issues of treatment. Now we were to apply it as well as explore the more recent works in the field.

Gaddesden has taken the position that a Master candidate would see several real patients. This was a new idea since most students before just studied the sources. I gather that my visit down the Thames had made an impression. It did on me.

THE TRINITY

After many discussions regarding the Sacraments Ockham and I commenced discussion on the Trinity. I had read Augustine and in turn I had read some of Aquinas. I found Aquinas convolved, an exercise in words, an attempt to emulate Aristotle. Yet Aristotle had no Trinity to deal with. There is always the issue of the three persons. How does one explain this concept. Also how much of this concept is the result of Greek thought and attempts to apply human reason to perhaps a purely theological construct. The problem I had with Aquinas was that he tended to integrate theology and philosophy. Attractive as that may have been, it did raise many issues. Philosophy deals with the human condition, man as an entity and his relationship to both himself and the universe.

It examines everything from the reference point of man; inwardly and how man thinks and outwardly and how we understand our world. In contrast theology deals with the divine, those things that God presents and many of these are at best available through revelation. They may not be easily, or with difficulty obtained in any manner other than faith. Thus began the lectures of Ockham on the Trinity, clearly one of the most complex issues of Christianity.

Ockham remarked as to Augustine:

"For Augustine, he believed that there are certain things of God we can know by our reason. As Paul states in Romans 1.19-20,

"For what can be known about God is evident to them, because God made it evident to them. Ever since creation of the world, his invisible attributes or eternal power and divinity have been able to be understood and perceived in what he has made. As a result, they have no excuse."

And what did Augustine mean of this? Simply that man can know of God's attributes by human reason. Man can by observing the world through his reason observe and understand the attributes of God. Thus for Augustine there is however no disclosure of the Trinity, that he understood must be accepted by faith and not reason."

Such was Ockham's belief and such was the issue as to the Trinity. This was a view of Ockham and not of Lombard, it was the Sentences of Ockham and not the Sentences of Lombard. I could see the other students having a level of confusion, for they were all Theological students, and I on the other hand was a Medical student. For me what was real was life and death, sickness and health, cure and failure.

Ockham went further. He stated:

"Augustine and Boethius used the terms father as merely relative terms. These relations amongst the Trinity are personal properties to Augustine and Boethius. Further as Boethius was wont to say:

"Substance preserves unity, relations multiply the Trinity."

And to Augustine and Boethius the Trinity is an expression of relations."

Ockham spent considerable time expounding on the Trinity. His initial accounts related to the Dominican view versus the Franciscan view, and these views were often in conflict. Ockham explained the differences in view as follows:

"Now for Aquinas, to a degree following Augustine, he states that the Trinity is found in relationships, as consistent with Aristotle's categories. The Father is father to the Son and the Holy Spirit to the Father and Son. The Son is an active spiration whereas the Holy Spirit is passive. They are one in essence but three in relation.

In contrast we have Pecham and his view, a Franciscan view where the relationships are by emanation. Namely the Father is unemanated, the Son is emanated by way of the intellect and the Holy Spirit emanated by way of will.

The argument then for Aquinas is that the Father would need to generate the Son and that results in a temporal chasm, and would violate the understanding of an eternal God. Bonaventure who represented the Franciscan view then counters that by raising another contradiction."

Needless to say at this point I was totally confused. The argument of relations followed from my studies in Grammar and the Categories, the emanation argument was I gathered the inverse way of saying the same thing. Relations was a father by nature would have a child and if the child were male than there would be a son. That is the very words dictate a relationship which

established existence. Then the argument flows that we know the Father is father from the New Testament and we know the Son is the son by the same means, as Augustine would argue, and this perforce of the essential relationship the two are one. I still was at odds. From Lombard's book we did have the construct:

"God the Father is the Father because he generates or whether he generates because he is the Father."

This was thus the question that fractured relation versus emanation. I kept longing to return to my medicine and sick people. But on the other hand I was learning where the many traps were that one should avoid. For me theology was training in mental warfare. I would never be a Theologian but I was surrounded by them, and any careless word could have one declared heretical! That is why I saw Ockham as a brave individual, for he raised questions that showed many of these statement for the vacuous nature they had.

Ockham went on in his lectures to take an extreme position. He rejected both the relations and the emanation constructs. For him this was given by God in the Testament and as such he stated that our belief is *sola fide*, by our faith alone. That is as stated in the letter to the Romans, we can know certain things by our reason, namely that God exists and is all powerful, but the understanding of the Trinity is beyond our reason. Thus relation or emanation is irrelevant. All that would count is Faith!

To me this was simple. I could ask "why" on so many things, yet those things I saw as things of man and thus of understanding. I could ask why a man gets ill and of a certain disease, or why the extract of a willow have the ability to reduce a fever or swelling, yet asking why there are three persons, why the Trinity, was beyond reason and was faith alone.

THE EXAMINATION

I had managed to continue my work on animals and had also been working more on medications going well beyond Dioscorides. I had finished several more theology courses and I was asked to sit not only for my Master in Medicine but also a Bachelor in Theology. I was more concerned as to the latter than the former. I knew medicine well, Gaddesden was a splendid teacher and our experience with the sick, case by case, helped clarify what was in the texts. By the time I sat for my exposition and dialectic with the Masters, they all knew me and I them and further I had been exposed in some way or another with each.

On the other hand, theology was more of Ockham than anyone else and Ockham had managed by this point in June of 1319 to have begun to alienate everyone he met. He had followers, but they like him were young and bright and wanting to break down walls as well. Thus my fear was that as well as frankly not seeing any need for such a degree, I was not intending on any further progression and even more so I was a sub-deacon and that was as far as I wished to go. I was tonsured yet to a small degree fitting my position.

Thus in the last week in June the examinations began. My first four days were on medicine. Gaddesden became almost an adversary. What fevers were there, how did I treat them, what

swellings can be treated, what is the prognosis of an apoplexy, and apoplexy on just one side, and the questions continued. The lay Masters were the toughest. They went over the various medications of Dioscorides, then asked that I compare Hippocrates, Galen, Avicenna and Gordun. I was asked if Gordun or Gaddesden were correct and which was in error and why? None asked me for any basis other than the ancients. None asked who I had treated and the outcomes. It was intense and lasted on three of the days for over twelve hours, from morning prayer to evening prayer!

Upon completion I was told I has passed and would be made a Master. Now on to the two days of theology.

I appeared. There was Ockham, not yet a Master. Then three Masters, a Franciscan, a Dominican, and an Augustinian. I had studied under each. My first question was to critique grace under Augustine and describe the faults of Pelagius. I completed that in about thirty minutes. There was no second question. They all smiled and congratulated me. They did not consider, discuss, evaluate. I was shocked. Yet again I had no intent to proceed in theology, but as a Bachelor I did have some modicum of standing. I have to this day really wondered why so simple an test.

ON TO FRANCE

Completed, and now a Master I wanted to begin practicing amongst the people. I enjoyed helping the various people I had interacted with and each time I did so I actually learned more. But before that could happen Dismas met with me along with two other Masters. They sat me down one evening and said they had been discussing my next steps. I kept thinking when would I start my own next steps but alas it was the hand of God I suppose driving me onward. Along with the three also came Ockham, a strange mix if I ever saw one.

Dismas began with the statement:

"Brendan, you have done well here, but with all due respect to Oxford, we are limited in medicine. There are places that can expand your training and do more than just leaving now. We have discussed the options. It is felt that you should go to Montpellier, the best for Medicine, and study there for your Doctors. We know many in the Franciscan there and you should find a welcome. In addition, you will be exposed to the culture. Finally, you will be close to Avignon, and Brendan, there are reasons why we want you closer than here."

I looked about, there was a sense of seriousness amongst them all. I wondered what they had in mind. I had no experience in France, I had not been out of England and Ireland, and I had not been back in Ireland in twelve years. I asked:

"Why Montpellier?"

Ockham replied:

"Brendan, first you are studying Medicine, and as such you have a reason to continue your studies. We, let us say, shall call that the reason. You also have a reasonable awareness of theology, at least enough that you can keep out of trouble. Thirdly, you are astute in languages, and as such can be quite facile flowing back and forth. Now why are you going there, simply we, our Order, the Franciscans, felt that the current Pope, John XXII, has begun considering ways to deal in a negative fashion with the Franciscans."

"We need someone who can flow back and forth unencumbered. You will be studying, yes, but you also will be advising us on what is happening. We want you on the one hand to settle in Montpellier but in reality make whatever contacts you can to appear in Avignon, but not be seen as other than just a visitor. Yet when you are there we want you to listen, find out what you can as to the Pope's intentions. We truly fear a major break is about to occur. Avignon is French at heart, Avignon is not Rome, and the Pope is the bishop of Rome and not Avignon. Do you understand?"

I was somewhat set aback. It appeared, no it was that I were to become a Franciscan spy at the Papal Court! So much for theology!

CHAPTER 7 (1318-1320) MONTPELIER

I left Oxford in August 1318. I thought that as we went there would be a separation from my old life and an introduction to the new. I knew we would pass London and then outwards to Greenwich from where we would get a ship to Calais. However wherever we saw people there would be some conversation, as if we were on some gliding stage on which every player would be corresponding with their then temporal and spatial neighbor. I suspect it was also the way to spread news.

The latest political news, as I sailed down the Thames, was that Hugh the younger Despenser had replaced the role of Piers Gaveston, the man whose head I reattached. King Edward had given him the now title of the Earl of Gloucester. This it seems had again greatly displaced the Lords and Barons. Most of the common folk just saw this as another distraction from the Royalty, and a distraction which they found more laughable than consequential. The mere fact that this change in patronage and the King's strange predilections made for what I perceived a distraction from otherwise dreary lives. The people laughed at their leaders, they saw them as fools who lived on their labor. King Edward, that man a I had met when examining his son, was at least to me a man who one could greatly dislike. Yet I was certain to keep my opinions to myself. Others who had no knowledge of him spouted opinions freely.

What I also found of further interest was that these French Norman names got translated by the local in England to a local manner. I was trying to improve my French, especially since I was to go to Paris, and I had been told that despite my excellent Latin skills that the *soto voce* remarks would be in Parisian French, a style of speaking that was unlike my learned ways. I was becoming more and more aware of accents, not just of words, of accents and timing, and the usage of pauses in speech. One could pose in a certain fashion just by speaking in a different manner. Thus each time we stopped I would try to listen to the difference in the locals and see if I could hear some French as well.

Now the change from French to English was also a compelling interest. English was in no manner like French, and hardly like Latin. It was a language that was sharper than French, it had edges in various ways. In addition, words were being changed from French to English with drastic changes in pronunciation as well as meaning. Thus consider the name of the King's new favorite, Despenser. I wondered what it may have been. If one looked at it as "des penser", or "of the thinking", if you will, how had it become de Spenser, a Royal Norman name? Who this Spenser was I have no idea. Yet he most likely had no capability of thinking or judging, just the giving of flatter and the taking of Royal favors. I also suspected that his end would not be unlike that of the dismembered Piers, whose head I managed to reattach to his remaining corpse. Politics seemed as a brutal sport, and I thought that being a religious was much more safe. That would also be seen as no sinecure from slaughter as I travelled south.

I wondered if this was just an extension of what I had learned several years earlier. Kings were sometimes not worth what they were given. England, as I left, was again setting herself up for another unsettling time. I wondered how the Queen, fair Isabella, would be handling this as I gathered she had difficulty with the prior favorite.

I had in my possession letters from Gaddesden and Bradwardine, as well as two Priors and a Master. I also had documents attesting to my degrees of Arts, Medicine and Theology, including my Master of Medicine. I had an introduction to Bernard de Gordun at Montpellier under whose aegis I was to study. I was also given several manuscripts we had translated for Bernard as well I gathered as further inducement.

Along with this I was accompanied by two Friars, who would take me to Paris. I gathered that I needed the accompaniment for a variety of reasons, one being that I would then have a Friar from Paris take me south to Avignon. I was also to obtain more information at Paris.

We left Oxford and went to London. We stayed at the Friars Convent there for a short period. London is a very populated and intensely compact city. In addition it is probably the dirtiest place I have yet to visit. The smells of human waste just flow across every alley, every street intersection. Buildings are built upon buildings, and I wondered what would happen if ever there were a fire. There would be little room to escape. I was glad to leave London and breathe again.

We sailed down the Thames and out to the channel waters. It was getting much colder and wetter as we proceeded. The Summer of 1318, like its predecessors was already one of the coldest, but the waters across the channel made the cold just sear into one's flesh. On the boat I was given a large animal skin with fur, I was told it was a bear, and it did tend to keep us warm and drier. The Channel crossing was slow but uneventful. We landed in Harfleur which is English territory and proceeded down the 420079329241990048500186537052 to Paris again by boat.

PARIS AND THE UNIVERSITY

Having gotten to Paris from Harfleur via a small boat down the Seine, I was soaked and wanting to clean and seek some warmth. Paris was an interesting city, as my first time was to show. We landed on the bank of the Seine on which the University was located, also called rive gauche. The Isle de France, the island where the old city was, sat in the middle of the Seine, with the river splitting upon both sides. We sailed down the right most slit and on the far side at the end of the first large island was the cathedral of Notre Dame, a massive structure nearing completion. The cathedral shone in the sunlight, a bright light of the type I had never seen before. The light here in Paris is unlike any I recall in the Isles. It brings out colors and hues that I never imagined. The size and scope of this cathedral was amazing. We landed and unpacked our things and went towards the Franciscan Convent near the University.

The Convent had been expanded recently and it housed some 90 Friars, most of whom were studying or teaching at the University in Paris. I was brought to a small room and there I could get clean dry clothing and was able to clean myself. I managed to store the materials I had brought with me and ensuring they were dry and undamaged. The sun was warm and strong despite the late October weather. It appeared that Paris had not suffered as badly as we had with the cold and loss of crops.

I went down in the main hall and there was a large oaken table with long benches. The walls were exceptionally high and again the stones were of that light gray material and the sun

managed to shine brightly in the windows. There we were met by Master Alanus de Tongres, the Master of the School, Martinus d'Abbeville, Master John of Tongres, Michael de Chartres. The size of the group was somewhat alarming since I did not know if they were aware of what I was doing. It would be best to let them speak and I would answer. Another younger Friar came in a bit late, he was Guillaume de Condeto. Guillaume was to be my guide going south to Avignon.

I did not realize that this was to be a meeting detailing more on why I was being sent South. Master Alanus introduced me to everyone and began his presentation. Alanus was the oldest, with grey hair, a large beard, but dressed in a neat clean tunic. He had sandals and of course his rope about his waist but it was nearly a pure white rope unlike so many I had seen, like mine, which had developed a patina of age. It was clear he was the Master.

He started his review as follows:

"We have before us, as an Order, several clear and present threats. On the one hand, there is the threat from the Spirituals. As we all know, and Brendan may not be as familiar, there is a growing group of our brothers in Italy and in the Languedoc, south of France, who have taken up this cause, a cause we have not fought but not seems to concern us. The cause is the belief in poverty, especially as applied to our Lord Christ and his Apostles, and in turn its application to all of the Church. As you all know, Saint Francis took a vow of poverty amongst the three vows we all take. Just what that means is that we are mendicants, we cannot own anything, and further that we rely upon others to enable us to do our works. We fundamentally recognize, here in Paris and also in Oxford, that to do the good works we do need support. Thus, we do not demand that all live in poverty. There are others, the Spirituals amongst our Brothers, who do hold that view, an extreme view, but with some scriptural basis."

For me this was all new, I had been vaguely aware of these issues but at Oxford our interest was all too often academic and religious, and poverty was a way of life since most students had no funds and lived in a fashion not unlike mine. Also the vows were in my mind a cost of being educated and not a statement of my faith. I understood that Dismas and I came to the Order with different mind sets. He made a later in life choice, mine was pre-ordained. Yet, I was at ease with my situation. I had grown not only to accept it but to find it a very acceptable way of life. Yet the extreme views that Friar Alanus mentioned were indeed a concern. The concern was simple, it threatened the opulence of the Papacy.

He continued:

"I believe that much of this started with Olivi. For you Brendan, Peter Olivi was a Friar from Beziers, he studied here in about 1270, yet as the records show he did not complete his theological studies, he managed a Bachelor but the Masters then felt he was not adequate for a Master. Thus he left and returned to his Convent. The problem started when he began to write about the Virgin and his writings fell afoul of Church teachings. The Commission formed to deal with him found error and he was required to disavow the writings. The problem we have often is that certain students are educated and the education is just enough to allow them to think they can opine but fail to understand that they are not fully trained, and all too often fall afoul of what is acceptable. Bachelors know something, yet they are not fully tested."

I replied:

"I fully understand Master Alanus."

He laughed and replied:

"Brendan, I am sorry but I meant that not for you. You are a Master of Medicine, and as I was told by Prior Dismas, your Theology was somewhat detailed despite your intent to avoid it. Yet from what we understand you learned enough to be cautious not adventurous. Now with Olivi the real problem arose when he began to opine on poverty, specifically the concept of *usus pauper*. The issue was simply; is our vow of poverty, is it one of simply not owning something or is it more severe, in that it restricts our use of goods in some total manner? *Usus pauper* becomes a confusing standard. Vows, if broken, result in mortal sin. Chastity is clear, probably the most clear if we define it to an act. But chastity becomes less clear if we extend it to any thought. How much thought becomes a break in the vow, the looking upon any woman? No, we have the Poor Sisters Clare, they work with us in serving the poor. Do we require that we separate ourselves. Do we insist that the Sisters hide themselves under heavy garments, no. They are women but equal amongst us as believers in God. Then there is obedience. There we may have a conundrum. As Saint Francis had said in his first Rule, obedience may be relative, we cannot, should not obey any command that is against our Faith. The decision for obedience is our own conscience. If we feel we are being urged to act beyond what we believe we have a right to reject the command. Moreover we have a duty to reject it. Finally, poverty, and here we have to understand *usus pauper*. Our vow is not to own anything, yet *usus pauper* extends that to us being the poorest of the poor. Thus, for the Spirituals, they have taken this to an extreme, there shall be no sandals of any kind, and the tunic must be of the shabbiest of fabric, the thinnest of fabric, and the least amount of any fabric. The Spirituals of today take it upon themselves to wear shortened tunics, above the knee and are shoeless, never bathe in many circumstances, and thus stand out almost as a separate Order. I believe it is fair to say that much of this is derivative from Olivi."

He continued. This was a lecture almost, and those also around the table sat silently. For me it was all new, I had been aware of some of these issues but as a scholar and a Franciscan in Oxford, I had been shielded from any day by day issues. He then said:

"Then, in 1316, less than two years ago, after a brutal battle, the Cardinals, mostly French, chose John XXII as pope. He was a Cardinal with the blessing of his predecessor Pope Clement. His training was in Canon Law, not Theology, and his experience was more in enforcing Church Doctrine than in understanding and clarifying it. Furthermore, he became an even stronger user of the powers of the Inquisition, with such Inquisitors as the Dominican, Bernard Gui. He has pursued the Spiritualists, the Templars, the Cathars, and all whom he considers as heretical. Gui is a classic example of such an individual, for he personally has pursued hundreds and has even written a manual on how best to achieve this pursuit. He, it is said, can get a confession out of a stone. He is ruthless and will take any means to seek to send the convicted heretic to the fires."

"Now we also have the case of Ubertino da Casale, formerly one of our brothers and now a member of the Dominicans, as of last year. Ubertino was a follower of Olivi and believes in *usus pauper*. He further complained that we in the Order treat the scholars and Masters better than others; with better food, better clothing, better housing, and better medical care. That such treatment abrogates our vow of poverty."

I interjected:

"I know little of the differences in clothing and the like but as far as England is concerned we treat all equally in medicine."

Alanus replied:

"We know that well here also. But his complaints did cause a stir in Avignon. That was one of the reasons for his being sent into isolation. Now John XXII started to focus on our Order last year, in the Spring of 1317. Last October, October 7, 1317 to be specific he called Ubertino and another Friar, one Angelo Clarena, to Avignon to inform the Pope regarding this issue which, by now, John was regarding as a significant issue to be dealt with. For it was spreading amongst the Order. In no time at all, Pope John issues a bull, *Quorundam exigit*, wherein he stipulates such things as the type of robe we may wear and not wear and second he spoke that we may keep food stores whereas the Spirituals were opposed to that. Finally, he states:

"Great is poverty; greater is chastity; but the greatest good of all is obedience if strictly kept"

That was clearly not a statement of the vows but a clear threat that obedience was above all and obedience strictly to the commands of the Pope. Never have we seen such a threat and one which he then carried out. Now just two years ago in May 1316 our Order elected a new Minister General, Michael da Cesena. He set about restructuring and reforming but just a few months ago after the Papal Bull he was called by the Pope to Avignon. The Order had some twenty five Friars identified as heretics in violation of the Papal Bull by the Pope and a fellow Franciscan who was acting as Inquisitor, one Michael Monachus. These twenty five were then interrogated by Monachus using the procedures presented by Gui. The result was that four of the Friars who refused to recant even under the worst of torture were burned on May 7, this year, 1318, at Marseille. Yes, burned as heretics for debating poverty! Tortured by one of their fellow brothers in Christ, damned by the Pope, and handed over to the local authorities to be burned! Now Brendan, do you see where this is all heading?"

He was clearly disturbed. He could see the destruction of the Order resulting from two opposing forces. On the one hand the refusal towards blind obedience by a few Friars, something that even Saint Francis would have permitted under his First set of Rules, and at the other extreme by the Inquisition, and the Inquisitors coming from our very ranks. his was not Gui and the Dominicans, it was a Franciscan Inquisitor.

I sat there in silence as the brothers around the table just sat silent and blank faced for a while. He then continued after a brief rest:

"Brendan, you are being sent into what could be a very dangerous location, even though you are on to Montpellier. You may very well meet one of our brothers, one Bertrand de la Tour, and he is a confidant of the Pope. He also as I understand is a confidant of Gui and the two work hand in hand dealing with Inquisitional issues. Now we really do not know how Bertrand will regard you. I suspect he will know you are coming and he will seek to meet you and will in turn use it as an interrogation. Thus, as you are aware, be cautious. You are somewhat safe. You are not a Philosopher or Theologian. You are not a Lawyer; Canon or otherwise. You are a Physician, and as I understand it the Pope is often in need of medical advice. You are a Master, albeit young, but accredited. On the negative side you are from Oxford, a University that is looked upon as being somewhat extreme and free in its ideas, and you are also Irish, and the Popes have had problems with the Irish dating back to Columbanus. But use your eyes and ears, use your mouth little, expose none of your feelings. Avignon is filled with political intrigue. Be cautious with friends, you will never know what their real intents are. I also suspect that your presence will be known well before you arrive. Our prayers go with you. We look forward to your insights. Now brothers, let us eat."

The discussion was more than I had ever expected. Ockham and the others told me little of this. I had just been getting used to English Palace intrigue and this took it to another level. In England the King could not behead me, but in Avignon I could be tortured and burned at the stake for just looking askance. Welcome to Church politics.

TRAVEL TO AVIGNON

We set out from Paris, Guillaume and I, and we had two small horses, one for carrying our books and the second for one of us to ride if that became necessary. I had new sturdy sandals and both of us had an extra pair as well as an extra tunic. I had been warned that any excess could be considered a sin by the Spirituals perchance we met them and they questioned us. This I gather was more possible the further south we travelled. We did the usual path, down to Lyon, crossing many fields of grain. The land south of Paris on our route was flat, and at this time of year all had turned a bright gold yellow color.

French lands were unlike English, they were devoid of the small towns and the multiplicity of merchants. England seemed to have people selling or doing things everywhere but that was not the case here in France. As we went south, we managed to spend resting time at Churches or sometimes at a farm house. The French the locals spoke was changing every fifty miles and now almost to Lyon I was slowly adapting but there were words and pronunciations that at times were incomprehensible. Guillaume tried his best to interpret but he also was oftentimes at a loss.

After two weeks we reached Lyon, and unlike Paris this seemed a contrast. We approached the city by coming over a set of hills to the north and then below us and stretching out to the east was a large plane, and from the top of the hill I could see southward and the Rhone River, the route we would take leaving Lyon. It was a city, but a city in contrast to Paris. There were as we wandered our way in many remnants of the Roman presence. We saw a stadium or stage like assembly where I would guess they had plays or similar presentations. We went to the quarter called Le Cordeliers, which I gather meant cord or rope in reference to the rope we Franciscans wore about our middle. There we found the Franciscan Convent and rested for two days.

We managed to speak both Latin and local French, but the Latin was spotty and it had acquired an accent quite distinct from what I had learned in Dublin as a child and modified by my Oxford dialect, which at time made me sound rather pompous. We did not pronounce every vowel as they do here and we were mush flatter on all our syllables, and here they started to pronounce and accent almost every vowel. In Paris, I had noticed a lifting on the second syllable, unlike my flat accenting. It was not only the words but how they were stated.

The Prior in Lyon, a Prior Luc de Marie, was somewhat older, and had been a Franciscan for several decades. The Friars and the Prior welcomed us, we were allowed to refresh ourselves, and I was even given a new tunic. The cloth was finely made and I also received another pair of sandals along with some boot like shoes. I was told the road may be rough and the boots would come in handy. They also provided me with a new set of undergarments, since the use of them was allowed here as well and the cloth was soft and very comfortable. We attended evening prayers and Mass in the early morning. Strangely and fortunately there were no questions, no issues of the Pope, the Spirituals, or other items which could have raised concern.

However, I was certain that our progress was being monitored, since Paris, and I was always concerned and had visions of Bernard Gui and the Inquisition. Although I had no record of heresy, nor should I have one, I was certain my very presence would be a concern.

The trip was south of Lyon along the Rhone River, and as we progressed I started to see the southern mountains arise on both sides. As we went through the valley we saw many small hamlets, where the peasants managed their existence using the water from the river and the poor lands along the slopes on the sides. At each tow we saw the standard church and a few residents. Now I was seeing what was called the domus, Latin for home, which meant more than just a family, it was a small collective of people all linked by some familial ties. The faces appeared aged and darkened by the sun, I suspected that despite my youth they were not much older than me, yet looked closer to death than most patients I had back in England. There was little cold, little rain, and the foliage was spotty and dusty.

As we headed south the food also changed. We managed to eat at some home or church each night, and the meals albeit simple, were all concocted with an elegant collection of local herbs. Each hamlet it appeared had their own special collection, and despite the food, some grains, in some poor wine sauce and a few pieces of pig fat yet combined in an almost elegant manner with these herbs. There was always bread, some barley and some wheat, and always wine. I wondered if the water was drinkable. I always managed to cleanse myself at the river, yet not once did I see any of the locals doing so.

The ten days were a long and fast paced walk over the less than reasonable road along the Rhone until finally coming up to a plane where we found Avignon.

ARRIVING IN AVIGNON

The arrival at Avignon was in early October 1318. Fall in the south near the Mediterranean was unlike anything I had seen in England or Ireland. Leaving England we had just gone through a

second summer of cold damp weather. The crops had not done well again and hunger was spreading. The King, Edward was now with a new young friend and he apparently disregarded all his subjects, resulting in increased disharmony amongst all. The cold weather had just made the situation worse. Food was scarce, the people working the lands had less to eat of the food they grew. In contrast, Avignon had markets with foods of the type I have never seen and in an abundance also of which I had never seen. The clothing was in Avignon rich with color, more than I had ever experienced. Men and women walked about with gold and jewels hanging about them. I was first to meet the local Franciscans and merely let them know of my presence. Friar Guillaume with whom I had been with since Paris went to arrange the meeting. I had the chance to clean from my trip.

In the local Franciscan Convent I found a small room and adjacent was a large fountain from which I could draw water. I had some soap left from Paris and a sharp knife I could use to shave. I set about the process and apparently my cleansing routine was a total surprise to all the other Friars. I also managed to wash my cover and let it dry as I said my mid-day prayers. The sun in Avignon was so strong, even in October, that the cloth dried in less than an hour. I had never seen such brightness. The stones on all the buildings was a bright grey white and it further reflected the light, so that the sun managed to penetrate all corners. The roofs were all some orange clay material and the uniformity of construction as well as its newness gave a powerful impression of organization and control.

By later in the afternoon the Prior came down to introduce himself. He was named Andre, and was a short man of some older age, a beard, sandals, and a bald head, thus no obvious tonsure. I had refreshed mine so it was evident. He came to the small bench outside my room and sat beside me. He said:

"I understand you are from Oxford, and are off to Montpellier to study medicine. I welcome you to Avignon, have you ever been here before."

His approach was gentle, open and inquisitive. I replied:

"Prior Andre, I thank you for your hospitality and peace upon your place. Yes, I have been sent to study at Montpellier. I have never been here nor have I ever been outside the Isles. You can probably tell from my accent and bad language, for all of this is new to me."

He replied:

"Tell me Brendan, that is your name, tell me is it is habit to cleanse yourself very common at Oxford, is there some reason for doing so? I thought we left ourselves totally to the Lord and caring for the body was not our concern."

I could see I was about to enter the world of politics. He was simple, but simple like a fox. I had been prepared for this so I would try my answer.

"Prior, it is my training back up in the Isles, as a physician, we cleansed ourselves to treat the sick, to not make them uncomfortable in any manner, to let them feel they are being treated in the best of ways."

He replied:

"Brendan, you may find the Masters at Montpellier a bit different, especially our Franciscan brothers. But alas, culture is different everywhere. We all follow our vows, poverty, chastity and of course obedience."

I started to get the point. Who was I trying to obey. He clearly was trying to find a reason to refute my cleanliness claim but alas he fell short. At that moment Guillaume returned and spoke to the two of us:

"Prior Andre, I am happy you have met Brendan, and I see he has brought with him his English ways. But I have to take him to see Bertrand del la Tour, our order's representative here in Avignon. Apparently he has heard of Brendan and seeks to meet him."

Prior Andre smiled and replied:

"Brother Bertrand hears and sees all, that comes with his closeness to his Holiness. I would gather than his interest in a poor student from Oxford is driven not by curiosity, his time as part of the Papal Palace is quite important, and taking it to meet Brendan, well, that should be interesting."

He turned to me and said:

"Brandan, perhaps your bathing has come at a good time. Be careful with what you say, even how you look and move. Those in the Papal Palace are in a world unlike what we see. This is especially the case with the new Pope.

BERTRAND DE LA TOUR

The papal Palace at Avignon was massive and it appeared under continuous construction. The halls were of near infinite height and with long clear windows that allowed the strong southern light to illuminate the rooms. The room was also filled with the finest of furniture, made by superb craftsmen and there were dozens of massive tapestries upon the walls, with bright colors and both religious and other types of designs. My eyes were made to just wander across this landscape. Such wealth I had not even seen in some of the English Castles.

Bertrand de la Tour entered the room, wearing an elegantly cut tunic, of the finest of wools, sandals crafted from the finest of leather, a beard, well-trimmed and short, a finely groomed tonsure, and dark piercing eyes. He clearly was a creature of the Papal Palace. He walked towards me with open hands in a welcoming manner but by this time I was warned to be careful of feigned kindness. He began:

"Brother Brendan, I am so pleased to meet you, your arrival came as good news that our Brothers at Oxford are sending one of their best down here to study. Come sit, let us talk, and get to understand one another."

We went to a table, a large wooden one, with chairs, large wooden chairs, more elegant than any I had seen even at Windsor, covered in a fabric of beautifully dark red colors, and stuffed with what I guessed were bird feathers. He continued:

"I understand you are on your way to Montpelier to study, continue your studies, in medicine. But I am also told you know many of the theologians at Oxford, such as Friar William of Ockham, is that not correct?"

I carefully replied:

"Good Friar Bertrand, I am but a young physician, I study medicine, and yes I know Friar William, since I also studied a bit of theology. But I assure you, I am no theologian nor a philosopher. In fact I have tried my best to stay clear of such things, for as you may very well know there can be many pitfalls. I have enough difficulty dealing with human ailments and seek not to examine Divine issues."

He smiled and sat back, looking at me, and he waited as we both kept silent. I out waited him and he replied:

"Interesting reply. You are not what I had expected. You are clean shaven, cleanly dressed, well prepared, and carefully avoiding any direct answers. Tell me your true mission Brendan, I will eventually discover it. Perhaps I can assist you."

That comment truly terrified me, this man would assist no one.

BERNARD GUI

After a half hour of subtle interrogation without asking a single question, a great technique but one I was prepared for, the door opened and in came what appeared to be a Dominican, black robe with white Alb like dress, all of the finest cloth, all spotless, and wearing fancy shoes, well beyond any Franciscan sandals. He had a dark beard, cut short, a bald head, and piercing black eyes. He had what seemed to be an Italian nose, and the features of what I would expect in an Italian. He had also the most serious of looks and the most direct of presence.

Bertrand greeted him:

"My friend Bernard, so good to see you back here in Avignon. Your work goes well I understand, heretics are falling like the fall leaves from the trees. His Holiness will be so happy."

Gui replied:

"Brother Bertrand, I am back for but a short time, there is so much which must be done, and I am thankful that the Lord has given me the opportunity to purge these evils."

He turned and immediately looked at me:

"What have we here Brother Bertrand, and elegant well-groomed Franciscan, and from whence has this pearl landed upon our shores?"

At that point I knew to truly beware. I knew Gui headed the Inquisition, and even though I had some modicum of training in Theology, I knew what not to say, in this case it was nothing if I could get away with it. I saw Guillaume look aghast. He never expected this meeting. After all I was essentially just a student. Why have these two decided to meet me, what did they know or think that both Guillaume and I were ignorant of? Gui continued:

"Brendan, that is your name, yes, we welcome you to Avignon, and on your way to Montpellier. I understand you are a Master of Medicine from Oxford and are off to study under de Gordun. He is a brilliant man, brilliant. Yet I hear he is ill and ageing, God be pleased to help him. I also understand that you are well versed in many languages, many, including Arabic, yes, Greek, yes, and I understand a bit of Hebrew, yes. How strange that such a young man has such diverse interests. You even have had the time to get your Bachelor in Theology, perhaps you can educate us as well."

I suspected that needed an answer, although properly not a question. Yet to remain silent was potentially deadly. Thus I answered:

"Most Respected Inquisitor, I am honored that you know so much of my humble beginnings. I am merely a student of Medicine, and am seeking, as my fellow brothers has asked to obtain as broad an education in the art, as I can. I am told that de Gordun is the most knowledgeable in the field and that Montpellier has a wonderful reputation. My intentions are to spend some time there expanding my expertise so that I bring it back to the people in the Isles and assist the poor as best I can."

Gui snapped back:

"You must have some habit of extreme cleanliness, for I have seen few, nay I have never seen a Franciscan being so clean. Your face, your nails, even if I may note your very feet! This is not some new religious extreme from the north, is it Brother Brendan? Unlike your fellow Franciscans, the Spirituals, who seem to sleep with the foulest of God's creatures. Perhaps you are a member of some new extreme, some shall we call them, anti-Spirituals? Clean and obedient, his Holiness shall be so pleased!"

I knew that one must balance clarity of response with a certain humility, but perhaps I let myself go a bit too far when I replied:

"Master Inquisitor, it is my respect for this place of the Holy Father and of Master Bertrand for which I cleansed myself from the dust of my travels. I did not wish to present myself with

disregard for the position that all hold here in Avignon. I have done equally at the Court in England and would do the same for any and all who should be respected. In fact I have found in treating the sick that presenting myself cleaned from the dust of the path allows me to minister to the body and hopefully the souls of those for whom my calling requires of me."

Gui was clearly set aback not by what I said but by how I dealt with him as an equal, almost lecturing to him. He responded:

"Master Brendan, I see that you Irish have even more strength of presentation than your English brethren. I am learning much from this discussion, yes very much. Perhaps we can continue our talks at length later. Now my brother Bertrand and I have much to discuss. We shall meet again, indeed, we shall meet again."

Thus began my understanding of Avignon, the Pope, and his advisors. I bowed and gave them my leave.

BERTRAND DE GORDUN

In two days after the meeting at the Papal Palace, I took off for Montpellier. The weather was warm and bright and the road was well traveled. It was clear that many people would travel from the University to the Papal Palace and back. It was somewhat akin to London and Oxford, yet a bit more pleasant. I arrived in Montpellier in mid-day, the view was spectacular. It was my first chance to see the Mediterranean. The trip had been easy since there were no mountain roads to traverse. I was glad to be there and went immediately to the local Convent. There I had been expected and was welcomed.

Upon my second day at Montpellier I went from the Convent to the University and sought out Master Gordun. The University was another stone building near the center of the city and it was in a U shaped design with a courtyard again covered in massive amounts of small stones. I kept wondering where they came from and who did all the work in collecting and then in distributing them? But again, each time I venture farther south the sun just becomes so more intense, and here, unlike Paris, there is an intensity of colors I have never seen before.

I ventured to Master Gordun's offices and it was there that I found him. He appeared much older than I had anticipated and further one could see a tremor in his right hand as he held it steady. He clearly had a palsy and it was a bit significant. I ventured towards the door and he caught sight to me. He looked up without changing any expression in his face, a symptom of the palsy I assumed, and motioned me to enter. I had my documents and packages and walked in and presented them to him.

He had me sit before him while he read the letters. He used a lens for reading very much of the type I had seen in Oxford but this lens was in a magnificent gold casement, topped with a small but very attractive red ruby. It was something I had never seen before, especially in an academic. He finished the letters and turned to me and said:

"You come with some interesting recommendations. Perhaps you can tell me why you are here. I gather you have already passed through the gamut at Avignon and you are not as of yet a designated heretic. Tell me why you study medicine and why in turn you come all the way down here, here in Montpellier?"

I replied:

"To study under you for a period if such is possible Master Gordun."

He then asked:

"In your brief experience, who do you consider you should consult with first when dealing with a patient."

I replied perhaps a bit too succinctly:

"First, listen to the patient, determine the symptoms, understand the patient, then the evidence from what the patient brings with them."

He sat backward, and I thought perhaps I had failed the first exam. Then he said, his head now shaking slightly, his skin tight and almost translucent,

"Very good young Friar, I see you have treated many a patient. But let me ask, what if the patient lies to you, what then?"

I replied:

"Master Gordun, all too often the patient tries to present their disease in a manner that reflects their view of themselves. The brave say it is nothing, the fearful that they are on the verge of meeting the Lord, the ignorant that there is some curse put upon them and that I cannot be of any help. The truly ill will often appear just helpless, on the verge of death. Thus the attitude of the patient is the first sign, it only helps, then in my experience, a physician must carefully pry from them what they ate, who else is ill, what other symptoms they have, what is real and what is imagined."

He continued:

"As to fevers, what experience have you?"

I replied:

"I have studied your work of course and the other Masters. As for patients I have seen fevers of many types, and several of the type found in the young that lead to death, those where there is also a swelling of the glands, and a high persistent fever. That I have seen that several times and death always follows in but a few days. I know not of any cause not do I know of any treatment."

I have not seen some of the many tertiary and quartary fevers as discussed by you and Galen and others. Those I have studied, but we see none of that far north in England."

He seemed satisfied but we continued our discussions. Then he asked about my studies in astronomy and astrology. I was fearful that my lack of interest might show through but I would be truthful. I replied:

"I have mastered astronomy in my quadrivium. As you may be aware Master Gordun, in England we have such poor weather that a good appreciation of the planets and stars is quite difficult. We have means to tell dates, to measure time, and an understanding of where the planets and stars should be, but for that reason I would look forward to time here with you at Montpelier where I could best appreciate these issues."

He seemed placated by that answer. We then discussed other issues such as his views and mine on the testing of urine and we had a small debate on the toughing of patients. I held fast on the need to assess the state of the organs and even to listening to the heart and the taking of the pulse. I recounted:

"Master Gordun, I have done many studies on the taking of the pulse, the actual measuring of how many beats per minute there are. The reason is that what I may say is slow another may say is fast. Yet if we were to measure the pulses in number then my fifty is your fifty, and we can compare numbers not perceptions."

This somewhat surprised him I gathered. He then asked:

"I gather you are one of these new types, using arithmetic and numbers, measuring and recording. How did you get to use these methods, what has happened up there in Oxford?"

I replied:

"Master Gordun, I had been translating many documents with a colleague, and my sponsor, from Arabic and Greek, I gather following the work of those before me like Master Bacon and Master Grosseteste. We have learned a great deal and I have also found that gathering numbers allows for two things. A record of change over time, say with the heartbeat, and a record of comparing between different measurements by different individuals. Fifty per minute is the same whether I measure it or it is accomplished by some other Master. Then the second change is our ability to record it. We have a small paper mill outside of Oxford. I assisted in setting it up. There we can get papers, and on papers we can make a record of each patient which we bring with us. Thus our memory is not tested and further each new physician has the past to examine and contrast to the words of the patient."

He sat up as if he was hearing me for the first time. He almost came alive with color in his face. He said:

"Well Master Brendan, I look forward to having you as our guest. Your ideas may send a new wind through our dusty hallways. Please join me for dinner later, we can continue then, along with some colleagues. I welcome you to Montpellier."

I then said:

"Master Gordun, I also have for you a gift from our brothers at Oxford."

I gave him the books and he was almost in tears looking at the works. I gathered my introduction went well. This was in total contrast to Avignon. But things would change.

THE UNIVERSITY AT MONTPELIER

I began attending Gordun's lectures. In many ways it was like Oxford but the number of students was much greater, some thirty-five my first day, and from many different places. I was the only Franciscan there and at first I was judged with some discern. Clearly the problem of the Spirituals had become well known and the issue of the heretical burnings was also an issue. But my tunic was clean, full length, I had sandals and on top of that I maintained my bathing habits so that I did not disturb the air about my fellow students.

My first day I was surprised by two factors. First Gordun made the point in introducing me and announcing it in such a manner that I was here at his request to learn from him. I frankly did not care and actually appreciated it since it played into my plan of being just a student. After all I was assuming that whatever happened here would work its way back to Gui and de la Tour in Avignon and by my being a find of Gordun made it so more the simpler. His second factor was the way Gordun lectured.

When he had the chance he would degrade any of his contemporaries if they in any way did not meet his often unspoken expectations. He truly had an arrogant bent in public that surprised me. I was later to find that he was almost friendless. Now I could see why. In my total time with him nothing matching any of my relationships at Oxford would develop. Notwithstanding this it was an excellent platform to work from. I would need an excuse to go back and forth to Avignon but that would take some further digging.

What was different was that Gordun would demonstrate phlebotomy with a surgeon. I had never been one accepting of bloodletting but it was a standard practice and the physician would order it and a surgeon would effect it. While I was there one of the other Masters had become ill and he was in turn treated by another Master. Apparently Gordun was kept at a distance and I suspect it was his age and health. The tremor was become more evident each day. But what happened was the physician Master ordered the bloodletting, brought in a surgeon, apparently of little experience, and then the Master left, to go elsewhere, and rumor was that he had some woman friend he was to meet. The result was that the surgeon erred and the ill Master died of massive blood loss, he had cut through to an artery. Gordun was furious. The next day at class he spent the entire time lecturing us on our duty of care, that surgeons are just expensive butchers, and the physician is always responsible for their patient. Never had I heard such a lecture, at such

intensity, such focus. His point left a lasting impression on all the students. Nevertheless it did further antagonize his relationships with his peers.

Subsequently to enforce his points regarding surgeons and physicians, he brought in several patients with cysts, tumors, hemorrhoids, hernias, and even teeth problems, and then working with a surgeon he had chosen we went through each procedure, having diagnosed and determined what needed to be done. He, at each step, asked the surgeon a question as to the anatomy of the procedure, and, at each moment, the surgeon could tell us and Gordun what the anatomical structures were and moreover what he could expect next. There was great planning in every procedure, it was clean, carefully orchestrated, carefully managed, with the sharpest of tools and the cleanest of cuts.

By December Master Gordun had come to understand what I had already learned and he asked me to lecture on certain topics. It appeared that his health was starting to fail even more. Thus did I begin speaking on the issue of anatomy, based upon my understanding of the writings of the Greeks and Muslim writers and my understanding from my direct experience with animals. It was in that lecture that one Italian student asked me:

"Master Brendan, have you spent any time at Bologna, I understand that they actually examine humans, criminals who have been executed, and they thus gain direct knowledge of the specific differences. I understand the study of animals is useful but is not the study of humans even more so?"

That was when I saw that I must at some time go to Bologna, yet how to achieve that given my current set of mixed goals, medicine and espionage, would be difficult.

GORDUN AND MEDICAL LITERATURE

I had read Galen, Hippocrates and even Gordun's very own works. Yet he lectured in a manner quite different from Oxford. In Oxford we read, and then met with the Master and discussed what we read. It was interactive and a method that often highlighted our misunderstandings while intensifying what we had learned. In contrast, Gordun, and those at Montpellier, lectured, and then we were examined as a group. The works were read to us and from time to time Gordun or his colleagues would remark upon some actual case they were involved with.

What I did not know was that the public asking of questions was unacceptable. One was to sit, listen and not remark. For the less educated students that may have worked but for me, I just managed to ask, to question, and worse of all things to ask "why?".

Gordun spent the first set of lectures taking us through what was called the Articella. This consisted of: Hippocrates works on Aphorisms and Prognosis, Theophilus on Urines, Philaretus on Pulses, and a lengthy discussion of Galen on the Art of Medicine, also known as Tegni. Tegni came from the Greek, τέχνη, techne, or art or technique. Understanding Greek as I did, I spent a week trying to understand what they were saying. Once I saw it was Greek, then the absurd use of Tegni almost made sense. It was clear that they had gone through several distortions to get to

this word. I realized that Greek, no less than Arabic, was foreign to all these students, and even Gordun had only a rudimentary understanding.

We proceeded to study a variety of diseases, many of which I had already understood and even seen and treated. On the other hand, this far south, I saw diseases that I had never seen before. There was apoplexy, common almost everywhere, and asthma, seen quite often in the more wealthy families, dysentery, a common ailment with a multiplicity of presentations. I saw my first examples of leprosy and even a few cases of epilepsy, the so called holy disease. Then there were the common pustules, sores, scabies, ulcers, many of which by means of cleansing using of ointments they could be managed and cured. I also studied diseases of the eye, a complex organ. Also Gordun did lecture of the diseases of what I called the psyche, the melancholy, insanity, manias, and the like.

I had thought I would be seeing the same things just presented differently but here Gordun actually gave new insight. The patients we saw were different, the diseases a slightly different presentation and the medications more in line with Galen and Dioscorides. I suspected that the herbs and other sources of medicines were more common here than what we had at Oxford. Also Gordun had us examine patients much more than we had done at Oxford. There we studied the books, and despite my wandering to help those in need, Gordun managed to select the most challenging cases. Gordun was a follower of Galen to a degree, but I saw him as much more pragmatic. He did not accept Galen as if it were Gospel. He told us to observe, to learn from the past and also from what is presented to us. Knowledge in medicine was always evolving and hopefully improving.

GORDUN AND EXPERIMENTS

We spent time discussing various potions and their applications. What I found most interesting with Gordun and his fellows was their concern on poisons. The closest I came to that at Oxford was the food made by Brother Richard, a Friar from Cirencester, who was quite plump, always happy but somehow put cups of lard and then hands full of salt in every pot of soup. I had learned to avoid it and all the better for my digestion. But here, in the south of France, and I suspect all across the Mediterranean, poisons were a major concern. Poisons came from both human intentional sources as well as natural.

We discussed the mixture called Theriac. This was considered a universal therapeutic for a wide variety of poisons. However each Theriac seemed to be created from its own separate mixture, and as usual some could be beneficial while others more deadly than a poison. Gordun then presented us with a demonstration. He took two pheasants, cut their combs so as to provide a point of entry. The he took a poison, one I do not recall, and pasted it on each pheasants open wound. To one he added a Theriac solution, to the other, nothing. He placed them in a cage and we then examined them the next morning. The one with the Theriac lived the other had died. Thus he concluded that the Theriac was functional.

Here is where I created my first entry as a disruptor. I stated that one could at best consider Theriac to function. For there could be several other conditions. First the dead pheasant could have died from shock, loss of blood, even old age. We did not know the poison as the sole cause

of death. Second, the live pheasant may have already been protected from the poison, the poison could have too weak, and so on. As I continued, the other students were aghast. Clearly no one else had done such before. I suddenly realized that perhaps I had strayed too afar.

But to my surprise Gordun then said:

"Master Brendan, perhaps you could inform us as to how you Masters at Oxford would treat this analysis?"

I then took the opportunity. I replied:

"Master Gordun, let me begin. We have several questions to be answered. First, does the poison alone kill? To answer that we should take a larger number of pheasants, I would say at least ten, and I could separately explain why, but first perform the test alone with poison on all ten. If they all die in a comparable period, then we can most likely state the poison is the cause, for other causes would be unlikely in such a large group."

"Then we have a second question, that of the theriac. I would again take say ten pheasants, but in two groups one with the poison alone and another ten with the poison and the Theriac. Then I would examine the results. Again if all the poison alone die and all the Theriac live, we can reliably state the efficacy of the Theriac."

I continued:

"Finally, it may be possible that some of those poisoned and without Theriac survive, or even some poisoned and with Theriac perish. These exceptions should be studied even further."

I looked about and the students had abject terror on their faces. They expected me to be expelled with the most severe of reprimands. Yet Gordun smiled and said:

"Master Brendan, you have excellent insight. Having such a large number would tend to exclude small exceptions. However, as perhaps the class would also understand, if you kept this up you would consume the entire market for pheasants."

I laughed, so did he and then so did the class, all of them amazed.

After the lecture he asked that I accompany him on a call to a patient. It was a local pastor who apparently had a kidney stone. He was in great discomfort, and Gordun had done the diagnosis. On our way to see the man we discussed experiments, and how one could best measure and report results. I explained some of the mathematics we had been working on at Oxford, our use of the Arabic number schemes, and the use of graphing results, to show changes as images, like we would do in Geometry but with data. He was extremely enthusiastic.

We met the Pastor, he clearly was in great discomfort. Gordun asked that I examine him and render my prognosis. I first tried to examine his urine, and it was difficult, for despite his consumption of wine he still was retaining fluid. I then palpated his body, carefully examining

the kidney on each side, and from the radiating pain I suspected that the stones were there and descending. Gordun then asked if there was anything else. I examined his eyes, they were clear, his mouth and breath were normal, his temperature normal to the touch, his flesh not too dry nor too moist. I then did something that Gordun had not seen before, I laid the Pastor down and with my ear listened to his heart and then upon rolling him over listened to his lungs. They all seemed normal.

I then said:

"It appears that the stone is in transit. I would recommend fluids, a weak wine perhaps, with boiled water, and I would recommend some poppy extract for the pain, mixed in the weak wine."

Gordun then said:

"Excellent. Now take this which I brought and treat this patient."

I did so, and the Pastor was relieved of the pain and put to sleep. I watched his breathing because I knew the poppy could suppress the breath. I told Gordun so. He then said:

"Fine, so stay here until the stone passes. I will return then."

He then got up, not another word, and walked out. I sat and administer the Pastor for two days when the stone passed. The urine became bloody, the Pastor showed great pain, even with the poppy extract, and then the stone dropped. The pain disappeared and the Pastor wept with joy. He said to me:

"Now I see what women must suffer with child birth!"

I smiled and before I could turn there was Gordun. He smiled and greeted the Pastor. As if nothing had happened, we then sat for lunch. Gordun had brought three roasted pheasants!

SOME PATIENTS

By early 1319 I had gained Gordun's trust and I gather acceptance and unlike his other students I had already experienced a considerable amount of direct exposure and treatment of patients. As his health was still in decline he asked that I accompany him on several visits. Many of these were in Montpellier and its surrounding environs. However, we had a request from Avignon to visit a local Inquisitor in Pamiers, a three day journey on horseback from Montpellier. Gordun was a bit secretive of this visit and I was also inclined to ask few questions since it involved an Inquisitor, not of the same caliber I gather as was Gui, but an Inquisitor just as well.

We headed along the coast to Beziers and from there we headed almost due west, north of Narbonne and through a mountain pass area of farmland and forests. On the end of the third day we approached Pamiers, a town just north of the mountains that starts there and goes for miles. There is a small river, l'Ariege, which flows though the town. It is narrow and appears slow flowing, not something I would expect any boat traffic upon and I assumed it was coming from

the mountains and not towards the sea. The land was flat and appeared quite fertile. This land was good for local production but I suspected that it was not good for exporting its wares, or even importing many of the exotic things which I had seen in Montpellier or Avignon.

Our patient was Jacques Fournier, who was the Bishop of Pamiers. I wondered why we were going so far for a local bishop and also why Gordun was so secretive as to whom we were attending. When we arrived at Pamiers I had anticipated staying at the Franciscan Convent there but Gordun had other plans. We went directly to the Bishop's residence and we made no effort to let anyone know we were even there. In fact Gordun had me change into non-clerical clothing the morning before our entry to the town. As far as those seeing us, we appeared as two travelers, of a somewhat upper class. I briefly wondered what my Superior would say or even worse the Prior at the local Convent. And here I was going to meet a Bishop! I asked Gordun and his reply was short but enigmatic:

"We have an important patient, and one who needs no reference to any potential weakness. Thus we are neither cleric nor physician to anyone but him, we are merely visitors from Avignon. To that end speak as little as possible, your accent and phrases will alarm everyone."

Then off we went into Pamiers and to the Bishops residence. We entered and Gordun spoke with his assistant, a cleric, young, local as far as I could tell, and of few words. He led us into the Bishop's quarters, and we waited.

It took almost an hour, then the Bishop Jacques Fournier entered. He was somewhat young, short, of slim build, a long narrow face, clean shaven, and his attire made it clear who he was, the Bishop. Yet he was, as I was told by Gordun, also a Cistercian. As such I was surprised since it was my understanding that the Cistercians, akin to the Benedictines, were monastic, shunning the world and stressed manual labor. This man before me was thus a contrast. He did not physically appear capable of much manual labor, he clearly was not shunning the world, and I gathered that he was well educated. He was indeed a contrast.

He politely waved us to his large desk and had us sit before him. He then said:

"Doctor, my many thanks for your coming. I gather his Holiness has asked you and you have little information as to why. I also gather that this is your assistant, and Master Brendan, you are a Franciscan is that not correct?"

I replied:

"Your Grace, I mean Your Excellency, yes I am, from Oxford, and now with Master Gordun at Montpellier. I was asked to hide my presence and thus my lack of proper attire."

He smiled, and replied:

"You English have a twist on many things, and I do like your titleage. There is no issue with the attire, we are trying to keep our flow of rumors to a minimum. I understand that his Holiness has

heard of you Master Brendan and he had suggested that you would be of great assistance to Doctor Gordun. Now let me explain why you have been called."

"As you know, I am the Inquisitor for this part of Languedoc. Also in this area we have large collections of heretics, especially Cathars. I have spent a great deal of effort eliminating them and this has taken a great deal of my time and travel. Unfortunately I now have some severe ailments which seem to prevent my travels, and I will explain them to you. I seek your guidance and if the Lord permits then a remedy so that I may continue with my efforts. There are so many of these Cathars that the challenge can only be met by one in the best of health."

He then proceeded in the most clinical manner to describe his problems. There was digestive discomfort, somewhat painful abdominal areas, and not truly relieved by standard medications. The pain occurring later in the day, reaching a peak about two hours after dinner, making sleep uncomfortable. I asked if he been eating something different and he said that it was his standard meal.

I took a sample of urine, and I also listened to his heart, checked his pulse. His eyes were clear. I palpated his abdomen seeking his liver, spleen, pancreas, and all seemed normal. He had no lower abdominal pain signifying a blockage in his appendix. His urine appeared normal and thus his kidneys appeared to be functioning properly. I examined what was the gall bladder region, and flank, knowing that stones are frequent in some people.

I consulted with Gordun, and we both agreed that what could be a set of concerns were eliminated. I asked for a sample of his stool, to assess his digestive process. I knew it was potentially embarrassing and would take some time but I was surprised by his clinical acceptance. We would stay the evening, and also however long we required. We were sent to our rooms, elegant beyond anything I had been in before.

We had our dinner in the kitchen, off to the side, but served on a small table. The cooks were preparing a meal for the Bishop and some local guests. I decided to watch the preparation and not eat. Food is often a cause of these problems and perhaps we were looking in the wrong direction. The master cook had been with the Bishop and his predecessor. He was well trusted. His staff however was new and comprised of locals. I had some knowledge of the local flora since I was using it in following Dioscorides. I watched the local cooks prepare a sauce on the venison they were preparing. Then I saw the problem. One of the local cooks was adding a red berry like fruit to the sauce, and when I looked closer it was clearly a Nightshade, also called a Bittersweet. Some of the berries were still green and these could cause a significant gastric poisoning. I went and asked him what he was doing. He told me that the Bishop likes fruit in his sauce and he made this especially for him. I then called the master chef over and asked what this was about. He dropped his knife in horror, for he had never noticed. He was in abject terror but the local cook just looked dumbfounded, he was just ignorant.

I went and told Gordun, who, albeit very tired from the trip, was exalted, we had a solution. He then said:

"Brendan, that was wonderful, you tell the Bishop, I believe you should!"

I replied:

"No Master Gordun, let us both go, and let us do so now. My concern is that they do not too severely punish the cooks, but I believe the chef was at fault, but that I shall not say to the Bishop."

We went up to the Bishop's meeting room, a grand room with a warm fire and many candles. He was entertaining several people and surprisingly it included Gui. Gui immediately saw me and noticed with apparent disagreement that I was not in my mufti. Gordun indicated to the Bishop that we wish to speak with him. Surprisingly the Bishop came along with Gui, so we must deal with both. Gordun stated:

"Your Excellency, we believe has discovered the problem that afflicts you. It is not a disease, it is a fruit in your food, Nightshade, a toxic substance that causes your distress. We have eliminated the toxin but the food preparation should be followed up closely."

The Bishop appeared satisfied and relieved. Gui on the other hand looked concerned. He clearly knew it was I who had found the toxin. He then turned to me and said:

"Master Brendan, we thank you for this, but do you have any suspicions that this was anything but carelessness? You understand from whence I ask the question?"

I replied:

"Master Inquisitor, I understand, but I suspect it was ignorance, and perhaps a lack of oversight, but no intent as best as I can gather. As you can see, they did not suspect me of anything since I did not present as a Friar and was just an assistant to Master Gordun. But Master Inquisitor, you raise a significant issue. The ingredient lent to the symptoms because the cook was careless and inserted non ripe fruits. The ripe fruits are just as deadly but they give less signs early on and they can lead to, let us say the results are not beneficial to any. I would strongly advise, given what I see as the circumstances, that you continue a more vigilant oversight of the food. The same would be for the wine."

I then turned to the Bishop and said:

"Your Excellency, I suggest that Master Gordun and I remain for a while to see that you have a full recovery. I have some herbs that will assist in clearing your system and I believe you will recover with no harmful results. However, I would be cautious in the future."

The Bishop agreed and thanked us. Gui then asked that he and I speak on the morrow. I gathered that I had opened a door that would change a great deal in my life.

The next day Gui met me in the rear of the Chapel after Mass. I was still in local dress. He motioned me to follow him and we walked down to the river edge. The day was clear and cool,

the river was flowing quickly and winter was upon us and one could see the snow on the mountains to the south.

As we walked Gui said to me:

"Brendan, you have done well, and you have managed to become just a shadow. That is a wonderful talent. I see Gordun is ill, and have known that for a while. But he was a great man in his time, a bit abrupt but a great man. Bishop Fournier has done a wonderful task here with the heretics. I suspect you know little of them, is that true?"

I replied:

"Yes Sir, I may as you have noted been educated somewhat in Theology but I am but a tyro, one who understands enough perhaps to just avoid trouble, not enough to get into trouble."

He replied:

"Brendan, the problem here is not the Theologian and their heresies, it is the common people, the peasants. The problem here is the Cathars. They have been a plague on our lands, the heresy seeps into the soul of a town and then spreads like some plague. Bishop Fournier has brilliantly fought it but there are still pockets. I believe you can help us. You have a presence and a skill in observing that can be quite useful. Let us consider what you can do. We shall keep in contact as I go back and forth from Avignon. Also I suggest you stay close to the Bishop, God tells me he is a chosen man, a selected person."

I had no idea then what he spoke of. Yet I was starting to accomplish my tasks of gaining insight and access well beyond my greatest expectations.

Gui then said to me:

"Brendan, I have a need to examine what is happening in a small mountain town, called Montaignou, south of here. I would very much like you to accompany me, it will be useful. We go in the disguise of the type you have so well adopted, mere merchants, seeking sources for new products."

I then asked,

"Why Montaignou? What has occurred there?"

Gui then motioned for the two of us to sit. He then began:

"The Cathars, you must have heard of them. Well let me take you aback, when they started to penetrate their heresy. For a Cathar, there is a good and an evil deity, like the Manicheans, but more severe. Your studies in Theology have introduced you to some of the classic heresies, settled a millennium ago by the many Councils. This is truly a new one, but it has the flavor of many of the old ones. Not only is there a Manichee with good and evil, there is a Docetist or

denial of the reincarnation, and a Gnosticism wherein there is secret knowledge. There is a chose few the Perfects, and in addition there is a belief in a Hindu like reincarnation, and animals and insects carry human spirits. They proselytize with a preaching of simplicity, humility and poverty. They look upon the Holy See as almost the devil incarnate. But what is worse, they prey upon the poor and ignorant and we see their "priests" using their power to seduce women and create great instability in their communities. They may be preaching one thing but their actions are quite different. There is thus in this town we fear such a priest and worse, we believe the entire town is corrupt with this heresy. While Gordun helps the Bishop recover, we shall go and seek out the facts. I believe this will be an excellent exercise for you, for you clearly have the skills to quietly examine and ascertain the truth."

He continued:

"The goal of the Perfects in Cathar are clear. They intend to use the basics of the Church, undermine them by their view of dualism, downgrade Jesus to just an angel, and to have a set of Perfects and Believers, the chosen and the yet to be chosen. A sign on their presence will be the absence of any typical sign of our belief. There will be a church, yet no statues or outward manifestations, the home will be devoid of any crucifix or other manifestation. It will be subtle, many will miss the signs, seeing instead a poor people with few belongings. Our goal is to seek out the locals, to observe and listen, not to engage them in debate. We seek to identify, and then allow the Bishop upon his recovery to perform his function as the Inquisitor here."

At this point I felt that I had become a spy upon a spy. On the one hand I had sought to get close to the Pope and his Inquisitors, now I was to be one with them. In addition my medical education was taking its own twists and turns.

We departed the next morning. I had told Gordun that Gui required me to see some other patients and he was pleased to rest with the comfort of the Bishop. Fournier was slowly recovering. I had prepared a mint broth for him to purge his system, both kidneys and bowels. It would take a week to fully expel the toxins and I had hope there would be no permanent damage. I also saw that Gui had taken some drastic measures in the kitchens, seeking a more reliable set of cooks. Surprisingly he found three of the Poor Clares from the Franciscan Convent to take the role, they were three older women and I suspected the Bishop would be well fed.

It was winter and cold and we set out on horses, both dressed like merchants, with a rough wool cape and hood, well insulated boots and leggings. There were four horses, two for Gui and myself and two carrying wares for trade. We had some herbs, a few spices, a few pots, and cloth. Gui had also managed to assemble small but valuable items including sewing needles and some fine leather which could be used for patching. I truly thought we looked like a fine group of middle class merchants. Then off we set to the south and up the mountains. The first day was not that bad. We rode some ten hours, and managed to go about 38 miles. The ground was hard and there were spots of snow. We had to be cautious with the horses since they could readily slip on some of the rocky road. The first night we rested in Lavalanet.

There was a light snow falling and reached the town just as the last of the light was leaving. I felt we have truly pushed the light on both ends a bit too far, and I saw Gui as an aggressive risk

taker. Ten hours was the maximum of sun light available at this time of year. The streets were covered in a slushy snow and we saw the church and Gui stopped there to inquire for a place to rest. The priest came out to greet us and I had to stop from saying "Peace be unto this house", it had become my Franciscan mantra and as Gui reminded me we were not now mendicants, neither Franciscan nor Dominican.

The priest sent us to the home of a widow, a Mrs. Medard, she was middle aged, and apparently had three deceased husbands to her credit. She welcomed us in and showed us a spot where we could rest. She then prepared a meal, I gathered it was warming up some porridge with some small amount of pork and a bit of day old bread. It was accompanied by a drinkable red wine, strong and as I recall quite fruity. She asked us the usual questions and I let Gui respond. My concern was that although we were dressed as merchants, we were mendicants, and both of us had tonsures still, yet since it was winter we managed to keep our small caps upon our heads. That was when I worried about Church, Mass, and going without any head cover. But I suspected Gui had a trick for that as well.

We slept the night and arose about at sunrise. Mrs. Medard was already awake and prepared for us a warm broth and some cheese. Both were excellent. Gui paid her with a small pot for which she was immensely grateful. I had never really see barter like this before and it made some sense but paying with pots required a large caravan of horses if one were to travel extensively.

The remaining trip took another ten hours, the reason was snow and the climb up the mountain road to Montailou. As the clouds cleared and I could see in the bright sun the mountains were covered with snow and absolutely beautiful. It was a clear blue sky, a blue well beyond my arguments with Ockham, strange that color would bring that back to me. The white of the snow was a perfect white. No stain of anything. The mountains were majestic. I had never seen anything quite like this. I wondered what people would do in this mountains. At least here in Lavelanet one had fields for crops, soil to grow them in, land to move them about. Up there one had what appeared to be pure stone.

We first arrived at Belestia, a small hamlet with few people but still there were remnants of farm land, people could survive. Then the climb began. It was difficult and dangerous. We also could see the Ariege River from time to time, I gathered it also flowed through Montailou. I really wondered why anyone would worry about a heresy up here. Where would it go, it seemed to me to be at the end of the world. Yet Gui and Fournier were concerned of identifying and eliminating all. So up we went, getting colder and more snow. I had never been so cold before. The snow was hitting my face like small needles, I had a cowl across my head but the wind kept blowing it aside. At this point I think I believed my sole purpose was to have one of us alive to identify the frozen body of the other. Which of us would survive was my knowing question. I keep saying to myself, "One more step, one more step".

Finally, we arrived, more than ten hours of climbing, and the horses and we were exhausted. The horses needed care, that I knew. I wondered if Gui was as attuned to the animals. As before we went to the local church and sought out the priest. There in the town, a few houses of a town, was the Church and next to it a rectory. We knocked and a priest came forth. Gui introduced us as we stood at the entry. It was a Father Pierre Clergue, a well-groomed man and behind him in

the Rectory sat a young woman, who we were to find was a Grazide Lizier, his mistress. That would Gui's first find. Clergue sent us to the home of Guillaume Benet, one of the wealthier families in the town, although I could never discern what wealth meant here. Off we went and at Benet's we were offered a room in the rear of his barn and also space for our horses. Here we also paid with pots. I was amazed as to how many pots we had initially but now I saw why. Gui went to meet Guillaume while I tended the horses. They needed feed and water and a good rub down. That took me a good two hours, but at least I was out of the snow and the movement made me warm. The horses seemed to appreciate the care and food. There was a bucket of water that I drew from the well, it seemed potable but I washed myself first, in the freezing water, with the small piece of soap I had wrapped in my clothes. I took my cap to hide my tonsure and went to have some food.

Gui had already eaten and had begun to engage Guillaume in conversation. But I saw Gui returning to his style of an Inquisitor. I decided that perhaps I should tell Guillaume who we were, or at least who we wanted him to think we were. I said:

"Guillaume, this is a beautiful area, such lovely mountains, acres of land, what products do you have there that you find demand in? Cheeses, furs, perhaps. "

He responded cautiously, he appeared quite astute but was trying to understand who we were and if we may have been some threat to him.

"Brendan, we really sell little, we consume it ourselves for the most part. You travel way up here is a bit strange, since we see so few visitors. What is it that led you here? Also where are you from, your accent is something I have never heard before."

I replied:

"Ah, I am from Ireland, Dublin, my family are in trading and shipping. My uncle owns the ships that we travel on and my father does the trades, mostly to the English and sometimes to the French. They have been down the coast from Brittany, through Gascony, Aquitaine, the coast along Spain, and in many of the Muslim territories. I have picked up several languages on the way including Arabic and that also would account for my speech. My uncle dropped me off in Montpellier and asked that I spend time exploring for new markets. I am here with my friend, Bernard, who we have worked with over the years."

Guillaume absorbed the story quite well and Gui fortunately caught on and remained silent. I managed to take the lead. I continued:

"I often take off on exploring new sources of trade. This time I met a merchant in Montpellier, he told me to go north east along the edge of the mountains, up through to Toulouse. There we found cloth, some fancy jewelry, and of course dried herbs that we can sell not only to the English but along our trip back. We would like to seek trade in oils, namely olive oils and also wine, for we have many sources now from Gascony northward. But on our return from Toulouse, we were told that up here on the mountain edges we could find some lichen from the mountain trees. You see, we deal with many cloth merchants, and they are seeking new dyes and colors for

their cloth. The English in particular, they have much wool, and there is a demand for many new colors. The lichen here on the trees of these mountains, they make beautiful dyes that are strong on wool."

He then asked:

"How do you make these dyes? I have never heard of this."

I explained:

"You see, you go and collect the lichen. You separate the different kinds, for each yields a different color. You then must extract the dye colors from the lichen. We use something the Muslims call alcohol, a clear water like substance we get from boiling wine and extracting vapors. Others use just water, and boil down the lichen, for almost a day in some cases. Then you collect the fluid, and on the side you have prepared a fluid from the burned bark of oak trees, its ashes, we use that in paper making as well. We get a very pure solution which can be very harmful to the skin if you were to touch it. But then into the fluid from the lichen you slowly add, drop by drop, the water from the oak bark fluid, slowly, and suddenly the clear liquid turns color, often a brilliant purple or blue, or even red. It is truly amazing. That is the dye, then you must use it quickly to adhere to the wool. That material has great value. We would be willing to pay a great amount if you and your people could collect these lichens. These mountains are very special, they contain some of the best we have ever seen. There is great opportunity, great opportunity."

Guillaume replied:

"I see now why you spent so much time climbing up here. It makes a great deal of sense, and it may help our community. You then seek the lichen, and that we can get for you."

I then replied:

"Ah, we thought it would be worth the trip, but, Guillaume, the ice and snow, that was like God sending down tiny stones, our faces almost torn apart!"

He laughed and replied:

"Stones indeed. Are you a very religious man, you and Bernard?"

I now knew I had gotten him to where we wanted, to religion, then to probe. I replied:

"I am not very, of course I have been educated, by the Sisters in Dublin, but just to read a bit, some writing, and a little arithmetic, to keep the books. But I do not go to Church, I travel so much, and in Ireland we have had a conflict at times with the English, and of course with others. In fact we avoid getting close to Avignon, too many clerics, monks, Friars, Bishops, priests, too much for me, and Bernard even more so! Too much politics in the Church."

He then opened up:

"Have you ever considered a better form of our true religion, one where there is no mighty religious, no Pope with gold and jewels, just a pure God who can protect you from pure evil?"

I replied,

"I have never considered such. But I consider myself a good man, always seeking to be better. Bernard, you too have said as such, yes."

Gui now well understood my tactic and he replied:

"Yes Guillaume, we do speak of seeking a better way to seek God."

I then said,

"It is getting late, but Guillaume, perhaps we can speak again of your ideas. This has been a most enjoyable evening."

We retired, Gui and I to the barn in a side room, and the horses settled out front, now warm from the mountain cold.

When we were alone Gui turned and said to me:

"Where did you learn to handle such a person that way. It would have taken me week of Inquisition to get that far? And where did you learn about lichen and dyes? "

I replied:

"I am a physician. One of our basic tenets is to understand the patient, yet almost all patients fear to tell us the real problem. Thus we have ways to engage them, get them to discuss things that eventually get to what we seek. I treated him just as I would a patient. As for the lichen and dyes, well we have a paper making plant in Oxford that Prior Dismas and I assembled with the help of the locals, and in investigating organs for anatomy I worked at the slaughter house and thus to the tannery, and each day I speak to local craftsmen who tell me about all these new techniques that they are learning about. A key to speaking with people like Guillaume and have them believe what you want them to, is to have a true story, it must be true, and you have to carry it far enough that you out run their questions. Then they accept you and they feel you have opened up to the. Fill them with facts, true facts, but facts that direct their attention elsewhere. But then as a patient, find out what they think, what they feel. I hope I am not being too irreligious, but not being a priest, nor a theologian, I have to deal with people, and facts." Sometimes they do not align."

Gui replied:

"Brendan, you have missed your calling, you should be an Inquisitor."

I smiled and replied:

"Now is time to sleep."

In the morning Guillaume invited us for a breakfast, yet his was quite telling. Gui had told me to watch, for as a Perfect had exhibited Cathar signs. After breakfast we were invited to one of their ceremonies. Gui saw immediately it was Cathar and I was intrigued as to this variant of a religion. Gui gathered more evidence but it was clear we would do nothing ourselves here, we would never survive. But we opened a door, and for that Gui was satisfied. We bade them farewell, saying we would be back to purchase the lichen.

Regrettably I gathered years later that Gui sent troops there and many of them were tried and a few executed. It was in my opinion sad but alas this was the world we lived in.

PETRARCH

We returned to Pamier and the Bishop had healed and Gordun was recovering quite well. For a Carthusian the Bishop had developed a fine taste in living, good wine, food, and a well decorated residence. I had become quite aware that not all monks or friars had taken to poverty as strongly as others. I saw a bit of this at Avignon, and that I had expected, but here at Montpellier it was even more evident. I had been here almost two years, and had achieved what I had sought to. My contacts with Gui and his group had become a fine source of information, much of which I could send back to Oxford, albeit in a rather slow manner via Friars, who would be on travel.

In Montpellier from time to time I would be consulted for my medical opinion. I gather my acceptance by Gordun had enhanced my credibility and my association with Gui had further led an air of importance to what I had to say. Frankly, I felt no wiser, for I was now spending time actually practicing medicine more than studying. I even lectured when Gordun was incapacitated.

Gordun was aging and he actually consulted me regarding his care. We spoke one day about his illness. He had great difficulty urinating, and at times he had discomfort and I could see small amounts of blood in his urine. He recently had difficulty in standing up, the pain in his back was quite severe. He sought my opinion. I asked that I may examine him but with his help and guidance. He replied:

"Brendan, you are wise beyond your years, and I know that I may be nearing my end. You know that I abhor the bleeding, and that you wisely examined the urine. The specks of blood tell a tale. What else might you seek to examine?"

I hesitated but in my readings of the Arab masters and in my listening to a small group here in Montpellier I understood that there is a growth around the urethra, the tubule coming from the bladder or urine sack that may be enlarged, or worse may be nodular with a cancer. I explained this to Gordun and said that I could examine him for this. If it were just an enlargement then perhaps a simple catheter and liquids may help. On the other hand if I found the nodules of a

cancer then the prognosis was poor. I sought his guidance. He said to proceed. I thus did an examination in the most sensitive manner. I felt the nodules, several, on the front side, and they were hard and numerous. I was fast to minimize the discomfort. I then washed my hands and spoke softly:

"Good friend, I fear that there are many nodules and it is a cancer. Perhaps we can pass a catheter through to alleviate the discomfort, but like so many of these cancers they tend to spread about the body. As you know there are mixtures to minimize the pain, but given your back discomfort that is also a bad sign. I believe that a simple diet, some herbs and medicines may help. But good friend, you know well yourself what this means. What can I do to help you?"

For a moment he settled back in thought. Having practiced medicine for so many years he had seen this as the practitioner, now he was the patient, with the poor prognosis. He then looked up and said:

"Brendan, you have a great skill, and a fine and fair way with the patient. Now that we know what to expect, namely my time is near, let us finish what we can and then move on. One thought does come to me. Anatomy. Strange but to better practice we must better understand the human body. You have a good understanding but I think to make progress you need better. I would thus suggest you go on to Bologna and study anatomy, see real bodies, better understand what the connections are, look for facts not just some single historical record. We could not do that here, but you can, and I dare say, you must do that. So let us finish our small work here, I will assist you in attending Bologna, they would benefit greatly from your insights."

I continued to tend to Gordun. But amongst the care for him, many others began to seek out my assistance. One especially was of interest, a young man named Francesco Petrarcha, a Florentine whose family were exiled and were now in Avignon. His father a lawyer in the Papal court and his other family members there as well. He had just been in Montpellier for about a year. He was a very young and dreamy boy, yes a boy, not yet a young man. He was there to study law, and this he seemed little suited for. He was a dreamer, a nice outgoing personality who seemed more interested in reading poetry and trying to understand the old Roman writers. He was not a philosopher, nor a lawyer, nor a theologian, and certainly not a physician. He was exploring life, but he was quite friendly and for some reason I had taken a liking to him. I liked to listen to his view of the ancients, the Romans, and his view of the Greeks. He knew Latin but was ignorant of Greek. I tried to interest him but to no avail.

After knowing him for several months, he came one day and appeared quite upset, deeply upset. Apparently his mother in Avignon was ill, and the doctors there, including those in the Papal palace gave her a poor prognosis. He pleaded with me, with tears in his eyes, to accompany him to Avignon and see what I might do for his mother. I was becoming the travelling physician. Most physicians had attached themselves to wealthy families, Nobles, Bishops or Cardinals. I, as a Friar, was somewhat of a free entity, attached to no one and free to care for anyone.

I spoke with Gordun, whose pain we mollified with opium as prepared by a Muslim pharmacist I had become acquainted with. The pain we reduced but I could see the wasting process moving quickly. I managed his catheter and he could, with one of his students, maintain a modicum of

flow. My concern was his bones, because as I had learned, this cancer would somehow eat away at the spine, and at times it would just disintegrate leaving the patient in total agony.

Off I went with Francesco to Avignon. It took several days as we went and I could see that Francesco became more agitated as we got closer. I arrived and I went to the Franciscan convent, where I had been before and Francesco went to his parent's home. I would see him in the morning.

In entering the Convent at Avignon, I was greeted by the Friars I had known and by those who had been communicating my messages. We spoke little to avoid any exposure. Yet no sooner had I cleansed myself that at the door was a messenger. It was from the Dominican Convent at the Papal Palace. I was asked to come and have dinner with Gui. I was shocked. How had he known of my presence? I was here solely as a favor to the young Francesco, why Gui, and why now? We had left of what I felt were good terms but as an Inquisitor one always had second thoughts. I had a clean frock available, and I wore sandals since this was common even amongst the Friars at Avignon. I left and walked with the messenger who had also been sent as my guide. I thought perhaps he was more than that. Perhaps he was to ensure that I did not wander about and get myself in some sort of discomfort, if that is the best phrase one may use.

It was near Christmas, and Avignon had taken on both a cold, but not frigid, festive appearance. The sun had set but lights were everywhere. The opulence of a Papal Court spread to almost every dwelling. The smoke from the fireplaces would be blowing above our heads and the air was dry but with a strong chill. I was now wishing that I had taken a warmer cape but it was too late. Hopefully Gui had a fire.

We entered the gates about the Papal Palace, which was up a hill overlooking the river and there one could see the bridges which had been built since the Pope took up residence. The Dominican Convent had been the home of the prior Pope, Clement. It was like a palace all to itself. The doors were immense, solid hand carved wood, the walls about were stone and massive in height. It truly was a palace but without a king. We entered. All across the walls were candles, light was everywhere, as if no expense could be spared. I had seen the royal dwellings in England, a glimpse in Paris, but this exceeded anything I had yet to see. And this was not the Papal Palace! No expense was spared, no luxury forgotten. I could see why Franciscan poverty would become an issue.

I was escorted to the large room, with a long table and a roaring fire place. I was now warm again. My escort asked if I would sit and then if I would care for some wine. I did and it was in front of me promptly. Then the door at the far end opened, and in his majestic looking robes, black over white, came Gui, all smiles with his hands outstretched.

He said:

"My brother Brendan, I am so pleased to see you again. I thought a dinner here would be better than some barley soup at your Convent. Sit, sit my brother, and tell me how things are progressing. I understand Master Gordun is ill, quite ill. You are treating him, I hear, and he is quite thankful, but as I gather, it may not bode well. Now tell me of this young man, you see his

father works in the Papal Palace, a lawyer of sorts, family from Florence, Guelphs, White Guelphs, loyal to the Pope, good people. So tell me what think you of this Francesco."

I now think I saw what he was about. First he tells me things that were most secret, my treating Gordun, then he tells me about Francesco, and why is he worried about this youth, perhaps Francesco's father in the Palace. I replied:

"It seems that my medical services are in demand, as it appears you are quite aware. Francesco's mother is quite ill I am told, and he knew me from Montpellier, and asked that I give an opinion, and if warranted assist in her treatment. But again Master Gui, as you must know, I have but cleaned myself from the journey but am quite pleased to see you again and moreover to be near a warm fire. We Franciscans at time take the poverty issue a bit far, but I leave that debate to you theologians."

He laughed and said:

"Well you have covered all my questions in one response. You have not changed brother Brendan. You are not a politician but your directness and avoidance of dangerous issue will secure your position well. Also, again many thanks for your help on our journey to the mountains. We did manage to cleanse the mountains of the heresy, and many thanks for your creative support. Now let us discuss Francesco."

I sat back and wondered what he was seeking. Francesco was young, a dreamer, an Italian, and he had not any taint of heresy, he was studying law, but that did not seem to be of his liking. He pestered me often about classic Latin and Greek, asked me of my knowledge of the ancients. We even discussed Augustine and his Confessions although he was not the least interested in reading it. I replied:

"Francesco, Francesco Petrarcha, a Florentine by birth, young, idealistic, even a romantic. He worries about his mother and I gather his father worries about him. He is not a good student, he spends his days dreaming of romance, dreams of great men and great achievements, and his focus seems to be on those of Classic times. He is the farthest from heresy I have ever seen, Master Gui, if that be your concern."

Gui replied:

"No not at all. There was a question as to his father, he was to be given more responsibility at the Papal Palace, and there is no stain we could find. We just wanted to check the boy, and especially since he was befriended by you, I thought your view would be of the utmost value. Also I wanted to have you as my dinner guest. I enjoy your ideas, and your way of seeing what others do not."

He continued:

"I understand that you may want to go on to Bologna, anatomy is it? Yes I think you would do well there, if Master Gordun and his health fails, that would be an exposure that would be quite

useful. Perhaps we can help you there, you see those Bolognese often do not take positively to those from afar, despite your Franciscan heritage. I think you may even complete your Doctorate there, then, who knows, the Pope may wish to have an added physician, you may want to travel, you seem quite comfortable with that. And we can continue our conversations, yes?"

At this point I saw that my future, whatever it was, had become entangled not only with my "reporting" back to Oxford, simple as they may have been, but now I was entangled in Papal politics, and a Pope who I had neither met nor understood.

The meal was exceptional, for December it had vegetables and meats of the type I had never seen, a fish fresh from the sea. I could see how one could adjust to this form of poverty. Then again I could also see how it could corrupt. I also knew that now I would be off to Bologna, and most likely with my new friend, Francesco. Or Petrarch as he now was calling himself.

The dinner lasted well into the night. Gui asked more and more about Oxford, the Franciscans there, their study of Theology. He also asked about Ockham, and at this point I no longer was surprised at anything. How did William get known by an Inquisitor in Avignon. Gui would test my limited Theology but to no avail. I was neither a Thomist nor a strict adherent of Ockham. I was a physician and my philosophical training was adequate for medicine, not for the Academy. It is valuable at times to be knowingly ignorant, for one can carefully avoid the pitfalls of saying the wrong thing, or worse the correct thing to the wrong person.

The next day I went to Francesco's home. There I met his father, Pietro, and his mother, Eletta, as well as his brother, Gherardo, and a friend one Guido Sette. Their home was a modest place not that far from the Papal Palace on the city side of the river. It was two floors, in a set of similar buildings. I gathered it was a location for those who worked for the Papal Palace. The area was clean, new and appeared well constructed and like all the other structure the roof was of those half circular reddish tiles.

Pietro welcomed me into the home and his mother Eletta was clearly ill, sitting by a small fire place with a heavy layer of blankets. She appeared quite gaunt and it did not take much medical education to see that she was seriously ill. Despite her clear discomfort, she tried to get up and assist me with some wine. I indicated to her that I was fine. Pietro said:

"Father, welcome to our home, Francesco says you are a great doctor."

I was somewhat set back because I did not want to rebuke him and at the same time despite Gordun's now respect I was still a bit of a tyro, and sought confirming opinions more than allowing my ego to take control. I carefully replied:

"Eletta, Pietro, I am honored to be in your home. I am but a simple Franciscan Friar, and have had the good fortune to be educated by some of the best medical Masters here and in England. Francesco asked for my opinion, and if possible some therapeutic suggestions. Let me see what I can do, but please understand that I have but a few years of experience."

Pietro responded:

"Ah but Father Brendan, I hear from the Papal Palace, you are well known and one for whom the Pope himself has said words of praise, your healing of the Bishop, your respect even by the Dominicans, says a great deal."

When I heard this I was a bit taken aback. The Pope himself! I barely knew the Pope's name, and frankly could care less at this point, but this may also explain my reception with Gui. I must thus try my best to treat this woman if at all possible. I then said:

"Eletta, can we have a more private place, I would like to examine you, and discuss with you my findings, then we can both return and discuss with your family."

She was shocked. She said:

"Tell me, tell me first, tell me alone, why all the other doctors never speak to me, they look, poke, check, read their books, then go and speak with Pietro. It is as if I am not even alive! Speak with me, that is wonderful, I must know what my fate will be. Thank you Father, thank you so much!"

That also surprised me, a bit, for many physicians neither inform the patient and if the patient is a woman then they often treat her like some animal, as if she was not even part of the conversation.

I went with her to a small room on the second floor. I then asked:

"Eletta, tell me what the problem is."

She replied:

"It is my breasts, Father, they have tumors, and I feel I am to die. I have children, I need to know."

I then asked that she remove her top, which she did, then examined her breasts, her arms, her back, and there were many small tumors. I examined her urine and pulse. She was losing weight, had back pain, and was terrified. After I finished I said:

"Eletta, I fear that you have cancer, and a cancer which is spreading. We cannot treat it unfortunately. Yes, Eletta, you may have just a few months. I am sorry."

She broke down in tears sobbing, holding my hands, her body throbbing as she wept. She took a few minutes and then looked up and said:

"Thank you father, I know what I must do in my time left. Thank you for the truth. Can you tell my husband and my son?"

I replied:

"Yes Eletta. Also we can get you some medications to relieve the discomfort. A good priest here in Avignon may also help you. But most importantly will be your good family. Again I am sorry, truly sorry."

She actually smiled and hugged me. I find patients when facing death go through these stages, some even lash out, but she came to acceptance. Telling the family was difficult, and the Italians have a response to such tragedies that is rather dramatic. Death for us Irish is common, for the Italians each death is to be bemoaned. It was a difficult moment for Petrarcha.

SILVA FATUUS

From time to time in life we have the opportunity to meet a person who seems to be not of this world. Not a saint, but clearly not a sinner, not a wise man, but one who possesses a clarity of insight into the obvious, not one of many words, but of simple yet profound sentences, elucidating our very existence and its true meaning.

One such person was Silva Fatuus. He worked at the Franciscan convent in Montpelier, he had been an orphan, left at the monastery as a child by some family member, to be cared for by the community. He was about fifteen when I first met Silva. The Friars looked upon him with kindness, he worked in the kitchen, but he was not educated, and he clearly would not become a Friar himself. Yet he was happy.

For some strange reason Silva found me to be his guide to the world outside the convent. When I went to see the sick, he diligently set my instruments in order, saw that a horse was available if we needed to go a long distance, brought along some drink, usually one of the better wines, and of course some of the best cheese and fruit from the convent.

Silva had an amazing empathy with those who were quite ill. He could help them ease their pain, he had no fear of death, which we often saw, and he managed to deal with the samples of human bodily expressions that we often examined to determine the proper diagnosis. I suspected that the other Friars wondered why I accepted Silva as almost a partner in my dealings with the ill, and my reason was quite simply that he helped those in distress.

He had a smile, a warmth, and a way of helping that for some reason those quite ill were often not only willing to accept but actually sought his warmth and human understanding. Silva was not a bright young man, but he always managed to find the best in things. He would become my aide for the next fifty years, and in that process lend a level of humanity that I saw in no other person.

It was for that reason that I wonder if I found Silva, if he found me, or, if more likely, God just put us together.

TRAVELS TO AVIGNON

Having befriended Petrarch, I now had an excuse to travel back and forth to Avignon, to visit with him his parents. His father was at the Avignon Papal Court and as such I now had an entry point. One thing I discovered, if one were to spy upon the powerful one must befriend the powerless amongst them. These people are invisible, but yet can go anywhere and hear anything, and they do not have the sense of retaining secrets, they often see everything on an equal plane, there are no gradations in their observations. They speak of the mighty's movements, whether they be travels, indiscretions, sins, or failures with equanimity.

Petrarch's father was such a man. Having escaped from Florence and what I was to understand as the intensity of local politics, and frankly its deadly consequences, he managed to find a secure place here at the Papal Court. His two sons, including young Petrarch, he wanted to study law, a path that would lead them to a secure position in life. Yet it was not what Petrarch wanted, yet father's all too often dictate and son's follow, for a while at least.

But we travelled in a two day journey to Avignon, and it was there that I was most interested to examine, for now I had another portal. I had my growing acquaintance with Gui, but that was unpredictable. Here I had a more obtuse connection. But my first concern was Petrarch's mother, for he had asked me to examine here and treat her accordingly. We arrived on a beautiful day, and I was continually amazed by the beauty of the buildings, the brilliance of the sun, and the warmth of the air. This was not Oxford, and in no way was it near to the Dublin of my childhood. We found Petrarch's family home, not far from the Papal palace, on a small side street, a small stone façade, connected with collections of similar homes.

The buildings all had the now so familiar orange tile roofs, stone facades, there was an almost total absence of wooden structures. The streets were covered with stone as well, and there were few horses or carriages to be seen. Almost all were on foot and the clothing was more elegant than anything I had seen in Montpellier. I had been through here two years back, but not with a local and only to my Franciscan Convent. This time I was travelling and staying with locals, seeing the city from a different viewpoint.

There were many shops, and there was an elegance about what was sold. The city was under massive construction since the Papacy had taken up residence. Clearly funds for construction flowed in from all directions. Yet I did not see the less attractive elements, the tanners or pig merchants. They must have been kept at bay. The other thing I noticed was the absence of sewer smells, what one was sometimes overpowered with in Paris and London, and even remnants of this in Montpellier. Here, there were, what I found were Roman like sewers, taking the human refuse to the rivers. Yet this seemed only for those close to the Papal Palace, as was Petrarch and his family. I soon found that just a short walk there were no such conveniences and the night pots were carried down to the river each evening, being dropped just south of the city as the river flowed. Strange, I thought to myself, that here I was to try to heal yet my observations were related to the refuse of mankind. The water was drawn from small wells located at squares in an around the city, and I suspect the well water was somehow connected to the river carrying the refuse. It reminded me of Oxford, the sewer droppings, the tanners overflow, the dye makers and paper makers mashes, flowing into the very water we were consuming. Perhaps that is why the

French drink no water, wine, and for some children animal milk. This all seems connected, but as a physician I am told to ignore all this. I again asked myself why this was such a focus of my seeing Avignon again, in Montpellier I had become accustomed to everything, ignored the droppings, ignored the filth, as I did in parts of Oxford. With disease one looked at predicting and curing, and very little to cause. Perhaps the causes may very well be in front of us, the filth and self-generated hazards of humanity itself. I was ready for a bath, if I could now find clean water!

Petrarch and I entered his family home, it was later in the day and all his family was present.

DEATH OF GORDUN

I received notice the Gordun was quite ill. I returned to Montpellier went to see him. His face had turned ashen and his pulse was slow. He saw I was present and smiled. His lips were dry but I helped water them and he spoke softly thanking me for my visit. I stayed through the week at his residence assisting in his care. I used an opium powder to control his discomfort, and each time I did so I could see his breathing slow. By the end of Sunday night, I applied another treatment, and his breathing slowed and stopped. I waited, and it did not begin again, he had passed.

His body was prepared for a funeral. It was held at Montpellier and many attended, along with Gui from Avignon. At the end Gui came to me and said:

"We all thank you for your care. Also, you are now off to Bologna. But you should know that Gordun had recommended you for a Doctorate here at Montpellier. There will be an exam, I suspect a bit cursory but formally necessary, and then a small ceremony. All complete by week end. Then you are off to Bologna. We shall meet again my friend, and may God be with you."

My life was no longer in my hands, as if it ever was.

It was time to go to Bologna. I had completed my degrees, and sought my arrangements for travel.

CHAPTER 8 (1320-1323) BOLOGNA

Thus, in the Fall of 1320 I went off with Petrarch to Bologna; he for Law and I for Medicine. I sought to better understand human anatomy and Mondino was the teacher who held the keys to that door and Bologna was where we went. Petrarch and I travelled together, first going through Avignon to see his family and then across to Bologna.

THE JOURNEY TO FLORENCE

We set sail from Montpellier, sailing along the coast to a small port of Cannes. The water was beautiful and the beaches were magnificent. We only replenished our ship and there was a couple of days of trading by the ship master. It was interesting to see how this was accomplished. It was in many ways the manner in which my family, my mother's side, had been doing for generations.

We finally landed at a small town on the Italian coast, Livorno. There was a good harbor, some small port facilities, and a tower for signalling to ships. We unloaded our small belongings, and sought horses to assist us inland. As a Friar I was given two excellent horses, from a local merchant, whose son was a Franciscan and in Florence. He asked that we travel to Bologna via Florence and deliver certain things to his son at the Franciscan Convent there. I was more than pleased to do so. Petrarch, however, showed some concern, which he kept to himself. After we had dinner with the merchant, one Dominic Benedetto, Petrarch spoke quietly to me. His concern was that his father was banished from Florence and his return could be a problem. To that I responded that he was under my protection as a Friar. Frankly I had no idea if that would work but I soothed his concerns. This was my first introduction to Italian politics.

From Livorno, we headed inland towards Florence. Petrarch was still mourning his mother's death. He was reading more and more of Augustine, especially the volume of Confessions I had given to him, and he was trying to compare Monica, the mother of Augustine, to his own mother. He had written a poem celebrating his mother, and as he read Augustine more and more he became more intrigued by the old Roman ways.

Augustine was influenced by Cicero, his Hortensis, a volume I had heard about but did not read. In this context, Petrarch was being drawn back to the old Roman heritage, Rome of the Empire and great writers. His questions of me were relentless on these topics. He was more interested in old Rome and the classic writers. It was Seneca, or Cicero, or whatever, asking me one question after another. The only benefit was that I was learning the local language, the Italian dialects, which literally changed from one town to another, all with a hint of Latin, but with new words and pronunciations. No wonder Petrarch's Latin was so fragmented, yet he was but sixteen, or was it fifteen. At that age, I had Dismas, Oxford, English, Irish, and the beginnings of French, not to mention Latin as spoken at Oxford, an understanding of Hebrew and even some Greek.

Thus, we began our trip up to Florence and then on to Bologna. But as we started eastward, Petrarch became ever so much more excited, nervous would be a better term, or even fearful. At the end of the first day we rested at a Church in a small village, surrounded by fields in full fruit.

I thanked the local priest and I introduced Petrarch as my young novice, Francesco, for I did not want to identify him. I remembered the violence between those who supported the French Pope and those who opposed them. After the meal, I sat under a grove of olive trees, and asked Petrarch if he was comfortable with my approach, calling him my novice and using only Francesco. He replied:

"Brendan, I do not recall anything here, it was all so far back. But my father still fears many in Florence. As we have spoken you remind me of my native tongue, and how it differs from town to town. I suspect that in Florence they will hear me as a Florentine, and all Florentines try to find out from what family you are from, and in no time, I can be discovered and the child of an exile, and no matter how much you try to protect me, well, you cannot. They are all powerful."

I could see terror building up in his face. The full reality of the powers in Florence, the internecine hatred, was overpowering. Thus, I suggested:

"Petrarch, Francesco, I suggest the following. You speak only Latin, no other tongue. Beware then of your own language, and I shall create an identity for you, even a new name, one that will satisfy but not inspire excess interest. I cannot call you Francesco, not even Petrarch, it may signal your true family, even more so than Francesco. A French name would be suspicious, and you do not look English, and especially not Irish. I know, we shall say you are Greek, and I shall call you Φραντζέσκος, the Greek version of Francesco. Fransiskos Capetanakis, how is that? That way you will not be too confused, I will not be lying, after all that is who you really are. Then from where? From where you cannot be caught up meeting someone, let us say Hania on Crete. Also, I will also say that you are deaf and dumb, cannot speak, thus I will write in Greek, but say it in Latin. That way despite your lack of Greek, they will think that you are reading while I say it in Latin. Will that do?"

Petrarch smiled and replied:

"Friar Brendan, you are more devious than all the Florentines. We shall be safe, I shall do my best. Buy why Hania, I do not know the place."

I replied:

"Hania is a Venetian trading center. Thus, if anyone were to see Italian blood in you, the reason is that it is a mixture from whence you came. I have never been there but I have heard a great deal. I believe we can be safe going through Florence. But we must practice from now until we pass."

From that point on he spoke not a word, and I wrote Greek on a slate pad with a chalk, and spoke in Latin every word I wrote in Greek. Despite his poor Latin he managed to survive as we spent three more days slowly on our way into Florence.

ARRIVING AT FLORENCE

We came down from the slight incline in the west at the end of the fourth day, slowly approaching Florence, and as the sun shone from our backs the city was lit up with the clear light and the orange stucco roofs stood out all about the city. The city appeared as a large orange set in the landscape. Orange roofs, as if there were some mandate that all homes appear the same. The river winds about its edge and one could see, barely, a bridge which apparently had been recently complete across this river. The more I looked the more bridges I could see, until there were, I counted, some four bridges crossing the river. Then the next thing I noticed was that here in Florence there were towers, a square tower jutting skyward, one here, one there. Petrarch told me that each wealthy family to express their wealth built a tower. I asked if such a tower were of any value, other than just display. He tried to argue a defensive role but I suspect that there was none. We had to make our way to the Franciscan Friary in the city center and I had suspected we would be approaching as the sun set.

The river running through Florence was called the Arno. I suspected that each name had some meaning beyond just the letters. I was becoming aware that each place had history, names had a history, and that when I learned a new name I often did not have the history, thus the meaning to me was not the meaning to those who held the history. That was also a warning. History here in Florence meant vendettas, revenge, harm done to family, and words may reveal things that you had no idea what their meaning was. Florence would be more of a trap than Avignon. Yet unlike England and France, there was no King, each town had its own rulers, or ruling group. Generally it was a family, but these families could annihilate each other. There were no Kings, there were families.

We proceeded into the city through the western wall and sought out the Franciscan Convent. I knew of its existence and had a slight idea where it could be. But the day was late, the sun setting. As darkness fell, the city would close up. Light would disappear soon and frankly we would be lost until the next morning. The Convent was on the other side of the Arno, from where we were approaching. I could see the river from the hill, and we could get down to it quickly. There were lights on the other side, and there was a bridge with what appeared as walls and shops along it. I had not seen such before and along some of these shops there were lanterns, and men still moving their goods. We made our way across this bridge, and onto the side where the city was. Then we walked along the bank of the river, and I asked some of the locals where the Franciscans were. Most had no idea what I was saying, though they saw my attire and finally they pointed downward towards a slight bend in the river. We walked through this area which was occupied by what appeared to be the poorer class, many seeming to be fresh from the country side.

Finally, on our left was a massive cathedral. I asked an older man what the name was. He said in what was I gathered Italian, Santa Croce. Petrarch smiled at me and kept his silence. I knew we were here. I turned left away from the river, and we walked towards the Cathedral. It stood above the mass of people who surrounded it, a beautiful edifice, one I had not seen before, it was not French, it was Italian, but massive. This was Santa Croce. It was so unlike a Franciscan in so many ways, it was embarrassing, but we were in Florence.

We went to the door of the residence and knocked. A young Friar came and when he noticed my attire he was taken aback. He did not know who I was and here was Petrarch, silent and behind me. He asked in his local Italian:

"Friar, who do you seek?"

I replied:

"We are travelling from Montpellier to Bologna and seek shelter for the night. Perhaps you may have some space?"

I spoke each word slowly, clearly, trying my best not to sound too incomprehensible. I was learning the Italian manner of speaking, each vowel to be pronounced, almost sung, like a chant, but lightly.

The young Friar responded:

"Si, Si, .."

It seemed that it was all he could say. He waved us in and walked us down the hall.

We were directed to the Prior's rooms. There we met Father Vincenzo Vitagliana. He was of medium height, balding, somewhat stout, much like the Friars I have seen at some Convents, but with a warm smile and he came to meet us at the doorway.

He first spoke in Italian, but when told my journey, switched to Latin, but with the Italian accent. My flat unaccented Latin to his song like lilt, but we understood one another. He asked we come into his small room, and the young Friar departed. He said to sit, and Petrarch and I did so, I motioned to Petrarch.

He smiled and asked:

"You are on to Bologna, from Montpellier. That is a long journey. But your Latin is not French, it is more. shall I say, abrupt, short, to the point. Where did your journey start?"

I recognized that telling a story filled with the truth is essential. So, I told him of my trip from Ireland to Oxford, then Oxford, through Paris to Montpellier, my studies, then via Avignon, now to Bologna. I told him young Francis was a Greek who could not speak or hear and I had taken him to be my aide, since he was abandoned in Montpellier. He could read and write, but was otherwise limited. Petrarch just sat there with a smile upon his face. He must really have been enjoying this. I realized that at some time I must confess, perhaps, for my deceit, but logically I was just telling a story to protect a life. I guessed this is why Theologians are so well parsed, they alone can parse these conundrums.

Father Vincenzo was from Aquila, a town on the mountain chain east of Rome. He explained that to us, as Petrarch sat silent and with his eyes down. I continued to feel somewhat

uncomfortable withholding the identity from Father Vincenzo but in Italy they say all walls have ears and all ears have daggers. We would stay in Florence for a short while. Father Vincenzo wanted to learn of the news from Avignon and to also better understand the practices of the Franciscans up north. I suspected that he sought more information as well. I, on the other hand, was anxious to rid myself of this city. It was a cauldron of battles. But I was not to leave that quickly.

We were given separate rooms, adjacent, with small cots, just wooden planks. Petrarch went to his, I to mine. I said my evening prayers, then sought some water. I saw another young Friar at the end of the hallway, sitting on a bench, apparently standing guard of some sort. I approached him and asked:

"Ubi aqua?"

I thought I would try some Latin. It worked, he pointed to a bucket next to the wall and then to a well outside the residence. He then waved his hand about his mouth so as to say do not drink. He said:

"vino"

That I knew, I guessed the water good to wash but bad to drink. I was becoming addicted to this fact. When I returned, he had a clean set of clothing to wear, somewhat worn, but clean. I thanked him and returned to my room. I washed with my small piece of soap, then retired. The air was still soft and warm, the room was dry, comfortable, and I went to sleep with no delay.

FLORENCE, THE CAULDRON

At dawn, there was a call to prayer, like every other Franciscan house, for that I was prepared. I rose and with the other Friars we walked down the hall to the smaller chapel. There were many Friars, more than I had seen assembled at once before. Many were quite young but there was a large group of older Friars. I wondered if any can recall back to the time of Francis. I doubted it, for that was a Century now.

After Mass, Petrarch and I had breakfast with the Prior. He explained that in Florence there was a continuous war, between one set of family factions and another. As a Friar I would be set apart. However, he looked at Petrarch and said that he should keep to himself and stay here. to us, as Petrarch sat silent and with his eyes down. I felt somewhat uncomfortable withholding the identity from Father Vincenzo but in Italy they say all walls have ears and all ears have daggers. We would stay in Florence for a short while. Father Vincenzo wanted to learn of the news from Avignon and to also better understand the practices of the Franciscans up north. I suspected that he sought more information as well. I, on the other hand, was anxious to rid myself of this city. It was a cauldron of battles.

The Prior spent time asking me of Avignon, the French Pope, not directly asking me anything just presenting questions whose answers may lead to another set of questions. He did not know of Gui and my training as an interrogator. He was asking without committing anything. He did

not know me but then again in this environment I gathered one must be careful. I could see he was becoming more comfortable. Then he spoke about what I was studying and why Bologna. When I told him I was studying Medicine it was as if a great load was lifted from his shoulders. I started to see why as we continued.

He asked me if I had heard of the Spirituals. I told him I did. He then asked what I may know of them from Avignon. I replied that as little as I had known, that the Pope was targeting them, the Pope frankly was seeing if he could get the Spirituals to be found in heresy. That the Spirituals were at great risk. This made him talk even more. He seemed to forsake his daily duties and had me accompany him to the small area adjacent to the church. We sat in the sun, it was warm, and Petrarch sat beside me, quite but so very attentive.

Prior Vincenzo looked quite concerned. He proceeded, now calling me by my Italicized name, Brendano:

"Friar Brendano, you see, the Spirituals have become a serious problem for our order. One of their advocates studied here at Florence, and I was one of his fellows. He was Ubertino de Casale. Perhaps you may have heard the name? Perhaps not. He followed the work of Pietro Olivii. Both of our Order. Now their issue is that of poverty, out vow, and how extreme must it be. For them there seems to be two issue, simply put. First they state that we, Franciscans and any taking such a vow, must avoid any ownership, and to the extent that what we even use must be at the point of useless, of no value. Thus poverty means not only not owning but not even using earthly goods beyond bare necessities."

I replied:

"I have heard of some of these views. You see, Prior, at Oxford, from whence I originally came, we are less strict, since in winter, as an example, we must wear shoes, the snow is frequent and the land is hard and rough, ice cuts our feet, and we have thick tunics and even capes to stave off the piercing ice. We own nothing, but we do live in a convent of modest means."

He responded,

"You have heard but the first part, Brendano. Ubertino takes it further. If it was limited but to our Order, then the Pope would most likely let us free as long as we present no threat. But, and here is the problem, Ubertino states that the Apostles followed this rule and it is a rule of holiness that the Pope himself should follow. You have seen Avignon, have you not. How would you see the Pope responding to that demand?"

I replied:

"Prior, I agree that such a mandate upon the Pope, especially this one, John XXII, would not be taken well. But why tell me this, I am but a physician. I have no degree in Theology or Philosophy, no training in Law. I have no contact with the Pope. What can I do?"

He smiled and replied:

"All the better Brendano, as we say, the small bird with dull feathers can fly fearlessly through the hunters den. You can help our Order, Ubertino must not bring us down. We serve many in Faith bit to take this to an extreme, to challenge the Pope, especially this Pope, will only lead to destruction. I have a small task for you before you go to Bologna, if you will accept it."

I wondered just what I was getting into. I looked at him and waited for the next words:

"Brendano, I would like you to go to Ravenna, across the hills and see a man I have known for years. He studied here as well and he knows Ubertino, and shares some of his ideas. He is from Florence, but he was expelled under the current political conditions. He is important, he can tell people what I cannot and you can, I truly believe, help as his messenger. Ah, and your young friend, I know he is not Greek, I can see it in his face, he is Florentine, I knew his father, he is in Avignon now, yes? He is a Petrarca, I knew the two brothers, many years ago. Your little, shall we call it twist of a phrase, one can see through if one is from Florence. His manners tell all, they are taught by the mother, and his mother was Florentine as well. By the way, how is Signora Petrarca?"

I was nearly lifted off my seat. I started:

"I am sorry if I offended your Prior, it was just for the safety..."

He interrupted me, with a smile, and said:

"Brendano, no need, we are brothers, and you just did not know us well enough. I understand that everyone now sees Florence as a cauldron of corruption, familial warfare, and the like, so you are forgiven. However, as I see your career, you must leave what you can hide and what you cannot, who you can trust and who you cannot. You will learn this, but back to my request. You see, my old friend, Dante Alighieri, we call him Dante, is in Ravenna. I fear that his health is weakening. You are both a Franciscan and a Physician, and perhaps you can help him in both ways, you see he was a student here, when I was younger, he never became a Franciscan, but he has a great mind and a wonderful way with words. I need you to see him, let him know we are praying for him, and he has a package for you to take and keep, a last work I am afraid. Can you do that for us?"

I did not think but just replied:

"Yes Prior, I can. May I take my young man with me?"

The Prior replied:

"Young Petrarca, well yes indeed. He may like seeing the great writer. It may inspire another Florentine to write well. It is a shame that the great Florentines must do all their work outside of our city."

I smiled as well. The I said:

"Prior, also regrettably young Petrarch, as he is wont to be called, his mother died just before he left. I was there to assuage her pain, she was in great discomfort, and so fine a woman. I think young Petrarch, a very bright young man, is seeking his way. His father desires him to study Law, he did so at Montpellier, but he wanted to come to Bologna. Perhaps to get near Florence, I do not really know. But he writes poetry, poorly in my opinion, but after all what knowledge do I have of sweet words? Perhaps, indeed, if he meets this Dante, well, perhaps he may find a calling that uses his talents."

The Prior bent closer and said:

"Brendano, you too have talents, you are just discovering them, keep upon that path, and I am certain your talents will help our Order as well as young Petrarch."

We went inside and there was Petrarch, sitting on a wooden bench pretending to hear nothing. The Prior went up to him in a warm manner and said:

"Young Francesco, my prayers will for your mother. I remember you as a small child, and now you are a young man. Welcome and fear not, there are no Guelfs, Black or White, here and no Ghibellines. "

Petrarch opened his eyes as if they were to fall from his face, his skin turned white, he suddenly looked at me in terror! The Prior continued:

"Francesco, or shall I call you Petrarch, I knew who you were within hours. Brendano did a reasonable effort in presenting you but as a Florentine, your manners, your style, it came from your beloved mother, God rest her soul. She is in Heaven, and like all heavenly mothers she guides your every step. I have asked Brendano to go to Ravenna, before Bologna. There he and you, yes, you should be with him, will meet Dante, perhaps you may have heard of him. But we must prepare you both, for you will leave on the morrow."

He stood up, and I could see now why he was a Prior, a good choice. I wondered if he knew of Prior Dismas, a world away. In many ways these were very similar men. In many ways he was treating Petrarch as Dismas had once treated me.

DEPARTING FLORENCE

After a week, much longer than I had planned, we set off not to Bologna, but to Ravenna. We headed east, over the mountains. The weather remained dry, but as we climbed the winding mountain roads, it became quite chilly at night. I had almost forgotten that winter had existed while at Montpellier. One could see why Franciscans went barefoot, it was always warm and dry. There was no snow, ice, mud, and the ground was not as rough as it was back in England.

At this point Petrarch who had been quiet for a week, was now bursting in words. He said:

"Dante! Do you know who Dante is?"

I was stunned but after all my reading was limited to medicine and sickness. I had no taste for the romantic, poetry, and frankly I was more interested in tumors than politics, infections, than literature. But I was slowly getting into this world, not by choice, but by decisions made by others. I wondered how much of what we are is what we do or is done to us. But I listened to Petrarch as he continued:

"Why Brendan, it is the Inferno, Dante's work telling us of what levels of evil there are, in Italian, not Latin, for the masses, not the elite. We are to meet Dante, what a blessing, you must read the Inferno, and of course Purgatorio. He too was expelled from Florence, you see, but they had asked him back. Like an honorable man, he rejected this, he kept true to his convictions. So we are to meet Dante, what an honor, what a favor, will I have time to talk with him Brendan, will he speak with me, do you think?"

I quietly let Petrarch sit and said:

"Petrarch, my young friend, we are not in the clear yet. We have a hard journey across the mountains, and I am afraid that Dante is ill, so my part in the journey is not just a social meeting, I have been asked to see what I can do to help. For that I see it as a honor, an honor not to me but to our Order, for a chance to be trusted. Perhaps I may help, perhaps not."

I needed to better understand the issue with the Spirituals as well as more of the politics here in Florence, if not in all of Italy. In England we had a King, and strong Dukes and Earls, all somehow balancing each other. There was a hierarchy of rulers. As also there was in the Church, with Pope, Cardinals, Bishops. As a Franciscan I owed my loyalty to the Pope, but there was a head of my Order, frankly a person of whom I had no knowledge. Then there are these Friars, all presenting new and opposing opinions. Theology was not my strength, albeit I had a Bachelor in the field, I tell no one. I found and even more so find it a field of confusion. And worse, I find politics almost incomprehensible. For the Pope seems to try to control all, but he is of the Church, whereas Kings and Emperors are of this world. I always wondered when the Pope crossed the line to the political from the pastoral.

The next day, the Prior spent many hours discussing the Spirituals. We also discussed the politics of Italy, a topic I found fascinating. For Italy was a collection of City States, with no clear King, and the City States were ruled by locals, chosen not descended. People got to choose who ruled them, and they could be replaced. Thus at one hand we had the Spirituals who basically put the Church at the extreme of Poverty and prayer and the City States which put the rule of secular affairs in the hands of the people. There seemed to be no room for all powerful rulers, no Pope, no Kings, no Emperors, people as individuals, not as subjects. It took me back to Ockham and some of his ideas, albeit less well exemplified by facts!

Later that night after dinner and prayers, the Prior wanted to speak again. He began by speaking of the Spirituals:

"Brendano" as he was now calling me, "Brendano, we are all Franciscans and we have all taken vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Each of us has our challenges in one or more of those

areas. Yet internal discord, strife, and almost outright warfare is not the way to solve issues. Here in Florence, well we have had a century of it almost. Those supporting the Pope, the Guelfs, those supporting the Emperor, the Ghibellines, and then the White versus Black Guelfs. Perhaps we will have war amongst the shades of grey Guelfs as well. Families have seen death, expulsion, loss of wealth and loss of families themselves. But the Spirituals present a true threat to our very existence, not just as an Order, but as a Church. You see, if we accept the extreme view, we accept the Pope as false, that is where this argument will go. I seek your help to solve this problem. Now Brendano, I think you know what may happen, the Inquisition. And in the Inquisition, the Inquisitor. Perhaps you know Inquisitor Father Bernardo Gui?"

I was taken aback. The Prior had a way of asking without asking, of getting to truth by the side door, not a frontal questioning, not as good as Gui himself, but well placed. In this case the truth is the only defense. I replied:

"Yes Prior, I know Gui, and as you may be aware, I know him quite well. In fact I believe it is by his recommendation that I go to Bologna, that I study there as well as my studies in Montpellier. It was he as well as Master Gordun who suggested Mondino. Yet I have no knowledge of Gui ad the Spirituals. But I suspect that if he is involved there will be a significant battle of body, mind and soul."

The Prior replied:

"Indeed, Gui is unstoppable. But Brendano, you must know that Gui is but a Knight of the Papacy, he will defend it because of his Faith. If the Holy Father says something different, then Gui will defend that as well. However, you may also be well aware of Gui's open mind, he is logical, he has a basis of thought, and he has a strong Faith. Yet he is persistent. He also has many means at his call to gather information, take actions, influence key people. I suspect that is what he may have seen in you."

I replied:

"Prior, as I have said to you, Gui and others, I am a physician, not theologian, no philosopher, so what can I do to keep this peace?"

The Prior replied by bending towards me and placing his right hand on my shoulder:

"Brendano, I do not know what you can do, but many people have faith that you can get people to communicate, get them to resolve their issues. You listen, then you understand, then you communicate. Gui sees that and so do I. The reason to speak with Dante is that he was a student here as such I know him well. He also knows Ubertino, and was initially one of his allies, yet I believe that such an alliance may have wearied. Finally, Dante is popular, especially amongst those who make decisions and influence those who do. His writings can be viewed as against the Pope, at least the current Pope. I take no sides. But Dante can by his writings create a strong opposition. You must understand him, because he is both a good friend as well as a major influence on how the Church will see the Papacy. He also I fear is near death. Thus your visit

holds three missions; the first is the survival of our Church, the second is the treating of his body, and the third the saving of his soul."

The Prior rose and walked across the room. The candle lit only where we sat but there was a bit of brightness on his table and from there he took a small book. He walked back, and as he did one could see that the burdens of this highly political existence in Florence weighed heavily upon him. He placed the book in front of me on the table and said:

"Here is Dante's latest work, *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Read them, it will give you a sense of where things are. He is finishing the last book, *Paradisio*. You may get some of it from him when you meet. Here also is a letter from me to Dante. It will explain all. Now, let us pray, then get our rest. You will leave in a day. Poor Petrarch, he has no idea what he has gotten himself into. He comes from a good Florentine family, I hope he gains something from this adventure."

We knelt and prayed, then I slept. Just before morning Mass I arose and washed as was my way and shaved. I gather this was being noticed by my fellows with more curiosity than disdain. After all I was not Italian but Irish and they thought that perhaps this was some alien act. The prior condoned my ablution and even said as much when he was questioned so the issue remained but a curiosity. The convent was clean and kept that way, for it was the work of the young Friars and of the older less involved Friars as well. Water from the well was brought in each day and the floors were swept and washed, the beds were mere wooden planks, and there were pillows stuffed with what appeared to be some type of straw, which had not yet gotten infested by the local vermin. I found it better to do without than to be exposed to an infestation of lice. It appeared that the Friars were in two classes; those who were ascetic and fasted and those for whom the gifts of food meant that all needed to be consumed. For the latter the garb of a Franciscan hid many sins of gluttony.

After breakfast I spent time reading *Inferno*. I had some level of understanding of Italian, the vernacular, so I could grasp some about three quarters of what Dante said. It began:

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
ché la diritta via era smarrita.*

*Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
che nel pensier rinova la paura!*

*Tant' è amara che poco è più morte;
ma per trattar del ben ch'ì' vi trovai,
dirò de l'altre cose ch'ì' v'ho scorte.*

*Io non so ben ridir com' i' v'intraì, 10
tant' era pien di sonno a quel punto
che la verace via abbandonai.*

*Ma poi ch'ì' fui al piè d'un colle giunto,
là dove terminava quella valle
che m'avea di paura il cor compunto²,*

The vowels were overpowering. mezzo, middle, cammin, road, nostra, our, vita, life. One must hear it spoken not just try to read it, it sings, It is Latin but not Latin, it is the song of this language, perhaps of these people, unless the brutality of Florence takes it all away. Every vowel counts, it is a tongue of a song. I knew I was missing a great deal. It was like a child trying to translate Caesar for the first time. You spend time speaking each work, not singing the entire sentence, entire poem! I can somewhat easily understand it in Latin, but Latin is rigid, Church like, Italian is not, and there is no way I could move this to English! I walked about trying to sing the first stanza again and again. In came Petrarch. I knew I was in for trouble. He laughed and said:

"Brendano, you sound like a cat caught by its tail. Softly, softly, let the words flow, don't mangle them, each word has a life of its own, let it express itself."

That was the first time I had seen young Francesco take charge. He understood the language, he understood the intent, he understood the song Dante was singing. He then said:

"Latin, that is the classic language, Italian sounds so, well plebian, Latin verse is what I will write!"

I looked at him and smiled:

"So now Petrarch you are a world famous Latin poet? What happened to Law? What will your father say?"

He looked sullen. Then replied:

"Fine, I study Law, but my heart is as a poet, a Latin poet, like Virgil. The majesty of Latin, the glory of Roma. Brendano, you are not Italian, you do not understand, over a thousand years of culture almost two thousand. I will bring that to mankind!"

He swung his arms in an arc emphasizing every word with some motion of his body. There was the Italian!

I kept reading. Then upon Dante's entrance to Hell he states:

*Through Me The Way To The City Of Woe,
Through Me The Way To Everlasting Pain,
Through Me The Way Among The Lost.
Justice Moved My Maker On High.
Divine Power Made Me,*

² <http://italian.about.com/od/italianliterature/fl/Inferno-Canto-I.htm>

*Wisdom Supreme, And Primal Love.
Before Me Nothing Was But Things Eternal,
And Eternal I Endure.
Abandon All Hope, You Who Enter Here.
These Words, Dark In Hue, I Saw Inscribed
Over An Archway. And Then I Said:
'Master, For Me Their Meaning Is Hard.'
And He, As One Who Understood:
'Here You Must Banish All Distrust,
Here Must All Cowardice Be Slain.
'We Have Come To Where I Said
You Would See The Miserable Sinners
Who Have Lost The Good Of The Intellect.'
And After He Had Put His Hand On Mine
With A Reassuring Look That Gave Me Comfort,
He Led Me Toward Things Unknown To Man.*

These words sent chills down my spine. Hell was a loss of total hope. It was despair. Dante had captured this in so few words. Not some sermons by a vitriolic local pastor, some ardent Inquisitor, but from a poet. I looked forward to meeting this man.

RAVENNA AND DANTE

We came down from the hills and rested in Faenza, staying at a Franciscan convent in the town. The Prior, one Antonio di Brogli, from Naples originally, was friendly and welcoming. He told us to wait till the sun was well up and to go quickly from Faenza to Ravenna, before the end of the sun because it was well known that the air from the swamp could be deadly. People believed that the smoke from the swamps if breathed in at evening time could lead to fever and death. Thus we should not delay. Ravenna was on the coast but it had swamp lands about it. He said further that when we want to go to Bologna on our return that we should do the same, come from Ravenna to Faenza, quickly in the day time, avoiding the swamp smoke, and then north to Bologna. He seemed terrified of this swamp smoke. For me this was a first and I became interested in better understanding what it was.

We arrived at Ravenna late in the day and managed to cross the swampy area before any smoke had risen. It was also a windy day with the wind from the East and we were on horseback. Ravenna was on the coast, and again a small city with houses covered in red clay tiles. Somehow they all look alike here. Prior Vincenzo had given me the location of Dante's residence, it was close to the seaport, and we managed by asking a few questions to find it. It was a beautiful residence, two stories, white stucco, and of course the red tile roof. We came to the front and knocked upon the door. There was a house keeper, an older man, who opened the door and I explained who we were and why we were here. The older man disappeared and a few minutes later came a medium height thin man, with the now classic long Italian nose, piercing eyes, a sharp chin and in elegant clothes. There was a deep red cape like garment and he clearly was not of the best of health.

I said:

"Signore Alighieri, I am Friar Brendan, Brendano for my Italian friends, and this is Francesco Petrarca, Petrarch, to me. Prior Vincenzo of Florence asked that I come to see you, We are on our way to Bologna, to complete our studies, but Prior Vincenzo asked that perhaps we could for a short while discuss some issues that he thought you could shed some light."

Dante replied:

"Prior Vincenzo, Florence, well, come in, come in. Scholars! Two scholars, my house is honored. And what are you off to Bologna for Brendano?" he said as we walked to the back of his open, which opened into a beautiful garden area. He said:

"Sit, sit, something to drink, some wine, some fruit?"

I replied:

"No thank you Signore Alighieri....."

He stopped me and said:

"Dante, call me Dante."

I continued:

"Thank you Dante, we have both thirst and hunger having quickly cross the swamp area."

He laughed and replied:

"Prior Vincenzo, always fearful of disease and death. Death will meet us sooner or later so why try to avoid it. Tell me Brendano, what do you study, philosophy, theology, law..."

I replied:

"I am a physician Sir"

He was taken aback. That I suppose was not for him a Scholar. He then asked:

"Where have you studied?"

I replied:

"I have been dereed at Oxford, then most recently at Montpelier. I am here to study under Mondino for about two years."

He looked quizzical and said:

"You present an interesting set of facts. You see, you give your pedigree, and given the feelings at Bologna, you must have a very powerful sponsor to get to Bologna, they guard their students closely, they rarely open up to, shall we say, random foreigners. Montpelier, you say, then perhaps also Avignon?"

I replied:

"Yes, Avignon. But as I say again and again, I am no philosopher, no theologian and no lawyer. I am a physician and as such avoid the battles we so often see over some religious dicta. I deal with the body, what little we truly yet know."

I was beginning to dislike my statement of my position, yet it seemed necessary at every introduction, every discussion. He looked surprised and said:

"A humble and honest physician! You are a first. Also your sandals, your horses, you are not of the Spirituals, your accent, it is more than English. So tell me more. But before, let us talk young Francesco, ah yes Petrarch. What of you?"

Petrarch spoke:

"My family lives in Avignon. I am off to study law at Bologna. I studied at Montpelier. My father is a lawyer in Avignon."

Dante stopped him and replied:

"Petrarch, you are a Florentine! I can tell by your words, what family are you of, the Petracca, you said, White Guelphs. Yes, now I remember, I recall your father, I believe, his family. Welcome young man. Welcome. A lawyer, yes indeed a lawyer."

I replied a bit humorously:

"Petrarch wants also to be a poet. He read your works, as did I, but he managed to complete Inferno, knowing many of your characters."

Dante laughed and said:

"Petrarch, wonderful, the world needs more poets than it needs lawyers. As for physicians, Brendano, well, God ultimately reclaims each soul. for better or worse."

We all laughed. Dante then said:

"Here I am with two angels sent to me by God, one Seraphim and one Cherubim. Well my angels, I suppose you both will stay here with me for a short while? Fine, we will make room, and we will have dinner. Can we get anything for your stay?"

Over a wonderful dinner, food the like of which I had not experienced, fish, vegetables, wine, and pastries, as the sun set in the west, we began a lengthy discussion. Dante looked at Petrarch and started:

"Petrarch, why the name, why not Francesco, it is like Plutarch, the Roman. You are not Roman are you, you are a Florentine."

Petrarch replied:

"I have been reading the Roman writers, Virgil, like in your Inferno, but my Virgil is in classic and elegant Latin. Latin is so wonderful a tongue for the expression of life, of action, it flows, and Virgil is but one. Cicero, a wonderful orator, his oration against Cataline is compelling. Caesar is plebian as well all know but Seneca, and the comedy of Terence, the wealth of the classics."

Dante replied:

"Ah, a classics man, you see the past as the best. You see Petrarch, I write for the people. Not all understand Latin. The scholar, yes, but as my friend Brendano would agree, I believe, languages evolve, and each one conveys the meaning of its own time and place, you agree Brendano?"

I replied:

"I agree Dante. I grew up with three different tongues, each had a nuance, and at times I would use one of the other to make a point. Then at Oxford, Montpellier, I learned more. I find your Italian interesting. What is missing is what I did for Arabic, a list of words, Arabic to English and reverse, then also a brief Grammar, because Grammar is such a powerful mechanism in understanding how a people think. For example Arabic future tense is much weaker a concept than English future. You see in English we have a statement of what will be, without any emphasis and then we have a concept of what must be, with a sense of certitude or even mandate. Thus language is culture and also culture is language."

Dante was a bit surprised by my response and he replied:

"Brendano, you are more than just a physician, I can see why Prior Vincenzo sent you here. We must continue the talk. It is time for rest. Sleep well my new friends."

As we walked to our rooms, Petrarch turned to me and said:

"I think I want to be a poet."

He then disappeared into his room. I went to mine. There was water to clean, a very clean and comfortable bed, and the winds blew into the room from the sea. Ravenna was a delightful place if one could cross the swamps quickly. Dante was a friendly but at times sarcastic person. He clearly still bemoaned the fact that he was expelled from Florence. He also personified the Italian manner of family, like a clan, and he, like Petrarch, related their entire existence to the family.

I arose in the morning quite refreshed said my prayers and went to the open area expecting to see young Petrarch. He was not there but Dante was, writing at his desk. When I came in he smiled and said:

"I am finishing my final work, Paradisio. You two have given me some new insight, I hope you will not mind, I am including you both, not by name of course."

I smiled and thought here I was being included in some obscure Italian dialect poem on Paradise. I had read through his first two works, perhaps I can do the same here and try and see where I am included. But no matter, a work like this will not last, I assumed. But it was a way to get back at old enemies. And this Italian, th language changes from town to town, and is this Ravenna Italian, Florentine Italian, the problem is too complex.

I had a breakfast, and then sat and read some more of Inferno, trying to understand time and place.

Dante came over after an hour and said to me:

"I suspect that if Vincenzo sent you here it was not merely to make my acquaintance. Perhaps while we are not with the young poet in waiting we could discuss the issues."

I was thankful for the quiet and his astute understanding. I replied:

"Dante, Prior Vincenzo is concerned about the Spirituals, and especially now that the Pope has focused on the extreme position that many of them are taking. The Prior feels that perhaps I could be of some help to the order, especially since I hold no position but as the Prior may believe I have associates on both sides of the argument. The Prior would like me to understand from you the view of Ubertino da Casale and then when I am in Bologna perhaps speak with some of my brothers, even perhaps Michael of Cesna. The Prior believes that your initial beliefs were of merit but he wondered why you may have changed your mind. I am neutral, I am but a sub Deacon, not a priest, and frankly I have no interest to do so. I have some understanding of Theology and Philosophy, but as I tell all, they are in no way what I have insight in. That is one reason I am here."

He then asked:

"The second, Brendano?"

I replied:

"Your health, Dante."

He smiled and said:

"Let's focus on the second, since that is the shortest one. I have been ill. I feel my life may be short, I am weaker as the days go by. You see me now as an old man, my eyes are sunken, my skin is grey. I have no pain, just weakness. We all are mortal, and I thank the Prior, my old friend, for his concern. What can you do? You are not a miracle maker, I don't think. So at best you may tell me if it is days or months, both of us know it is not years."

I replied:

"Well said. I have been practicing medicine for several years. I have seen people get well, and I have sat at the side of many who have passed on. I am not a bleeder, I have some knowledge but you may have an equal amount of yourself. For some, I can find ways to ease the pain, but medicine is still an art, we do not have any certainty, despite our pretenses towards logic. Perhaps it is easier if we discuss the first point?"

Dante kindly said:

"You are the first Physician that did not want to pick and probe. Also, you are the only one to admit your limitations. Perhaps it is that honesty that Vincenzo saw. Let us discuss the second."

"Ubertino, he and I knew each other well in Florence. He had come there after being in Paris, it was 1285 if I remember, before you were born most likely. He taught at the Franciscan convent where Vincenzo is now. Ubertino comes to know Pietro Olivi, another Franciscan and one who espoused the fundamentals of the Spirituals. Olivi you see was also at Florence, 1285 to 1287 if I recall properly. I met him as well. Florence was a hotbed of contention. Politically with the Guelphs and Ghibellines, religiously with the Spirituals and Conventionals. This is all before the Pope has been moved from Rome to Avignon. Thus, if one were to think of the movement of the Spirituals as a move against Avignon, I see now truth in that. Was it the battle between the Guelphs and Ghibellines, the Blacks and the Whites, I do not think so. You see, the more I understood the battle, the more I saw it not just as a battle over poverty, but a battle over power. Olivi, and Ubertino as well, as I saw it, tried to say that poverty was to be understood in extremis, namely total negation of anything. One owned nothing, moreover one possessed nothing. Then they took it a step further. They then said that Christ and his followers practiced poverty, chastity and obedience. That poverty as well as chastity and obedience were the cornerstones of the Church and as such must be reflected in the Pope. Now here, Brendano, is where the line got crossed. Imagine telling the Pope he must go shoeless! Why that was a threat to the very structure of the Church. Were the apostles chaste? They had wives, families, we do not know much but they indeed had that. Thus, as I see it, Ubertino had valid points, but he like so many who feel they have discovered a new truth, takes it to the extreme without understanding the consequences. They follow the extreme and it is then the system as we know it comes upon them."

I was amazed at how well this poet knew politics. I knew at this point that I must read his works because he is not just telling a story, but he is clarifying the facts. I asked:

"Dante, then what does this have to do with the Franciscans?"

He smiled and looked into my eyes:

"Olivi, Ubertino, they lead to Michael of Cesna. Michael heads the Franciscans now and he, a humble man, is a staunch Spiritual. That is where it leads. We will not see him change, yet we do not want the Order to be condemned. The current Pope, John XXII, is a French plant, we Italians see that as an occupation of our religion by a foreign power. This Pope seems to want to destroy the Spirituals which in turn can destroy the Franciscans. I feel your task, as difficult as it may be, is to be at Michael's side. Not everyone wants to see the Order destroyed. Smart minds see that if that were to occur that the Church itself would collapse. Michael must be saved from himself. You can be an instrument in that process."

We spoke at length and I could see why Vincenzo had me seek out Dante. I came away understanding the issues as well as the people. How to see Michael of Cesna would be the issue. He spent time in Assisi and I most likely would need to see him there.

Then we hear sounds in Dante's library. We both arose to see what was happening. There was Petrarch looking at volume after volume of manuscripts. Cicero, Virgil, poets, philosophers, all types of Latin documents from the time of the Romans. Petrarch looked up and with a smile across his face he said to the two of us:

"A gold mine of wealth here, Dante, page after page of wisdom, beauty, I envy you the collection. May I continue?"

Dante replied:

"Yes but it is a bit like a dog looking at its master having finished his meal. Be cautious but do go on. Perhaps someday you too will find a mass of such texts."

Petrarch replied:

"I have fallen in love!"

I looked at Dante and replied:

"Youth, now I am beginning to feel my age!"

We spent three more days with Dante. I did eventually have the chance to examine his wellbeing. As I listened to his heart I could see he was ill. The heart was weak, there was a heartbeat which was not regular. I suggested some digitalis plant. He decided against it, but he may have used it later. I told him that the chest pains were his heart, that there was nothing we could do, and frankly no one could really tell. He was pleased that death would be a surprise.

On the fourth day, after reading more of Inferno, and reminding myself of Virgil which I had not read in almost a decade, I saw the classic challenge of linearity and circularity. Namely the view that history, humanity, is a linear forward progression with uncertainty versus the more classic view of circularity, we come back again. For that I spoke with Dante. Here I made the opening:

"Dante, what is history? When we look at Rome, are we not looking at the past, when we look for example at a century ago, say in Florence, is that not the past. When we look at now, we are looking at what is. We cannot, I believe, look at the future with any certainty."

Dante replied:

"Ah, there are many who see history as a straight line, moving forward, ever changing. There are others who see it as a circle, just repeating itself. I have no view, but I am certain many do, and their actions reflect such."

We continued our discussions but I saw him tire quickly.

On the fifth day, we arose early, bid our farewells. Dante gave Petrarch a manuscript of Virgil, an old one but now Petrarch was finding himself in the club of the famous. As we went west again, in a strong wind, I thought that may have been the last I would see of Dante. His insight was helpful. I was concerned, however, that I was entering a new world, one which I had not anticipated, and that what I would be doing would not be all of my making. I wondered if this was life, following the leads put before you, that choosing what to do, against these headwinds, was all too often counterproductive. I looked across at Petrarch, he was now envisioning being a poet, I did not understand what a poet did, but he now saw his future. These few days changed his life, I hope for the better.

ARRIVING AT BOLOGNA

Arriving at Bologna was another experience. Petrarch and I still had our horses and I still wore some semblance of shoes. I was covered in dust from the ride, Fall was coming on, and my first need was to find the Convent. My concern was now understanding the Spirituals that they may be in control and I would be some outsider. But knowledge is always helpful, I thought.

Soon after we arrived at Bologna, I let Petrarch go his way to the School of Law while I sought out Mondino. I gather his full name was Mondino de Luzzi. He was considered to be the best in anatomical studies and despite my training thus far he added considerable amounts to what I saw as necessary to be a true physician. No matter what Galen said, one really had to see the body from the inside. I knew from Gordun the issue of the organs around the bladder, the position and enlargement, then from Petrarch's mother, the breast and the nodules indicating the deadly spread. I have seen disease and had read the works but seeing various actual bodies would be essential.

I found his place of lecture in the center of Bologna. I was wondering how anyone could find their way around, one needed maps for all these cities. Also I was seeing more and more dress which appeared opulent but almost comically so. Men wore clothing akin to women, and women wore things which defied nature. Everyone tried to outdo each other. I wondered if this trend had yet hit England.

I saw a large lecture hall, and a table at the center around which was several dozen students one would guess. In the center was what I would assume was Mondino, speaking in a rough Latin mixed with what were Bolognese Italian, and by now I had some semblance of understanding. It was early October, 1320, the weather was clear and moderate and the sunlight shone through to where the body to be examined lay. I gathered that I was a bit late and I just walked into the room and mingled amongst the others. I was also the only religious in the group of about twenty. As such I stood out. The others were all dressed in the style of Bologna, which was a bit different than either Florence or Ravenna, but it was clear that the cloth was elegant, the color outstanding the on the one hand there was a self-assurance amongst all of them and terror awaiting Mondino.

Mondino entered the room and the students all gathered about the table. I stood somewhat off to the side so as not to be too obvious, but I would say with my grey tunic and clean shaven face I stood out squarely. Mondino came out looks around and no sooner did he spot me but he said:

"We have today, gentlemen, a Papal guest, one Master Brendano d'Ocforde, just from Montpelier, and Ocforde. Let us greet the good Father Brendano, for he may share some of his wisdom with the class and also perhaps your humble instructor."

I was a bit shocked. First, what Papal guest? I have no Papal instructions. Second, how did he even know me? Third, why the open sense of hostility? Fourth, what did he know that I did not. And fifth, I was not a priest, people keep calling me this.

The group turned and all stared at me, some looking disdainfully and some with abject terror.

Mondino then turned towards the body and began. He spoke as he demonstrated. He said that we must begin with the opening of the abdomen by means of a vertical incision to which is added a horizontal cut above the navel.

Mondino then went through the dissection with a description of the muscles of the abdomen, and a long discussion of the position, the function and the anatomy of the stomach. He slowly cut through each muscle and brought it out and flapped it across the body, slowly exposing each lower layer. Then he identified and opened the stomach, commenting as he did on each muscle, ligament, and structure and its position and anatomy.

Mondino opened the stomach and he indicated that the wall of the stomach is composed of an internal coat, the seat of the sensations, and an external or fleshy coat which performs the act of digestion. After a discussion of the position of the spleen and of the liver, he describes with great accuracy the vena cava which always played an important role in the anatomy.

This took about three to four hours. The students were taking notes and it also appeared that all of them had a copy of Mondino's book. In contrast I had nothing, no note taking nor did I have Mondino's book. The joys of poverty I suppose.

When the class ended Mondino again addressed the class first saying what to do for the next day, and then he said in a loud voice:

"Father Brendano, could you please accompany me to my rooms."

I thought this was not going well. Not well at all. So I went with him and he said nothing. In his room there were many books, a large round table, a large chair, with stuffed pillows, a set of other wooden backless stools upon which guests were to sit if at all, and again the sun was shining through. He bid me to sit and then began the questioning:

"Who are you? Why does the Pope send commands to Bologna to have you attend?"

At this suggestion I jumped. I replied:

"Master Mondino, first I am but a Friar, not a priest, second I am here at the suggestion of Master Gordun, at Montpelier, whose death left me without a Master. I have been degreed by Oxford and Montpelier, and am here to study under you for a brief while. I believe my Order has done what was required. As to the Pope, the Holy Father, that I have no knowledge, I have no friends in Avignon, I have no allegiances there, I am merely a student, a Franciscan Friar. How did you think me otherwise?"

He got up and went to his desk. He brought to me on the table a letter from the Bishop of Bologna, one Uberto Avvocati, which told Mondino of my coming and directed that he should extend to me all courtesies by order of Pope John XXII. That took me aback. Of this I had no knowledge. I replied:

"Master Mondino, of this I have no knowledge, I assure you. I say again that I am but a poor Friar. I am from Ireland originally, then educated at Oxford. I have no knowledge of the Pope and my time in Avignon was as a traveler and as a physician. Clearly this must be some mistake, some misunderstanding. I am not here in any manner other than as a humble student."

He did not seem moved. Then we did discuss Gordun and his work. We also discussed my work at Oxford. It was an indirect exam. We ate lunch and then we went out for a walk. He seemed to feel more comfortable walking and interrogating, that way he felt I gathered he had control of the interrogation.

As we walked he spoke:

"So Brendano, how then does a simple Friar come to Bologna, by means of a Papal mandate, and then find himself amazed, I think is the word, that any one was even aware of him? What miracles have you performed, what family connections do you have, is the Pope some relative?"

I tried to assuage his concerns but since I was as unaware as he was all I could do is stay the course with the facts, the truth, for in so doing perhaps I could salvage my less than successful first day as a student at Bologna. I replied:

"Master Mondino, let me try to explain what may have caused this. First, it is not of my making. Second, while at Montpelier, under Master Gordun, I developed close relationships with many

who were my patients or who referred patients. For example, I know Inquisitor Bernardo Gui quite..."

He stopped dead in his place. He stood upright, his head slowly rotated towards me. His mouth was hanging open, his eyes showed almost total terror. He then said almost as a supplicant:

"Master Brendano, my humble apologies, I have made a tremendous error, please forgive me, I did not know. You may have whatever you seek, please, please, do not tell the Inquisitor, I did not know..."

I stopped him by saying:

"Master Mondino, there is no issue, Inquisitor Gui and I are associated only through patients. I assisted him with some close associates, and thankfully my efforts worked. The Inquisitor is not as you would say, a colleague. I have no interests in the Inquisition. My only interest is to learn from you, perhaps to share with you some of my knowledge. As for telling anyone anything....that I am afraid is all up to you. Perhaps we can begin anew, your presentation this morning was brilliant, I have never seen any dissection since we do not do such at either Montpellier or at Oxford. I am here to learn, to practice at the Franciscan hospital here in Bologna, and is possible to share my little knowledge with you and your students. That is all I assure you."

I saw him almost collapse in relief. But now I also knew that I had a strong backer in Gui, but I also understood that these webs I was getting wound in would most likely grow and that I must be careful not getting entangled in some deadly cross fire.

We went back to his facility, for the University was not just one place, but it was a virtual construct, because many of the professors taught from their own homes, and as with Mondino, he had a facility for his dissections and small rooms for teaching and lecturing. I also gathered that Mondino was an anatomist and not a physician. He understood what was inside, and did not have the connection between the symptom, the physical embodiment of it, and a potential treatment. If I could better understand the inside of the body, so many of my questions may be helped.

When we arrived he gestured me back into his study, this time pulling from another room a padded chair like the one he used. He sat down, asking me to do likewise. He then took from the shelf behind him a copy of his work, *On Anatomy*, and he gave it to me. He said:

"Here, my apologies, take this for your studies. I understand now what I should have given time to understand earlier. Now let us talk. Tell me why you desire to study anatomy?"

I replied:

"I practice medicine. I follow Galen, the Muslim teachers, what the ancients say. But I also want to know why. Let me give a simple example. I have seen several patients, older men, who have problems with urination. Some of these men get so bad that they die from this disorder. I have used a catheter, a silver pipe, which I can insert to the bladder and drain it. But now I ask, what is

normal, what does a normal path look like and what is abnormal, namely what has grown differently. Is it a disease or is it just some continual growth. If I can know what physically is happening then perhaps I can treat it."

He sat back in his chair, and thought for a bit and then said:

"That means we need to know what is healthy and what is not. I have faced this problem again and again. When I do a dissection, I, at the time, see certain organs enlarged or atrophied. I do not report such because it will lead to confusion. But I see your point, if I recorded everything on every dissection and then comparing one to the other would be useful."

I replied:

"But Master Mondino, you should also have a set of the symptoms and if possible a diagnosis. A history if you will of this patient. Then one can present the normal and the abnormal."

He smiled and replied:

"Ah if only I could. You see Brendano, they are all convicts, they have no history. I get what I can. Your suggestion is to do a dissection on normal people after death. That my young friend would lead us all to the fire!"

We spent the rest of the afternoon talking and comparing notes. I retired for the evening and returned in the morning.

Upon entering the class, the students looked warily at me. Most of the students were from wealth families and they had variegated clothing, big, fluffy, almost woman like. On this day I came in my tunic plus a white apron thrown across my shoulder. I suspected Mondino would call on me. And when he came in I was not surprised.

He walked up to the front, before the body, waved his arms and began:

"Good morning, today we shall continue and this time we shall examine the other organs. I introduced you all to Master Brendano yesterday, our Papal scholar, and he and I spoke at length yesterday. A brilliant young man, from Montpelier, with his Doctor's degree under the famous Gordun, and from Oxford, did I say it correctly Master Brendano, in England. He will be assisting me going forward and whereas I will be doing the anatomy he will comment on the medicine elements. Thus for the first time we shall connect the organ with what can go wrong. You students are witnessing history. First, let me tell you that each body is different. The heart you see this time may differ a bit from the heart next time. We do not yet know what is a health heart from a diseased heart. Study is the only way we have to ever know that. Is that not correct Master Brendano, come up, please."

I knew that I was next. This would be my first as a student and as a teacher. I started:

"Master Mondino is correct. We physicians often rely upon the old texts such as Galen. I am not saying we neglect the ancients but I am saying that knowledge is the result of observing and questioning. Knowledge is an evolving and changing set, what we knew a millennia ago may get changed by what we have observed since then. Observation, well trained observation, is essential. Observe, record, report. Be willing to challenge and be challenged. The biggest question that we should always ask is; why? As a physician, we are taught to ask what is the disease and how do we treat it. We should, no, we must ask; why is the disease there? Why has the fever occurred, why has the heart failed, why had the kidney stopped. Key to answering the why question my fellows is to have an excellent understanding of the body. That is my purpose as a student, and connecting this to the illness is my purpose as the teacher and physician. Are there any questions?"

Suddenly they all looked stunned. I gathered later that no one ever asked if there were questions from students. It was unheard of. Then before one could catch a breath the questions flowed as if from some large water fall.

Mondino then proceeded to perform his dissection. His description of the male genital organs is far more detailed than that of the female genitals which seem to be based on the anatomy of animals exclusively. I wondered why but I suspected that as anatomists they could not choose one sex over another. As a physician by definition half would be women. Mondino tried to give an exact or, at least, an approximate description of the organs. He still relied on the teaching of Galen, however, on whom he also relied for his physiology. The liver has five lobes, as in many animals; the stomach is described as spherical. But in looking at the actual organs we saw differences. One must be careful in starting to counter Galen.

The yellow bile is secreted by the gallbladder, while the black bile has its origin in the spleen and reaches the stomach by channels, the description of which is purely imaginary.

Mondino cut open the heart area. The heart is described by Mondino as having three ventricles. He then stated that in the right ventricle are two orifices, the larger one directed towards the liver, because through it the heart draws the blood from the liver, while the other is the opening of the arterial vein towards the lung. The left ventricle also has two orifices: one with three valves and the other with two valves through which passes smoke-like vapor from the lungs. The third chamber is described as consisting of various small cavities in the septum, where the blood crossing to the left ventricle.

The anatomy of Mondino is to a large extent an attempt to teach anatomy from personal observation, justifying the Galenic assertions with imaginary descriptions when they appeared erroneous. Galen was the authority from whom there was no appeal. He was often read in an Arabic translation, and as there were frequent errors in the translations there were also many difficulties in interpretation—difficulties which, as we know, persisted until the time of Vesalius. Whenever actual facts could not be brought into accord with the statements of Galen, it was customary for the anatomist to state that the text of Galen had been changed by the Arabs, the translators, or the copyist. The idea that Galen himself might have made a mistake could not be entertained.

THE CLINIC OR HOSPITAL

The Franciscans had a small hospital in Bologna where we cared for the poor and sick. We also cared for our own brothers, many who now were getting older and infirmed. I spent almost three days a week there, after studies and through the nights. Medicine is not a day job, it is often demanded at the early hours of the morning, when all are asleep. Then there is a sudden crisis from a patient and then you must be on your best.

I saw three general types of patients. First, those who had acquired some recent disease, a fever, passing of blood, water, a kidney stone, a hernia. Second, I saw those end stage diseases, where there was a tumor, a long-lasting deterioration of the body. Third, I saw many self-inflicted diseases. The obese well to do merchant, with gout, swelling of the legs and difficulty breathing. I saw the drunkard, consuming excess of wine or even a stronger liquor. There was a fourth class which I could not add to that above because I could not diagnose or treat them. These were the few who we called insane. I had no idea how to deal with these people. They had visions, seizures, they believed they were gods, being attacked by some creatures. For those people we sent them away. There was nothing we could even attempt to do.

For the obese and drunkards, we could tell them to stop, but that was usually without result. We would do it once, perhaps twice, then we saw no hope. That left us with the short term sick and the long term dying. For the short term we had some ways to deal with them. For the long term dying, those with tumors and the like, we tried to make them comfortable and speak with their families.

I got to see many short term disease here that I had not seen before. The swamps and their gasses often produced fevers described in Galen and of which I had studied. They were undulating, spiking every three to four days.

Then there were the disease of fever and diarrhea, massive diarrhea, watery and looking almost like a rice mix. We knew that this patient would die in many cases. Here I spent time trying to understand why and where. I spoke with families, and often those in the same residence had the same disease. Yet when looking at others, there were ones who were a distance away but they too had the disease. I asked for a map of Bologna,

I found in the herbals suggestions for reducing diarrhea. I had some small amounts of rice, which is a small grain that apparently comes from the East, it is common in the Levant somewhat and has recently been grown along the Po River to the north. It is costly but makes a silky white broth that is very rich. To that I add ground beans, the large flat ones, and heat that as well in the rice broth. Then I have the patients consume a large glass every time they pass fluids through themselves, in a manner so as to have a balance.

Balance is essential. I also did not bleed the patient, in many cases they were bleeding in their fluid passage, and any more loss of blood would disturb the balance. The bean and rice mixture was given hourly for three days. Amongst the fifteen patients I had, all recovered. Sadly, in the other twenty, treated by bleeding and no fluids, none survived. Needless to say, when I tried to convince the old physicians of what was done, they all stated that I may be some sort of witch,

doing this with evil magic. Fortunately, the Prior and the Bishop, as well as Mondino and the medical school staff supported me. In fact one of the local physicians ranted that we should not be wasting good money on rice for dying people, God will care for them. That taught me another lesson; change can be quite dangerous.

METHODS, TECHNIQUE, PROCESS

After a year with Mondino I had developed a reasonable skill on anatomy. At least on a cadaver. I spoke with him one afternoon regarding surgery. I saw the surgeons from time to time and generally they were a bare step up from a butcher. They had sharp knives, a quick hand, and did what the physician told them to do. After studying anatomy for just a year I wondered if we physicians had any idea what we were telling them. I spoke to Mondino about that.

He said to me:

"If you really want to learn surgery, to be a real surgeon, you spend time on the battle field. You may save one or two, but for the most part you get to see hacked up parts of the human body. In those conditions, you see blood, mass amounts of blood. The surgeons here have some blood, but they move so fast and cut so quickly, mainly because their patients are in agony. If only we could keep the patients out of pain, say put them to sleep, but painlessly."

We spent more time over the next month exploring this. I had used some opium, a poppy plant extract, and it did provide some relief.

I spent time on examining various medications as well. I had access to both books and herbs and other ingredients that were unknown in Oxford as well as Montpellier. I read the Muslim authors and in particular Ibn Sinha. My Arabic was still quite good and to the surprise of my peers I managed to go through a great deal. What struck me was the technique Ibn Sinha demanded.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna) developed rules for testing the effectiveness of a drug or medication that still underpin modern clinical trials:

1. The drug must be free from extraneous accidental quality.
2. It must be used on a simple, not a composite, disease.
3. The drug must be tested with two contrary types of diseases, because sometimes a drug cures one disease by its essential qualities and another by its accidental ones.
4. The quality of the drug must correspond to the strength of the disease. For example, there are some drugs whose heat is less than the coldness of certain diseases, so that they would have no effect on them.
5. The time of action must be observed, so that essence and action are not confused.

6. The effect of the drug must be seen to occur constantly or in many cases, for if this did not happen, it was an accidental effect.

7. The experimentation must be done with the human body, for testing a drug on a lion or a horse might not prove anything about its effect on man.

This meant a procedure which was documented and consistent. It is what I was trying to accomplish with my patients and the rice-bean broth.

A pharmacist was called saydalani, a name derived from the Sanskrit for a seller of sandalwood. The saydalanis introduced new drugs including—not unexpectedly— sandalwood, but also camphor, senna, rhubarb, musk, myrrh, cassia, tamarind, nutmeg, alum, aloes, cloves, coconut, nuxvomica, cubeb, aconite, ambergris, mercury and more. They further introduced hemp and henbane as anesthetics, and they dispensed these in the forms of ointments, pills, elixirs, confections, tinctures, suppositories and inhalants.

TEACHING

By the end of my first year I was asked to teach a section on urology. I had been spending time in the clinic with many patients with various urological problems from discharges, stones, cancers, and disorders of the kidneys. I had spent time with Mondino especially on the anatomy of the kidney, the connections to the bladder, the prostate, and its interconnections. I now understood the bladder quite well and from three anatomy dissections had examined and detailed the prostate. I saw changes from a young man and a much older. Yet I knew just two samples do not a pattern make. But the teaching of urology was a way to bring the medical students into a better understanding of why anatomy was so important. They would be dealing with live patients in the future and visualizing what the issue was from the outside in was essential to diagnosis and treatment.

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My teaching style was different. I used actual patients and did not stand and read from Galen as many other did. The students were brought to the clinic, they saw my patients, they were examined with what they observed. They saw technique, saw urine, felt lesions. Then back with Mondino they saw in the cadaver the organs they were feeling and examining and were asked what was the source of the complaint, the problem. This of course was not well received by all. Being a Friar, with a Papal brief, gave me some protection but to avoid severe political problems I deferred to the faculty.

The technique of uroscopy even at that early period had attained a high degree of excellence, although the methods did not concern themselves so much with the diagnosis of individual diseases as with the progress or course of disease in general. The Hippocratic writers, however, describe in an excellent manner several morbid affections of the urinary apparatus, laying particular stress on the color of the urine and on urinary sediment. They distinguish various kinds of sediment according to color, general appearance, quantity and consistency.

I discussed the analysis of the patient according to the then classic signs of the urine. The clouds and condensations appearing in the urine were designated according to whether they were

situated on the surface, in the middle or on the bottom of the vessel, as nubecula or cloud like, suspensum or in the body of the urine or sedimentum or settled at the bottom. Uniform, clumpy, branlike, lamelliform and scaly, sediments are also described. Among the abnormally colored urines that which is black, thick, and offensive is considered especially dangerous. However I stressed that examining the urine without seeing and speaking with the patient was useless. Urine examination was an aide to understanding it was not the only understanding. I admonished my students that one must always speak with the patient, and listen to the patient. Age, activity, diet, physical appearance, all must be taken in for a diagnosis. Does the patient have a fever, does the patient consume great amounts of wine, does the patient have skin lesions, is the patient obese, cachexic, and are the patients eyes clear or jaundiced. Each tells the physician something, and only after assembling the total picture can a diagnosis be made.

The source of the abnormal constituents of the urine may be located in various parts of the urinary system. I demonstrated that when performing a dissection. Liquid in taken it, it is mixed with the blood, and they all pass through the kidneys, then down to the bladder and out as urine. Where then one must ask is the problem? One must not be deceived because the bladder itself is diseased and gives to the urine such characteristics, for that is not a general symptom good for the whole body but is only a special symptom of the bladder. If bubbles form on the urine, one may conclude that the disease is in the kidneys and that it will last a long time. Frothy urine associated with unconsciousness, diminished vision, points to approaching convulsions, this is a good observation of uremic symptoms in chronic nephritis. Bloody urine is indicative of rupture of renal veins, inflammation of the kidneys, ulcers of the bladder, and of disease of the parts surrounding the bladder.

It has been argued that bloody urine does not indicate anything serious if it occurs rarely and without fever and pain, but when it appears often and one of these other symptoms is present, then it is a dangerous sign." Pus in the urine is found in cases of pain in the bladder with fever, vesical stones, and nodules in the urethra. In diseases of the kidney, fleshy particles appear in the urine. In chronic catarrh of the bladder the sediment is branny. Sandy urine indicates stones. Itching in the " lower parts " (glans penis) implies sandy urine and the passage of small calculi. The great work of Celsus, written in Latin and based on the work of the Hippocratic and Alexandrian schools, contains not a few references of importance for the history of urology. It appears that Celsus tried to determine on the basis of the different characters of the urine whether the disease was referable to the bladder, the kidneys or other organs.

Bloody or purulent urine resulted from disease (ulcers) of the bladder or kidney. Those suffering from stone could be recognized by the following signs: The urine is voided with difficulty and in drops; occasionally it is passed involuntarily. It contains sand-like admixtures and at times bloody or purulent material. Some can only void in the upright posture; others only when lying down, and this is the case especially when the stone is large.

Others can succeed best if they bend forward and lessen their pains by stretching the urethra. There is also a feeling of great heaviness, which is increased by running or by any movement. If the kidneys are diseased, then they are apt to be diseased for a long time.

In treatment Celsus advises rest, attention to the bowels (enemas), hot baths, avoidance of cold beverages and foods, and especially abstinence from all salty, spicy and sour articles, and fruit. He recommends an abundance of water and the use of substances that act on the secretion of the urine. Several lectures dealt with urinary difficulties and their treatment.

Catheterization with the curved metal catheter and its indications both in the male and in the female sex were exhaustively discussed. Several lectures were devoted to the treatment of patients with stone, the signs of gravel and of soft stones, and the treatment after the removal of the stone.

The discussion on lithotomy is especially important. The method I described was probably that taught in the Alexandrian schools and was in use for many centuries. The principle of " deep " lithotomy is described by Celsus as follows: Exposure of the transition between the urethra and the bladder by means of an incision through the soft parts of the perineum; opening of the urethra. and extraction of small stones through the wound, with eventual preliminary crushing of the stone. Celsus mentions an instrument recommended for lithotomy by the famous Alexandrian surgeon Megees.

Galen, concerned himself very much with the diseases of the urinary tract. Difficult urinary secretion, according to Galen, had three degrees of intensity. Dysuria is the mildest form, stranguria is present when the urine is voided in drops, ischuria when no urine appears externally. The cause resides in obstruction of the urinary passages (by reason of very thick urine, coagulated blood or calculous concretions), in inflammation or paralysis of the bladder (because of dyscrasia or pathological new growths), or in the acidity of the urine (in consequence of changes in the blood), or in diseases of the kidney.

I also presented cases of dysuria which according to Galen can occur in the absence of disease of the urinary organs. If retention has lasted a considerable time, Galen advises evacuation of the urine with an S-shaped catheter. This technique I was able to demonstrate to my students. Needless to say, it was painful for the man. We would also have women patients and for the students this was most uncomfortable, and even more so for the patient. I tried to be as kind and considerate to both. I would place a curtain between the woman patient and the examining area. I also had the examining area cleansed using some soaps by the Sisters or Poor Clares. They were wonderful at this and there was one Sister Rosita, an older Sister, almost mother like, who, although quite religious, managed to keep total control over the process whenever a woman patient was involved. I often wondered how I could practice without her presence. She was short, rotund, but had arms like a boxer, and was not one of those women religious terrified by men. In fact, she took control whenever needed and every man present responded as if she were the head of the Army! We used a solution of opium to ease the patient and I further covered the catheter with a salve containing an opium solution.

Inflammations of the kidney are often of long duration; indeed they can persist throughout life. Stone in the kidney arises just as gouty deposits in the joints. Bladder stones are more frequent in children, especially boys. Vesical calculi may be adherent or free. When the stone drops in front of the internal orifice of the urethra it may produce a temporary retention. Galen, like Rufus, employed bimanual examination. His description of renal colic is similar to that of Hippocrates.

My students often asked how the fluid taken in was passed through the kidneys. How did it get from the stomach to the kidney. I often tried to explain that when dissecting but I felt I did not have an adequate explanation. As to the forming of these stones, often passed with great pain, that there must be some dissolved stone in the drinks consumed. Thus I strongly urged that water from the wells which had large stone deposits not be consumed.

For purposes of differential diagnosis between renal and intestinal colic we made use of laxatives. We attributed diabetes, the essence of which he saw only in polyuria, to a loosening of the kidney structure, a sweetness of the urine. It designated as psora of the bladder a condition in which the urine had a thick, tough consistency and contained branny scales (chronic cystitis). In the therapy of urinary calculi and of gout he employed among other things wine with honey, myrrh, parsley, caraway, and the powder found in sponges. For a treatment against hematuria or blood in the urine we used alum.

I taught this for two years, in the Fall of 2021 and in the Fall of 2022. Many of my students found this approach much more useful than just the readings of Galen and others. I tried to encourage the study of urology but for the students they had many other academic burdens and this was not a focus.

MEETING MICHAEL OF CESENA

After almost a year at Bologna, I was becoming well adapted to the studies and location. It was not Oxford, and it definitely was not Montpelier. I received news that Dante had died. It was, I believe, mid-September in 1321. Apparently it was from the swamp fever as they had told me but I believe it was his heart disorder which I had diagnosed the year earlier. But perhaps it was a combination of both. I had learned to be cautious in giving my opinion from afar. I wondered what impact Dane would have. I had read his work again and as I became more comfortable with Italian it became a bit clearer. On the one hand it was humorous to see how he placed certain people in Hell. On the other hand it was dangerous.

I was in the Clinic seeing some local patients who would come from day to day, generally the poor, since for those of better means we would visit them. I also had to be cautious of taking "business" away from the local physicians who made considerable sums from their advice. Mine, of course was free.

Into my Clinic came an old and short and very tattered Franciscan. He looked about fifty or more and his tunic was old and tattered, He had no shoes and his feet showed signs of years of beatings from rocks and twigs. He smiled when he came in and walked up to me and said, "Peace be unto this house" the standard Franciscan greeting. I replied "and peace to your brother, may I help"

He smiled and touched my arm and replied:

"Sit, sit, Brendano, sit here with me. I think you may help. I am Friar Michael."

It suddenly struck me that this Friar Michael was Michael of Cesna, the head of our Order. He was appointed in 1316 and as was well known to that he was a strong backer of the Spirituals. In addition it was he whose name had risen across my travels, the leader of our Order but one disliked by the Pope. But why was he coming to me, was he ill, was he trying to examine me?

Michael was warm and friendly, very un-assuming for what I had anticipated the Head of the Order would be like. He had a ragged cloak, no sandals, a skimpy unkempt beard, a well-groomed tonsure, and he clearly had seen little of a bath. It was also clear that he saw in me a total contrast. I was clean, clean tunic, shoes, clean shaven, and a tonsure shall we say in name only. He continued:

"Brendano, you I am told are a very honest man, and very smart as well. You also I am told on the one hand know many powerful people and on the other hand deliberately avoid any and all politics, to an extreme. You also, as I am told, say that you are but a physician, yet there are times you speak with theological authority. That, Brendano, you may not even know of yourself. But others do. I come to seek your advice. Seek your support if you will. I do not seek your support of the Spirituals, as we are called, but your support of how we can best deal with the Pope, the Inquisitors, and the threat to our Orders very existence."

His directness surprised me. Again I wondered how all these parts were adding together. I replied:

"Brother Michael, what can I do to help. As you also know I eschew any theological or philosophical arguments, I have enough difficulty in dealing with the human body no less its soul."

Michael replied:

"Our problem Brendano is that the Pope is seeking to have me and our Order questioned in Avignon. I also am no legal mind, no expert in the sophisticated reasoning at the Papal Court. You on the other hand know some of it, you know Gui and the Inquisition, you know the Papal Court, and more importantly you know who best to help represent our Order at Avignon. I believe we need the best of our Order to assist me at Court. Who, my young friend, would you suggest?"

For that I was taken aback. Yet the answer came quickly to my lips.

"Why good Brother, the best of our Order to deal with this is Friar William of Ockham, he is a brilliant theologian, philosopher, and well in my opinion, his arguments are like a razor cutting through complexity and seizing the essential truth. William is who you would need. Yet I know not of his predilection regarding Spirituals. You see, like me, he wears sandals, and like me, well, he is shall we say a Conventional."

Michael smiled again and in almost a fatherly manner said:

"I understand. But as I understand, it is William and his mind we need, not his bare feet. We have bare feet enough in Italy!"

I laughed and he did as well. We continued to talk. To discuss the issues and the risks. After about an hour he finished with:

"There is no rush, but can you communicate with Friar William and let him know our concerns. I gather you will return to Oxford at the end of the coming year, can you perhaps do so via Avignon, understand what is happening, and then go on to Oxford, speak with our brother, William, and prepare for our battle. Finally, good Brendano, we will need your help. You can do things, speak to people, gather information, seek out other options, better than any of us. I am not asking that you profess as a Spiritual, although I gather that you are almost there, except for the sandals and that clean face you always have, but it is that small bit that makes you capable of dealing with Avignon. They do not see you as a threat, yet you may very well be more of a threat than they ever understand."

He smiled, blessed my head, and walked out.

I sat back and wondered just what a mess I was getting myself into.

From then on, Michael would come and speak with me almost fortnightly, he would try to argue with me on philosophical and theological grounds. I suspect he was using me as the resident sounding board, a safe fellow Franciscan who he could try his thoughts on with no fear that I would report him to the Papal authorities. Perhaps he also thought that my prior connections with Gui and the Inquisition would also help him in his meetings with the Pope in Avignon. The result of these meetings was that I too became more astute on the Theological issues, not that I agreed, but it was if I were a lawyer and Michael were my client. I had to understand him, his position.

I had written to Ockham and carefully expressed my concerns. The problem with writing anything was that it often went through many hands and whatever one wrote could come back and threaten them.

BOLOGNA AND PETRARCH

I remained close to Petrarch, he often met with me for dinners and we spoke more and more on the classic Roman authors, and on mothers. He had consumed Augustine and his confessions to a degree which I had little interest. He saw in Augustine's mother Monica a parallel to his own mother, and he would bring up the topic almost incessantly.

One evening he said:

"Brendan, what of your mother, you speak not a word, is she still alive? Don't you miss her?"

I sat aback for a moment and realized that my life was one of always looking forward, not a speck allowed me to look backward. I replied:

"Petrarch, first let me speak of Augustine. For you he is a new window on an old world. Your reading of his Confessions is an enlightening experience. For me however I am deeply troubled by all of Augustine. My most troubling moment is the abandonment of the mother of his only son. How can a man, who on the one hand is confessing all his sins, failed to accept and remedy the abandonment of the mother of his only child, an act which I see as facilitated by his very holy mother, Monica. Thus for me, Petrarch, I see a man who on the one hand deeply loves his mother but on the other hand rips the mother of his son from him. That act is an act of cowardice. When I think of your poet Dante, and his writing of Hell, I often wonder if he would, should, have ascribed some place for such an act. For Dante assigns to the lowest depths those who are treacherous, those who have a special duty, obligation, and deliberately abandon them. Did not Augustine abandon the mother of his son, did not Monica facilitate that, encourage that?"

Petrarch said back, somewhat surprised:

"Brendan, I am surprised. Yet I can see your point. Abandonment. Duty. Yes, we all have duties. Yet my mother did not abandon me, she was taken away."

I replied:

"Petrarch, your mother was saintly, a true woman of respect. You my young friend, you loved and still love and respect her. I speak not of your mother, I speak not of my mother. I speak of the actions of Augustine. I am not a theologian. I am a physician. I see pain and suffering in the body and try to mediate it, cure of possible, assuage is all else fails. I speak of Augustine whom many see as without sin, he was truly a man who had sinned, and admitted it, but not all, and especially not his most mortal of sins. For that my friend, I cannot render any understanding."

Petrarch then asked me coyishly:

"Brendan, of your mother, you speak little. What of her?"

I got back to his question with some thought. I replied:

"Petrarch, my mother, a convert you must know, sent me to England at the age of twelve. Your family left Florence but stayed together. My family wanted me to be educated, and I guess saw no way other than sending me to the Church and England. I am now but a Friar, I pray, I respect those who have taken priestly vows, I am but a sub deacon. Thus my mother, whom I have not seen in some seventeen years, I know not even if she lives. My father likewise. My brothers and sisters equally so. My view of the world and life is that of a single individual, I belong to no clan, no family, other than as a Franciscan. Yet even there I have been a wanderer, being sent from one place to another, gathering wisdom, technique, and trying to help those afflicted in body. You, my young friend, you are part of something, you are Italian, you are a poet, and yes you are no lawyer, but that is irrelevant, the world has too many lawyers as it is. So my friend, write your poems, write your words, for your view is what makes people see the value in life, in living."

Petrarch smiled and responded:

"Brendan, I am a poet, I dislike the law, I dislike philosophy, and sadly I dislike many physicians, but you my friend are a healer of souls, priest or no priest. You have shed light on my life, I now know what I shall do."

We finished dinner, and as usual he quizzed me about things which were related to humane relationships, not philosophy, and not at all about medicine.

FEVERS

One of the opportunities at Bologna was the ability to study fevers. I had been trained in Galenic theory but generally at Oxford, the source of such fevers was limited. Here, closer to where Galen wrote, one was exposed to such diseases. Gordun has written a great deal on fevers, and perhaps my brief time limited my exposures to them at Montpelier. Yet here at Bologna, especially each Fall, there would be an explosion of fevers. They often presented as undulant type.

I also taught my students on fevers. Using Galen, the Galenic triple classification was as follows:

Fevers which affect the spirits (pneumas)
Fevers which affect the liquid parts (humours)
Fevers which affect the solid parts (organs)

Gordun accepted in large measure that the fevers nominated ephemeral or one-day fever are a product of the effect on the spirits, natural, vital or psychical. They are benign diseases which disappear within four days, and for which, according to Gordun, it is not usual to consult a doctor for treatment, although, on occasion, if the patient is not treated adequately, they can derive into other more dangerous fevers, as happens in the case of what Gordun called hectic fever.

Again following Gordun I explained:

Fevers which affect the natural spirit: As we know, the natural spirit is the force responsible for the organism carrying out part of its nourishing function, especially the three digestions. It has its base in the liver.

Fever produced by an intense cold is a fever which is the product of a great cold which surrounds the patient for a length of time as a result of snow, ice or great storms. Excessive exterior cold acts on the person causing the natural heat to withdraw into the depths of the body, where it concentrates, grows and takes possession of the blood. This hot blood arrives at the liver and affects the natural spirit which, as we know, belongs to this organ, and affects to a lesser degree the spirit which is found in the heart (vital spirit) or the brain (psychic spirit).

Fever produced by bathing in harmful water may occur if the patient bathes in rough water, water for washing linen or water which contains a lot of mud, sulphur or gypsum, he will contract this type of ephemeral fever. The same will happen in stagnant water. The mechanism of the process consists of these waters causing the body to dry out and, in consequence, the pores

of the skin to close up. Since the heat cannot get out, it concentrates in the internal parts of the body, takes over the blood and reaches the liver where it first affects the natural spirit, then passes to the vital, and later the psychic spirit.

Fever produced by ingesting food, drink or medicines of a very hot nature: This fever is produced by an internal cause, such as taking food or drink of an excessively hot nature, although he does not specify which. All food and drink goes first to the stomach and then to the liver, and if these are too hot they cause the blood to boil and, by continuation, produce the same effect in the natural spirit. Gordun, in addition to hot food and drink, adds medicines of the same nature as a potential danger - the consequence of a possible error by the doctor.

Fever which appears after excessive exercise Abusive exercise is included by al-Isra'ili and Avenzoar among the external producing causes of illness. This fever occurs among people who walk or ride for many consecutive days. Al-Isra'ili indicates that the fever appears after an excess of physical work, and its producing mechanism is that which affects the three powers, especially the natural spirit since, by an excess of work, the organs become hot and dry. Later the muscles and the nerves too get hot The heat generated rises to the brain, taking possession of it and confusing it²⁶• Avenzoar says only that fever can be produced by a fatigue which goes beyond all limits²⁷• Gordun derives this fever from excessive exercise and includes it in the same group as anger or sadness, but not among external causes. He does not reveal the producing mechanism of the fever²⁸• Fevers which affect the vital spirit The vital spirit exists in relation to the regulation of innate heat, a function which is carried out during respiration. Its origin is the heart. At the same time, the heart is the organ where, according to many authors, the feelings are established.

Fever produced by anger As to the place where the fever originates, our authors do not agree. This fever, it is argued, results because the heat of the anger takes possession of the psychic and vital powers. By continuation, the blood boils, produces fever and goes out to the external parts of the body. Avenzoar does not agree, since he says that great anger produces an excessive heat in the heart, seat of the vital spirit, which subsequently burns, and produces in this way a fever. For Gordun, this fever does not result from external causes. He maintains that anger is an excessive movement of the natural spirit, contradicting what we have just explained. He does not offer the producing mechanism of the fever. In this instance, we believe that Avenzoar best reflects the feeling of the time. For that reason, we have included this fever in the part of the vital spirit, since we think with Avenzoar that anger affects principally the heart, traditional seat of the feelings and vital spirit.

Fever originated by a great sorrow. Sorrow distinguishes itself from sadness in that the former belongs to the spiritual power which rests in the heart, and the latter to that in the brain. Although the treatment is the same as that for sadness, this fever is different and the prognostication worse, for it can be transformed into hectic fever or consumption. We do not know its producing mechanism.

Fever produced by inflammation and swelling The fever is produced by the presence of inflammation (abscesses) located in the throat, neck, armpits and below the ears. According to The bad blood, becomes hot and the heat passes to the heart where it engenders fever. We

suppose that in the heart it would affect the vital spirit, although he does not say. Gordun only credits it when in relation to the lesser abscesses which appear in the armpits and the groin.

Fever produced by a great lack of sleep Al-Isra' ili maintains that a fever which occurs as consequence of staying awake continually, affects the psychic spirit. To explain its mechanism of production he returns to the words of Hippocrates. Whenever a man stays awake for long periods and does not sleep, the organs of the body move, heat escapes and from the places where the digestion of the food should be produced. The food thus remains raw and produces vapors in the body. One author adds that this fever affects the psychic spirit in the brain, so that this is extenuated and debilitated. Avenzoar includes wakefulness among the external causes capable of producing illness but, once again, does not indicate the mechanism of production. Gordun does not mention this fever.

Fever produced by excessive heat Al-Isra' ili maintains that the heat of the sun, especially during the summer, produces a great effervescence in the blood in a way which affects the brain, seat of the psychic spirit⁴². Also it can produce another unnamed ephemeral fever, owing to the fact that the air is very hot Breathing this air heats the heart, an organ which already has a lot of heat, producing fever. According to al-Isra'ili, it would affect, on some occasions, the psychic spirit and, on others, the vital.

Tertian Fever This is another of the better studied fevers. It is differentiated from the cause, also produced by a change in the yellow bile, in that in this case the material putrefies. Al-Isra' ili says that it is produced by the putrefaction of yellow bile of a saffron colour. The humours outside the organism's circulation putrefy, the bile is of a dry nature and because of this putrefies. This fever distresses the patient a lot, because of the acuteness of its material and because it is next to the cause fever. If hot food is given to those suffering from tertian fever it can engender frenzy fever. Avenzoar indicates that this fever comes from putrefaction of the yellow bile in the veins or in another part If it is inside the veins they are the pure, intermittent tertians. Also it can proceed from an ephemeral fever. The words of Gordun are that the putrid fever of the yellow bile is known as the tertian or true tertian. It can be produced from pure yellow bile or from yellow bile mixed with phlegm. In the latter case it is known as false tertian. If the bile putrefies inside the veins and the arteries then continuous fever is engendered. If it putrefies outside the vessels it is interpolated fever . In this case, when the offending material collects together and cannot cool down or be destroyed, the heart heats up excessively, either because the putrid vapor goes to the heart or because one part or another heats up until it arrives from the most deep part of the heart. Or for both reasons. When the heart is heated, together with the rest of the body, it produces a fever.

Quartan fever of the yellow bile: In treating the quartan produced by the black bile, Gordun affirms that there is a quartan fever whose origin is the putrefaction of the yellow bile. The other two authors make no reference to this.

Fever from a pain in the side: According to al-Isra'ili, the fever produced by a pain in the side also has as its origin the yellow bile. There is nothing about this from the other two authors.

Semi-cotidian fever: Avenzoar refers to it as being produced by bilious humour the colour of

verdigris. He suggests that, on occasions, it also proceeds from an ephemeral fever. Neither al-Isra' ili nor Gordun mention it.

I was now expert in identifying and classifying fevers. Yet I knew not their cause nor their cure. It frustrated me that so much of medicine was giving a name to something. Why not remedy it.

LEAVING BOLOGNA

By late June of 1323 I had completed my studies at Bologna. Not only under Mondino, whose work I had begun to expand upon, but also in some of the pharmaceutical areas. Mondino had recommended me for a Doctor of Medicine, and the members voted to award it. For that I was greatly honored. The two years here was very maturing and educating. I had learned to create new ideas as well as deal with the sick on a larger scale. I also now had a great understanding of my patients, by knowing what was inside as well as out. However I still was concerned that one must be very careful announcing new discoveries. There were large groups bound to the old ways, and facts notwithstanding would not get in the way.

Upon completion and recommendation, I had to follow the graduation process. Graduation consisted of two parts. First was the private examination which was led by Mondino. By this time I had known most if not all the faculty and I had avoided many of the political missteps that some students do. Second, the public examination, called conventus, or conventactio, meant that in a large room, they used in my case the room used by Mondino for dissection. Perhaps a wise idea since it was June, warm, and we were not dissecting, yet the odors lingered, and thus the questions would be short.

The private examination was the real test of competence, the so-called public examination being, in practice, a mere ceremony. The candidate who had passed the private examination and was admitted to the public one, was called a licentiate. Yet in my case since I had been practicing at the local Franciscan Hospital, a crowd of well over a hundred Bolognese came in, former patients, their friends, families. Apparently this had never before occurred, and they all stood and attested to the quality of care and the saving of lives. I was overcome with the well wishes of these fine people. Mothers came up to me with food, fruit, new sandals, and things for my journey. Mondino was surprised but not really. He had seen this bond develop and I believe he built upon it.

Generally, the licentiate proceeded to the ceremony which made him a full doctor after a very short interval, in my case they were but a day apart. On the day of my public examination, the love of pageantry characteristic of the medieval, and especially of the Italian mind was allowed ample gratification. Before the appointed day, I was preceded by the beadles of the Archdeacon, rode around the city inviting public officials or private friends to the ceremony or to the ensuing banquet. On the day of the conventus I was accompanied to the cathedral by the presenting doctors and by fellow students lodging in the same house with him.

I gathered from speaking with others that this derived from the principle of Roman law according to which a man was invested with office by a solemn performance of its functions. By

this act a new doctor was recognized by his colleagues, and received among the doctors, he., into the teaching guild or brotherhood.

Arriving at the cathedral, I delivered a speech and read a thesis which I defended against opponents who were selected from among the students. I found this rather interesting since by now many of the students were young men whom I had been teaching.

I was then presented by Mondino to the Archdeacon who delivered a complimentary oration and concluded by solemnly conferring the degree of doctor by the authority of the Pope and in the name of the Holy Trinity. There was at this point a bit of laughing because all knew my appointment from the beginning was by the Pope and was even a point of contention. Mondino also saw the humour in the process.

A gold ring was to be placed upon my finger, as a token of my espousal to science or as a symbol of the my claim to equality with knight. My Prior suggested that such could be disregarded in my case since I had a vow of poverty and obedience to the Church. Frankly the ring in my case was a bit much. Yet conferring on me a Knighthood was not anything of monetary value thus poverty could be ensured. At least that was the logic. I thus became Sir Brendan, at least in Bologna. But I initially paid no attention to this.

There also was the process of the placing of the magisterial cap upon my head, and Mondino gave me a paternal embrace, the kiss of peace, and a benediction. The ceremony concluded, all present were required to escort him in triumph through the town, surrounded by a mounted cavalcade of personal friends and wealthier students and preceded by three university pipers and four university trumpeters. It appears that in the case of poorer students these expensive ceremonies were dispensed with but somehow they insisted that even though I was a Friar many in the town contributed because of the work at the hospital and frankly because they wanted to have a celebration. I guessed that I could participate and my Prior, with the guidance from Michael of Cesna, agreed as long as I received nothing of value. We did not discuss the *usus pauper* issue.

I later discovered that not only did I obtain a Doctor in Medicine but that so great the importance attached to the graduation was the fact that Charles V granted to the college the right of truly conferring a real knighthood upon doctors; and that the doctors of the college were themselves knights and counts of the Lateran. Thus unbeknownst to me for decades, I was now both a Friar and a Knight. That would become a use at a later moment.

One of the most interesting differences between the University of Bologna and the other universities lies in the relationship between the various faculties. In Paris and in other European universities, the doctors and students of all faculties were united in a single body. In ancient Bologna there was no connection between the faculty of law and that of the arts, i.e., liberal arts and medicine, other than that the students of both received their degrees from the same chancellor, the Archdeacon of Bologna. The organization of law students attained a high development earlier than that of the students of medicine. Up to the end of the 13th century the faculty of law claimed jurisdiction over the students of other faculties, but later, the faculty of the “artists” became completely independent and elected its own rector.

It is obvious that such an enormous body of students as the one which constituted the university of the artists could not meet as frequently as the Parisian University of Masters. Many problems, therefore, which at Paris were dealt with by the university itself were decided at Bologna by the Rectors and the Councilors, who made up the ordinary executive body of the university. The rector was chosen every second year by indirect election; the electors were the ex-rectors, the newly elected councilors and an equal number of special delegates.

The rector was required to be a “secular clerk, unmarried, with five years' standing in the study and at least twenty-four years of age,” and took precedence over all archbishops and bishops, except the Bishop of Bologna, and even over cardinals. He was expected to live with a certain amount of pomp: for instance, he was bound by statute to keep at least two liveried servants. The festivities of Inauguration Day, which took place in the Cathedral, entailed great expense. The Rector-elect was solemnly invested with the rectorial hood by one of the doctors, after which he was escorted in triumph by the whole body of students to his house where a banquet awaited the constituents to whom he owed his exalted office.

Each university had as officers, two treasurers, a notary, a syndicus or common advocate, and a beadle, *bidellus generalis*. The duties of the beadle were fairly analogous to those of the venerable and picturesque functionaries who bear the same name in the English universities. Besides receiving the rectors on public occasions, the beadle made the rounds of the schools to read statutes and decrees, announcements of lectures, lists of books for sale and other matters of general interest. The beadleship is among the most ancient of academic offices, perhaps as ancient as that of the rector. Rashdall remarks that an allusion to a beadle is, in general, a sufficiently trustworthy indication that a school is really a full-fledged university.

It is interesting to note that punctuality was enforced at the schools with extreme rigor. The professor was obliged to begin his lectures when the bells of St. Peter's began to ring for mass, and was penalized whenever he failed to do so. He was forbidden to continue his lecture one minute after the bells had begun to ring for tierce. Apart from these limitations, the idea of discipline never entered the Bolognese lecture rooms at all. Also the professor was not an officer of any public institution; he was simply a private free-lance lecturer.

Notwithstanding the strict prohibitions, we know that migrations from Bologna occurred at the beginning of the 13th century and from these migrations were born some important universities of Northern Italy. A colony of students from Bologna established itself, in 1204, in Vicenza; the university of Padua was founded in 1222 by students who, dissatisfied with the rules imposed by the city, had abandoned Bologna; and in 1228 a migration of students took place from Padua to Vercelli in Piedmont.

RETURNING TO OXFORD

After my final weeks, it was time to return. Before leaving I spent another day with Michael of Cesena. We discussed the ever more complex discussions with the Pope and his demands and Michael was becoming more fixed in his position. It was his view of none. I tried to convince him to have some flexibility but he refused. I said I would try and convince Ockham to represent him at Avignon. William would be my first focus. I knew it would take me at least a month to

return and I was wonder what route would be best. I thought of going by ship, but that would require connections. Michael told me it would be best to go by land and he assured me I could use both horse and wear boots! That must have been a unique move on his part. Had I been any other Friar, walking and shoeless would be demanded. But somehow my more relaxed presence was now something he was accustomed to. I kidded him:

"Master Michael, I think you should create another Order just for me, we can call it the Fourth Order of Saint Francis, the should be shoe , horse riding, clean shaven, Friars!"

He laughed and said:

"Francis would have like you, strange as you are from most of us, but you have cared for the sick, comforted those near death, and helped the families of those gone. I guess as Francis dealt with the fancy birds and flowers, he could deal with you Brendano, but let us not start something too strange! Before we know it this Fourth Order will be dressed like the Lords and ladies in Florence!"

I was happy to see Michael had a sense of humor. I felt his ordeal was just to begin. I bade him farewell but I was certain that we would be meeting again. It was now early July and I wanted to be back at Oxford before September, and I knew it was a long trip. I had a sturdy horse, a small supply of food. I was allowed by Michael to bring with me some books which I could share at Oxford. I kept Mondino's anatomy, Dante's Comedia, and a few others. I also kept my notes to be later transcribed.

Just before leaving one last visitor came, young Petrarch. He approached and gave me a strong embrace. He looked happy. and said:

"Farewell good friend, perhaps we shall meet again. It seems that this world is getting smaller all the time. I also, thanks to you, have decided to become a poet, I must still study Law but having read Dante, having met him and with your help, I am now writing, perhaps I too can achieve what Dante did. You changed my life good friend, for that I am grateful. Be safe, and perhaps you can help other like me. Farewell."

I was atop my horse and set out north towards Milan, then Lake Como and the mountains. It would be a length trip across the mountains then across France. I hoped my horse would fare well. I found a Franciscan convent in almost all my stops. The weather held well, and my horse was also healthy, I did not ride it too hard. My lack os full Franciscan mufti was forgiven by Priors and fellow Friars when I showed them the letter from Michael. Although the did not understand the reason, they clearly saw that I was in somewhat of a hurry back to Oxford. Thus at each junction, often after a twelve hour ride, some 40 miles a day, with more care for my horse than for myself, I came into Burgundy, flat lands and on my way to France.

CHAPTER 9 (1323-1328) LONDON AND AVIGNON

After Bologna I was to return to England. At that point I had achieved the education and experience I was required to have and the Prior had asked that I return. I was now a Doctor of Medicine, with extensive experience in anatomy from Bologna and in Arabic medicine from Montpellier. More importantly I had now also had experience in dealing with many sick people, and had developed a confidence in diagnosing and treating many of them. I felt that when I returned I could settle down and treat the poor and others in the community. I also envisioned extending my work on how the heart and urology. I was now more comfortable to take a position of doing the work on my own merits. Little did I know.

ENGLAND (1323)

It was the middle of the Fall of 1323. I had made the French coast on the Channel. It had been a long and tiring journey and I had been gone now over five years. I took a ship from Calais to Dover and then along the coast to the mouth of the Thames, then up the Thames. It was good to see England again, even if it was not my true home, I saw tress, farms, houses, we passed the Isle of Dogs and Greenwich, and I knew we would soon be in London. I disembarked, carrying my bag of books, and looking I gather a bit disheveled. I walked to the North West to where Greyfriars was located. There I knocked upon the door and a young novice, looking perhaps the way I did some twenty years earlier opened and I must have terrified hi. I was long haired, bearded, filthy, in a brown tunic, with boots and my bag. He asked:

"Yes, and may we help you old man?"

I laughed so loudly that several Friars came to the entry. Three I had known well before I left, Friar Thomas, Friar Geraldus, and Friar Columbanus. They stared at me and then jumped forward and embraced me, taking my load and actually carrying me forward. Columbanus yelled out:

"Our prodigal son has returned!"

Then the Prior, one Steven, came out looked at me, he I did not know, and said:

"Who is this person?"

Columbanus replied:

"It is our prodigal brother, Brendan! He has just arrived from, well where now Brendan, from Bologna?"

I replied:

"Yes Prior, I have just come back from Bologna. I apologize, but I have a message for you, it is important, and I apologize to my brothers, but perhaps we can speak in private."

Prior Steven looked concerned, but since I was well known he agreed and we went to his room. Opening the door there was Prior Dismas! He jumped and embraced me. He said:

"I always knew you would return. Not quite like this, though. You my young man have both aged and look like some of our brothers in Italy, brown tunic, close to nature, and just a mess! Sit, Prior Steve and I were just talking. What is the news?"

I sat down and said when the door was closed:

"I bring a request from Prior Michael of Cesena. He is very concerned that the Pope, Pope John, will be sanctioning our Order, and quite soon. I have brought this letter. Here."

They took it and looked at it carefully.

I continued:

"He may soon be summoned to Avignon. He is requesting support. He specifically asked for William, William of Ockham. I suspect that is my fault since I spoke so highly of William. He must defend our understanding of poverty. He is I believe it is fair to say, terrified, that John will condemn the whole Order, not just the element of the Spirituals."

Dismas looked towards Steven and said:

"Let's ask William to join us. First, Brendan, please go clean and become a bit more presentable. You may terrify William, you almost did that to us. I will get some of the Brothers to assist you. And yes, I have some soap, and a razor, we also have a clean tunic in accord with our local custom. I never thought I would ever see you as you are. How did you get that way by the way?"

I replied:

"I spent the last forty five days on a horse and then a ship, at twelve to fourteen hours a day. And a bath, yes, my skin would very much like a cleansing!"

Off I went to restore myself.

Later I returned and was met by Steven, Dismas and William. We sat about a large Table and began discussions. Dismas began:

"Brendan, first you must know that William has just been before our Order in Bristol where he had been accused of heresy by certain Brothers. We reviewed his writings and disagreed. However, we believe his accuser had gone to Avignon and brought the issue to the attention of the Pope. As such, William may be called to Avignon to defend himself, yet we have no official demand. Your arriving just seems to add to this mystery."

I was shocked. I asked who would have done this.

Dismas replied:

"Amongst us Brothers, not to leave this discussion, we believe it was John Luttrell, the Chancellor at Oxford, now former Chancellor and who himself is ensconced at Avignon trying to gain a position with the Pope. He apparently holds some grudge against the Order and used the attack on William as one tool."

William the replied:

"Luttrell is a Dominican and was Chancellor. However he actions were so unsettling, some would say barbarian, that he was unseated from his position. He was then unseated and took with him my writings on Lombard. You remember Brendan, you were one of my students, well over five years ago. He then went to the Papal Court, we believe he travelled there early this year after his dismissal, and then started to spread around the rumor that Oxford with the Franciscans is teaching heretical works, and he used my Sentences papers as evidence. I suspect that despite the clearing by the Order that the Papal court will be calling."

He continued:

"Luttrell was fortunately succeeded by Henry Gower, a fine man. You may remember him. But alas he is not our problem, Luttrell and the Papal Court is."

I then explained to them my work with Gui and how the Inquisition works. I said:

"Gui is a Dominican, at first not the kindest person I would meet. His mission was to search out heresy. What I saw him do was focus on real heretics, groups who professed anti-Church beliefs in cadres and groups, who themselves professed heretical beliefs. On the other hand, he was in support of my treatments assuaged his disease and I had assisted him in treating various colleagues, even some Bishop whose very life I saved. I have thanked Gui and respect him, but I must say, when told by the Pope to act, he does so with full fervor. He does not seek out people, he does what he is asked. I had no issues, indeed, as a physician, he saw little to complain about. But, I would advise you three, Avignon can be a nest of vipers. There are many people with many agendas, and there is in my view a whole group just dedicated to destroy other people, with no good reason other than that seems to be their job! Frankly I detest the city, I have no political interest, not taste."

Then Dismas replied:

"That is why Michael wants you. hat is also why we need you. Not to defend William, Michael or the Order, you are not a lawyer, you were a great source of information when in Montpelier. It helped us. But this is a serious assault on the Order. They are attacking the Spirituals, which we have no interest other than they are Bothers, but then they attack the Conventionals, and do so on the basis of heresy as well. The Papal Court wants to destroy the Order. We need you Brendan to use your connections as well as your presence as a Physician not as a Theologian."

I replied:

"Then my Brothers, you must know that Pope John is a very difficult man. I know him but at a distance. Yet he is a lawyer by training, in Roman or Justinian law, and as such he has no understanding of English or Salic Laws, he then will take anything we say, and twist it into a brief of Roman law. You must be prepared to do battle on that ground. But you must also consider what you will do if we lose both battles."

The three of them were quiet. Then Dismas said:

"Brendan, your point is well taken. If we lose and both Michael and William are declared heretics, and worse suffer death, that will be an attack on both parts of our Order. However if perhaps they both presented their positions and if before they were in danger, if such were to be the case, they sought refuge beyond the Papal Court, then we could settle back and wait for things to quiet down. Heresy and Death at the hands of the Papal Court would be untenable. Escape and persistence would allow some survival. My suggestion then is that you accompany William to Avignon, use your contacts as required. Perhaps if you and William remained at a distance that would be better, Steve, do you agree?"

Prior Steven said:

QUUM INTER NONNULLUS

It was just about two months later in January 1324 that we received the Papal Bull, Quum Inter Nonnullus. It was brief and to the point. I had just gotten back to normal after the trip when Dismas came in with William and said:

"Well, Brendan, here is the next attack. This is short, blunt, and leaves little room. This is the attack on the Spirituals. We await the attack on William next. But read this, it is a brutal attack."

I picked the document up and it read as follows:

Since among not a few scholarly men it often happens that there is called into doubt, whether to affirm pertinaciously, that Our Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles did not have anything individually, nor even in common,

is to be censured as heretical, diverse and opposite things being opined concerning it,

We, desiring to put an end to this contest, after having taken the counsel of our brothers the cardinals by this perpetual edict do declare that a pertinacious assertion of this kind, when sacred scriptures, which assert in very many places that they had not a few things, expressly contradict it,

and when it supposes openly that the same sacred scripture, through which certainly the articles of orthodox faith are proven in regards to the aforesaid things, contains the ferment of falsehood, and consequently, as much as regards these things, emptying all faith in them, it

renders the Catholic Faith doubtful and uncertain, taking away its demonstration, is respectively to be censured erroneous and heretical.

Again to pertinaciously affirm in the preceding matter, that the right to use would not by any means have pertained to Our aforesaid Redeemer and to His Apostles for those things, which sacred scripture testifies they had had,

or that they would not have had the right to sell or given them away, or on account of these the right to acquire them, which things nevertheless sacred scripture testifies that they did in regard to the aforesaid things,

or supposes expressly that they could have acted thus, since such an assertion evidently would constrain that their use of things and their conduct, as regards the aforesaid things were not just, which certainly as regards the use, conduct or deeds of Our Redeemer, the Son of God, is wicked to opine,

We do declare, after having taken the counsel of our brothers the cardinals, this pertinacious assertion to be deservedly censured as contrary to sacred scripture, inimical to Catholic doctrine, and heretical.

Certainly therefore to no man it is lawful to infringe this page of our declarations, or by rash daring to oppose it. If anyone however should do so, let him know that he has incurred the wrath of the Omnipotent God and of His Apostles, Peter and Paul. Given at Avignon, two days before the Ides of November, in the Seventh year of Our Pontificate. i.e. 1323 A.D.

I replied:

"I would say two things. First I believe that the Pope himself crafted much of this. He clearly wants to get his point across. Second, I suspect there will be more to come. He is as I noted a Canon Lawyer, a Roman lawyer and they never do anything just this short. This is a call on Michael and the Order in general I am afraid.

ISABELLA AGAIN (1324-1325)

A month or so after the Papal Bull arrived, early Lent of 1324 if the time is correct, there arrived a Royal Messenger from the Queen, Isabella. I recalled her from when I was studying at Oxford and when I treated the young prince with Gaddesden. Yet I was surprised for two reasons. First, why seek my advice on anything, she had a Royal Physician in attendance, and second, how did she even know of my return. Prior Steven came to me when I was working with William on some replies to the Pope and walked in and said:

"Brendan, you have a request from the Queen to attend to certain concerns of her person. What have you gotten yourself into now?"

He smiled and said:

"You have brought with you the winds of change. Frankly this makes for excitement! Right William?"

Somehow William was not excited, he was slowly getting annoyed as he read through documents. I was glad to have the opportunity to seek a break.

I went to meet the messenger. He was a young man in some fancy looking costume. I noticed that costumes were changing in London to the level I had seen in Bologna and Florence. The cloth was not as fine but the colors, the dyes. I recalled my trip with Gui to the mountains. Dyes were making the people.

Then the messenger said I was to follow him which led to a carriage. He said we would ride to the castle down the Thames. I found that strange since general the trip was by boat and was easy to accomplish, by carriage, the road was rough and the trip was longer. I would have rather ridden by horse, at least that I was used to.

I made the trip in silence. I had my tunic and a cape, for winter was upon us. I had become accustomed to my boots, and with permission from Prior Michael, in writing even, I kept them on. I was becoming a somewhat lax Franciscan.

We arrived at the Palace and entered in a side gate, which was guarded, then into the rear court yard. It had begun to rain as it often did in London and environs so I pulled my cowl above my head and scrambled into the rear entrance. A guard met me and escorted me to the Queen's residence. I saw no other people there at the time. The door opened, I was escorted through and then it was the Queen and myself. I bowed and said:

"Your majesty, it is good to see you again."

She came over, a bit aged but still with royal beauty and said to me:

"Brendan, sit, here at the table, across from me, sit please. I have a special task for you, a very special task."

She continued:

"You see, you have certain talents so I understand. You have just returned from Bologna, you know France, Avignon, and how to move across spaces with speed and security. You also have a reputation as one who, let us say, can be discreet. What I am to ask you must be very discreet. Can we agree?"

I replied:

"Your Majesty, if you want a Confessor, I am not the person, if you want a physician, I have been told my expertise is more than average."

She smiled and said:

"Yes, I recall you treating the young Prince. He liked you and your talent in dealing with him was noticed. I seek your help for neither, but a much more important mission. You see, we have grave problems here in England. You know the Despencers, do you not?"

I replied:

"As a Franciscan and as one having been gone for five years, I recall them and their issues but am not aware of their most recent actions. I am also aware, more than I should admit of the King's shall we say indiscretions. Of those many are aware, but the facts I would gather are between him and his Confessor. But what may I do to assist you?"

She drew close, so close that I could feel her breath on my face. Frankly I was more terrified here than in all my other adventures. This was the Queen, the Despencers were ruthless and the King good Edward II was often thought of as a bit unstable. She continued:

"I want you to take my son, the young Prince, from here to Paris. I want you to do this secretly and to do it when I tell you, at a moment's notice. You can dress him as a Novice, and he can pass un-noticed. In Paris you will meet me at my brother's Palace, the King. I fear for the Prince's life, as I fear for mine as well. Will you do this mission for me? Please."

I suddenly realized she was speaking as a mother. She was not known as such, in fact she was often seen as a ruthless French princess, and this side of her I had not seen. She was speaking to me as a younger sister would speak with her older brother.

I replied:

"Your Majesty, yes I can and will. I assume that I will have a bit of time to arrange for this. In the Spring, after the Christmas season, is that what you want?"

She replied:

"Yes, by the beginning of Lent. It will still be cold but the snow will most likely be gone and the Channel with hopefully be passable. My biggest concern is the Channel crossing, I assume you can arrange a safe crossing?"

I replied:

"Yes your Majesty, that I can do. Perhaps between now and then I may become a more familiar face with your son? That way he will not feel threatened. Is that possible?"

She replied:

"Indeed, that I had planned, you will become his tutor."

Thus began another career.

Here I was back just a short while and somehow the Queen assigns me as a tutor. Strange because we take our authority from the Pope eventually and not from Royalty. How was I to deal with this challenge. I did not intend to become a tutor to a Prince, and did not intend to become a co-conspirator with the goings on of the King. To that end I went and spoke with Dismas, who was present in London.

"Prior Dismas, my problem, you see, is that the Queen, Isabella, has requested, rather I suppose, ordered that I become the tutor to the Prince."

Dismas smiled and said:

"That is a true honor, yet as I can see now that you are so well educated, it can be a humbling act."

I replied:

"If that were all, we would not be having this conversation. His request is not that I be tutor qua tutor, but a tutor as a feint so that I may assist here in taking the Prince from England under cover and transport him with her to France. I suspect there is even more in what may be a conspiracy against the King. All of which good Dismas I am of no knowledge. I would rather just attend to the sick, not get myself in the midst of this political mess. Frankly, having spent time in Florence, Bologna, I saw politics in the small, as a vicious and near evil act. Man has enough of ills which perhaps I can assuage, not to become part of the problems brought on it by Kings, and yes Queens."

Dismas was now quite attentive, and lost all semblance of amusement. I gather I had made my point. He quietly paced about, apparently getting more intense the more he thought. He turned quite dour and said:

"On the one hand you cannot say no to this offer. On the other hand, you, and I believe the Order, may be walking into an inferno. Sit Brendan, let me try to tell you what is going on. You have not been in England for some five years and eve before that your exposure to the politics of this land was minimal. Yes I remember the man you found, the "friend" of the King. But that is but a small part of this complex puzzle."

He continued:

"The King has strange interests. He seems to have little interest in his Queen and much interest in his male friends. Many believe that those interests are shall we say less than moral. Yet I am not one to judge. On the other hand, the Queen is more powerful than perhaps she gets credit for. She is the sister of the King of France, whom the King owes homage, and to whom the King has not yet paid such homage. The Queen is also the mother of the Prince, the next King if he lives long enough, and as such can influence a great deal. The Queen is also, so I am told, a very smart and cunning person, not just a woman. She is now dealing with the Despensers, a family who it appears is controlling the King, and a family which is despised by many of the Earls and Barons.

We are in a country that I feel is on the brink of a massive war, internal and bloody war. Now comes this request, no it is a demand. I ask then; why did the Queen select you? What does she know about you that neither you nor I know? You see, I am afraid you have already entered the wolf's den, and there may be no way to escape. Yet, I also think that perhaps you may turn this to our mutual advantage, by us I mean the Order. We, through you, will have another window on the Pope, perhaps this will help, you see the Queen I gather is highly respected by John XXII and the Pope himself has tried from time to time to get King Edward II to mend his ways, yet to no avail. Thus my young friend, you may have to achieve success in a perilous balancing game; between the King, the Queen, the Pope, and even the Prince!"

He paced about and then looked quite intently at me and said:

"Brendan, first you must follow on as this Tutor assignment, but beware, for that is not why you are there. The Queen is ruthless and she may be cornered by Despenser and his ilk. The King is feckless, but Despenser is a vicious and violent man, he would think nothing of beheading you in the hallway of the Castle. So beware. The Prince must live, and I suspect for reasons we do not know the Queen sees you as his protector. I trust that is all she sees in you, but I suspect that you have had some exposure to women in Italy if not in Montpelier and Avignon. Be cautious, and we shall speak of this later. I also suspect that your presence is now well known and the Queen's pretense as Tutor is well known to many. They too may be wondering. So play your part, carefully, and do not under any circumstances do anything more than your role. Do you understand?"

At this point I was becoming terrified. I truly was without explanation for why I was even chosen, not less even identified. How did the Queen even know of my existence, after all I was but an Irish Friar! And not even in England for five years!

The next day I returned to the Castle, and was escorted to the Prince in a large study. It was December 1324 if I recall, a large fire, lovely tapestries, and some large wooden chairs. The Prince was about twelve years old, of medium height, thin, dressed in royal clothing, and remained sitting as I entered. I walked to his front, bowed slightly, since frankly I had no idea as how to behave. He looked at me as I guess any twelve year old King in waiting and said:

"Friar Brendan, I gather you are to be my tutor. So say my mother the Queen."

That sounded like a line from some stage play and not the parlance of a twelve year old boy. But he was a Prince, and in this tense environment. I replied:

"Yes your Highness, I have been asked to be your tutor. Is there anything else I may tell your Highness about me?"

He looked a bit off put, since I gather one did not pose questions, just answer what one was asked. He then laughed and replied:

"I gather you are Irish, I can tell by your speech, and I am told the Irish have always been one of our most difficult people to deal with. Come here Friar Brendan, sit down, you have my

permission. So tell me more about yourself, the Queen says you have travelled across many lands and that you are a Doctor, of Medicine, tell me about your travels."

I began to relate my travels, my studies in Montpellier, the Pope in Avignon, travels to Florence, Bologna, Ravenna, across the Alps, the Channel. I told him of my family and their ships and trade. He then asked more deeply about medicine.

When I discussed my studies in Bologna he was especially interested in my studies in anatomy and the dissection of humans.

GADDESSEN REUNITES (1324)

In late Advent of 1324 Gaddesden came down from Oxford to consult on several patients in London. Master John was the Royal Physician and I gathered he had come to deal with some Royal complaint, which given the circumstances at Court one could perhaps expect a great many. I had not seen Master John since Oxford and just as a student. Thus I was surprised when he came to Greyfriars seeking me of all people. I had been working at the local clinic and had been treating many of the poorer folk in London, of which there were many. London was a mix of very wealth and some at Court, although the Court did move a great deal, and then the mass of poor in hope of some means of survival.

I had brought a copy of Mondino's anatomy work with me for Master John, not expecting he would come to me. Thus when he arrived I was surprised but anticipatory.

Now Gaddesden has always been a bit haughty, and with his work *Rosa Medicinae* he had reached a certain level of acclaim. However that acclaim along with his Royal connects may have made him a bit over bearing. Yet I appreciated his insight and friendship, as best as such could be called a friendship.

We met in the main room at Greyfriars and greeted each other as old Master to old student. I presented him with my copy of Mondino, and we discussed it at some length. He was surprised as to the extent that I now understood anatomy and my importance of gaining further knowledge. He strongly disagreed with my understanding of the heart, veins, arteries as was examined in Bologna and went back to the concept of spirits. He had the habit of referring to authorities and after five years of actual practice I was more accustomed to dealing with what was observed.

I also found that I had been treating many more patients than he. He still lectured and his Royal commission was somewhat unique. I gathered he was the first English physician to be so chosen.

He finally got around to what apparently got him to this visit. Namely he said:

"I gather you met with the Queen and the young Prince?"

I did not want to confirm this because of the sensitivity but since I had been most likely seen as a Tutor with the Prince I just answered:

"Yes but as Tutor to the young Prince."

He replied:

"No need to be too cautious with me, I was the one who recommended you to the Queen. She even remembered our visit a long while back. But my visit today is both as a friend and as one to bring word of caution. I serve the King, and from time to time the Queen. Yet as you may or may not know, there is a great deal of let us say uncertainty with the King and his allies, the Despencers. The Despencers are not at all inclined to the Queen and in fact they may be inclined to take over the Crown. That did not come from me of course Brendan."

I was a bit surprised but responded:

"I greatly appreciate your referral and am likewise as concerned as you may be. I know little of the King and what little I do makes me cautious. As for the Despencers they are like the previous selection and that as we all know did not end well. As of now I am but a Tutor to the Prince and see little of the Queen and not a bit of the King. I hope to keep it that way."

Gaddesden replied:

"Be very careful Brendan, they can be a nest of vipers, and one can get drawn in and lulled into a sense of comfort. Your advantage is your Order and Papal protection, but as I hear, the Pope in his wisdom is now attacking your very Order. So beware!"

I took his words with great weight. We spoke of medicine for several more hours. Then he left and I was now truly concerned. What was I getting into. On one hand I had the King, Queen and Prince, and on the other the Pope and William. I had anticipated just the practice of Medicine, not global intrigue.

PARIS AND THE KING OF FRANCE (1325-1326)

In March 1325, at the middle of Lent, the Queen had prepared to take the trip to Paris to meet with her brother. I felt that such a trip was perilous, the winter Channel was often storm ridden and at this time of year even iced up ships crossing leading to loss of life. Why March and why not wait? I suspected that much more was afoot. I set off with the Prince in tow. But the Queen asked that I keep the Prince disguised as he left England, yet that would mean not only the crossing but until we reached French lands. Young Prince Edward and I went down to a small room in the Palace and there I had a tunic which fit him. By this point he had developed a sense of trust as well as a sense of adventure.

When we entered I said:

"Your Highness, as the Queen has said, we must quietly leave because we may be concerned as to certain others who may not have our best interests."

He looked at me and said:

"Despenser and his clan I believe, Brendan. I have been listening to the rumors. The Queen is off to France, I gather to satisfy the King and Despenser, as I gather, is trying to control everything! So why the disguise?"

I replied:

"Your Highness, the concern is rightly Despenser. He has apparently threatened the Queen and she feels that if she is seen with you going to France, even though it was the King's wish, he may fear that you and the Queen would align with the French and against the King. Or frankly, your Highness, that is what I think they are all saying!"

The young Prince laughed and replied:

"Well Brendan, at least you are honest. No one seems really to understand what is happening. What am I to pretend to be?"

I replied holding forth the tunic:

"A Friar like me!"

He stood back and almost screamed:

"Is it filthy like so many others?"

I replied:

"No Highness, I personally washed it in the best of French soaps, lilac scented, and did so in a tub of boiled and filtered water. I made certain that it is of the softest cloth and that like me we shall wear shoes and undergarments. After all, it is a disguise not a commitment to the religious order."

He then said woefully:

"And do I need my hair removed!"

I said softly:

"No Highness, you just keep the cowl on your head, no one will ever see. Also just mumble in Latin and it will confuse anyone, even French is no longer spoken by the common folk. So this should work well. Now I have horses, we ride south, I have a ship ready for the crossing, from Brighton, to Dieppe. Then to Harfleur."

He looked amazed and said:

"To Harfleur, why not the short way to Calais?"

I replied:

"No one would expect us to go to Harfleur, and from there we go by boat down the Seine to Paris. Two Friars on their way to the University, who would expect anything else."

We then set out due south to Brighton, a long trip by horse, rough, and cold, but when we got to Brighton, my Uncle's friend, Aiden O'Laughlan was there with his ship, an old hand at Channel crossing. Aiden was waiting for two Friars, and then we arrived. He spoke to me in Irish, which fortunately I still had a grasp of.

"Brendan I presume and the little lad with you, another Friar, yes?"

I replied:

"And it is Aiden himself I am speaking to, I am happy to say that you look hardy and well for such a crossing. And my uncle, Seamus, I gather he stands well with all?"

He laughed and slapped my back and that of the Prince. The Prince was a bit shocked but he did well and smiled. I told Aiden:

"He is English, I am taking him to Paris, to the University. He is a bit shy so be gentle with the lad."

Aiden replied in rough English:

"Lad, speak ye some English, ahh?"

The Prince turned to me as if he were spoken to by some Arab on a camel, and said:

"English?"

I answered:

"We all try, some better than others."

The Prince replied:

"Perhaps at some time English will be accepted by a few people, but it is a God awful tongue, but people seem to pick it up everywhere."

Aiden had us in the boat, and I had the Prince down in the bow, under cover, to avoid the seasickness that many get. Off we went, out across the grey Channel, hoping that we would make a good sail. The wind was coming from the north west which gave our sail some speed, about 15 knots, which was good. I estimated some ten hours or less, even with some slowness. It took seven hours, and we kept to 15 knots almost all the way. We made it to the shore at Dieppe,

and then headed west along the coast, but we needed to stop for the night. We had been at the sail all day. I had actually remembered much of what I had learned as a child and Aiden was thankful. We stopped at Fecamp, and there was a monastery which accepted us with no questions. We had dinner, and for the Prince this was a true experience. We were given rooms, and said prayers and slept, wakening at dawn for Mass and then breakfast. The Brothers wished us well, and gave us some food and wine for the journey. I wondered what the Queen had in mind with my taking the Prince this way? It was an adventure!

We sailed half a day or more just to make Harfleur at the mouth of the Seine. From there I wanted to get somewhat in land for safety. We sailed down the Seine for a few hours. Aiden asked where best to stop for it was getting dark. I saw small town with a Church. We would try there. We pulled the boat up and I walked towards the dark church and there was a small house next to it where I knocked at the front door. I wondered what the Prince and Aiden would discuss when I was gone. The door opened and there was an older priest who saw me as a Friar and asked me in. I told him I sought shelter and he agreed. I then went back to the boat to get Aiden and the Prince. As I approached I heard laughter, almost bawdy. I got immediately quite nervous, Aiden was a ship's captain and he had no idea about the Prince and the Prince was a twelve year old, my age when I was handed off to Dismas. I dreaded what was happening.

Approaching the boat the two of them appeared as old friends. I walked on board and said:

"I hope all is well?"

The Prince replied:

"Oh yes, Aiden was telling me about the things you did when you were my age, especially your, I think he said, "keen interest in the ladies". Somehow Brendan I cannot see that one....On the other hand!"

Then the two of them laughed like two drunks in a bar. Then the Prince took a cask of what I had thought was wine and handed me a drink, at which point I knew this was not wine, it was Irish spirits! I now had a half drunk Prince swapping sea tales with my uncle's drunken sea captain. My worries about Despenser had disappeared and became a concern about handling this one in front of the Pope!

I topped the jug and dragged the two of them ashore and to the chapel where we had a spot in the rear. We were given some soup and bread and some cheese which frankly was better than any I had ever had before. We slept and in the morning I went to Mass with the local priest, I could not wake my two friends, and when done I managed to drag them with some dried fruits in their hands back to the boat. What had been a sullen escape had become a childlike escapade. I felt as if I had become the parent. I dreaded how this would play out when we reached the palace in Paris.

We made slow progress the next day, just to Rouen, and around the bends in the Seine, the current was stronger than I had expected and the winds was not favorable. We passed Rouen on our left side, the walls were still in place and the city did look beautiful, it must have taken

almost an hour to sail past it. The sky was clear, the weather crisp, but the new cathedral was majestic reaching towards the sky. The Prince remarked:

"Aiden, can we stop and look around? This looks just lovely."

I replied briskly:

"We have distance to make, and I would rather not have us wandering around until we know better just where we are. Now sit down."

Aiden laughed and replied:

"Now Eddie my lad, we will have a chance soon, I suspect we will have to go ashore in an hour or so, as the travel is a bit slow. Also Brendan has become a bit of a worrier. Strange don't you think Eddie my friend, here is a man who travelled alone across the world worrying about travelling down a river with his uncle! It was as if he were travelling with a sack of gold!"

I saw that the Prince was ready to say something but fortunately he had the sanity to keep his royal mouth shut. The more this trip went on the more I felt I was in the process of changing England forever!

As Aiden had expected, light was being lost and we managed to land near a church a slight distance from Rouen. I told them to stay and would find some accommodation. I truly worried what I would find upon my return. The Seine winds around and around in this location. I felt one could walk farther towards Paris than one could sail, especially under these circumstances. I found a local church and sought the pastor. He was an older French gentleman, who clearly had mixed feelings about Friars, and I hoped that this would not dissuade him, perhaps a barn, some cheese or wine. I introduced myself and told him:

"Father, peace unto this home, we are Franciscan scholars, and a ship captain, only three, on our way to Paris, perhaps a place in the barn, possibly some bread, a little wine..."

From the back I heard the sound of an older woman, looking older than the pastor, she came out to the front room and said:

"Now good Friar, of course the Pastor has space, no bar for you, we have room right here, and a warm fire as the night gets cold. I have some soup, and some wine, get your friends, the pastor will be happy."

It was clear the pastor was not happy but alas it was also clear who was in charge! I thanked her and went to the boat, and brought the two with me. We entered, and as usual Aiden, in broken French, introduced himself, kissed the lady on the cheek, offered the pastor a bit of his Irish wine, which was well received, and told them about his friend "Little Eddie". I wondered what would happen if anyone knew what was afoot. I suspected the Queen was on her way in all elegance to Paris and there was "Little Eddie" watching Aiden and the Pastor, one Jean Paul

Menard, slowly sink into a warm friendship over the "Irish wine". The more this continued the more I wondered how this tale would be retold!

We had a wonderful soup of various vegetables with what were turnips, well boiled and seasoned with many herbs. There was also some cheese, I gather from a goat milk, but aged and somewhat bitter. The wine was wonderful, and I was surprised that Aiden managed to consume his fill. Aiden also became a wonderful conversant about his tales of sailing, even though his French was limited, yet somehow the more wine they all consumed the better was his French!

We left the next morning as good friends, and were wished well on our journey. The more I went on this Seine the more I disliked it. It just wound around and around, as if we were slowly going towards Paris, ever so slowly.

Three days later I could see Paris. We rounded the river at Saint Denys, a town north of Paris. I knew we had a few more bends of the Seine to navigate but seeing Saint Denys let me know Paris was near. As we rounded the bend in the river, I could see Notre Dame on the end of the isle. I told the Prince and Aiden to stop and look. We pulled the boat over and looked at its glory. It was late in the day, the sun was in the south west and it shone on the side of the Cathedral. The stone was magnificent and the structure, what they called buttresses, were like the wings of angels. The Prince was for a brief while just silent. As was Aiden. Before the Cathedral, as we approached was the Palace, it was on the west end of the island, a fortress redone as a palace. That was our destination, but how to get there. I doubted that we could just land, besides the walls were massive.

It was mid-September 1325, and Fall was arriving quickly. There was a chill in the air as we arrived. We would land on the south bank, also called the left bank, and go to the Franciscan convent at St Germain des pres. Yet my concern was again the Prince, without a tonsure he could be suspect. I knew several at the convent and perhaps they could be of help. I had no choice other than again leaving the Prince with Aiden. I went towards the convent, then I realized that I had better go to the palace instead. The faster I got the Prince there the better. So I turned about and went across the bridge to the Isle de cite. I turned left towards the palace. I frankly had no idea what I was doing. Was I going to ask to see the King? How would that turn out? What King would see a wandering and water washed Franciscan Friar? Yet that it what the Queen had instructed me. So I gave it a chance.

I made it to the main door of the Palace. It was a beautiful edifice of light stone with turrets of black slate, a beautify contrast. I then approached the door and there were several guards, well-armed. I approached them and said:

"I have a message for King Charles from his sister Queen Isabella. Perhaps someone may be of help?"

They looked at me as if I were some strange foreign creature. First my French was a polyglot of French, not Parisian, second, I lacked any station, and third I truly looked the part of a Franciscan. Fortunately a Captain of the Guards approached and spoke with me:

"What is your name, Friar?"

I replied:

"I am Brendan of Oxford, and have been commissioned by the Queen to deliver a package from London. Here is my commission."

I gave the Captain the Commission written by the Queen, in her own hand, and sealed with her seal. He examined it and then told me to stay put and he would return. It was getting dark, and I worried about Aiden and the Prince. Paris as I recall is not a place one should wander at night. Not to mention that Aiden may seek to introduce the Prince to some of the "finer" ladies of Paris. I waited almost thirty minutes, and then in a flurry out came the Queen, with twenty guards and torches. She was dressed in the finest French dress and at her side was a man I had not seen, apparently royal as well. She came up to me and asked:

"How is the young man?"

I replied:

"Fine your majesty, well fed, rested, and with a great understanding of this land from our trip. I have him on a boat on the other side of the river. Shall I get him?"

She turned and said to the man:

"Charles, I will go with Friar Brendan and get him. I shall be back."

Charles replied:

"No I will go with you, Guards, lead the way, tell us Friar where to go."

Now I wondered how Aiden would find this one. The King of France and the Queen of England off to his boat. This was getting more curious by the minute. Off we went, like a royal parade, me in my tunic, torn and still wet, in sandals and the King and Queen in the best of French finery, with twenty or so royal guards and torches. Over the bridge again and off to the side where Aiden had docked. As we approached I could hear the worst! Aiden and the Prince singing one of the bawdy Irish songs, and I truly hoped they were somewhat sober! This would not be a way to be introduced to the King!

When we approached the boat, the noise from our approach, not to mention the near daylight from the torches, brought the two of them to the deck. Aiden was at first surprised but not as much as I had expected. The Prince immediately saw his mother and ran across to her. The Queen hugged her son and kissed him. The Queen turned to the King, Charles, and said:

"Charles, this is my son Edward, and Edward, this is your uncle, King Charles."

They embraced:

Then the Prince turned surprisingly and said:

"Mother, King Charles, this is my best friend, Aiden O'Laughlin, he is from Dublin, and he and I had a wonderful adventure. And yes mother, Friar Brendan kept us out of trouble." He then looked at Aiden and winked!

The King walked over to Aiden and held out his hand. Aiden shook it! To the surprise of the King since the ritual is a kiss without touching. The King then laughed. Then Aiden took out his ever present flask and asked the King if he would like a drink. To which the Prince replied:

"It the Devil's Piss, uncle!"

At which point the entire set of guards began laughing! I would rather have been deemed a heretic by the Pope at this point. But surprisingly the King laughed and asked Aiden to come along back to the Palace! I could not imagine in all my days that anything like this would ever occur!

We spent several days in the Palace, not a place for which I was comfortable. Slowly the Prince was reabsorbed into royalty and Aiden departed back to the north after a farewell from the Prince. The Prince was to pay homage to the King for lands that his father had and the King accepted the homage from the Prince since the King was back in England fighting his own wars. Frankly I had no idea what lands were owned by whom.

Meals at the Palace were sumptuous. I was used to minimal food, as compared to many of the Friars I had met, I gathered my limit on food made some believe I was a Spiritual, except for my cleanliness and shoes! But at the Palace, the soups were often very heavy, containing cream and butter, thus very fatty. The meats were in several courses and the conversations controlled by the King, where you were asked something and then only allowed to make a comment.

Then one evening, having sat as what some called the "Resident Friar". the King asked me a question. He stated:

"I am told, Friar Brendan, that you are a Physician, in fact a Doctor of medicine, from Bologna of all places. You studied not only at Oxford, but Montpelier. I gather you also personally know the great Inquisitor, Bernardo Gui. Is that not so?"

I was surprised. Not surprised he knew this but that he would chose this time and place to discuss it. My response was minimal. I said:

"Yes, your Highness, I am a physician."

He retorted:

"But Gui, dear Doctor, but Gui! How does a Franciscan align himself with a Dominican, and especially this one. I hear Gui will be examining your Order, is that not correct Philip?"

He posed his question to his cousin Philip, who sat to his left. Philip I gathered would be next in line for King if Charles had no male heir. Philip was somewhat younger and I knew nothing of him. But he replied:

"Yes indeed cousin. But Friar, no Doctor Brendan, I also understand that you know the Italian States well, and also I am told you are fluent in Arabic, the strange tongue of the Muslims. I often wonder how you monks, sorry Friars, get to achieve so much. And being Ferry Masters as well!"

The royalty at the Table all laughed, except Queen Isabella, who was both serious and occupied. She seemed on the one hand comfortable and secure and on the other hand concerned deeply about some distant issue. Towards the end of dinner a guest arrived. He was introduced as Roger Mortimer, I gathered one of the many expelled by King Edward. Mortimer was comfortable in this gathering whereas I was like an observer of some claque of wild beasts collected so as to be observed. They were all elegantly dressed, in dyed fabric, with colors I had seen in Bologna and Florence. How style migrates! I was in my tunic, clean, untorn, but standing out as if in a full suit of armor. Our conversation on Gui just abruptly ended by Mortimer. I wondered why the question, for people like this are not social animals. Why Gui, why from the King of France.

Also I noted the apparent relationship between Queen Isabella and Mortimer, It apparently was more than Queen and ex-patriot, albeit one exiled under penalty of death by her husband the King. There clearly is a great deal of dislike for King Edward. The talk is not outright attacks, but that subtle round about court discussion, nothing ever precise, ever exact, but always cleared even to a naive Friar such as me. Also there is a style, here at Court, of asking a question and then moving on before an answer is proffered. It leaves something in the air, an uncertainty, a potential plethora of answers. The Court is not the University, there is no dialectic, no battle of ideas and the intellect. There is a clear pecking order, one knows the King first and always will begin and end a conversation. Question asked, then on to the next question, answer deferred, left hanging.

Not soon after my arrival, I believe it was September 24, 1325, the Prince saw me early in the morning. He was not happy. I asked what the problem was and he said that this day he was to pay homage to King Charles. He explained that there were lands which were somehow connected to France and the English held them but under ultimate French ownership. As such the King of the secondary position owed the King of the primary position, homage. I asked the Prince what homage was and he said it was a formal ceremony at mid-day in the palace. There he would prostrate himself before King Charles as a subject, related to those lands. I asked him why he was so imposed and he said that his father refused and his mother demanded. I suspected her demands were some form of quid pro quo with her brother. King Charles frankly was an unlikeable person.

In July 1326 I was staying at the University, taking the opportunity to teach some material on anatomy, explaining to Master students what I had seen at Bologna under Mondino. They all had copies of Mondino's work but apparently I was the first to have studied under him, the first to have seen a dissection of a body, and multiple times as such, and having actually directed a

dissection myself. I also had the opportunity to deal with patients at the L'hospital de Dieu, the old hospital in Paris. The sickness was varied, many poor people, often sent there to die. But surprisingly I found many that could be helped, with small changes, such as better food, more fresh air. Many however were there solely for death.

An early day in July before going to the University for my lecture at the convent I was visited by Ockham. He had come from Avignon, for help. William look haggard, and William was also mad. William had the habit of getting deeper into issues that perhaps he should have. This time I fear he may have stepped too deeply off the cliff, into thin air. We met and sat for a conversation along the river. It was shaded and comfortable, although Paris was often humid in the summer, more so than either Oxford or Montpelier.

I asked William:

"William, have you defended the claims made against you?"

He replied:

"Yes, almost all. But that is not the problem. As you are aware, I am defending our Order and especially William of Cesena. The Spirituals, their understanding has some merit, and in the course of preparing a defense I have reached a troubling conclusion. One of which I need your ongoing help. I fear my conclusions goes well beyond the issue of the Spirituals. It may reach the heart of the Church itself."

I replied:

"William as we spoke back in London, Michael had asked me to ask you and that I did. You agreed."

Then I asked him how he could make such a statement, after all, he was but defending Michael not supporting him. His reply was chilling:

"As I have studied and prepared, I have sincerely come to the conclusion that the Pope has uttered a heresy in his assertions. Not just one heresy, multiple. Now I must confront this issue for it is at the heart of our argument. You know me well, Brendan, and I seek your temperance as well as your support. I understand that when a man, albeit one educated in such matters, finds such a conclusion, then one is both compelled to assert it, but also one is further compelled to do so cautiously."

I replied:

"William, both you and I understand this Pope. He is a lawyer, from the Roman school. Frankly he most likely would not recognize a heresy if he walked across his table with a sign declaring itself. Yet one does not declare the Pope a heretic in his own residence whilst trying to defend our very Order. Your seeking of advice is well merited. I suspect we have time to examine this

and prepare before we return to Avignon. This will not be easy my friend, and it will most likely be dangerous."

I spent time trying to understand just what a heresy was. I understood the great heresies. Arians, Pelagians, Donatists, and on and on. Just what heresy did William opine? What heresy did the Pope commit? We have core value and beliefs as Christians, was the Pope mis-stating or deliberately committing error. All of this on the issue of poverty. Was the problem a battle between a lawyer and a theologian? Was it merely words or fundamental truths.

I thought I would ask William a bit more. I posed the following:

"William, the position you are defending is that Christ and the Apostles owned nothing. Correct."

He replied:

"In simple terms that is correct."

I continued:

"Then, does it not say in the Acts the following:

42 They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.

43Awe came upon everyone, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles

44All who believed were together and had all things in common;

45they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need.

Then did not the Apostles and early Christians have property, albeit shared in common?"

William replied:

"That is exactly the point. Property is shared, not owned."

Then I countered:

"Then are we arguing over the meaning of words or is there a core belief somewhere and if so where and what is it?"

I replied:

"But William again in Acts 4 it is said:

32The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.

33 With great power the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great favor was accorded them all.

34 There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds of the sale,

35 and put them at the feet of the apostles, and they were distributed to each according to need.

36 Thus Joseph, also named by the apostles Barnabas (which is translated "son of encouragement"), a Levite, a Cypriot by birth,

37 sold a piece of property that he owned, then brought the money and put it at the feet of the apostles.

So does this not say that the very Apostles had both possession and use of money, money given to them? If the Apostles took the money, for that was the purpose of Barnabas, then they by taking possession and determining its distribution so render it controlled and of their possession."

William smiled and responded:

"Brendan, you have some insight, but you approach this as a scientist, taking words at face value. As a theologian and philosopher I must see behind the words. The Pope takes them as determined by the Law of Justinian, a law created about the very ownership of property. Let me lay forth my reasoning."

He continued:

"Let me lay out the Pope's argument against us and prior Popes and then let me present the counter."

I stopped him and said:

"Wait! Before we continue, let me understand what you mean by a heretic? How is it defined, or better yet, how do you define a heretic?"

He sat back, looking a bit pensive, and replied:

"Good point to start. First heresy. Heresy can be defined as any assertion which is in conflict with a Biblical understanding."

I replied:

"Fine but let me probe a bit further. First, what Bible? The one we generally use at the University, the Latin Vulgate translation? Or perhaps the Geek versions from which that came? Or perhaps the Aramaic or Hebrew originals. As you very well know, I have some semblance in these languages. The translator chooses a word, when there may be multiple nuances in the original. That from that choice of a choice of a choice, you then add your own interpretation. Can you see where I am going William, you assert a basis, a source, for what you allege but that very source has been the subject of multiple changes. Why I see that all the time in say Galen. I have

original Greek, then Arabic and then Latin. I can assure you that there are cases where nuance is an understatement. How do you deal with this? What is the ultimate authority?"

William was taken aback. For he had assumed I could see that the authority was the Bible, but if that were subject to interpretation even in translation then we had a problem. He responded:

"The reliance upon the Bible is a reliance upon centuries of review and concurrence by the Church itself. By the give and take of many Councils and the ultimate acceptance of the word."

I replied:

"So all right, let us assume the Bible as we have it is the ultimate basis. But even there we have statements that can be interpreted as one extreme and statements at the other. There are of course laws promulgated such as in Leviticus. In the New Testament we also have the words of Christ mandating certain things. Yet we also have general statements which can be interpreted. You also know that both our brother Franciscans here in Paris as well as the Dominicans have been developing correctoria, massive lists of corrections to the Vulgate. So where do we look for a basis, a truth? For example, as we had even discussed a few years back, Augustine allegedly knew no Greek, and he relied upon the Latin version. Yet when we examine Augustine, even his references differ from what we have in the Vulgate this very day. So what is correct?"

He laughed and said:

"Be careful physician, lest thou too fall in error?"

I did not find it humorous at the moment. My mind was racing forward. He was making me think in dimensions I had left behind at Oxford. William continued:

"Let us accept the Vulgate, most people do. Now back to your question. What is heresy? Heresy is the stating of some fundamental position of theology which is at variance with the generally accepted Biblically based interpretation. Where generally implies acceptance by the majority of Christians including the majority of Bishops. By Biblical interpretation I mean the generally accepted understanding of what is in the Vulgate version of the Bible."

I replied:

"You are beginning to think and speak like a lawyer but still lack a basis for certain facts. But let us continue. You have spent the last two years back and forth in Agincourt defending yourself. I gather you made statements alleged to be heresy. The allegation by certain person or persons that led for you to defend yourself before a Papal tribunal. The result of the tribunal was that the alleged heresies were not heresies. You were cleared before the tribunal. The process allowed you to present your reasons and they were deemed non-heretical. Fine, but we all know the basis of the original claim. Jealousy. So let us assume there exists a process whereby one can assess that some statement is or is not a heresy. Then what?"

William picked up the conversation:

"Then Brendan, we must distinguish a heresy from a heretic. As you noted let assume we can identify a heresy by a process. Let us assume that as a result of such a process someone is found to have issued a heresy in their writings, preachings, or otherwise. Let us further assume that they are accused and present themselves before a tribunal. Let us assume the tribunal asserts that what was claimed a heresy is a true heresy. Then is the person a heretic? My answer in no! To be a heretic, you must embrace the heresy, not allow it to be denied. In fact you must do so pertinaciously!"

I then continued:

"Fine, then we have heresy and a heretic. Then I gather you infer that the heretic is the sinner not the mere statement of something which may be a heresy. So let me explore this a bit with you. Say I am walking along the road. I see an apple tree. There is no wall, no fence, not even a farm house. Just a big apple tree. I have hunger and now there is a tree. So I take the apple and eat it. Is the act called theft? It may be, especially if the apple tree belongs to some farmer, some Lord, or some other person should could assert a valid claim to the apple tree and its fruits. However would this make me a thief? Let me use your logic. I have finished the apple. Then along comes a local Priest, who knows the Lord who owns the tree and sees me finishing the apple. The Priest then tells me that my act is an act of theft. If I were to then deny that and take another apple, again a theft, as an act, then by my pertinacious act I am then a thief. As English law would say, I now had the mens rea. I had a mind of the thing, I knew what I was doing, as both a bad act, and my intent was to commit that act. Is that William what you are saying?"

He again smiled and said:

"That is why I asked you here. You have made it simple. In fact the apple, the Garden of Eden, and the tale of the expulsion was itself a pertinacious act! Thus the distinction between an act and the intent of the act. One can do something and not realize it is wrong, then to be a true wrong does one must have intent, and more than just plain intent, one must have pertinacious intent"

I responded:

"Fine, now we have gotten this issue out of our way. Let us examine the issue of poverty and the Pope. I believe as you have noted that there is a history here. On the one hand we have Popes agreeing and now we have a Pope condemning and worse we have Michael of Cesena telling the Pope he is wrong and doing so emphatically! Popes, I gather, do not take well to such assertions."

William continued:

"Now Brendan let me set before you the history of Papal understanding of poverty. The first is in 1230, almost a hundred years ago, when Pope Gregory IX in *Quo elongati* gave the distinction between ownership and use. Franciscans were to have only the latter. Poverty did not deny use only ownership. Thus, our books, for example, are not owned by us individually, or even by our

Order but by some third party, such as the King or the Pope. We can use them without breaking a vow of poverty. Innocent IV clarified this further in *Ordinem vestrum*. There he asserted when someone donated something of value to the Order, for their use, such as land, the right, the ownership and yes even the lordship or control remains with them or the Church. Then in 1279 Pope Nicholas III in his *Exiit qui seminat* stated that he agreed with prior Popes and further that he agreed with Bonaventure and his writings. Specifically the right or using, or ius utendi, and simple use of fact, simplex usus facti. The Order was free of any ownership albeit had free use without ownership. Thus there were five elements posed. They were: ownership, possession, usufruct, right of using and simple use of fact. These laid out the distinctions upon which it could be determined whether the Order adhered or not. The Order was satisfied. Then in 1298 Pope Boniface VIII in Liber Sextus, the books of Canon Law, and included Exiit, stated that the Order did not lack property rights in those items which that used."

"Then just a short while ago in November 1323 the current Pope states the following, let me read this to you in *Quum inter nonnullos*:

Since among not a few scholarly men it often happens that there is called into doubt, whether to affirm pertinaciously, that Our Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles did not have anything individually, nor even in common, is to be censured as heretical, diverse and opposite things being opined concerning it, We, desiring to put an end to this contest, after [having taken] the counsel of our brothers, the cardinals, by this perpetual edict do declare that a pertinacious assertion of this kind, when sacred scriptures, which assert in very many places that they had not a few things, expressly contradict it, and when it supposes openly that the same sacred scripture, through which certainly the articles of orthodox faith are proven in regards to the aforesaid things, contains the ferment of falsehood, and consequently, as much as regards these things, emptying all faith in them, it renders the Catholic Faith doubtful and uncertain, taking away its demonstration, is respectively to be censured erroneous and heretical. Again to pertinaciously affirm in the proceeding [matter], that the right to use would not by any means have pertained to Our aforesaid Redeemer [and] to His Apostles for those [things] , which sacred scripture testifies they had had, or that they would not have had the right to sell or given them away, or on account of these [the right] to acquire them, which things nevertheless sacred scripture testifies that they did in regard to the aforesaid things, or supposes expressly that they could have acted thus, since such an assertion evidently would constrain that their use [of things] and their conduct, as regards the aforesaid things [were] not just, which certainly as regards the use, conduct or deeds of Our Redeemer, the Son of God, is wicked to opine, We do declare, after [having taken] the counsel of our brothers [the cardinals], this pertinacious assertion to be deservedly censured as contrary to sacred scripture, inimical to Catholic doctrine, and heretical. Certainly therefore to no man it is lawful to infringe this page of our declarations, or by rash daring to oppose it. If anyone however should do so, let him know that he has incurred the wrath of the Omnipotent God and of His Apostles, Peter and Paul.

Now this seems to declare that the precious statements by multiple Popes is false."

I replied trying to take all of this in:

"I see where pertinacious comes from. But here is the issue. It is Michael of Cesna and his colleagues who have extended poverty to all, as a necessary element of following Christ and his apostles. He does this, Michael does, via an interpretation of scripture for which the Popes have in the most part agreed to by a parsing of ownership and use."

William interjects:

"Wait, Brendan, now in his latest he states, let me read this slowly:

However that which is put forth as the premise to support the aforesaid doctrine, namely, that in the confirmation and declaration of the rule of the Friars Minor of not a few of Our predecessors, namely Honorius III, Gregory IX, Innocent IV, Alexander IV, Nicholas III, words of this kind are contained:

"This is the evangelical rule," etc. put forward above, up to: "it is clear consisted even in the mere usus facti:" directly opposes the truth.

Honorius indeed confirmed the aforementioned rule without any declaration, in confirmation of which no mention of the aforesaid words is had, so that to whomsoever considers [it] attentively he can dissolve a confirmation of this kind: except in so far as mention is made of the evangelical life there in the rule itself, as confirmed, when it says:

"This is the rule of the Friars Minor, namely to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity."

From which words it cannot be concluded that through that same predecessor of ours those things, which they themselves assert in [regards to] the aforesaid words, have been defined. On the contrary it can be concluded rather, that the evangelical life, which Christ and the Apostles kept, did not exclude holding anything in common, since one cannot survive without anything of one's own, on which account, as living men, they would have nothing in common.

Also in the declarations of the aforesaid Gregory, Innocent and Alexander, who explained the same rule without another confirmation, similarly no direct mention is made of the aforesaid [words]; rather by means of these there is evidently shown, of those things, of which it is lawful for the friars themselves to have, the usus iuris pertains to the order itself. Indeed Gregory in his declaration, as much as regards this [point] inserts what follows:

"We say, that neither individually nor in common should they have property, but of the utensils, books, and movable goods, which it is lawful to have, the order has the use, and the friars may use them according to what the minister general and the ministers provincial will have commanded to be arranged [in the matter]."

Since it is said in the declarations spoken of above, that the order may have the use of the aforementioned things, it is necessary that this be referred to the usus iuris. Indeed [those] things done [in law], which pertain to individuals, demand and require a true [legal] person; the order, however, is not a true person, but rather is to be accounted as one represented and

imaginary. Wherefore [those things] which are done [in law] are truly unable to pertain to them, granted that these could be suitable to that which is lawful. Besides granted that the declaration of the aforesaid Nicholas III may contain these [words] which follow:

“These are those professors of the holy rule, who have been founded upon the evangelical discourse, strengthened by the example of the life of Christ, and made firm by the sermons and deeds of the His Apostles, the founders of the Church militant,”

and afterwards in the same declaration he added, saying,

“that the abdication of all property, as much as in individual as in common, is meritorious before God and holy, which even Christ, showing [us] the way of perfection, taught by word and strengthened by example, and which the first founders of the Church militant, just as [streams which] have drained from the fountain itself, in willing to live perfectly have directed along the stream-beds of their own doctrine and life:”

however, from the aforesaid words nothing at all can be inferred, since the intention of Our aforesaid predecessor, Nicholas, was, to say, that the said rule in respect to all things which are contained in it, is founded upon the evangelical discourse, and strengthened by the example of the life of Christ, and not because it was strengthened by the life and deeds of the Apostles.

For it is well known that many things are contained in the said rule, which neither Christ taught by word, nor strengthened by example, in as much as, what the founder of the rule precepted to all the Friars, that in no manner they are to receive coins or money through themselves or through an interposed person, and also even concerning many other things contained in the said rule, which at any rate neither Christ nor the Apostles taught by word, nor strengthened by example. Nor does this oppose [the truth], that Christ forbade the Apostles and the disciples to carry money, when He would send them to preach, since nevertheless, before He would send them,

We read that it had been forbidden to them. And that after [their] return they carried money, the evangelical truth and apostolic sayings bear witness in very many places.

Besides Augustine expressly says that this was not precepted, but [that] it was lawful for the Apostles [both] to retain, or even not to retain, the authority to receive necessities from others, to whom they preached the Gospel.

You see Brendan, he rejects former Papal authority! He deliberately and pertinaciously denies what was doctrine, what was in Canon law!"

I replied:

"Calm down a bit William. First, one must understand that this Pope is defending his own property! Thus Michael of Cesena's attack and assertion, albeit with merit, were a frontal attack on the Pope's personal comfort and way of life. Second, I agree that Michael and then you yourself have pointed this out to the Pope. Thus the issue of error and pertinacious seem there

but then you assert the Pope is not only stating heresy but is a heretic. For that I still have some difficulty with your logic. The Pope appears to be arguing on one plane of knowledge and you on another. He seems to say, yes the other Popes said this but they really meant something else. I believe you must prepare a better argument but not withstanding you are placing yourself in a perilous position. Popes do not like to be contradicted. Also as I keep reminding you, he is a lawyer and you a theologian. He will never understand you, even though you are correct. So we must beware!"

We spent the next few weeks going over this again and again. He slowly refined the argument reducing it to writing. I pleaded with him to consider carefully his next steps. Michael had already aggravated the Pope. I saw that I had no choice than to stay with William for the duration. He had to return to Avignon both to further defend the remaining elements of his alleged errors and to support Michael of Cesena.

In the interim I spent time at the University and at the hospital. What I found amazing was the fear that almost all the students had of the sick. They memorized the texts but when I asked to attend the sick with me to see cases many deferred. It was not required but I felt that seeing and discussing real cases were essential. I told them that the fevers of Galen were understood in his area but the fevers of the north were different. They just wanted to memorize and pass their exams.

I also spent two days a week in the morning with the Prince. He was maturing well and would make a good king. I could see that Queen Isabell and Roger Mortimer were getting close. She truly disliked Edward the King and the Despencers. In fact, there were several attempts to take her life by agents of Despenser.

In mid-August of 1326 William and I were discussing his work again when I suggested he might want to read the work of Marsilius of Padua, and his work *Defensor Pacis*. Marsilius had been the Rector at the University back in 1313 and then left to go back to Padua and then with the Court of Ludwig. I did not know him but his work had arrived back in Paris in copies which circulated. I had gotten a copy and read through much of it. I thought it might contain some ideas for William. It was a political document but one which in a manner expressed some of the same thoughts as William had espoused in his rejection of universals. Marsilius espoused the individual. The individual as a separate political entity not as some part of the property of the King.

I showed William some sections. Specifically starting with:

As to which form of tempered principate is superior, monarchy or the other two types, aristocracy and polity; and again, which of the forms of monarchy, elected or non-elected, is superior; and again, of elected monarchy, which is superior – that which is established together with the entire succession of a line, or that in which one individual alone is established without this succession (and this again divides into two, that which is established for the entire lifetime of one or several individuals, and that which is only for a defined period of time, e.g. a one-year or two year period, longer or shorter): all of this can be the subject of reasonable inquiry and doubt. Nonetheless it is undoubtedly to be maintained, in accordance with the truth and with the

express views of Aristotle, that election is a surer standard of principates. We shall establish the certainty of this more fully in later chapters of this discourse.

I said to William:

"Two things, William, first, the individual, and second the election of a leader. William, this is important, since you also have focused on individuals via nominalism, and as we get towards the Avignon issue then selection by individuals. For at one time all Bishops were elected by the people. Now, Cardinals choose a Pope, sometimes, and the Pope chooses the Cardinals. Hardly a system that assures the participation of the faithful. For did Peter select Paul? Doubtful. Paul was selected, if such be the case, by God. Then how would we follow forward? Take this with you, I suggest that you examine it as I have. I know this is not theology or philosophy, but this contains ideas whose time is nearing, a time for all mankind to break from our past. As you are doing so on the front in Avignon, Marsilius is doing so with King Ludwig and his battle with Avignon. We can meet again when I see you in Avignon. I will leave in two or three months, be safe my friend."

No sooner had I completed the discussions with the Queen than Ockham came and looked harried again. Ockham started the conversation by saying:

"Brendan, we have a serious problem. The Pope demands we present ourselves to his court in Avignon immediately and to argue why the Order in part holds to our view of poverty. We would like you to accompany us, for several reasons. First you have just come back from Bologna and Montpellier and have a better understanding of the way of thinking down there. Second, you as a physician can do things that we as theologians cannot. You have the freedom of a Friar and the patina of one not involved in the battle we fear will occur."

William then set out back to Avignon. He had with him a set of books and documents to bolster his case. I had obligations still with the young Prince, and to those I spent time. Having read Marsilius however, I wondered how long England would have royalty? If not who would rule and how?

I stayed while the Queen and Mortimer readied their return to England. In early October 1326, I saw them off to their crossing of the Channel. I wondered at the time what would ensue, would they survive, and what would become of England, and especially of the young Prince. My main concern was the Queen and this Mortimer. Although the Queen was a strong person, independent, and intelligent, Mortimer was one of those manipulative people one gets to meet in life and one of which one only truly knows after many years. Youth allows seeing only the satisfying reflections, the deep ruthlessness and controlling instinct of Mortimer were hidden from the Queen. And young Edward, I hoped he would survive, he was a good student, and perhaps a good King. I blessed them on their departure, and prayed that God would take care of all. I tried not to take intellectual sides, however, the more I heard of King Edward's alleged acts the more that it was clear that he had set out his own fall. Somehow Kings and their like believe they are supreme but there is always some entity willing to challenge this. In a sense this seems to be the same with William and the Pope, for I was soon to be called back to Avignon.

Before my leaving for Avignon I was summoned by King Charles. I entered his private quarters and there were no others there. That was quite unusual. In fact it was unheard of. Charles came forward and said:

"Brendan, you are a physician, and as I have learned over the past year and excellent one. Following the death of King Phillip in 1314, King Louis lived but eighteen months, then King John for five days, Phillip for five years, and I have been King for but four."

I replied:

"Your Majesty, that may be nothing more than a coincidence, you seem healthy, and should live a long life. I gather you and I are almost the same age, and I do not feel sickly and that is a surprise given my rather exposed life. Is there a concern that I may help you with?"

He was pale and almost ashen. He responded:

"Yes, I have a concern and I must be assured of your strict confidence."

I replied:

"Your majesty, as a physician my secrets are those of the confessional. I assure you upon the sacredness of my vows that what we discuss remains with us."

He came forward and said:

"Examine me for I am not well."

I spent the next half hour examining the King. He was not a robust man but that often was the case with royals. He allowed me to examine his skin, urine, eyes, heart. Then as I felt his flesh for any abnormalities I could feel many small tumors. Under the arms, some small one along the side of his neck. They were also atop of his chest and along his groin. They were not moveable and were generally painless. I asked:

"Your Majesty, for how long have you had these?"

He replied:

"Just a month or so. Is it what I fear?"

I replied:

"I could seek a consult from the school here in Paris, but frankly your Majesty I suspect it is a cancer type disease. It may take six to twenty-four months but I believe you shall not survive. One can be bled, given various potions but in my experience there is not a great deal if anything a physician can do. That may not be what you want to hear but you have asked me and that is what I see,"

He sat quietly, looked out the window, Fall was in full force, and I was trying to get south to meet William before any snows. He then slowly turned, more ashen than before and said:

"That my friend is what I thought. I will thus try to make the best of my time. You I believe have another venture to pursue. I thank you for honesty, and wish you a good journey. I have a good horse and pack for you, as my gift, and a letter for transit. Thank you again. God's speed."

He embraced me and I left. It is always painful to tell a patient that there is nothing to do but wait for death. He does have time, but not much.

The next morning as I prepared to leave, the young Prince, who was left behind when the Queen and Mortimer set off for England, came to me privately. He said:

"I wanted to thank you Brendan for your many lessons. And of course our wonderful adventure getting here! I learned a great deal. No matter what happens next I sincerely hope we can remain the best of friends, and I can share my confidences."

He then came and gave me a great hug. It was the first sign of any affection I had seen. I truly wished him well and a safe return to England. He ended the conversation with:

"When you return to London, and I know you shall, you must come to meet me again. I shall hold you on that promise."

And I was certain I would.

The next day at dawn I mounted my horse and headed to Lyons.

TRAVEL TO AVIGNON (1326-1327)

I had agreed to go and help Ockham. I set out to Agincourt, an extensive journey. It would take me twenty full days. I may make it a bit faster but again the weather would be the determinant. My concern was snow, and since I did not have experience here with it I was just concerned enough to try to warn Ockham but he just moved on.

As I went south of Paris the land lay flat and there were many acres of now yellowed farm lands. It would take us well over ten days of full riding to get to Lyons. As I had feared half way there I started to have snow, a wet light but freezing snow. I was concerned it would weaken the horses. Each night I found a local church that gave me board and I would spend an hour or more caring for the horses. I recalled that poor Ockham had no idea how to treat the animals having spent so much time in London and in his studies and I wondered how he fared on this journey. In contrast, my studies demanded understanding all animals and especially those we relied upon for survival. I wanted to be certain the horses were fed, ribbed down and set for a good rest in the evening, each with a blanket for warmth. One thing I had learned is that if one relies on horses for survival then one must ensure the horses survive. I wondered how Ockham had done on his trip south. Yet he had left in better weather.

Twelve days and I reached Lyons. There was a Franciscan convent there in which I found rest. I suggested that since we were doing so well and that we had to meet the mountains in the south that we rest the horses for a couple of days. Ockham reluctantly agreed. I now had four horses, one for me and three for carrying our documents. As before I handled the horses and the Friars at the convent were quite interested in how I treated the animals. They, like so many Franciscans did their travels by foot, and it was only with the permission of the Head of the Order that allowed me to have the horses. In fact I still retained the Order from Michael of Cesena, our Order General, allowing me both horses and shoes! At each convent I often was required to show the Order and the Prior was both surprised and impressed. Also, unlike so many farm peasants for which handling a horse was so common an act, for the academic Friars it was strange.

I started south towards Avignon. This time I had to climb over the hills southward. Fortunately as I got farther south the weather improved. I remember the winters in Montpellier, they were so mild and sunny. Again I saw that weather. Ten days later I arrived at Avignon. I had followed the roads along the Rhone all the way and to my surprise it was uneventful. I had been to Avignon before with Petrarch and I visited his family. But this time I was to see the Palace and the Pope.

I crossed over the bridge and before us was the Palace, the same fortress like edifice, hardly a religious looking site, more military in style. The weather was clear and sunny and the yellow grey stones so common in France shone so bright on reflection. As I got closer I could see flashes of colored garments, the various religious members attending this Pope. They were outside coming and going. Our stay would be in the Franciscan convent there so to that I went. When I arrived Ockham went off to do his introductions and politicking while I took care of the horses, my daily task. I was so pleased that they had lasted this long journey. I fed, watered, and washed them down. I did not know if and when I would need them again. They could rest, and I needed a bath. That was my next surprise for these Franciscans, most of whom spoke the local French dialect, rarely bathed, it was common.

I asked for my quarters and then if I could bathe. The look I received was as if I had asked for the local bordello! I also wanted to shave and cut my hair, since I had not shaved a great deal on the journey. The Prior finally came; he was a new Prior from when I was here before. He explained that they could arrange a bath but the water would most likely be cold. I indicated that such was fine. I also asked if I could wash my robes and get some clean ones in the meantime. Again the response was as if I had been the worst of atheists, open to eternal damnation. I explained I was also a physician and that it was required of my practice. That somehow made it all the more acceptable.

I now was in Avignon and sought out Ockham. I had expected him at the Franciscan Convent but was told he was at some Papal controlled dwelling. After all that had happened that did not surprise me. I went to the location and found Ockham as well as Michael of Cesena. They greeted me warmly and asked:

"How is the Queen and the King of France. We gather you have been making some powerful friends." said Ockham.

Michael added:

"Be careful young Brendan, don't get too close to these flames!"

I replied:

"Fear not, they terrify me more than you ever know.

Shortly after arriving, I was summoned to meet the Pope. I was surprised since I was a lowly Friar albeit a physician, and moreover I was not party directly to the ongoing debate before him and our Order. I wondered what had engendered this demand. It would be my first meeting with a Pope and I had been warned of his nature in dealing with people. He was a civil and canon lawyer by training and knew the law well and was expert at inquisitions. I wondered if he was seeking more on Ockham and our order. I informed Ockham of the desired audience and he too was concerned.

I thus went to the palace to find him and after walking through a deep barrier of courtiers and cardinals, of archbishops and bishops, I finally entered his quarters. They were magnificent. He was accompanied by a bishop whose name I have forgotten. He was regaled in white and gold robes of the type I had never seen. He was of average height and quite thin if I recall. That surprised me because the amount of food consumed here was more than I had ever before seen. As I was escorted in he looked up from behind a gold encrusted desk, covered with masses of documents and looked at me when I stood before him. I was never asked to sit, just stand. He first looked, said nothing, went down to his documents making notes, then motioned to another bishop, made a notation, then gave the document which was carried out of the room.

He then spoke with me, in Latin. His Latin was now familiar, it was southern French in character, the type I had become familiar with in Montpellier. He stated:

"Friar, I understand you are Irish."

I replied:

"Yes your Holiness, I was born in Dublin and my father was from there as was my mother"

Then he said:

"I understand also that your mother was, let me see, ah yes, she was a convert, is that not correct?"

I replied now understanding that this was an interrogation:

"Yes your Holiness."

Following Ockham's advice I kept my answers short and factual. For when one deals with lawyers they are always seeking to catch you with your own words and despite the fact that I had yet to be accused of anything I feared that perhaps I would give something away. He then continued:

"Friar, your name is Brendan is it not, may I call you thus?"

He was now trying to befriend me. An interesting tactic. Was he trying to obtain my view or my brothers views on the issue of the Spirituals. Was he trying to further explore Ockham and what he had been accused of? I replied:

"Your Holiness is free to address me in whatever way he so desires."

His reply was interesting:

"Brendan, ah I see you are cautious, you perceive this to be an inquisition and I both inquisitor and judge. To the contrary. You are a physician and not a lawyer or theologian or philosopher. Your craft can be used by any and all. I seek your insight however not in any of those areas but as an Irishman, albeit away from your home for many years now. Also as one who has an understanding of the English and the other nations which we have earthly dominion. So let me ask, are you familiar with Robert Bruce and his attempt to free Ireland back in 1317?"

I vaguely recalled and my mother had written me of some of the disasters afoot. My best way to answer was to display ignorance. I replied:

"Holiness, I left Ireland as a very young man and have been with the Franciscans since that time. I unfortunately hold little memory of the specifics of the time you speak."

He replied:

"Well put Brendan, but you see back in 17' the Irish came to me to seek relief from what they saw as occupation by the English. They sought to have Robert Bruce, a Scott, declared by me as King of Ireland. I have always wondered why they would choose one foreigner over another, what is it of these Irish like yourself who seek to break away from the English. Are they also seeking to break away from the Church as well?"

It was at this point that perhaps my own "Irish" got the better of me. Thus I replied in a rather forceful manner:

"Holiness, the Irish have been faithful and obedient members of the Church, even long before the English. As your Holiness well knows, the Irish were converted by Patrick and we have held strongly to that faith. It was not until 600 that Saint Gregory, then Pope, sent the Italian Augustine to Canterbury as bishop, and to the Irish this was seen as an affront. For why not send an Irish bishop. Perhaps it was the words between Saint Columbanus and Saint Gregory, the dispute on the dates of Easter. As Columbanus went through the Merovingian and Lombard lands, converting and educating, finally establishing Bobbio which stands to this very day. Despite

the invasions of the Norse we Irish have remained faithful Then Pope Aiden, that English Pope of Henry II, declared Ireland as part of England using the document you are aware of, the Donation of Constantine, a false and slanderous document. It justified, on a totally false basis, the giving dominion of Ireland to John, Henry's son, a King detested in all of England as well as Ireland. Thus you ask why the Irish want freedom, and why they come to you, then look at the long commitment of the Irish to the Church and look also at the Church's abandonment of the Irish to the occupation by the English. No other dominion is so treated."

At that point he turned to the bishop and asked him to get me a chair. For I had stood before him I would gather in an almost an accusatory manner. I sat and he sat backwards in his chair. He replied:

"Brendan, you should have been a lawyer. Your case has merit. But this is not what was before be back when I decided. The case with Robert Bruce was one occupier for another, and I had a loyal subject in Edward II and none in Scotland. My decision was political and related to stability. I deal with many political issues, issues of nations and peoples as well as managing the works of the Church here on Earth. I see you are forthright in your response, as I suspect any physician would be. You see the symptoms, you assess the disease, and your recommend a treatment. Your training makes you think differently than those of us who deal with the Church. I understand that you and Ockham are good friends and that you are here at his behest. You are not a theologian nor a philosopher but perhaps you can inform me not as to Ockham but as to Oxford and its way of thinking. I am aware of Paris, of what Aquinas has produced and how his work is now in favor. What say you of Oxford?"

I wondered if he was asking of Ockham, the Franciscans or Oxford in general. I had been more cautious on my expression of Ireland but he clearly was seeking more. I now knew well the case he was making against the Order and especially the Spirituals. Thus I cautiously answered:

"Your Holiness, I have been away from Oxford for several years, studying at Montpellier and in Bologna. Of most recent is Bologna. I did return to London and Greyfriars and there as you most likely know did stay with Brother William. Perhaps I could tell you of that much better than I could of Oxford for things change so quickly now a days."

He laughed, which shocked me, since I did not believe Pope's had any sense of humor, and furthermore I was not even trying to be humorous. He then stated:

"You handled the response well, not responding but reflecting. So let me be more direct. You are here with Ockham and he is to continue defend both himself and the Spirituals. First are you a believer in the Spiritual way?"

I knew whence he was questioning me that this was an ongoing interrogation. Yet I also knew he had all answers to questions he was posing. This man did not ask a question without having answers and corroboration. That much I had learned from Gui. At this point I began to dislike this person. Yet I continued to respond. As Dismas had taught me, and as was proven to me the correct approach, never lie or seem to do such but tell facts that can cloud the answer. It is often

better to tell lots of true yet irrelevant things than to more obviously evade an answer. I thus replied:

"Your Holiness, as I had noted and as you well know I studied medicine, not theology. Further as you very well know I am but a sub-deacon, the lowest of the low, and I leave to theologians and philosophers the understanding of such weighty issues. If there be a tumor, a fever, some form of swelling or coloration of the skin, then can I opine with some wisdom. But as to taking a side in a debate of which I know little, that would be like attending some joust and cheering for some Knight of which I have no knowledge."

I could see he wanted to gain information but I was sparing with him in the interrogation. I had the clear advantage of telling the direct truth, for Ockham had not gotten me involved in any manner with the controversy of the Spirituals nor in his own. However, and this John did not know based upon his questions, he seemed to not know that my studies for two years under Ockham had been as much as student as it was interlocutor leading to his current philosophical view. But then again, one could never truly know if this man were reflecting any true facts.

He continued his questions regarding Ockham, but seemed less interested in Michael. I assumed he knew that I had been in extensive contact with Michael and that he too was summoned to Avignon. He yet remained in Italy. I also wondered how much he was aware of Ockham's development regarding the putative heresy and heretical acts ascribed to John. It was clear no matter what that my presence was well known and now well followed.

John continued:

"I also gather Brendan that you are considered quite favorably by Queen Isabella as well as her brother the good King Charles. How is King Charles by the way?"

Now I wondered what he was up to. Did he also know of Charles's misfortune with his health? Was he just probing and what of the Queen? I gather that in my journey the Queen and Mortimer had landed and proceeded in conflict with King Edward. The details I was lacking, and frankly I did not really want to know, other than the safety of the young Prince.

John just kept questioning:

"Brendan, I understand you are no theologian, further no philosopher. But I noticed that you arrive here with four horses and you wear shoes, you are washed, your tunic is clean and untorn. You are not quite a Dominican in neatness yet you clearly do not reflect the let us say lack of cleanliness of some of your Order. For example, you do not bring in to my chambers the odor of many days on a horse, and I see your hands, despite your trying journey, the hands are clean, the nails well groomed, and not a speck of dirt. You present more sophisticated and respectable than most in your Order. Yet I also understand that you do so with the explicit authority of Michael of Cesena! How can one like you be with the others who appear as the poorest of the poor! Do you practice poverty and if so is it the same as Michael's poverty? Is there one poverty for you and another for Michael?"

At this point I was beginning to be concerned. Was I falling into some trap? Was I myself becoming some heretic? I could now see the concern of Ockham. This man was certain to seek his revenge on an order such as ours. What drove him I do not know. I tried to answer with caution. I recalled my days with Gui, but Gui had a focused task, heresy and heretics. Thus far as best I could remember I had not gotten into the battle on poverty but now I saw my very person exuded a position that was on the one hand counter to the Order's perception yet on the other hand something not only condoned passively but allowed by decree of Michael. Was this a trap, was I to be used to attack the Order? There were too many questions now going through my mind. I longed for just a good fever, a good tumor, something I could examine and try to heal. This was not such.

I replied:

"Your Holiness, I dress this way to be clean for my patients, it comforts then, my travels required more than just foot travel since I transported many books to be placed in the library. Books on medicine to help heal. They are not my books, I was but the carrier. My tunic is from the Convent and my pardon if the shoes concern you, but climbing mountains and crossing fields of ice and snow whilst on a horse requires good grips. My overall cleanliness is in respect for you and your office. As for the arguments on poverty, I am just a lost child regarding these issues. What more shall I say your Holiness?"

He smiled, almost a devil like smile, as Dante would have agreed, and Data gave me so much insight, and then said:

"Brother Bernardo briefed me well. You are smart yet cautious, articulate yet you chose your words carefully, obedient yet protective of what is truly inside your soul and mind. I also do not suspect any concern, and perhaps good Brendan you may be an intermediary in some of these discussions. Perhaps. Enjoy Avignon, while you are here. Your example, may it extend to others in your Order."

He then waved his hand, held it out for me to kiss, and then ushered me out with the turn in his eyes. Elegant, arrogant, manipulative, and hardly what one would call holy. I wonder what Ockham thought of this man?

THE CAPTURE AND DEATH OF DESPENSER AND OF KING EDWARD II (1326-1327)

News from England came back to us. Forces had been aligned against Edward II and Despenser. The two of them had gone too far, Edward made Despenser his second in command. The result, Despenser was executed and the King imprisoned, but the surprise was that it was led by Mortimer and Queen Isabella. My suspicions were correct. The two were in collusion most likely to a most intimate degree. In just a few weeks of imprisonment Edward II was dead, and it was rumored he was murdered. I was in Avignon with William so all this I heard through rumors.

I could not follow this since we were full in battle against the Pope.

ARRIVAL OF MICHAEL (1327)

Ockham was slowly making headway with his issue regarding heresy. Namely the claims against him. He also had spent time addressing the Papal issues but as I had warned him he must do so in quiet until the problems with Michael of Cesena are resolved. It appears as if we were making some closure when I believe it was June of 1327 that Michael arrived. I had hoped he would have calmed down but he came into Avignon with a contingent of Spirituals all walking barefoot the distance from Perugia! They marched across the bridge in front of the Papal palace, and it was a parade of some thirty to forty Spirituals with Michael at the lead.

When I saw them I said to Ockham:

"William, I believe this will not end well! You know the arrogance of the Pope but it is more than matched by the stubbornness of Michael as well as his obvious plea to the people!"

William watched the exhibit, it was mid-day and it was clear that everyone saw it. In fact the Dominicans were all lined up as Michael marched his contingent to our Convent. I dreaded what would follow.

Michael found the Convent having been there previously and the Prior greeted him. Michael saw William and myself and walked on through to greet us both. He said:

"William my brother, Brendan my brother, peace upon this house. How good to see you. Are we ready to do battle?"

He meant it. But I knew it would not be the enjoyable moment he anticipated. Michael was confident he was right and he had the Order behind him. I was not at all certain. William saw this as another intellectual battle. He was ready. But William was also expanding his thought as he and I had discussed Marsilius and his ideas. But that would be for another time.

We had dinner and discussed the problems and how best to address them.

Michael began with his discussion of usus pauper and Olivi. I found this of interest since I had never truly understood. First we discussed poverty. The issue of a vow is that someone agrees to do or not do something. A vow is beyond a commandment or rule. For example, one must not commit adultery. That is a commandment. In contrast a vow could be of chastity. A rule or commandment is required whereas a vow is a personal and individual choice. Thus a vow is not required of all whereas a commandment is. Michael mad that point again and again. Then to poverty. Poverty is not a commandment. Poverty is a vow. However as I said to Michael:

"Michael, here is where the problem arises. In chastity, as a vow, we say we shall not have relations with a woman. Is that not correct?"

Michael replied:

"Brendan, not so fast. Let us look upon the commandments. First we are denied the act of adultery. But second we are denied the act of coveting a neighbors wife, as well as his goods. Thus as a commandment, as commandments, we have not only the act but the intent. Intent is as critical as the act itself."

I replied:

"Then you are saying that poverty is what? Act, defined as what, and intent as also defined as what?"

Michael continued:

"Brother Olivi said poverty requires *usus pauper*, namely the minimal use, never ownership, never control or dominion, but the minimal amount required to survive. Thus our tunic is but one, our tunic is torn from use, we need no shoes, we eat just to survive. It is necessity versus excess. Always necessity, never excess. That Brendan is *usus pauper*. Why just look at us few here. We eat what is needed, not in excess. We have some Brothers who are in excess, they eat to the extent that it demands excess cloth just to cover them. We have Brothers who as Cardinals, yes Cardinals, walk about with the trappings of worldly princes. That is excess. They believe that they do not own, yet their use, not ownership, is what breaks the vow, what makes a mockery of their being a Franciscan."

I responded:

"But Michael, do we get that understanding from the Rule of Saint Francis, from his life, did he demand it as part of the order? From whence is the rule, what basis do we rely upon?"

He replied:

"We get from the Saint an example, and an example which we are to strive towards. We seek to use, not own, as the poor use, not as the rich. We use what is the least not what is the greatest. We own nothing, we merely provide to those in need what is transferred from those who have. We retain nothing."

I continued:

"Thus, Michael, as we have described a vow, and as you have described what the vow entails, how do you then state that the Apostles had followed the vow as well. Not just the commandments, but the vow? I have read what you presented and what John alleges, and one can see a bit of validity on both. Where am I in error?"

He smiled and put his arm around my shoulder. He quietly walked me about the room, as Ockham smiled in the corner, and spoke softly:

"Now Brendan, you are still so young, so occupied with saving the body. You must open up to see how we save the soul. Yes Brendan, saving the soul. It was the task of the Apostles and that is a task we too assume."

Then he continued with his argument.

In December 1327, at the end of Advent, just after Christmas, I received a note from the Papal Palace requesting me to attend a meeting. It was not a Papal note but from some Bishop. It was the Bishop of Lodeve, a small area north of Beziers, from where Gui and I had gone while I was at Montpellier. I let Ockham know where I was off to and that he should let Michael know just in case.

Off to the Palace I went and into an alcove off the main reception area. To my surprise the Bishop, Bishop of Lodeve, was Gui himself. He turned and greeted me with a warm hug. He actually smiled, something I had not seen before. He had aged but aged comfortably. Being a Bishop seemed to appeal to him. He said:

"Brendan, I hear you have done well for yourself. I also hear you have met our Holy Father and somehow are in the mix of those Franciscans doing battle here. I also see by your attire that you remain is shall we say a class by yourself!"

I replied:

"My good Bishop, also glad to see you and to thank you for the many favors. Especially at Bologna. That has made me a better physician, and has help many as a result. Now to your other observation. Ockham is an old friend. Also as a Franciscan I have a duty of obedience, to God, then the Holy Father and somehow as well to the Order. I have tried to keep them from a battle which I think no one can win."

He replied:

"Your observation is quite correct. I am here on the concerns of my faithful, but the Pope as you know is a close friend as well. I gather you and he sparred a bit but I believe he was just testing your metal, and he has no opinion one way or the other. But Michael of Cesena has started a battle that he will not win. Ockham has gotten himself in the fray as well. He has been absolved of any heresies in his work but he I fear sees the issue of the Spirituals as an intellectual challenge, and that is driven by pride, and he also will not win."

I replied:

"I fear that there will be no winners in this battle. May I sit?"

He replied:

"Of course, please do. Some wine?"

I replied:

"Yes, you always have a great selection. Now to the battle. There are three schools of thought here. The Pope is a legal scholar and he sees this as a legal procedure. Ockham the theologian. And Michael, well Michael sees this as, let me say an existential issue. Michael sees this as a necessity if one were to follow Francis. But Bernardo, the more I have learned of Francis the more I see that he was a humble but flexible man. He saw the complexities of life and chose the simple path as a way of life but also being simple was in fact a difficult path, not one for all people. He chose that path for himself, not denying other paths for other people. He was there to serve. I follow his rule by serving the sick, rich, poor, young and old. Why one day I may serve a King in the morning and deal with a leper at night. That is my way to serve as did Francis. I do not engage in theology, not philosophy, not law. I deal with lesions and death. I try to remedy and try to comfort. That I believe is what Francis spoke of. I do not lecture people, for I do not possess any unique understanding from God."

Gui replied:

"You have aged well my friend. I gather you cannot convince your colleagues of this. Let me tell you that I have excused myself from any role in this process. The Holy Father has asked that I work with you to see if there is any way to mediate, to calm Michael down if you will. If not I too fear the worst."

PETRARCH AND LAURA (AVIGNON)

As I walked about Avignon, between the local hospital where I spent three days a week and the Franciscan Convent, I met Petrarch. For Petrarch was back again in Avignon and he embraced me upon meeting. It was upon the death of his father that he came back to Avignon, now more of a poet than when I had last seen him in Bologna. He had matured a bit but was now even more so what could be called a romantic. He asked that we have dinner to discuss our days together and I agreed.

Later that week, we met for dinner at what was his parents' home in Avignon. With both his mother and father gone I was concerned since he was always a young boy lost in a world of battling adults. I asked him about his schooling. He said:

"I am no longer studying law. It is truly boring, dull, a burden on the body and soul. I saw what it did to my father, how it was also a burden on my mother."

I then asked:

"Then what are you doing?"

He replied:

"I, like you, have taken minor orders, and have a position here in Avignon."

I laughed and replied:

"Francesco, you in Orders? Why you are a dreamer, an artist, not a religious. But I guess we must all find ways to survive. Thus tell me of your work, are you still reading the classics, Cicero, Seneca, Terentius, and the others? Are you still writing verse?"

He replied:

"Yes, and to you my friend, I am in love!"

I was not really shocked. As a minor order he was not under permanent vows, as was I, yet being in "love" was one thing, but Petrarch then tells me she is married. I replied:

"Petrarch, my son, this can be dangerous. It is one thing for a Cardinal, quite another for one of us lowly orders."

Petrarch responded:

"Fear not, my love is from afar, but she inspires me, I write now as if the wind is behind my back!"

We had dinner, reminisced and agreed to meet from time to time. He truly is a dreamer.

GUI AND THE WARNING

In early May 1328, Gui met me at the hospital in Avignon. The Order has established a hospital for the poor and it also served for the Papal support people such as would have been the case of Petrarch's father. He approached and said to me:

"Brendan, let us talk down by the river. Walk with me."

I found that strange but here I was walking with a Dominican Bishop in Avignon. He with his robes and I with my tunic and my now common white apron, somewhat soiled from the morning. I had left somewhat surprised and failed to remove it. We must have appeared as a strange duo.

Thus down to the river we went. It was midafternoon, and is usually the case in Avignon the spring weather was splendid. When we arrived at the bank, he looked about and said when assured of privacy:

"Brendan, I fear that you, actually your Brothers, will soon be taken into custody for heresy. I think, no I know, that you are not a part of this but Michael and William have so aggravated the Pope that he is prepared at any time to have them seized and tried for heresy. You know where that will lead. William it is almost clear from his prior charges but he will defend Michael to the end and Michael, well he and the Pope are at odds to say the least. I feel the Pope seeks the worst for all of them."

I replied:

"Reverend Bishop, why tell me, if I am free, then is it not the Pope's actions that are his alone. What can I do?"

He replied:

"On the one hand the Pope respects you. First you treat the sick, endlessly. Second you do not present as a Spiritual. Third you have not stated any heresy. Fourth, frankly he trusts you to do the right thing. I feel, his Holiness and I have not spoken on this mind you, that perhaps if Michael, William and the others, say just disappeared back to their own areas, with no continuance then this can all go away. I personally feel that leaving Avignon would be best, perhaps retuning to Italy, Perugia or even Bologna. I also suggest that it would be best that you act to assist them, that way the problem disappears. We do not need a heresy trial and especially a conviction as an unrepentant heretic of Michael or William. Thus perhaps you can convince them to depart, quietly."

I replied:

"Your idea has great merit. I agree that Michael and the Pope will never reach any accommodation. As for William, he will follow logic, and sometimes that too has consequences. What shall I do?"

He replied:

"I suggest you arrange to leave Avignon in the next fortnight. I also suggest that you alone arrange the means, method and timing. Tel them what will happen but not any details. Tell me nothing as well. But do so before the end of this month, no matter what. Please."

I agreed. We walked back towards the Papal Palace and he bid me farewell. I then returned to the Convent and met William. I told him:

"William, I have become aware of the fact that the Pope will have you and Michael tried and convicted of heresy and as heretics. He intends to do so on June 1 of this year, about two weeks hence. I suggest that you speak with Michael, and I will arrange for a means to escape. I can take us to Italy, and from there was can avoid France at all costs, since the King is aligned with the Pope. Perhaps a long trip back to England. But no matter what, we must leave, please convince Michael. Fighting the Pope is fruitless."

William surprisingly agreed with no further effort. I left dealing with Michael to him. I took it upon myself to get the travel arrangements. I knew that the sooner we go off land the better so I saw the best option to sail out of Marseille. I set off to the port to procure a passage. Gui had given me funds to pay for the trip. Perhaps it would be sufficient.

ESCAPING AVIGNON (MAY 1328)

On the night of May 26, 1328, a warm Spring evening, I gathered William, Michael and six other Brothers, and we headed south to Marseille. I had managed to obtain horses for all, and despite the objections from Michael and his retinue, I sat him atop a horse and had him follow. Barefoot and aside a blanket instead of a saddle, the director general escaped from Avignon. It was near midnight, there was a good moon and clear sky. We headed towards Marseille, where I had procured a ship to take us out in the Mediterranean towards Italy. I prayed for clear sky and good weather. It would take a good two days, but I told them all we would travel without any delay. I had estimated that we could do this in about fifteen hours, which meant we could be at sea by the end of the following day.

My biggest concern was Michael. He was insistent on staying and defending himself. He felt he could intellectually overpower the Pope. He kept talking all the way on our horses. I had great difficulty keeping to the road, it was well worn from traffic to and from Avignon but that was useful only in the sunlight. We made it through Salon de Provence a small town about dawn. Now we were exposed. A band of Franciscans on horseback riding aggressively towards Marseille was a clear target if there were any people out to find us. It remained clear and dry. For that I was glad. Yet Michael continued his endless ranting. There were times that I could have accused him of heresy for just talking too much.

We reached the water north of Vittroule and went to its north and I knew we were close to the harbor. By mid-afternoon we saw the harbor. The horses were exhausted. We had been watering and feeding them but the distance especially now in the day time was exhausting. I knew where the ship would meet us and headed towards the water front. There was a ship with a bright green flag with a shamrock in yellow on the flag. That was our transport. I believe it was a friend of Aiden. They seem to be present whenever needed.

We left the horses with a man from the ship who said he would have them cared for. From there we went aboard to meet the captain. It was not what I expected. It was not another Aiden, but an Arab, one Hassan al Tafiq, from Morocco. Once I saw Hassan and recognized him as Arab I greeted him in Arabic, and for that he was both surprised and happy. We spoke briefly but he said we should set sail as soon as possible. I told the others and as usual Michael wondered why we have a pagan ship. It was then that I wondered what Dante would make of this voyage and its crew and passengers.

The day was waning and we cleared the harbor. We managed to get out beyond the horizon and Hassan set the anchor down for the night. It would not be useful to sail in these waters in the dark. The shore line is too rocky and we had no way to navigate. Thus as the sun set, we ate some light meal, met our captain and slept.

We sailed several days to Genoa. There we docked and reprovisioned. I often wondered where the funds for this came from. Was it Gui? Was the Pope just willing to rid himself of us. Was this whole escape just an act of the Pope himself? Were we just being gotten rid of? And finally why me? I had not been part of this Spiritual controversy.

We finally go from Genoa to Livorno. I remembered this from my trip to Bologna. We bid farewell to Hassan and his crew. By then we had developed a kind of bonding with these men, most of them North Africans, all Muslim. Hassan had gotten friendly with Michael which shocked me to no end. They would argue over God for hours! William was quite depressed. He was initially mad at the Pope, but at this point his anger turned inward, thinking how this would so alter his life.

At Livorno we first rested at a local Franciscan Convent, about a dozen men, and slept. The next morning we headed to Pisa, it was about a six hour walk, which Michael insisted we do. William and I had books with us so we each had a horse to carry the books. But for the full distance we walked. William and I were the only two with foot coverings. I had a chance to become clean the night before so I looked somewhat presentable. Michael I do not think had cleaned himself in a month and William was just haggard.

At Livorno, after resting I suggested we head to Florence, there we had Ghibelline protection against the Pope and his threats. I also knew the way and thus was anxious to get moving. Surprisingly Michael said no, and he spoke:

"No, Brendan, we go to Pisa. It is closer and King Ludwig is there. He will protect us."

I had no idea who this King Ludwig was, not following the politics of Europe. I asked William:

"Who is Ludwig and why are we going there?"

It was then that I discovered a second part to this "plan", namely Ockham was to become protected by King Ludwig of Bavaria. Ludwig had his own battles with Pope John and thus Ockham was considered a polemical asset in a war of words.

PISA AND MUNICH (1329)

In Pisa I met Ludwig as well as many of his supporters. Ludwig wanted to control the Papacy and more importantly become an Emperor. Pope John was vehemently opposed. I met them first in their quarters in Pisa. Ludwig was a short blond haired man of moderate build dressed in some military garments, surrounded by a collection of German Knights, many quite tall and broad.

In my conversations with Ludwig it became clear that to him Ockham was an asset, like his current guest in Munich, Marsilius of Padua. I listened but did not engage in the debates. Ockham was almost electrified by the opportunity to intensify the battle with the Pope. It was clear that for Ludwig this was just another cannon.

We stayed about five days in Pisa recounting the events around our escape. I did not divulge the cooperation of Gui and most likely the Pope himself. I kept asking myself what they did so.

We then headed north. This would be a long a difficult trip. Fortunately it was early spring in 1329 and the weather would be with us. We went to Verona, then Trent, then Balzano, over the mountains, through Innsbruck, then down into the flat lands and into Munich. Six weeks of

travel, albeit with a Royal caravan, and some comfort, but we arrived in early September. It was my first time in Munich and the Germanic language was quite strange.

But here I had my first chance to see Germanic lands in full color.

RETURN TO LONDON (1329)

In March of 1329, I received a messenger from the Court in England. King Edward, my young Prince of a while back, asked that I return to England to meet with him. At this point I was tiring of Court and the endless play between Ludwig, allied with Ockham, and the Pope. I no longer found the intellectual bantering of any interest at all. Thus a trip to England sounded quite useful. Perhaps I could find myself back at Oxford or Greyfriars. After all, no one had excommunicated me, at least yet.

CHAPTER 10 (1329-1334) LONDON AND POLITICS

I travelled back to England via the land route from Munich. As was my wont, I set out from Munich, saying farewell to Ockham and Marsilius. They appeared comfortable with each other and both continued their attacks on the Pope. I was to return to London and be at Greyfriars.

THE TRIP (1329)

From Munich, I travelled northwest, first to Augsburg, then to Stuttgart. It was a long trip and I managed about thirty miles a day. I had planned a month or six weeks for the journey. Spring was warm, yet the roads were muddy and not always as easy as I had thought. The German towns all had the same air, same architecture and regrettably the same predominance of beers. I really did not like beer. I managed to spend my evenings at various Franciscan houses, and in return I provided some medical advice and support. At each house the questions were about the Order and the Papacy, would we be allowed to survive. Also there was always a Friar who asked about my horse and my shoes. That was not Franciscan. Many also wondered why I was so clean, and shaven. I told them that I was on my way back to London to meet the King and one must be prompt and clean. That seemed to deal with the issue.

From Stuttgart I went to Saarbrucken, then on to Lille, a slow but more pleasant trip. Spring was warming my way and arriving in Lille I rested a bit at the local Convent. I was now well into French territory but soon would be at Calais. After two days, I crossed over the river heading to Calais. That was English and hopefully I would not have any problems between French and English. I had a letter from the King but frankly that may have been a risk in France and in Calais the English may very well be ignorant of who the King was and unable to even read! The one advantage of Lille was the wine. I could not consume a good wine without a good meal. The French know wine and good food. I really do not know how the Germans can survive; beer, pork, lard! Perhaps that is why they lack any sense of humor and bad bowels.

I reached the Calais port after about thirty days. I asked to see the Captain of the Port, trying to avoid too much exposure. Calais was grey and cold, the warmth from Lille was gone as we sat astride the Channel. I finally met the Captain, one Harald of Essex, and surprisingly he was aware of me and my journey. He looked at me and asked:

"Friar, how long did you take to get here. You have travelled a long distance. I suggest a brief rest before a crossing."

I replied:

"I have been on the horse for almost thirty days, and yes, I am a bit tired, the road is not always smooth, and thank God no vandals. But I must cross as soon as I can. What can you provide, I would greatly appreciate it. Also I leave the horse here, hopefully someone can care for him, a good horse and faithful. From the Prince in Munich."

He replied:

"May I keep the horse?"

I replied:

"Why yes, Captain, he is yours, care for him well. God kept us both safe, he will do likewise for you."

He then took me to the harbor, it was mid-day, and he gave me some cheese and wine, and showed me a ship for the crossing. He then noted:

"The weather may be clearing, but my ship's master here is quite experienced and will take you across and up the Thames to Westminster. It will take about nine to fifteen hours to cross and if you leave now, well you can make it in the light. Your ship master is Martin of Belknap. Martin is our best."

I met Martin, he was ready, and bade the Captain farewell. We then set out, and the winds were with us, and in eight hours we saw the white cliffs of Dover, the sun was setting and it was clear, they shone like towers reaching towards heaven. We landed and rested for the night.

The next morning I was met by a set of the King's men in a boat with sail and oars to take us up the Thames to Windsor. That would be a good days journey, under both sail and oar. To spend the time better I managed an oar for an hour or two, to the surprise and shock of the oarsmen! They told me that never had a person commanded by the King who even spoke to them no less helped in their work. For me, it just made the time go by. As we passed Greenwich I knew we were getting close, then past London, and up to Windsor. It was late, but I arrived at the dock at Windsor, in need of clean clothes, a bath, a shave, and to say my evening prayers, if I could.

The ship landed at the Royal dock on the Thames and the Windsor castle was just up the river's edge. Windsor has been a Royal residence for several hundred years and it was beginning to show its age. I had not seen Edward for several years, and he was a mere child when I treated him and tutored him. Then again I also was a child. He would be seventeen now, and I gathered he was married. I wondered what he would be like. He was King but I gathered from the conversation on the way from Dover that his mother, Isabella, and Mortimer were straining the relationship. Edward was King, but not yet the ruler.

I entered the grounds of Windsor and through the main doors. I must have looked like a beggar, and perhaps, as a Franciscan, that would be no surprise. Yet visitors to the King were generally expected to be a bit more proper. As an Royal setting, there were large collections or people wandering about, and it took a while to find a Royal usher to find a place to clean up and become presentable. I did bathe, I gather still out of fashion amongst the Royals, and did manage to shave and even cut my hair, all with a fine razor from France I had picked up along the way. I was now presentable. I even had a clean tunic that was gotten for me on our trip up the Thames. Perhaps my shipmates, not spiffy clean folk themselves, saw that presenting myself to the King in a tunic lived in for a month or so would not be best. I felt like a new man.

I went to the Kings Hall, where the young King sat at the head of a large oak table. There was a fire blazing in the large fire place and many men around the young King, some talking and others just trying to catch his eye. I approached and the King looked up and smiled. He stood and came to me and embraced me, for which the men in the room seem shocked. He said:

"Brendan, thank you for coming. You look well, especially after your trip. I was told that you were dressing to meet me, and by the way, I am told that I should be happy given your journey!"

I laughed and replied:

"My lord, indeed, I had taken on the scent of my poor German horse I feared. I am pleased to see you have prospered. You look well, and my congratulations on your marriage."

Edward continued:

"Thank you Brenden." He turned and one of the men approached and Edward said: "This is William Montagu, one of my closest friends. William, this is Friar Brendan, the one I have told you about."

I replied:

"Lord Montagu, I am pleased to meet you. My lord, what can I do to help you?"

Edward responded somewhat secretively:

"Brendan, let us and William go to my chambers and talk. There are way too many ears afoot here and we need to parlez in secret. Come."

We followed Edward to his chambers and Edward set his palace guards at the entrance. I found this a bit extreme but then again I was ignorant of what had been happening. Edward sat at a large table in his chambers and again another large fire. On the table were goblets and wine, and we sat after the King had seated himself and we all had some wine, Bordeaux I could tell, from his lands in Gascony.

The King started:

"Brendan. I need your support in dealing with a problem. The problem is Mortimer. As you know, my mother, the dowager Queen Isabella, had taken up with Mortimer, and had overthrown my father. Then, my father was killed, I believe that to be the case, and the hand who did it was Mortimer, indirectly if not his own. Thus whether he did it himself or by his command it was truly Mortimer. Yet, looking at the situation that prevailed with my father and his "friends", I can see that there may have been cause, and I leave it at that. You yourself know all too well of my father's shortcomings, shall we say. Yet he was the King. And I am now the King, yet in title only it seems, and each day Mortimer usurps more power. Mother it appears is on his side, the two cohabit and this has led to increasing strains. The Lords and even the people see this and find it unacceptable. Together, mother and Mortimer assume more power day by day and in turn

grab more wealth to themselves. My fear is that Mother, as the daughter of a French King, may be perceived as an agent of France and a usurper of the throne. Mortimer it appears seeks to seal this liaison, and then claim himself as King. As you may know I am now married and when my wife has a male heir, I have an heir and at that point I must assume full Kingship. I want that to happen smoothly, the country needs it. We do not need French interference. You, as I have understood, have a way of dealing with matters as complex as this but somehow, my dear friend, you do not become part of the problem, as is all too often the case with others. You can be trusted, and your interests remain true. Thus, good friend, I am asking that you meet my mother, she trusts you, and try to dissuade her from becoming part of the intrigue with Mortimer. That will save the Kingdom, and also save mother."

I sat there somewhat shocked. I was a Friar and now a well-educated physician, but I guess my acquired abilities with Gui and the Inquisition, the Pope, Prince Ludwig, and even Ockham had given me a patina as one capable of dealing with complex issues. I knew the Queen but what influence could I really have. Also I had known Edward II, and he was, shall we say, lacking in many areas.

Montagu interjected:

"Brendan, as his Majesty notes, Mortimer has exceeded his best intentions and has set himself up as a King. The people fear this, as do many of the Lords. The death of the King's father, two years ago, still is an open wound. To repeat, it is known that Mortimer had the leading hand in the execution. However, it is believed that Isabella was not aware of nor did she take part in it. Yet she remains with and supports Mortimer. I have assured the King that I can handle Mortimer if it comes to that. You must work with us to insure that Isabella does not become part of our problem. She still is the daughter of a French King, albeit deceased, and many see her as the aggrieved party. We also know that she and Mortimer are shall we say close. My pardon your Majesty. But should they wed, and worse should she bear him a son publicly, then we could even have a challenge to the Throne. You must try to intervene, speak with her, and avoid Mortimer."

I replied:

"I understand Lord Montagu, and my King. But how do I begin. Do I just walk up to her residence uninvited?"

The King laughed and replied:

"My friend, she knows of your return and she has already sent out a summons for you to meet her. I gather your reputation is building. I do not think she seeks your medical or spiritual advice. Just wait here and then you shall be summoned."

Montague and the King laughed as I sat there wondering what I had gotten myself into.

I replied:

"Your Majesty, Lord Montagu, may I make a suggestion. The Queen knows me and she most likely knows of my travels through France. Perhaps rather than a direct approach by me one could plan a suggestion that she request my presence, so to speak, and seek an update on France. After all I had been with her Your Majesty when we sought refuge in Paris. Let he reach out to me, and then she will be less guarded and more receptive."

Montagu smiled and said:

"Your Majesty, our humble Friar here has learned a great deal, and much to teach us even. Brendan, I have those contacts who can leave the bread crumbs for the bird to follow. Patience, but it will happen."

REQUEST FROM QUEEN ISABELLA (1329)

It was now early July 1329. I had rested a bit and had been back and forth to Greyfriars in London actually starting my medical work. That I truly enjoyed. I practiced at Saint Bartholomew's, a hospital for the poor founded in 1123 in the reign of Henry I. It was just on the other side of Greyfriars. Greyfriars abutted Newgate Street, which opened through the gate called Newgate and surrounded by the old wall. These gates were now used for taxing goods coming and going and I doubted that the wall would be of any use. Also the city had grown extensively outside the wall as well as on the other side of the Thames. One wondered what purpose these walls played other than for taxing.

Greyfriars had a large garden for our herbs and many botanicals we used at the hospital. It had a church, a cloister, a great one, and a smaller cloister. The inner plot had another garden and we had land for a small cemetery. The land was limited and was somewhat smashed into a corner of the wall about London. On the outer side of the wall was a large ditch, which if you were sitting in the library on a summer say, which abutted the wall and the ditch, the stench could be somewhat distracting. Improvements in London had eliminated some of the sewerage issues but there were people who still adhered to the old ways of just dumping nightpots in the open gulleys. Thus Greyfriars had grown with London, but it had its limitations. For me to go to St Barts by just a brief walk was exceptional, especially if there were some immediate need for my services.

Then a messenger from Windsor arrived with a letter from Queen Isabella asking that I meet her at Wallingford Castle. Montagu had accomplished his task, she made the request. Also as I was beginning to note, the Royals and their legions had castles popping up all over England. I would then travel out to the west to meet here. I had hoped that Mortimer was absent from there since I would need to get her personal perspective. I wondered if she was aware of my meeting with Edward and Montagu and if so what would her response be. I also wondered why she delayed in this offer since first meeting with Edward I had anticipated a more immediate calling. Yet I thought perhaps it demanded that Mortimer not be there, and for that Montagu was most sensitive. I suspect there were spies everywhere, perhaps even in my Convent at Greyfriars.

It was about a fifty mile trip, and even by horse it could take two days. I could go via Windsor but that may be too open a journey. I decided to travel via High Wycombe. Wycombe is a small

mill town and I found a local abbey to stay at. Franciscans were always travelers so my presence was not noticed. I had never travelled this way from London to Oxford, usually trying to follow the Thames. From Wycombe, I then went on to Wallingford.

Wallingford is an old castle like so many of them. I had started to wonder why so many castles, since warfare now appeared often on a field of nettle and less on sieges, especially in England. Perhaps that could change again. Lords and Barons seem to have a fancy for killing each other.

I approached the castle, and it was like so many others, strong, walls, turrets, and a large open front gate. I entered and was greeted by an usher who bade me to sit. In a matter of minutes the Queen came out smiling and with her arms open. She greeted me by saying:

"Brendan, my friend. So good to see you back."

I was a bit surprised for although I had been a part of her life as a physician and her travelling companion to Paris a while back, I would hardly call myself a longtime friend. But I went along with the approach, smiling and bowing. She took my arm and we walked out to the gardens behind the palace. It was a beautiful summer day and the garden was filled with a variety of flowers. The colors were magnificent and so well groomed. We walked with her arm controlling my direction until we got to the end of the garden. Then she turned and said:

"We can speak here. I understand why you are here. You are most likely the best intermediary between me and my son so we must act as if that is not the case. Do you understand?"

I replied:

"Yes my Lady."

As I suspected there are no secrets anywhere, especially at Court. I had come to the conclusion that I almost always was the one who knew the least but was involved the most. She continued:

"You can tell my son that I have no intention of usurping his throne. He should know that."

I replied:

"Let me be blunt my Lady. And I speak not for the King but as an observer of this whole process. First, I share your and everyone's else's concern of your late husband. Second, the handling of the situation was not as extreme as it could have been but his death was as many understand less than acceptable. But that is now the past. Third, and my Lady this may be a bit harsh, but Mortimer has usurped powers well beyond what he was granted and has done so not only to the detriment of the Lords but now of the King, who is coming of age. Fourth, the resulting taking of wealth by Mortimer, and frankly also by you my Lady, is leading to an extreme backlash that will result in needless internal warfare, if not outright bloody warfare. That is the issue my Lady."

She seemed a bit stunned but took it in stride. She then replied:

"I gather this is the King's position also?"

I replied:

"I believe it could be said word for word. Yet what I have just told you is also mine based upon my observations. Furthermore, my Lady, the continued actions may place you personally in jeopardy. If you understand?"

Telling a Royal this has its risks. I was not her senior even in age, we were of both the same age, and thus of the same experience in life. I was a Friar, but now with some worldly experience. Yet I could see her thinking what to make of my discussion. She was a Queen who had just taken back her Kingdom, but her son was King. She had a man who apparently loved her after an arranged marriage to a man who may very well have scorned here and in turn whose actions demeaned here. Was she to give this up and why? Would she fight to the end and would this lead to war in England?

She replied:

"Then Brendan, what do you suggest I do?"

I was pleased that at least we would have a conversation. Her reply could have been less than conciliatory. I replied:

"My Lady, I assure you that I shall do everything I can to remedy this situation and keep you harmless. We shall speak as often as possible. I shall take all the steps as may be necessary. I suggest you take no steps that in any way places you in further jeopardy. My Lady, I vow that for all the powers I can assemble, that I shall be your protector."

She looked at me, and I could see tears in her eyes. She replied:

"My thanks Brendan, no one has ever said that before. You are my knight in shining armor, or should I say in shabby grey tunic."

Thus ended our first of many such meetings.

EDWARD AND ISABELLA (1330)

It took me a week to get back to Edward and Montagu. I went out to Windsor to meet them. It was late in early May, the leaves were all bright green and the days long. This was a wonderful time of the year and the sun hit those fresh leaves and the world was aglow with new life. Leaves and young Thomas who was growing by the hour it seemed. I had told the Queen on her weekly visit of my trip so this would not be a surprise.

Montagu met me at the entrance of Windsor. How he knew I was so close as to be there I will never know. These people have spies everywhere. He greeted me and said the King wished to meet in his quarters. Off we went and sat in his rooms.

The King began:

"Well Brendan, what is happening?"

I replied:

"My lord, as you know it takes time. The Queen, your mother is not that easy to negotiate with but finally she agreed. She will try to get Mortimer to step down, to release his claims. If he refuses, and she will keep us informed, then she will do whatever is necessary for you and England, painful to her as it may be. She just asks that you, if at all possible, give Mortimer some clemency. Yet that was not a condition, for she now understands how serious the issue is."

Montagu smiled as did Edward. Montagu then said:

"Do you believe her Brendan?"

I replied:

"I do my Lord, for a variety of reasons. As your Majesty knows, she and I, and also you your Majesty, have been through many challenges over the years. She also knows that my judgement of issues like this are fair and reasonable having seen my dealings with the Pope and Ockham. As such, I believe she believes me, as for her trust, that I cannot say, for it means I would have to read her heart and soul, that I have no power to do. Yet, and this you must know your Majesty, I have vowed to protect her, a vow I mean to keep."

Edward replied:

"A vow, Brendan, I do not know if you have been brilliant or a fool, but I understand and respect your position. It may help. A cornered animal can be dangerous, show it an out and it becomes less so."

Then Edward asked:

"Brendan, how do you propose to have these "updates" as you have called them, as to Mortimer, and my mother?"

I replied:

"Ah your majesty asks an interesting question. The Queen as you know is quite shrewd. She has agreed to fund an orphanage at Greyfriars. She has interest in several of the young orphans and that thus gives her an interest in coming frequently to see their progress. Thus her presence will not be construed for anything but that."

Edward replied:

"That sounds plausible, but Mortimer knows you, I believe, and is that a problem? What of your Master Friar?"

I replied:

"I do not see that as such, since the Queen had asked me to her palace last winter, a medical concern, which was easy to remedy."

Thus from thence on, as the Queen would visit the orphanage and see Thomas, as but one of many, but a special one, I could see her bonding. Yet at the same time Mortimer was being ever so bold. I would carry her message back to the King and Montagu. Things would not end well I was afraid.

EDWARD AND HIS SON (1330)

In June 1330 King Edward had a son. That was the final element in his moving to take control. Montagu came to see me in late June of 1330 and we spoke. He said:

"Brendan, it has become public that Mortimer has stated that he will become King, displacing Edward. Mortimer has obtained by less than lawful means a massive set of estates. Last March Mortimer ordered the execution of the Earl of Kent, Edmund, the uncle of the King. I suspect that there will be a war. A war within the country.

I visited the palace at Windsor where the King and his Queen and the new young Prince were. I greeted the King and Queen gave my blessing to the young Prince. All looked happy.

Montagu took me aside and we spoke. He said:

"The Lords now feel we must deal with Mortimer, promptly. Your response from the Queen is helpful but Mortimer still gets bolder. Try to tell the Queen that time is short. Know that the King is now of age and also with an heir, thus there is no tolerance for Mortimer. The King also asked that you tell his mother to be careful. I will try as best to manage this and keep her from harm's way but now that she knows she may have more to fear from Mortimer than from others."

I agreed with his view. Mortimer was one of those people who was power hungry. The more he had the more he wanted. He was blind to others and I believe he was blind to the Queen.

I went forth and in my meetings with the Queen I again emphasized slowing Mortimer down. She now could see him getting out of control, exceeding anything that was even near reason. The end was clear and not a happy one.

MEET WITH ISABELLA, THE ADOPTION (1330)

Shortly after the discussion about Mortimer with the Queen, I again received an invitation, if such it could be called, from Queen Isabella. Frankly I had thought she was equally likely to be executed but young Edward took my advice and was lenient. After all it was his mother and she was not the one who advocated Mortimer's kingship. She was in Berkhamstead Castle, which is due east of Oxford and north of London. It was November and the winter cold had set in. The Queen was at the door of this two hundred year old estate which was surrounded by a near impenetrable wall. I was told that King Edward had given the castle to his new son, Prince Edward, so the Queen was now a guest of her infant grandson. A bit ironic I thought.

But she was at the door herself, which I found strange, since royalty had some many intermediaries. She was wrapped in a large gold threaded cape with a beautiful grey fur collar. She looked relaxed and happy, which surprised me since Mortimer had recently been executed.

She greeted me by giving her hand, and frankly she expected me to kiss it, which I did but wondered if I may have violated some religious dictum. She smiled and said:

"Brendan, you have learned some manners I see. When a Queen offers a hand you then kiss it, just the hand Brendan, nothing else. Come in."

I must have turned bright red since she laughed when she saw me. Here I was a thirty five year old man, a physician, a Doctor of Medicine, a Knight of Bologna, and I was clueless.

We went to her private quarters and she sat us down. She then said:

"Brendan, I seek your utmost trust. What I am to speak to you of must remain between us as if it were a confessional. Can I be assured of that?"

I replied:

"Yes my lady, you can. But what can I do."

She came closer and said quietly:

"I am with child, Mortimer's child, and I intend to have it and have the child survive."

I replied perhaps too quickly:

"My lady, as you wish but what can I do?"

She smiled:

"Thank you for asking. Here is what I am asking of you. First, deliver the child. I gather as a physician you have some skill there. I want no others to know. Second, I want you to secure a wet nurse for the child, one who will never have knowledge of the child's parentage in any

manner. Third, I want you to take the child back to Greyfriars and see that it is raised and cared for. Fourth, and this is most important, I want you to educate the child so that it can attain a level in society that is its heritage and class. Can you do that Brendan?"

I was speechless. I turned white. Sneaking Ockham out from under the Pope's nose was one thing, delivering the Queen's child and making a home and future for it was another. I said:

"My lady, as to a delivery, I have done a few in Bologna, but I am no expert, what if there is a difficulty? What am I to do?"

She replied:

"Then I will die and you will take the child dead or alive. If alive then care for it. Oh yes, I will have funds made available for its care so fear not."

I sat back still aghast. I then said:

"My lady, just when is this child due?"

She calmly said:

"Don't go anywhere Brendan, I suspect a few days a week at most"

I almost fainted. This is not why I thought I had come here. How do I get a wet nurse, a home, how to transport the child back to Greyfriars, who will take care of it, what will I have to do? I then said:

"One small point my lady. I can Baptize the child at birth but the child needs to be Baptized and it recorded. Shall I do this at Greyfriars. Also a minor point, what shall we name the child?"

Apparently she had not given thought to a name. As was her wont she turned to me and said:

"Brendan, what was your mother's maiden name?"

I replied without thinking:

"Menard, my lady, the family was from Harfleur."

She replied:

"Even better, but we shall make it English. We shall call it Maynard. Now for a first name. If a boy, yes, we shall call him Thomas Maynard. That sounds English. Yes."

I replied in shock,

"Yes my lady, but if a girl..."

She replied:

"It is a boy. Now I have a list of wet nurses. Go follow up on this and keep it secret. You can go Brendan."

I saw she was a bit uncomfortable and off I went to find a good wet nurse. Money was no obstacle! Yet I was a Franciscan and had vowed poverty. How strange circumstances become. Throw a Franciscan into the world and we swim with all the other fish.

I managed to find a wet nurse. I explained I need discretion and I would bring the child to her. She was very curious but when I gave her a sum of money she became even more curious. Who had said that money was the root of all evil! I reinforced with the wet nurse that I would return and that we would be on to London where her duties would cease. At least when I found another wet nurse. What would my Master at Greyfriars think, what would Dismas think? Had I already not made a sullied reputation for myself.

When I returned to the castle Isabella was rushing about. When she saw me she said bluntly:

"Get in here, now!"

Thus I entered her quarters without a thought as to what this may have looked like. I was certain that Edward and Montagu had their spies, but I just followed orders. Isabella laid on her bed on top of white cloths. She pulled up her dress and as I suspected she was ready to give birth. I said:

"Permit me to wash my hand and organize."

She shouted as she was in labor:

"Wash your hands, just catch this child, now!"

I washed quickly, grabble a bottle of fresh white wine to cleanse the area, then without a moment's hesitation saw the head emerge, properly aligned and free of any cord, slowly as she pushed without a single sound, the child came forth. I cut the cord, removed the placenta, cleaned the area. I wrapped and gave her the child. Mothers are all alike, the immediate bonding. She then asked that I clean the area as she fed the child. I wrapped all the cloth and placenta and placed them in a large plain wooden box which was then locked and sent to be burned. It took about two hours, and Isabella was back to her normal self. I had never quite seen anything like this, almost super human. She then said:

"Take the child, and yes, it is a Thomas, to the wet nurse and then to London, tonight. I have a carriage, a plain one. No one will notice. I will be in London in two weeks and I can see him then. Now go! And thank you, thank you very much."

Before doing anything I Baptized the child in front of Isabella. I then said:

"Well he has as good a start as any my lady. I shall take care."

Off I went with the buddle to the wet nurse. It was getting dark and the wet nurse was a hour ride. Fortunately the driver knew the way because it was pitch black when we arrived. The wet nurse fed the child and we stayed the night. I thought we would never get away with this. But so far so good.

In the morning at sunrise, we rose and the child, young Thomas, was fed. The ride to London was about eight hours. It was cold and the carriage ride was rough, the child eating every two hours. I had food for the wet nurse, for the driver and one small amount for me. I drank mostly the red Bordeaux wine, I was terrified.

Reaching Greyfriars I met my master Friar William. He was someone I had known from Oxford and he was a friend of Ockham as well. Apparently he had been told by a letter from the Queen of my arrival and circumstances. He had a place for the child at the home of the Poor Clares, with one of them, a sister call Elizabeth. Elizabeth met us and took young Thomas and said they had another wet nurse for the child. I handed him over and he smiled at me as he was given. I wondered what type of life this boy would have. Or would his life be threatened constantly.

Friar William looked at me and said:

"Brendan, your life seems filled constantly with adventures. I suggest you rest and we can talk on the morrow. Try not to do anything else today, I pray."

I was exhausted and went to wash, pray and sleep. I slept past morning prayers, not even hearing the call. William came to my room to see if I were well. He understood somewhat of what I had been involved in. He said to me:

"Brendan, I understand what you have been about, not all, but enough that I shall ask no more. I also realize that it was not of your making. It is God's will and I suspect that you may be seeing more. All that I can say is that from time to time one of us gets chosen for reasons we rarely understand to assist in matters like these. Stay true to your faith and if at any time you need to seek guidance I am always here for you. Just to let you know, almost all of the brothers are thankful for how you assisted Ockham and the leader of our Order with Avignon. You are our agent. Regrettably for you from time to time you may be just blown by the winds, stay fast in your faith. God be with you."

He left me to think. "What next?"

ISABELLA AND THOMAS (1330)

In late Spring of 1330 Isabella came to London. She had an entourage and a splendid carriage. She would stay at the Savoy palace along the Thames. It was not clear what her intent was but it was clear that she was here without Mortimer. I believe that Edward was, at this point, rather upset. Mortimer was taking a more prominent role. Mortimer was amassing lands and power and his ways were now being seen by the other Nobles as a threat not only to the King but to them.

Isabella was less than aware. Also, King Edward's wife was with child and it was due in June. This could change everything and Isabella was aware of that as well.

Isabella came to Greyfriars as part of her duties since she was a sponsor. She met with Friar William who was still unaware of young Thomas. I was at the hospital caring for some of the local sick patients, there was a series of chest and fever ailments, and the best we could do was to keep them fed, clean, warm, and as separate from others as possible. Friar William took the Queen around and to the Poor Clares home for orphans. For some reason he began with Thomas, who was now several months old, a favorite of the Clare's and becoming a rather plump child. As it was later told to me Friar William took pride in my bringing Thomas here and proceeded to tell the Queen how well we do with orphans.

The Queen asked William:

"Friar, pray tell, what name does this child have?"

He replied:

"Your Majesty, he is named Thomas, Thomas Maynard. He was an orphan brought to us by Friar Brendan who found him abandoned. Friar Brendan has taken a special interest in young Thomas and I suspect he may seek to have the young man look towards our Order, but that is a long way in the future. I believe you know Friar Brendan, he has recently returned from the German lands and is one of our best physicians. If your Majesty would like, we could have dinner with Brendan when he returns from the hospital. It would be a Convent dinner but I am certain your Majesty would enjoy his tales across Europe."

It was clear that Friar William had no knowledge of my prior associations with the Queen. I had kept my mouth shut on these affairs and my prior involvements were years earlier from Oxford and my meetings in France. Thus that night, as a surprise to all, the Queen having accepted showed up at the Convent at Greyfriars fully dressed for a Royal dinner. Now my fellow Friars were aghast. The carriages, guards, the Queen dressed elegantly. She descended from her carriage and Friar William greeted her as if she were just another guest. She took his arm and walked into the Convent greeting each Friar in turn.

Then came me. I was terrified as to what might happen. She approached and said:

"Friar Brendan, I want to applaud your efforts on the orphans. I saw that young one you found and brought here to raise. Such a charitable thing to do. Yes, so charitable. I have just told Friar William that I am setting up a fund to help support all such orphans and I will pay special attention to this one Friar Brendan, I believe his name was Thomas, was that not correct?"

I could not believe my ears. Here she had created a tale that would allow her continual access to her son while all other would see it as a purely charitable mission. This news would spread all over London if not England, if not more. I replied:

"My lady, each child is a child of God, and deserves respect. I have seen many abandoned children and my duty is to help all those that I can. Young Thomas, and my lady, I was told that this was his name by those about where he was found. He has prospered here, and if your Majesty had seen how well, you would be surprised. But I assure you my lady that I shall personally see to his care and education. I believe he has great potential, and he may be like a Moses, found amongst the reeds, and may thus have great deeds before him."

The Queen replied,

"Well said Friar, well said. We need more like you in our Orders. Perhaps we could speak again on this issue and I may see the progress with young Thomas."

Friar William replied:

"Of course your Majesty, we would be so honored. Let us go and partake of our meal."

Thus began a play. Each of us an actor, each a role to play, yet devoid of any script. And young Thomas was at this stage but a pawn. I saw this having many more dimensions than I had initially envisioned. The Queen had played her part well.

At the end of the dinner we rose and were set to part. The Queen turned to Friar William and said:

"Friar, perhaps Friar Brendan could visit me at Savoy on the morrow. I would like to gather some further ideas on what we have envisioned. Would that be possible?"

William turned to me and I replied:

"My lady, I have a clinic with the sick in the morning but after mid-day I could readily meet you there."

She replied:

"Fine, then I shall expect you."

She departed in her carriage and we went for final prayers and sleep. I tossed all night wondering what part I was playing. I had not lied, I had just responded truthfully. Yet I felt I had deceived William. Yet it would be to the benefit of Thomas. Yet I still had to speak with the Queen since Edward had told me so. The next day I went to the Savoy castle, and was invited into the Queen. The Savoy is on the edge of the Thames and it was a bright sunny day, warm, and she said:

"Brendan, let us go for a walk."

That would allow us to speak privately. We said nothing till we reached the edge of the Thames. Then she said:

"We did well, don't you think?"

I replied:

"Yes my lady but let me speak bluntly. Not about Thomas, for I am certain he will be safe and well taken care of. My concern my lady is that your association with Mortimer is becoming a deadly game. That I have from your son Edward, and now all London sees this game coming to a potentially deadly ending, for Mortimer and possibly you my lady."

She turned and was white. I was afraid I was too blunt, but I needed to be. Now she was trusting me for we two were in a conspiracy to save her child. We both understood. I continued:

"My lady, my interest is your safety, and that of Thomas. Let me continue. Mortimer is grabbing land and power and almost all of the Lords and Barons are against him. His execution of the Earl of Kent was the last straw. For that many want his head. Let me be a bit more blunt. The King is expecting a child, and one suspects it will be a boy. That will ensure an heir. Then the Lords will see no path other than support of Edward, and the destruction of Mortimer. You, my lady are directly in that path."

She sat upon a bench facing the Thames. She was quiet for a moment and then said:

"I loved Mortimer because he saved me from Edward. You knew Edward, you saw how he was. You know Mortimer, and yes he has gained power, but he deserves it. Look what he free us all from."

I replied:

"My lady, now would be a time to step aside and let young Edward ascend. I fear that if Mortimer continues, and he may already have gone too far, that he will have the poorest of endings. Further my lady, if you continue you will be seen as not only a consort but siding against your son! Cannot you see this. I truly fear for your safety."

She replied:

"Then what do you suggest?"

I thought a bit, having spent months worrying about this and then replied:

"As we have created a situation favorable for Thomas, let me take the lead and create one for you. I do not ask you to betray Mortimer. Yet you must be direct with him. Let him know the risks. If he refuses then let him be aware of the consequences. Yet to alleviate a risk to you, permit me to speak with young Edward. Let me be your discreet envoy with him, and if you cannot persuade Mortimer, let me represent you with him to save your from a deadly end. It may require that you, if Mortimer refuses, to side with your son, but you can rest easy that you have tried. You may then tell us what is happening and hopefully the King will permit me to act on your behalf. Permit me to ask the King, my lady."

She showed a sign of resolution. A sigh of reconciliation with her own concerns. She replied:

"Very well Brendan. Speak with Edward. He knows I love him. He knows how I was treated and should now with a wife have some idea what a woman needs in love and affection. Speak with him. I will do whatever I can."

I replied:

"Thank you, my lady. Your safety is my highest concern."

We spoke of Thomas and I walked back to the Greyfriars. I realized along the way that this could be a much more dangerous game than my dealing with the Pope. I could lose my head!

ARREST AND EXECUTION OF MORTIMER (1330)

By July 1330 Montagu had managed to assemble a large group of the Lords and their men to address the Mortimer issue. Dislike for Mortimer was now almost universal and Isabella had not managed to persuade him to step aside. In fact, it appeared the more Isabella tried the more intent Mortimer became in total control. This information made Edward ever so more intent in overthrowing Mortimer, but doing so carefully.

The King knew of my discussions with the Queen and that she would not be a problem. He of course had no knowledge of the child, which now was quietly in the hands of the good Sisters at Greyfriars. Isabella had agreed to assist the King and I was to be a conduit. Edward was pleased because the last thing he wanted to be accused of was matricide. He played no role in the death of his father but he would have had to sign a death warrant for the Queen if she had not cooperated. That would have been a difficult to near impossible decision. Mortimer on the other hand had already signed his own death warrant.

In September 1330 Mortimer had moved his court to Nottingham castle. There he intended to hold a parliament. There too he had continual meetings with his spies who were following Edward and his court. Fortunately for Edward, Isabella had identified most of the spies and Montagu made certain that what they saw would not be of value for Mortimer. I became an integral part of these discussions as the conveyor of the information. Montagu and others assembled for the parliament. Mortimer in his extreme arrogance had Montagu interrogated and again thanks to his prior information Montagu was able to avoid any deadly conflict with Mortimer. Mortimer as it appeared was getting more paranoid, more fearful of every sound, every shadow. One suspects he knew that the noose was tightening, at least figuratively, around his neck.

Isabella had found a local man, one William Eland, who had worked at the castle and knew of several secret passages to the inside. So informed, Montagu met Eland and from this information he developed a plan to secretly enter the palace and attack Mortimer. The problem was that the door at the top of this secret passage was locked from within and most likely only Edward could open it to allow Montagu and his men to secretly enter the castle.

Montagu had me close and said that I must get to the King and tell him what he must do. Yet I could not just walk into the castle. I needed some pretense. I knew that the King's personal physician was Pancio Controne, a man I had been aware of from Bologna and a close confidant of Edward. As such, I went to the castle and requested a meeting with Controne, under the pretense of a consultation. When I entered I saw Isabella, and she was shocked to see me present, we just avoided each other. I asked to meet Controne and we did so outside the King's chambers. I said to Controne that the door on the far side of the castle must be unlocked and that the King himself must do it. I was taking a risk because of spies everywhere and that I really had not been that close to Controne. But he assured me of his loyalty to the King and he immediately went inside to the King's chamber and the king then came to the door and his face let me know he understood.

The rest of the action I can best report from what Montagu told me no longer being in the castle. I returned outside and went afoot to meet Montagu. I told him the King was informed and was doing what was required. Montagu then took some two to three dozen men, I gather all excellent fighters, and went straight away to the secret entrance. From there to the door, which Edward had unlocked. Then these men entered the castle and a melee ensued. In no time at all, Mortimer was captured and his allies subdued. As per the agreement, Isabella was ushered to her quarters to protect her from attack. It was not known if any suspected her complicity but to avoid any chance she was protected.

Edward had Montague remove Mortimer from the castle. I met Montagu after his men had taken Mortimer away. We met in the small church in Nottingham down from the castle. I was there with the Earl of Lancaster who had been staying outside the castle. I had met him several times at the castle in Windsor. Montagu said that Edward wanted to have Mortimer hanged immediately. He was quite nervous in doing so. Lancaster told Montagu that Edward would best be served by having Parliament declare the sentence, then the King would be seen better by the people. Montagu agreed and Mortimer was duly presented.

In 26 November 1330, Parliament met, and gave the King the power to proceed and execute Mortimer. But since Parliament had judged him guilty of treason, he was to be drawn, quartered and hanged. That was to be the worst of the death sentences.

On 29 November 1330 Mortimer was hanged. Before his death they had him dragged by oxen along the stone roads so that by the time he had reached the gallows his body was near stripped raw to the bone. After he died, his body just hung for two days, as crows ate his eyes. Isabella had secretly come to me and pleaded that he have a burial. I went to the King and despite his still boiling abject hatred, he agreed that I could have his body taken down and buried. I got several Friars from Greyfriars and we collected his body, washed it, and placed it in an unmarked grave at Greyfriars.

From time to time, as Isabella in the future would visit Thomas, she would stop and weep over the spot where we buried Mortimer. I had a small bench placed over the site, and even stranger, on her visits as Thomas grew, she would take Thomas to that spot, sit him in the bench and read to him tales of great knights. This of course was known but to me and the Queen.

MY YOUNG APPRENTICE (1331)

By mid-1331, with the Queen safe and the King easily coming of age, I was watching Thomas grow. Once a month or so the Queen would come to the orphanage and she would bring gifts for the children and each time she had a special one for Thomas. I felt that perhaps it was a bit too much but perhaps it was my personal sensitivity. I would take Thomas for walks about London and he was now calling me "Benden" and had moved to that stage I am told of asserting himself with a "no". It was "Benden, want this" or "Benden want that" and then when told to do something it was "no" not even "no Benden" I truly enjoyed the joy of having a young child with limited political complications. I could go to the hospital, treat the sick in my clinics, teach the young men, and then spend time with Thomas.

Thomas had developed an affection for a Clare named Eleanor. She was a young woman from Bristol area and had joined the Poor Clares after learning of them from the Convent from whence I had met Dismas. We would speak of Bristol and the port and it made her homesick. Yet she was a devoted sister in the Convent and Thomas had adopted her as a mother substitute. Eleanor was very bright and from time to time I asked her to assist me in the clinic. She could read and I taught her a great deal. She was like a sponge, absorbing what I had to teach her more than any male student I had. My concern was that the young men could be jealous, and jealous young men are dangerous.

It appeared that the men were more fearful of the women than they were of the diseases. I often wondered why some of these men entered the order. A religious life provided a sense of security to many. None of them lived the life I was, no palace intrigue, no endless travel. Few had become physicians, because being a physician was a job, it was work, and unlike the non-religious, it led to no wealth. I often wondered as I looked at Thomas, why my own mother had sent me off, but then again I could see the reasons. Religion, lack of opportunity, persecution, and the like, as a religious you avoid that. I wondered what would become of young Thomas. Would he evidence the shrewdness and political intrigue of his mother, the arrogance and recklessness of his father? Could I help him avoid this? Will being an orphan hinder his success, will his relationship with Isabella be a threat. I worried because Isabella was becoming too obvious in her attention to Thomas. I suspect she was less attentive to Edward when he was young.

RETURN TO MUNICH (1333)

In mid-1333 I received a message from Ockham asking if I could visit him in Munich. He sought my insight in the work he was doing. Thomas was now going on four years of age, growing well, and beginning his education. I could leave him in the kind hands of Eleanor and travel during the summer to Munich. I dreaded the trip, but with warm weather and no great pressure it may be enjoyable. I was also intrigued how Ockham and his battle with the Pope was proceeding. By this time I was starting to feel comfortable with travel. The King gave me passage to Calais again and Isabella had arranged for a horse to take me from Calais to Munich. I often wondered how close to my vows of poverty I had been staying. Or worse, was I being as obedient as I should

be? Yet for some reasons my masters in the Order not only gave me permission but encouraged me to do these things.

I would miss Saint Barts and Thomas. But Thomas was in good hands, surrounded by women who cared for him, and thanks to Isabella he would have no wants, nor would the other orphans.

NONAGENTA (1333)

I reached Munich in mid-July. The weather was warm, sunny and quite delightful. It was not as severe as my prior trip. Munich was a beautiful city. Very German. Colors look different here. Different stone, different roof tiles, the dress is different, and my German is but passable. Ockham still spoke Latin and French, and his English had begun to be dated. In fact I was surprised how English was progressing, more and more of us who lived there followed the change in language, slowly moving out French from even the Court. But here in Munich it was this German tongue, unlike English, that the common folk spoke. For Ockham and myself, it was French, interspersed with Latin.

When I arrived at Munich, Ockham greeted me at a residence off from the palace of Ludwig. It was a small, sparse but attractive residence. He looked refreshed and ready to engage me in discussion. After greetings, we immediately jumped into the discussions.

He started:

"Brendan, the reason I called you is that I did this work, a work which took me but ninety days late last year, and it, I truly believe, makes for a total rebuttal of John and his heresy. But I fear it may also raise issues well beyond what I had expected. The arguments just flowed, it was a work whose stopping I could not do until the last word was penned. Yet upon my reading my own words I fear that the conclusions, and conclusions which I can support with my entire soul, are true. Yet I fear that besides the Pope and his heresy, they place before us ideas which may shake our world if accepted. You see, Brendan, what I have seen in disassembling the Papacy is the disassembling of the very means in which we govern our world. My arguments apply thus not only to Popes but to Kings. Thus my friend, you, as one who is close to these things, it is you I need to advise me."

He handed me his work in a vellum book. Beautifully done, clearly by Ludwig and his people. He then continued:

"So Brendan, what I ask, please read this, then we can talk. The weather is nice, the beer is good, the food is filling. So relax, read, then we can speak of it. Is that fine with you. I fear if I speak it will tarnish your first opinion."

I agreed to read the material and we then spoke of other things, and my life as a physician.

As I am wont to do, I continually remind myself and others that I am but a physician and no philosopher or theologian. But as I experienced many things I have I hope gained some wisdom.

I have seen battles with Popes and Kings, I have seen how conniving and political men can be, women also. It seems to be a human failing. Thus I set out reading the Work of Ninety Days.

I spent time by myself, often in the garden behind the chapel. It was quiet and the light was good. Much of what he has to say at the beginning I found well done but arguments we had seen in Avignon and shortly thereafter. He truly found John a heretic. Yet he took his argument even further, well into domains where Kings and Emperors may wonder. Having just seen what happens when Kings collide with Lords, I hoped I could let Ockham know what territory he was exploring and its risks. On the other hand his arguments were compelling and quite enlightening. Namely they had great merit.

I spent almost a week reading and thinking. Ockham is not always easy to venture through. He is a deep thinker and he has a breath of knowledge that often requires patience. But I did complete the document. I had amassed a long set of notes, not in the margins as many would do, but set aside for Ockham alone if need be.

In my third week, Ockham and I set aside a few hours each day to discuss his work. Thus we began.

I spoke with Ockham beginning on a Monday morning saying:

"William, I have finished. As usual you are direct, and compelling. The first set of arguments about John are well put and the review and elucidate the issue of ownership, of use, and how they relate to our vow of poverty. Your arguments regarding heresy and also compelling. John clearly took a heretic stance. Your description of being a heretic demands not just a heretic stance but a pertinacious persistence on said stance after having been adequately informs of its heretical position. Thus that too you have done well."

Ockham looked at me and then said:

"Ah Brendan, I sense a great "but" coming. What pray tell have you concerns about?"

I slowly started to tell him of my recent Royal intrigues. I continued:

"As you can see William, although the Pope may think he has temporal control, Kings, and I suspect Emperors as well, and Ludwig is an example, believe they have power independent from the Pope. They rule with a divine right. You, especially in the second half of your work, open the door on the supposition that humans fundamentally get to choose their rulers, and that Divine Right just does not exist. In fact you are quite blunt in stating such, I believe this can be said, although you are as always a bit obscure on an issue such as this, you say that people can overthrow a "bad" ruler, whatever that is."

Ockham smiled and said:

"Well yes of course, it follows logically, do you not see that Brendan?"

My reply was:

"William, first I see it, but who cares if I see it. Does Ludwig, my King Edward, or any other comfortable ruler see it. What they see is a threat to their kingdoms! What did you miss in my experience before coming here. Lords being drawn and quartered, then hanged!"

He sat back and thought for a bit. He then said:

"Brendan, let us use the Nonagenta, it is out, and you fear where it could lead, not what it says. Nonagenta is my argument against John. It is simple. Poverty has a Biblical basis. Property is a creation of man after the Fall. Heresy is disavowing the Bible and the Councils, only after having been shown it is such. The Pope has certain limitations. That simply are my arguments. Now you see more than that. Indeed there is. So let us dialog on those issues. We can use this dialog as a basis for exploring them in some detail. Are you comfortable with that?"

I replied:

"Of course William, as long as you do not mention my name. Kings and Emperors are not the type I can readily hide from."

We both laughed. Thus began our "Dialogues".

We commenced our dialogue as if he were the Master and I the student. It was easy to review and clarify my concerns from Nonagenta. However when we started to expand this to the secular domain it became more complex.

I noted that Monarchy is considered by many as the best regime for the world. Yet as I have noted, ancient Greece was a democracy, albeit a democracy of those men and citizens. I also noted that the Italian City States were somewhat democratic, lacking a monarch, yet "choosing" a leader. They seemed to flourish and to do so devoid of a monarch. Thus the best of monarchies do not seem to fit everywhere. I even said that Rome was not a monarchy until after Caesar, And that monarchy was not always hereditary.

Ockham then noted that one may see a monarchy suspended. Further Ockham argued that an Empire need not be a single united state. An emperor can establish parts of the Empire as independent regions, governed by local rulers with little authority devolving to the Emperor. The Emperor may even grant exemptions to individuals or groups and such a grant gives the recipient a right which the emperor cannot revoke unless there is some fault on that person's part or some good reason in terms of the common good.

No ruler is a ruler who is absolute. The monarch must be able to over-rule the independent governments or individuals. Likewise the same entities must have the power to depose a monarch. In fact it has been argued that an advantage of a monarchy is that the one ruler is easier to remove if the monarch badly. The monarch should have such power that he can avoid correction or remediation. In fact, Ockham argued, it is very dangerous to have an all-powerful monarch, without checks.

I then discussed with him the English monarch, somewhat checked by a Parliament and the interests of powerful Lords. I spoke at length of Mortimer, and the fact that unlike what Ockham saw as an all-powerful monarch, was an all-powerful usurper, like Mortimer. Ockham agreed and noted that he rejected the view of Marsilius that the monarchical coercive power must be absolutely unified. We noted that a set of checks and balances must be available.

I then noted the contrast with his Papal argument. For a millennia the check to the Pope was a set of councils. A Conciliar movement was the way to balance Papal power, authority. If there were ever an assignment of Papal power such as an infallibility doctrine, then the Pope would attain the characteristics of that all-powerful monarch, which in a secular domain we would all abjure.

Ockham took me back to the Roman rule. He said it was a single monarchical rule. It was even a "world" rule under a single monarch. He then noted that this world Empire belongs fundamentally to the peoples of the world, but by consenting to Roman rule they have entrusted it to the Romans, who therefore have a right to it that they cannot lose without some fault or for some other good reason, and there is no reason to think that they ever have lost it. The Romans in turn entrusted their government to one person, a monarch, Augustus, with the right to provide for succession. As is appropriate to the highest level of government, succession is determined by the best method, namely election, in the sense of deliberate choice.

I argued that monarchical rule in Rome was a usurpation of power. Cicero died as a result of his opposition to such power. Caesar was assassinated as a result of his attempt. Augustus was a way to regain control, but at a steep cost. I further argued that succession was problematic. All one had to do was look at Marcus Aurelius and his son Commodus. Marcus is highly praised, Commodus is an example of abject evil.

Ockham agreed and countered with regard to The Holy Roman Empire. It has never been hereditary. There have been times when the emperor chose his eldest son as his successor. In more recent times the successor has been elected by an electoral college, existing by the emperor's consent, consisting of certain German princes. Their election is enough to give the emperor-elect full right to administer the Empire, without waiting for papal confirmation or coronation.

Ockham argued that when a people establish a government, they can impose whatever conditions they think appropriate; they can provide that a successor should not take office until he has been approved by the pope or crowned, but if the people impose no such condition the monarch can determine the conditions under which his successor will assume administration of the government. Immediate power upon election has many advantages for the common good and is the practice the emperors have established in the Roman Empire.

Ockham's account of the Empire is developed mainly in opposition to the opinion that the emperor derives his power from the pope.

For Ockham, the power of the emperor comes from God, not through the pope but through the people. The Empire was established by the Roman people, and through any "transfer" it

remained the same Empire: later emperors therefore succeeded in the same right as the first emperors, that is, as empowered by the Roman people.

The pope does not have any regular power over the Empire, but on occasion popes may have intervened legitimately in the affairs of the Empire, either with the consent of the Romans, or to remedy the Romans' negligence or incapacity in situations of urgent necessity when the laity would not or could not act. Conversely, after the emperors became Christians, there have been cases when the emperor (not as emperor but as a leading Roman Christian) has legitimately intervened in Church affairs, either with the consent of the Catholic Romans, who by divine law have the right to choose the pope, or with the consent of some person or persons to whom the Romans have entrusted some right in Church affairs.

Ockham's account of the power of the emperor parallels his account of the power of the pope. Both are limited by the natural and civil rights of free subjects and by the requirement that whatever is imposed be for the common good.

Ockham then began a discussion of the monarch having a "fullness of powers". Namely the monarch can do whatever he so desires. Ockham then set forth several views. First, is that in temporal affairs the emperor can command anything not contrary to divine or natural law. Ockham made note that this is in total opposition to even what the Pope may have as power. A second view is that "his power of the monarch is limited, so that, with respect to his free subjects and their property, he can do only the things that are useful to the common good". Namely, as Ockham noted, the second view delimits the power of any monarch to only those things which benefit the subjects.

I then asked what he meant by subjects. Did he mean men and women equally, adults and children equally, free and slave equally? He thought for a bit and responded; yes. I was a bit surprised but agreed.

Ockham indicated that my point was well taken since it made his argument for this beneficial role even stronger. He noted that if the monarch had more power than that, his subjects would be slaves, which would be incompatible with the character of the government as the best form of government. Furthermore Ockham noted that the monarch has his power from the people, and the people never had power to impose on anyone anything that is not necessary without that person's consent. Ockham noted that the monarch's power has the same limit.

I then asked Ockham that if the monarch attains his power from the people, and if the people have the power to overthrow a monarch, and further that the people have the power to even choose a monarch, then how does this differ from say Greece during Plato, or any of the Italian City States. All had rulers with limited powers. The only difference I see is the duration of the ruling of the monarch.

I asked Ockham what then he considered an ideal state. Was it then one where the people selected the ruler, let me not call it a monarch, one also where the ruler can be dismissed, and one where there is some underlying set of rights, beyond say Natural Rights emanating from

Natural Law. I asked him if perhaps, as we English have a Magna Carta, some statement of rights, albeit in our case inuring to the Lords not the people, what if there were such a written statement of rights, powers, and limitations.

Ockham's response was:

"That my friend is an interesting question. Let me think a bit more regarding it."

Thus ended our dialogues.

Ockham was to somehow prepare this in a written form. I again advised him. I knew Marsilius was opposed to his positions. Ludwig should be consulted. I felt Ockham could retain his support since Ludwig would continue his Papal battle.

In late September I departed to return to London. I did so along my usual route. But since the weather was fair and I was under no Royal command to return. I was more leisurely. I took time to see places, speak with fellow travelers.

A NEW MEANS OF WARFARE (1333)

I had travelled my usual way towards Lille and then Calais. In Lille I met a Venetian, named Giovanni, who I befriended. We both spoke Italian, albeit with varying dialects, but enough to get a conversation going. I asked what he was selling and he said he was looking at silks and wall hangings made in Lille and that there was a great demand in trade out of Venice. I had never been to Venice but he had been to Bologna. He was impressed that here I was a Bologna Doctor on the road in Lille. He asked what I do and I told him my medical work and that I had been to Munich to visit a fellow Franciscan from days past.

I also remarked that I had read Marco Polo and his travels and was greatly impressed. He said he had known of the Poo family and they had brought back many things. He asked if I wanted to see one in particular. It was used for what he called rockets. I agreed so we went to the garden behind the hotel he was staying at and from his purse he pulled three bags. He had a round brass tube and a mortar and pestle. He took the brass tube, pounded it into the ground so that it was about 12 inches out of the dirt. The side had a hole in which he placed a small rope wick, like a lamp wick. Then he took out the mortar and put eight measures of a white powder. He ground it fine. Then he too one measure of a black powder and ground it finely in the same mixture. He placed this on a sheet of paper. Then he too one measure of a yellow powder and ground it finely. He then poured the paper mix back in and carefully mixed it. Then he placed it back in the paper and used it to pour into the copper tube. He had a small stick with a cotton ball on the end which he used to pound the mixture into the tube. Then he placed a wooden rod in the tube. I was not totally confused. He said:

"Now stand back."

He went to the wick and lit it with a candle which had been on the table. I saw it burn to the small hole and then:

"Bang and whosh!"

The wooden rod went flying skyward and smoke poured from the brass rod. I asked:

"What was that?"

He replied:

"Gunpowder. That is one of the things the Polos found. It makes for great fun, yes?"

I then asked:

"What are those chemicals?"

He replied:

"First the white material is saltpeter. I can show you how that is made. The black is just charcoal, the yellow is sulphur. You can get sulphur almost anywhere, from mines, and there are even sellers of it. I can sell it to you. You mix them as I did, use a brass tube, it must be strong, then send up your rocket. Kids love it. The wealthy people will spend much silver to do this at parties."

I asked him:

"Do you sell this all over?"

He replied:

"I try, but real money is in silks and rugs. This stuff is just a toy. The Chinese that Polo met use it in paper rockets but I have not been able to get that to work."

We launched a couple more and then I took him to dinner. We discussed many new things like this but this powder mix stayed with me. In fact I wrote the details down that night.

The mixture of saltpeter, charcoal and sulphur, carefully done, was of great potential. The result was explosive. I drew up a picture which I wanted to bring back to London or Oxford, perhaps it may have use by the English forces. But first I had to better understand how to get this Sulphur and saltpeter.

I recalled that many new inventions were slowly having their impact on our lives. Paper, and the ability to reproduce facts and tales in numbers and to distribute them widely; this new finding of gunpowder and the potential of hurling massive blocks long distances against armies and castles; and the compass which allows us to navigate on open seas. These events and others are changing our world.

Yet the one of greatest concern was that of gunpowder. My readings of Marco Polo showed the Asians having used it in rockets, with some effect, but I have seen it applied to brass tubes, canons, and then powder placed at its bottom, with round iron balls set atop that, and when lit the ball is thrown with great force at castle walls. Sieges will never be the same. I have also seen not balls, but chunks of sharp metal packed atop the powder and shot at attacking forces. Death ensues to those in the way. There is no need for hand to hand combat, death come from the sky. How this weapon will evolve is unknown but the tendency to kill, and do so in large numbers will be manifest!

We could easily get the charcoal, we can buy sulphur readily from the Italians, but how to get this saltpeter, the key ingredient. Giovanni had told me how he had seen it done. A complicated process but one which is repeatable. He said they took cow, pig and horse dung, along with leaves, placed them in a large barrel and let the mixture ferment. Then allow waters to slowly leech through the mixture and collect the drainage. With this drainage, boil it down slowly until you have a crystal like mass. The first time is somewhat dark grey. Then was it again, trying to filter out what is there, and boil again.

Do this until the dry crystals are white or as white as possible, then you have saltpeter. It is a slow process but it does produce the result. This is tedious but it works according to Giovanni. He said if I were interested he could get me some. I said I may be interested. He then surprisingly told me:

"You know, Brendan, there is also a German Franciscan, like you, who also is interested. His name is Friar Berthold Schwarz. I met him in Munich, where you were coming from, I was surprised you two did not cross paths. He likes it very much but he is a scientist I believe, and just wants to study it. Do you see any use in medicine?"

I replied:

"No, but I am continually amazed at coincidences in time and space!"

Giovanni had no idea what I just said. We parted and I agreed to follow up.

I arrived back in London and went to Windsor. Giovanni had given me a small amount of his powders, and I had obtained a brass tube, but I also had a small brass ball for the tube. The King and several of his Lords were there, it was late October and the sky was clear, the air fresh. He said:

"What toy have you brought me Brendan."

I replied:

"This is no toy my lord"

I took the small brass tube, now on a mount not in the ground. I then took a picture of a French knight on a paper sheet some twenty feet from the tube. I recalled from my days at Oxford how to calculate the trajectory to hit the picture. I then said:

"If you will step back my lords, let me show you what we can do."

I had the tube packed, the wick lit, the angle set to hit the picture, and then:

"Bang"

and the ball went through the French knight's face tearing the paper to shreds. There I stood amidst the smoke and about a dozen open mouths. The King was the first to speak:

"Is this what I think it is?"

I replied:

"Yes your majesty, this may replace your archers, it may terrify your enemies and in fact make them fear war, and result in peace."

Montagu then asked:

"Who else has this? And where does one get the ingredients?"

I responded with my tale and that as best I knew no one else, other than some Arabs, had these. But that saltpeter was difficult to make and it was key.

Montagu then turned to Edward and said:

"My lord, we need this now. We can set up a production in the Tower, and start collecting what we need. This can change everything. Brendan, many thanks, keep us informed."

I realized that this would not necessarily make for an easy peace. So much for technology. Yet, if I found it on a road in Lile, and another Franciscan had it in Munich, who knows what would happen next.

CHAPTER 11 (1335-1349) BATTLE OF CRECY

London was in a continual state of news from Gascony as regards to the actions of Philip VI and his desires to move the English out. The problem of being in the main city is that these tales get exaggerated as merchants come and go along the Thames, and as rumors are started to effect desired results. I suspect that for each rumor coming in on a ship there are dozens sent out bound. I also suspect, now based upon my own experiences in these matters, that there are a mass of French spies and God know what other eyes and ears walking about.

Thus far, I am enjoying doing what I sought, spending time at Saint Barts and trying my best to heal those who come to us. My biggest sorrow is still the death of so many infants. It is a part of medicine that we spend no time on. I suspect that it may very well be the ill health of mothers and filth surrounding the birth.

On a positive front young Thomas is still growing well and he is looking like a handsome young boy. He is smart and between his affection for Sister Eleanor and hanging about with me he has what can best be called a normal childhood. Isabella still comes frequently so she can see his development.

DEATH OF JOHN XXII AND ELECTION OF BENEDICT XII (1335-1336)

In December 1334 I was still in London at Greyfriars. I had actually managed to act as a physician amongst the poor, and tried my best to avoid the powers that be. Queen Isabella was now comfortable in her new castle to the north and King Edward was starting to stretch his wings as leader of England. Edward was clearly not his father. He was married with a child, also Edward, the young Prince now some five years of age. I had seen him several times to consult on a mild cold here and there. He was relatively strong and was being brought up as a warrior prince. But I had suspected a disorder in him, for from time to time he was ill with fever, but always managed to recover. The Court physicians always recommended some bleedings but fortunately the King moved that to the side.

At the beginning of the Christmas season, I believe it may have been the 15th of December, we heard that Pope John had died. For me it was no loss, for Ockham and the others remained in Munich and were still excommunicated. I had hoped that they would elect a better Pope, and hopefully one less tied to the French and willing to relocate to Rome. But that was much to pray for.

Obtaining the details of the Pope, Pope John XXII had died on 4 December 1334 at the age of eighty nine. He in many ways was defined as a cantankerous mean old man. He was one of those people who was assured that he knew everything and that anyone who disagreed with him was not only wrong but a heretic. I assumed Ockham and other Franciscans sighed a sigh of relief. On January 5 of 1335 a surprise in that my old friend, Bishop Fournier, was elected as Benedict XII. The decision was swift and in my opinion a wise choice. For it had been Fournier whom I had treated when I was in Montpellier. On the negative side since I knew his health conditions I was doubtful he would reach the age of John. John had done much damage to the papacy as well

as to the Church. The Franciscans survived and when reading Ockham's Dialogues, I can hear our conversation from our past meetings. It was me as the Student and Ockham as the Master. Strangely, many times in reading his Dialogues, I saw myself as the Master. But the Dialogues had let the genie out of the jar. It opened for me and many others the rights of individuals, natural rights, equality, choice, and limits on power. I do not suspect that the ideas will spread too quickly but at least Benedict will mollify the attacks a great deal.

This new Pope, Jacques Fournier, the Abbot I knew from my time with Gui, I recalled to be a fair man, reasonable, and not the type of John. John was short, ascetic, but a lover of the good life at Avignon. John also was a French supporter, yet tall, and open to new ideas. Now Fournier, as best I recalled, was even handed and was much less inclined to the wealth of Avignon. He was a Cistercian, and lived quite humbly. I wondered what that would mean to all of Avignon.

In the mean time I was watching young Thomas mature. He was now being tutored by one of my fellow Friars and the Queen was still a frequent visitor to all the orphans. She was now free of any concern of the Mortimer period and she frankly had become one of the wealthiest women in England. We would speak from time to time but it was clear that she had her life, I mine, and young Thomas was doing quite well.

Surprisingly in mid-March the King, also one of my former pupils of sorts, now a young man and truly the King, sent for me to attend him at the palace at Windsor. It was a simple trip as I had done it many times before. When I got there I was immediately escorted to the King's private residence. Edward embraced me and I wished him peace unto his house. He smiled and asked me to be seated. He then said:

"How are the sick my old friend. You are treating them day by day. Yes? The sick of London should be so happy to be treated by the best physician in the world!"

I replied:

"Your Majesty, I am quite happy not travelling across the world and having the good fortune of sleeping in my own bed every night. How may I serve you?"

He then came close and handed me a letter. It was from the new Pope. It was to me!

I looked up and said:

"Your Majesty, how did this get here, and what may I ask is it?"

Edward looked at me and said:

"Brendan, you have the habit of meeting and knowing everyone. In this case, the new Pope was I gather a former patient. And since he thought it best to ask me to ask you to come to Avignon, to meet and consult with him. That I find strange, but that I also find illuminating since he is not as I gather pro French. He is more balanced. I thus suggest that you be off to Avignon to meet this

new Pope and to see what England can do to improve its position with him. It appears that you are to be our ambassador without portfolio."

I replied:

"I must tell my Prior and then arrange for a horse and whatever else."

The King replied:

"I have already told your prior and you need no horse, I have a ship at the ready fully supplied and it will take you to Bayonne, and then from there across to Avignon by horses and accompanied by several Gascons loyal to us, our subjects. But here is what I need you to convey."

He then proceeded to tell me what his interest were. I suspected that this would be his last attempt to remedy the French problem with Gascony.

No sooner had we finished than I was sent to the Thames at the end of the road in front of Windsor and upon a ship to take me down and across to Plymouth, and from there upon a larger ship across the Channel to Brittany, then around the coast to Brest, then south past Bordeaux and then on to Bayonne. We disembarked at Bayonne and I was met by six Gascons, as noted all loyal to the King, all Knights, and we set out by horse to Avignon.

We set out towards Toulouse which took some fifteen days, of reasonably hard riding. It was still cold weather, in April and it was raining from time to time. We managed to find areas to rest along the way but it was hard on the horses. From Toulouse we headed towards Carcassonne, which I had recalled from my previous treks in this region with Gui. Then to Beziers which I also recalled quite well. By now we had been travelling almost 30 days. We refreshed the horses, and since the Gascons had what seem unlimited funds we always got the best. It may also have been their fierce looks that were persuasive as well. From Beziers we went through Montpellier and then to Avignon. I longed to stay and meet old friends at Montpellier but the Gascons kept close watch on me as if I were some secret cargo. I found that I had begun wearing leggings under my tunic and I suspected that Saint Francis had never done so since he walked all the way. For me, I had begun to truly dread these trips but I suspected that this would not be the end, just the beginning. We finally arrived at Avignon, and instead of going to the convent the Gascons took me directly to the Papal Palace. I recalled this from my time with William and not at all fondly. I had no idea what to expect. It was now mid May 1335 and I was now back in Avignon.

I was given a room and was also provided with a clean tunic. I bathed, and dressed. Shortly there was a knock on the door and a Papal secretary was there, dressed in a somewhat fancy garb perhaps a holdover from John. The secretary said to me:

"His Holiness would like to see you now if you are prepared?"

His appearance was also a bit askew. He asked this in a manner of great discomfort for I was later to understand that he was used to giving instructions and not in asking of someone was

"available" to see the Pope. Popes ordered even Kings, but this Pope had sought my attendance as not an inferior but as an equal. Strange, but I sensed this when the secretary was here but became more aware as time went by.

I accompanied the secretary down the halls of the Palace, I recalled some of it, but now I had the comfort to actually look at the walls, the images, the tapestries, it was a kingly palace, well beyond Edward or Ludwig.

We entered the Papal Chambers and Benedict was there already. He came and embraced me and truly showed pleasure in seeing me again. He was still tall, had filled out a bit with age and I suspect his better diet, but he did show signs of aging, as I gather we all did. We discussed our old times and the passing of Bernardo Gui some four years earlier. Then Benedict said to me:

"Brendan, I suspect that your King wants you to send me messages. Is that not true?"

I replied:

"Yes Holiness, Edward is young, but after the problems with the Mortimer issue..."

Benedict replied:

"Yes, Mortimer. On the one hand he did manage to resolve the problem with Edward II and his less than holy life. On the other hand, power can corrupt, and it did so for him and the Queen. For him, the result was extreme, for the Queen, I gather you and she are still on good terms, is that so?"

I replied:

"Yes your Holiness, I see her from time to time. She supports the Clares and helps with the hospital. And yes your Holiness, I do beware the charms of such a person. You know me well enough that poverty and chastity have been no problem, actually they are a security from getting one into trouble."

The Pope laughed and responded:

"But my son, you still have that Irish trait on obedience. I recall you and my predecessor!"

We both laughed. He continued:

"So tell me, I understand young Edward is having problems with Philip. The succession issue. Gascony, Normandy, and the possibility of war. How can we try and stop this? You know both of these men. I know Philip, and I know him to be, shall we say, childish in his ways."

We then spent time discussing the pending troubles between Edward and Philip. Benedict's concern was that on the one hand Edward was still quite young and it was necessary for him to establish his place as separate from that of his father and mother. England must respect the King,

and his path to such respect was military. Philip on the other hand was the first of the Valois, the Capetians now gone from the monarchy, and as such he had to establish the credibility of his rule. Then there was the lingering issue of who owed whom respect.

Benedict then continued:

"Brendan, you are aware of the many ears and eyes here in Avignon. Edward has his people everywhere, as does Philip. Also I am led to understand that almost every Prince has some source to provide them with what is happening, whether it is true or not! That my son is a problem. These people gather what they feel is valuable information to justify their position, and oftentimes it is just false, deliberately so. That information then become actionable on the part of their sponsor and that is when things get well out of hand. I need to have someone whom I can rely upon to bring messages back and forth to both Edward and Philip. I would like that to be you. Will you accept that role my son?"

I was a bit stunned. I had tried such for my order a decade earlier and never truly understood the result, other than escaping from Avignon is the dark of night. But I knew both Edward and Philip. Perhaps I could but coming from England by education may make me suspect. Yet being Irish gave me some respect from Philip, albeit limited. I replied:

"Your Holiness, I will try, but each King can be difficult, as you well know. But I will try, and I assure you the utmost in discretion."

He smiled and continued:

"I assumed you would. Let us discuss what should be done."

We then continued talking the remainder of the day.

MEETING GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT

After a week in Avignon I was invited by Pope Benedict to a mass at the Papal chapel. There I was to meet a composer of Church music, one Guillaume de Machaut. Guillaume was a presentable person from the area outside of Reims and he was in the Court of King John of Luxembourg. I had not known King John but I knew he was closely aligned with the French Court. The Mass began and the music was truly heavenly. Unlike the music at a Franciscan chapel Mass, this music had leaps and jumps of tone, a mixing of sounds not heard before. Guillaume was truly creating beatific sounds.

Guillaume had been asked by Benedict to come to Avignon. He was in many ways a true courtier, dressed elegantly, with manners befitting a courtly member, and from what I could gather the writer of both music and poems. Benedict suggested that Guillaume and I spend some time talking, for reasons I frankly did not understand. I was the antithesis of a courtly person. By this point, I lived a life in the shadows, except being drawn into schemes of others from time to time. I spoke with Guillaume as to his music, which as I learned I came to appreciate more in concept. Music was changing, in complexity of voice as well as instrument. I suspect one factor

drove the other. The music instrument maker was strained to meet the demands of the new music and the new music to expand the capabilities of the instruments. The large cathedrals challenged the composer to deal with massive buildings and there now was also a complementing set of large chorus groups to perform the songs.

Guillaume spoke of John of Luxembourg, his benefactor, as to how generous and devoted he was to the arts. He was also a devoted father and was a strong backer of the French king. I learned more of Guillaume and John of Luxembourg than I suspect Guillaume learned of me. I suspect he suspected that I was but a ear of the Pope. I feel that he never knew I was even a physician, and as for the Pope, he had been a patient, in a different time. Thus the Pope and I were physician and patient, albeit a grateful patient.

Guillaume and I spent time in Avignon, and I had the opportunity to show him about, since I had a reasonable knowledge of the city. I recalled my adventures with Petrarch, and the times of Pope John. I believe that Guillaume would have been a both more comfortable in the elegance of John's Papal Court. Benedict and I were more cut of the same cloth.

As Guillaume discovered my true background, I suspect via the leaks from the Papal Court, he saw me differently. Now he saw me less as a reporter to the Pope but as an advisor to the Pope. For that meant he should be more attentive to who I am and what I know. I am always amazed by those with Court etiquette. I saw this with Edward back in England, and yet with him I was still tutor and he pupil, albeit not exhibited to others greatly.

I enjoyed discussions with Machaut. We spoke of music, something I frankly had little knowledge of. My limitations were sacred songs sung at Mass or a few at certain religious proceedings. Machaut saw not only religious content but he brought in those of the court life and the life of many others who he interacted with. He was focused on those in power, those who could listen to his music, especially his non-religious types. I began to see structure in music, a complex structure of sound and time.

As I recalled my Oxford days of measuring various things versus time, music was essentially that writ large. Time, measure, was an essential element upon which all of the notes were laid. One could make many notes per unit of time or few, one could then lay upon that single time line other time lines, to create a harmony of voices or even a conflict of the voices. Polyphony, many sounds, human and instrumental. Machaut could "see" the sounds, and this sight allowed him to place them down in writing to be redone consistently by others. Machaut had mastered the recording of human emotions through music. One could take his music, move it to London, to Montpellier, to Bologna, and it would evoke the same effects. I had never realized that. Furthermore, I do not think Machaut did either, until we spoke of this observation. It often takes some third party to observe the obvious.

Machaut and I grew closer, albeit not what I would call friends. He was still courtly and I the shadow of a person, always avoiding contact, while he sought it. One day as time progressed and he felt more comfortable, he asked me:

"Brendan, I gather you were close to Ockham and his followers. If I may ask, is it true that Ockham believed that the ruler derived their position from the people, and that he rejected Divine Rights of Kings?"

At first I was almost shocked. From a man who was so close to the Court, this would be a heresy. But I felt it possible to address this. I replied:

"Guillaume, yes, that is what he and to some small degree, I believe, Marsilius of Padua, who preceded him, not only felt but wrote about extensively and in a compelling manner."

He replied:

"But the people, all the people, even peasants, even women, they get to choose a ruler! What type of person would we have? And did not God give our Kings the right to rule?"

I wondered briefly how best to answer this without heresy, but I thought that with John now well interred in his grave I could at least try in the third person. Thus I responded:

"Ockham and others asked questions about rulers and the ruled. They argued that in Paradise there were no rulers. I leave that to theologians. But they then argued that after the fall such things as rulers, property, and the like were created by man. These institutions were man made not Divine. Suffice to say Jesus said we give to God what is God's and to Rome what is Rome's. This they interpreted was a separation of the Church from the Ruler. Furthermore since the very idea of a temporal ruler is man mad to begin with, then we as individuals get to choose our rulers. God has nothing to do with them. On the other hand, the Church as we know it is descended from the time of Christ. Thus Peter and his successors must follow the laws as we see them in the Bible. Rulers as Christians must follow the religious laws, but as rulers they also follow the laws of man. Those laws are manmade and as per Ockham and his followers are the result of individuals agreeing under what terms to be governed, not ruled."

I wondered if this simplistic presentation of Ockham and Marcellus would terrify him and send his screaming. It did not. His response was simply:

"This is quite interesting. Thank you."

He got up and spent the remainder of the day down at the edge of the river, walking quietly in the sun. I frankly did not know what effect I may have had. On the other hand my repeating this position had reawakened in my the idea of the individual as the key entity in salvation. To me what Christ said was that it was not the tribe, not the Nation of Israel, but each separate person, each individual, Jew or Gentile, had the responsibility, the duty. It was not the Government to mandate, nor the Church to rule, but the individual to reflect on Christ's word, and to act accordingly. The role of the Church is at most to guide and clarify, that of the Government to protect and defend. In the end it was as Ockham noted, there was no ideal of man, there was but each individual person. Just as there was no ideal of blue, just the many differing blues of the flowers in the field.

ORDINATION

Having been at Avignon for two months, now being July 1335, I received a request to meet with the Pope. When I entered his quarters he walked toward me and smiling said:

"Brendan, I understand you have never been ordained a priest. You are still but a sub Deacon, a minor order. Is that your wish?"

I replied:

"Your holiness, as I have said, I am but a physician, trying to heal the body, I do not know if I have the qualities of a priest. Also your Holiness, my time is spent with the sick of body, not of the soul."

He again smiled and in his manner of coming in closely and speaking softly he said:

"Well Brendan, perhaps we can make you both. Let us say tomorrow at morning mass, Guillaume has written a small piece and I can perform the ordination. Then you can be fully a priest of body and soul, and also it shall give you a seat at the table, just in case you are ever in need of such a rank. Are you comfortable with that?"

I was shocked. I had never really thought of being a priest. I could help with a Mass and assist at an Extreme Unction. But being a priest, well it was something that I had not contemplated. But as Benedict noted, it would allow me to do things that as a sub Deacon I would not have the position to do. Also I would like to hear a new piece by Guillaume.

The ordination proceeded simply. The Pope was the principal and it was attended by but a few, one being the Prior of our local convent. The ceremony was brief, accompanied by a small piece by Guillaume and sung by my fellow friars. I was now a priest, with the ability to hear confessions, to say Mass, and to hopefully be a better physician as well. All too often my patients when dying asked for a priest, asked me if I were one, only to let them die without their final wish. Now I hope this will make the final passing more peaceful for them, not with what I can do for their body but their soul.

My local Prior in Avignon, Friar Jean Paul, spoke kindly to me. We knew each other only from a distance. He had heard of my time with Ockham and Michael of Cesena, albeit not a Spiritual, he was sympathetic. He quietly thanked me for what I had done, it saved the Franciscans in a way, by not having the shame of the putting to death of what were considered heretics. The incident was now forgotten, and it was a less than a decade.

Guillaume and I spent more time discussing more his music and poetry. I told him of my time with Dante, and more of my young friend Plutarch. He was aware of Dante but had not yet heard of Plutarch. He was to be Canon of the church and as such would have great prestige. He wondered what I would be doing. I was no longer a young man, but of middle age, in fact of an age where many less fortunate would never have reached. Yet my good fortune was my vows,

which had kept me from harm's way. Neither famine nor warfare. And thus far not even plague, despite my professed desire to care for all the sick.

Thus as I got to know Guillaume it would in turn this would open more doors. Doors I had never anticipated.

PHILIP ARRIVES IN AVIGNON (1336)

In early March of 1336, having been almost a year in Avignon, and actually serving at the local hospital, enjoying my work now as both physician and priest, I was called by Benedict to discuss an issue of some secrecy. I was concerned since I had per my instructions from Edward, been sending him information by a courier regarding the goings on in Avignon and the French King. Most of my information was what one would gather just in passing and I resolved to honor the privacy of the Holy Office, out of respect for Benedict. Yet this call was concerning, because he had now come to rely somewhat on my understanding of the English Court as well as the French. It was a balance lacking amongst many of the French focused Papal advisors.

I entered his quarters and we were alone, none of the other advisors were present. He spoke softly, asking me to come close so as to keep the discussion from any prying ears. He said:

"Brendan, in confidence, I have asked King Philip to come here to Avignon, and to speak with him regarding his actions which I fear will lead to war with England. Philip is a difficult man, and as I come to understand Edward, he feels he has been dealt with improperly. If these two go to war, well, many will die unnecessarily. I would like your advice. I also would like you to be present but not seen. I also ask that you keep what is said unspoken to others until such time as it becomes common knowledge."

I replied:

"Of course Holy Father. What can I do to assist you?"

He replied:

"First, you and I know that Edward has many agents here in Avignon and that they try and ply information from many sources. I ask you to manage them, to have them at a distance until I have an opportunity to deal with Philip. Second, I need to understand what basis Philip has for his claim and that of Edward."

I agreed and also gathered that Benedict was aware of my closeness to Edward. I had the balance of my Church and State loyalties. Under the circumstances it was clear that my loyalty was to Benedict, then to Edward.

On March 19th, the Feast of Saint Joseph, Philip arrived at the Papal residence. He was escorted into the Pope's chambers rather than the normal Papal reception area. The usual area was subject to great openness and thus not at all suitable for the sensitivity of the discussions. Philip was told to come by himself, leaving his retinue somewhat astonished in the hallway down from the Papal

residence. I was left at the door per Benedict's instructions and would escort Philip in. I wondered if he would remember me from almost a decade ago. To my surprise he approached and said:

"Friar Brendan, we meet again, or shall I say Father Brendan. And how is good King Edward?"

With no answer the King entered, and I shut the door behind him. Philip was a bit heavier than I recalled him and he was tall and still quite muscular. He was not as tall as I was and I gathered that he thought that an affront. His look at me was a blend of fear and distaste. Fear from the uncertainty of what I was now and distaste because of my English connections. His elegant dress contrasted to my simple grey tunic, his grand boot to my simple sandals. He entered the room and I closed the door.

I then went to where Benedict had shown me through a door to the back of his quarters and in a small room, akin to a Confessional, with a small window on the Papal quarters. I could see the face of Philip and the head of Benedict. The conversation began:

"My son, Philip, it is so good of you to come all this way. Have you had a comfortable trip?"

Philip replied:

"Holiness, trips are always long and trying. Many days and on a horse makes one sore and a bit testy. Also the food and wine along the way, shall we say not up to the standard I would expect."

The conversation continued but Benedict took control. He said:

"Philip, my Son, the situation is Scotland and it is an involvement that you seem to have participated in, leading to King Edward, and I believe rightly so, seeking to stop you by all means. You have, what I see, crossed over from a supporting ally to an interfering and threatening an adversary. This, my son, will lead to devastation, the unnecessary death of many, and it is not necessary. I fear that much of the evil resulting will be of your doing. I will not tell you how to run your Kingdom, but I feel I must tell you of the moral necessity to not take actions that will lead to needless death of many."

Philip then wandered about in responding and in each instance Benedict countered him. Philip was not astute, he was as Benedict had said, almost childlike in his demands, in his responses. He was less of a King and more of a recalcitrant child. Benedict demanded he resolve his difference with Edward, to cease this interference with the Scots, and to deal with the Gascony issue as well. Benedict then told Philip he was cancelling the Crusade, due to Philip's own actions. Benedict then told Philip, to my surprise:

"My son, you must also be aware that you have many enemies within your own kingdom. Your actions will just lead to your fall therein. You cannot afford a Crusade while at the same time confronting the English. This must cease, you must come to deal with your own domain first, before an excess of adventures destroys everything. I will therefore relieve you of your pledge of a Crusade. There is war almost all over our domains. Tuscany, Sicily, Germany, war and

anarchy. This is no time for a Crusade. I seek that you mend your issues with Edward. The result will just lead to more bloodshed."

Philip was livid. No one had ever spoken to him in this manner. He remained quiet and bowed and left the residence. I went back to the door and saw him out, and Benedict motioned to me and said:

"Follow him and return and tell me what transpires. Remain in the shadows. I fear for France, England and Germany."

I obeyed Benedict and when Philip left with his retinue, I managed by horseback, dressed in a local mufti to follow them south to Marseille. There, to my surprise, was the fleet that had brought Philip here, by ship, with a small version of an attack force. I managed to observe the mock battle they put on for him, I gathered from the locals, it was his version of what he would do on Crusade. He then left for Paris, again by ship.

I returned to Avignon and spoke with Benedict. He told me:

"I had thought he was persistent. But since I will not authorize a Crusade he is left to deal with his own problems. As for the meeting, Philip has already spoken to everyone, you may therefore relay what you choose to your King. At best we can now pray for peace."

I felt sorrow for Benedict. Philip was like a spoiled child and Edward was seeking revenge to compensate for the weakness of his father. It is strange what factors motivate wars!

LONDON; DARKENING SKIES (1336-1337)

In late April 1336 I was summoned back to London. The King wanted to speak with me directly. I had diligently written him almost weekly as he had requested and assured him that Pope Benedict would treat England and France equally and not at all like that of John, his predecessor. The relationship between King Edward and his French counterpart was worsening as 1337 began. Gascony, the remaining part of Aquitaine, that Eleanor brought with her to Henry II, had shrunken to a small strip of land along the coast, from Bayonne, through Bordeaux and up to La Chapelle. Good for wine growing and a source of taxes for Edward. Some of the local rulers in Gascony were always somehow out of step with Edward and things were just getting worse. I had gone through the lower part on my trip to Avignon and I returned via Paris.

TRIP TO KOBLENZ WITH EDWARD TO MEET LUDWIG (1338)

Edward wanted to align himself against Philip and as part of this he wanted to seek out Ludwig of Bavaria, the Holy Roman Emperor. This would be difficult because Ludwig was still excommunicated and as such, by dictate of the Pope, any Christian person, no less a King, must not deal with Ludwig. This, however, was irrelevant to Edward. He saw Ludwig as a powerful ally, Pope or no Pope.

Edward knew that I had become acquainted with Ludwig as a result of the Michael of Cesena affair as well as with Ockham and that I may be of help in his meetings. Also I had learned a bit of the German spoken and as such I could perhaps comment on what was said soto voce. Thus from early 1338 Edward began a trip to Ludwig, now at Koblenz and to campaign again against Philip via Flanders. The problem as usual was the cost of such an expedition. For Edward this was remedied by having his lords raise the funds off the back of his subjects. In many cases it was the taking of food from the mouths of the starving. Edward turned a blind eye to such acts but every noble who assisted Edward in such a fashion knew quite well that he would never be punished, at least while on Earth. These acts sickened me. I saw them first hand, old women, with a few resources between them and imminent death, having what little they had ripped from their hands, leaving them destitute. I tried many times to tell Edward but he refused to even discuss the facts because he was driven to overthrow Philip no matter what the costs. What had driven his grandfather and the Scots now drove Edward and Philip.

I met up with Edward at the port at Great Yarmouth, north east of London, I had traveled to Cambridge and then towards Great Yarmouth. When I arrived, I stayed a few days waiting for their arrival. The fleet was impressive and the entire Royal family was present including the Queen who was with child. Why she, Queen Philippa, originally Philippa of Hainault, was there, I could never understand, other than her being the daughter of the Count of Hainault. Philippa was unlike Isabella, she was very kind and loving, and was much respected by the English people. In my conversations with the old Queen, Isabella, she was respected by her as well. Yet the two were so starkly different. Thus, here was Philippa and the children all packed on an elegant ship on its way to cross to Brabant on the Flemish Coast. It was late July, and I hoped the weather would hold. The fear is of both storms and fog. Storms would overturn such an overloaded ship and fog could bestill and disorient the vessel.

I had brought a compass which I had from Oxford and I had maps of the channel, just in case, but with the King aboard and an English Captain, I doubted that anything short of death would motivate them to seek my advice. Yet one must be prepared. Edward stood out dressed regally, his family adoringly looking up to him, in elegant dress, crown atop his head. Little did many know but that the crown had been elsewhere before to assure his many loans to finance the wars. Young Prince Edward was now eight and he saw this as a magnificent journey, and I suspected this would influence him throughout his life.

We were fortunate to make the journey and I spent time showing the young Prince some of the elements of seamanship. He was a fast and eager learner. I also tried some German on him as well and that too he picked up quickly. We arrived on the Brabant coast and the Royal family found a comfortable residence for the night. I went to the abbey of St Bernard where I was given room. I ate with the monks and prayed with them. Conversations were limited. I was asked to say Mass in the morning and was honored to do so. Apparently some of the monks had known of my relationship with Pope Benedict and this they felt was a honor. I was truly honored that they asked me.

I retired for the evening when no sooner had I gone to sleep then we heard a loud set of shouts and cries from whence the King and his entourage had settled down for the evening. I looked out towards the building and it was engulfed in flames. I threw on my tunic as well as a pair of boots

I had, knowing it would require foot coverings, and with several of the monks ran towards the burning building. Flames shot forth and the heat seared one's cheeks and hands. The King was standing there and the Queen was frantic, the young Prince was missing. I ran around the side with two monks, shouting for the Prince. On the opposite side, standing calmly, watching the whole conflagration was young Prince Edward. He looked amused at the flames, he was standing as if hypnotized by the sight, with a smile upon his face. That concerned me. Deeply.

I ran up to him and said:

"Prince, your parents want you to be safe, let us go back to where they are."

He stood motionless, just watching. I turned to one of the monks and told him to tell the King and Queen that all is well and I will return shortly with the Prince. I stayed and watched the Prince just stare with an almost demonic grin on his face. I then wondered who had started the fire. It may very well have been the Prince. That I kept to myself.

Finally I got the Prince to move, and we went back to the King and Queen. Philippa grasped and hugged him, the King stood stoically and asked;

"Where do we sleep tonight?"

Brother Francois of the Abbey asked the Royal party to join them at the Abbey. I wondered what the King would think of that, and I was glad it was stone for fear of the Prince.

The next morning it was clear that Edward was upset, and not from the fire. That may have just added to the problem. He apparently had been told that Ludwig was backing out of his agreement. Edward was furious. He then said to his Lords:

"I am off directly to Koblenz. I am travelling down the Rhine to Cologne and then to Koblenz. You may follow after me but I cannot be burdened by having to wait."

He then instructed his forces to assemble and follow in barges along with the Royal family. He asked me and several others to accompany him by boat. I feared that he was at risk with such a small group of Knights and travelling against the current on the Rhine was always difficult. I had enough experience that I obtained a good boat and captain and we were off before sunset. I was concerned since sailing at night had perils, but the captain assured me that the moon was bright enough to see his way. I spent hours in the near darkness at the bow of the ship listening for rocks, the splashing of the water. I could swim, easily crossing this river, but not a one of the Kings men nor the King himself could stay afloat, especially dressed as they were!

We reached Cologne and it was a magnificent city. I had not seen it before. We briefly reprovisioned and continued down the Rhine. By August 30, 1338 we reached Koblenz. I suspect to the utter surprise of Ludwig! We pulled up to a small wharf just south of the joining of the Rhine with the Moselle Rivers. It was late in the day and the poor dock master had no idea who was disembarking. The King strode first onto the dock in full regalia. Then his Knights. Then me. None of us had any clue where we were to go! I spoke some German so I asked the dock

master where King Ludwig's castle was. This was almost a comedic scene! Hardly the entrance that Edward may have anticipated and I suspect an entrance not to be recorded in any history.

The dockmaster fortunately understood my child like attempt and said to me:

"dort"

That meant "there", where he pointed. I looked up and indeed there was a castle or palace. I turned to the King and said:

"Your Majesty, perhaps you and your men should rest a bit and I shall go the Palace and arrange for your entry. Does that please you?"

Edward just wanted to get on with his trip but he thought briefly and agreed. I set off to the Palace. Dressed as I was, I was un-noticed until near the Palace. There was a Franciscan convent, and I knew I must at least enter and announce myself. Thus I did and when I turned to see the Prior it was none other than Ockham! We embraced and he asked me what I was doing here. I answered:

"William, it is a long story. But simply I have the King of England waiting at the dock to go see King Ludwig. Needless to say the King is anxious and as all Kings, and yes Popes, and he feels that things must just happen now. Can you help me get to the Palace."

He answered:

"Better yet, I will get you to King Ludwig and we will have immediate reception for your King. Let us go!"

In a brief few minutes I was before Ludwig. He remembered me from my time with him a decade earlier. He recalled how I had helped heal his men and was happy to see me again. I gathered that he was less happy to see Edward because he was having second thoughts about this war. But with Edward at the dock, he had a duty to respect him. He quickly assembled a Royal assemblage to go to the dock and escort Edward, and Ludwig himself was at the front. Ockham and I rode at the rear. It must have appeared to the towns folk as some festival parade!

When Edward saw Ludwig arriving at the head of the party he was quite pleased and the two Kings embraced and shared solicitations. I stood there understanding the less than full pleasure of each party. They then went by horse back to the palace. King Ludwig had brought extra horses so that the King and his escorts would ride in elegance fit their presence.

MEETINGS WITH OCKHAM AND MARSILIUS (1338)

While Edward and Ludwig were negotiating, I spent time with Ockham and Marsilius of Padua. They both had been with Ludwig in Munich since Ockham had first met Marsilius in Padua when I had been with them in the escape back in 1328. We, of course had all aged a bit, but they considerably. I guess we never see ourselves as ageing, but they were a bit older and it was as if I

were looking at my future. They unfortunately had still remained under Papal edict, and even though I had remained un-aged. Human perception is an interesting study. Nothing is necessarily what it appears to be. We all seem to filter our perceptions to match our desired perception of reality.

We remained in the Palace at Koblenz, and I remained there after Edward returned. Thus I had time to converse with the two of them. It was clear that they advised the King, and supported his ongoing battle with the Pope, but at the same time they were not necessarily the best of friends. My presence gave them the opportunity to sharpen their intellectual swords and use me as their foil³.

We began to discuss Marsilius' most significant statement. That of people as individuals not as subjects. I said to Marsilius:

"People as individuals, is in my understanding, a nominalist idea. There is no such general concept as "the people" or even more so "my subjects". People are individuals. As you and I have seen as physicians, each sick person is different. They present differently and they heal differently. Thus individuals exist and it is the individual upon which we have a society. Now reiterate your principle of building on this fact."

Marsilius replied:

"The Principle is simply. That legislation, the creation of laws, must be done by all the people. Not from some single person and their will, nor even from a Pope. The logic is as follows. First. Legislative power belongs to all the people, for no person chooses to harm themselves. Second. Laws belong to those who can insure it is followed, but again that is only the whole citizen body! Third and finally, What can benefit each or harm each should be chosen by each."

He continued:

³ See Brett, Marsilius, Cambridge: *The thirteenth-century Latin translator of Aristotle's Politics*, William of Moerbeke, uses *affectio* in a quite different way, to translate the Greek *kedeia*, which means an alliance or tie (mostly by marriage). In the contemporary vocabulary of the Italian city-states *affectio* could also have this sense of political alliance or faction. There are perhaps some overtones of this political sense in I. 11, which discusses *affectio* on the part of the judge; but any such overtones are very muted. *causa* ('cause'): following Aristotle, Marsilius distinguishes between four kinds of cause, which are technically termed the final, formal, efficient and material causes. The final cause indicates the 'end' or 'that for the sake of which' a thing is in being. The formal cause indicates that element which makes a thing formally speaking what it is. The efficient cause is that which propels the thing into being. The material cause is the matter out of which it is made. Marsilius uses a variety of terms to indicate causes which bring something into being or into actuality (*efficiens*, *motiva*, *movens*, *factiva*, *agens*). I have chosen to preserve this more indeterminate usage rather than translating all these terms by 'efficient'. *civilitas* ('civil order'): as Quillet notes³, *civilitas* is the term used by the first translation of the Nicomachean Ethics, the *Ethica vetus*, to translate the Greek term *politeia*, which Moerbeke in his translation of the Politics rendered simply as *politia* (see below). Marsilius apparently signals his awareness that the two terms are equivalent in some places, where he talks of *civilitas seu politia*. But in others he uses *civilitas* as a synonym or near-synonym of *civitas* and *regnum*. I have translated 'civil order', picking up on Aristotle's description of the *politeia* as the 'order' (*ordo*, *taxis*) of a polis or city.

"The Church in its earliest days was such that it, the people, the individuals, chose its priests, it chose its bishops. Even more so it had women on an equal level to men. Was it not Mary and the other Marys who saw Christ first, who were with the twelve men when Christ reappeared. Why frankly who prepared the meal? Peter? Peter was but a fisherman, it was his wife and his daughters who must have been there as well. We now have a ruling class of Popes and Cardinals, none of which existed a millennia ago, why even Gregory the Great, the pope of some seven hundred years ago was but the Bishop of Rome, a Bishop, of a see in which he sat and cared for. So does John XXII when ruling in Avignon, in his Palace, with his wealth represent the people?"

I replied:

"I agree, Popes are artifacts of Roman rule, why even the current Kings have much less power. I further agree that Christ let Caesar's and God's remain apart. That insured that there would be no

Marsilius did not seem to agree this far. He said:

"In the domain of the secular legislator, or the ruling part, he is separate from a clerical ruling part. He has a duty to protect his people and rule wisely but he is not to be compared to the religious ruling part, for they are separate. The secular ruling part can be understood in accord with Aristotle...."

I stopped him and said:

"I fear Marsilius you are trying to have it both ways. Namely you want the Pope to be more freely selected and his powers as legislator curtailed whereas those of the Emperor, in your case not only remain but may be strengthened."

Ockham smiled and was cautious in any answer. Marsilius was clearly upset as I had neither accepted his position nor did I apparently respect his views as but a mere physician. Ockham interjected:

"I told you Marsilius, he is not just a normal physician, he was one of my best students, and unlike us he still wanders freely with Kings, and now Emperors, as a shadow in the wind, but a wind which can blow in any direction it wants."

Ockham then laughed and Marsilius just looked dumbfounded. I replied:

"I am sorry Marsilius, I did not seek to offend you. But I merely was trying to follow your logic. But permit me if you can, let me read your work, its opening, for you see I have studied it, albeit with not the wisdom of time that you have spent in its preparation. Let me see, here you state:

And so I, a son of Antenor⁴, heeding and obeying the aforesaid admonitions of Christ, of the saints, and of the philosophers, moved also by the spirit of an understanding of these things (if any grace has been given me), and of confidence sent to me from above (for as James attests in the first chapter of his epistle: "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down

⁴ Antenor was the advisor to King Priam of Troy.

from the Father of lights”); acting from reverence for the giver, from love of spreading the truth, from fervent affection for country and brethren, from pity for the oppressed, from a desire to save them, to recall the oppressors from the bypath of error, and to arouse the resistance of those who suffer such things when they can and should combat them; and beholding in you especially, most exalted Ludwig, emperor of the Romans, God’s servant, who shall give to this task that external fulfillment of it which you desire, and who by some special ancient birthright, as well as by your singularly heroic and outstanding virtue, have a firmly ingrained love of wiping out heresies, upholding and preserving the catholic truth and every other worthy discipline, uprooting vice, encouraging virtuous pursuits, extinguishing strife, and spreading and nourishing peace or tranquility everywhere—I have written down the sentences which follow, after a period of diligent and intense study, thinking that these may be of some help to your vigilant majesty, who bestows careful attention upon the above-mentioned problems and others which may occur, as well as upon all matters affecting the public welfare.

It is my purpose, therefore, with God’s help, to expose only this singular cause of strife. For to reiterate the number and nature of those causes which were set forth by Aristotle would be superfluous; but this cause which Aristotle could not have known, and which no one after him who could know it has undertaken to investigate, we wish to unmask so that it may henceforth be readily excluded from all states or cities, and virtuous rulers and subjects live more securely in tranquility. This is the desirable outcome which I propose at the-beginning of this work; an outcome necessary for those who would enjoy civil happiness, which seems the best of the objects of desire possible to man in this world, and the ultimate aim of human acts.

Now it is within these words of yours that I have sought to understand."

He started to speak but I continued:

"Marsilius, I was first surprised to see the comparison to Antenor. Perhaps you have heard of Dante, now deceased, but Dante had placed him in his Hell, in Inferno, for as the poet says in XXXII:70-123, which I have before me:

Afterwards I saw a thousand faces, made doglike by the cold, at which a trembling overcomes me, and always will, when I think of the frozen fords. And, whether it was will, or fate or chance, I do not know: but walking, among the heads, I struck my foot violently against one face. Weeping it cried out to me: ‘Why do you trample on me? If you do not come to increase the revenge for Montaperti, why do you trouble me?’ And I: ‘My Master, wait here for me, now, so that I can rid me of a doubt concerning him, then you can make as much haste as you please.’ The Master stood, and I said to that shade which still reviled me bitterly: ‘Who are you, who reproach others in this way?’ ‘No, who are you,’ he answered, ‘who go through the Antenora striking the faces of others, in such a way, that if you were alive, it would be an insult?’

Antenor, in the Eight Circle of Hell, a whole region, just before Satan himself, for treachery. Why choose such a person to relate to? There are many who now see such a reference as not just distracting but perhaps an admission of such an act. That Marsilius is but one thing which strikes me. But more so, consistency demands that if we agree that legislators for the Church must be

the people, then too must legislators for them people themselves. I admit it makes your claim above so ever more concerning. But it does I believe go to the heart of what you claim."

I finished:

"Thus for the Pope we see your view, to which I hold credence, but to your Lord I see you hold to Aristotle. A conflict? Why the difference, other than your holding true to one but not the other?"

Marsilius was at this point a bit red in his face. Apparently he had never been spoken to in such a manner, and from one not qualified as a Philosopher, a mere physician, and using some Italian poet to degrade him. I suspected he would recover, but perhaps I was a bit too strong. I had never done this before, always being subservient, but now I was aggressive, I had a collection of knowledge lacking as but a student, and a skill, if such be the term, to use the tools of this knowledge.

Natural Law and Natural Right

I stayed and managed to spend time with Ockham. He asked me to assist him in thinking through the issues, a form of dialectic. It was not the classic way I had been educated, it was more polemic, persuasive presentation. I told him that his Dialogues had come out quite well and forcefully presented the positions that we had discussed on my last visit. I asked if Ludwig too umbrage to his conclusions. He replied simply that all Ludwig cared for was to be Emperor.

Then as was usual with Ockham we took up our conversation where we had left off. Namely Ockham lecturing me and I acting as best I could as the student. Ockham thus began a discussion of his views of natural law and the rights of ownership:

"Consider, if you will, the work of Friar Bonagratia of Bergamo, a fellow Franciscan, who has contended that God, at the creation, gave Adam and Eve only simple use of fact, not the right of use (*ius utendi*). Bonagratia concluded that the Franciscans merely were returning to this state of primitive bliss. Now contrast with John XXII, on the other hand, sought to demonstrate by scriptural argument that God had instituted private property at the time of creation."

I hesitated and then asked:

"But William, what specific meaning do you give to *ius*? Is it the restrictive meaning such as a law preventing the taking of someone else's property, or a right for example to seek food to survive. If a person owns an orchard, and the orchard has apple trees, then the owner has the right to protect the apples and at the same time the law prevents the unauthorized takings. On the other hand the starving person passing the orchard will die if he does not eat and he has the right to seek food, and thus the apple."

I continued:

"Thus there are laws that prohibit and rights which permit. But there are times that rights and laws conflict. Furthermore there are many types of laws. There is divine law, what you call natural law, laws from the rulers, local laws, military laws, and probably many that I have no knowledge of. Laws regulate what individuals can do. Some laws, if you will permit me, do allow a person to do something. Most laws as we understand them, prohibit people from doing something. Take laws of trespass. They are laws of property. If I were to own a piece of land then I can prohibit another from trespassing on the land. The law would benefit me only by prohibiting another. Now a right is something positive, something that allows me to do something that gives me the ability to do something without any form of prohibition. Let us say I have the right to fish off the coast of Plymouth, if such were to be the case. Then anyone can do that with no delimitation. Thus, William, the word ius is so complex, does it prohibit as most laws do or does it permit as so few rights do? And as for natural law, from whence does it arise and does all mankind accept that same natural law?"

Ockham looked surprised. I gathered he was not expecting such a robust interrogatory. He sat back and thought a bit and then started his reply:

"As usual Brendan, you force me to think even harder than before. Now as to natural law, I see three types, three sources, if you will."

"Now let me begin. The first type of natural law is the one which conforms with natural reasoning. Natural law under these terms started with rational reason. It is predicated on a human having the capacity to reason, and humans actually being defined as reasoning beings. Thus the law of no killing another or not committing adultery is a set of natural law elements falling thereunder."

I interrupted:

"But William, take an adjunct or corollary to adultery. That which states one can have but one wife. That marriage is between one man and one woman. In the time of Moses, man could have multiple wives. In the current time, a Muslim can have many wives. If your definition of natural law comes from reason, from a rational man, then are these people irrational, are they not human, or are they disobeying natural law. Or perhaps as in the case of Moses, does natural law evolve, change with time. Your definition and fact seems to amidst a significant number of such possibilities."

Ockham responded:

"Then consider my second definition of a natural law. Then natural law are those laws which result from those people who use no other form of law to manage their interrelationships."

I replied:

"Again you create a natural law which is mutable. I gather your suggestion is that, for example, if with Adam and Even all property was in common, then after the Fall mankind instituted

various property laws which were less than a law from a government but a law from a consensus and thus that is natural law?"

He replied:

"Yes indeed. But again I see your concerns. You are concerned not only about the mutability but of the fact that if we consider reason, that some human reason may reach a different conclusion than others. But take murder, is it not common that all societies consider murder to be wrong?"

I replied:

"William, first, neither you nor I know all societies. Second, I have travelled extensively. As such I have seen many different cultures, have spoken to many different peoples. Moreover I know of people who have been exposed to many time more cultures than I and each has their own individual laws and characteristics. Thus by using reason alone, and reason predicated on the culture and background we share, is truly an inappropriate manner to determine a universal natural law."

Ockham continued:

"Then a third way is to examine many laws of nations, divine laws, other laws. These can be called contingent laws, laws dependent on prior human reason with a commonality across many human groups. Thus if a person is attacked, and the repelling by force is permitted, that can be an assertion of a natural law from a contingent analysis of an existing civil code."

I replied:

"Interesting. One can think of natural law, if it is a result of rational thought, being exemplified in what man creates in his own laws. Then by examining a wide set of such laws and seeking those which are common would then reflect what we would expect in natural laws. Thus if we were to look at Salic Law, at Roman Law, and English Law, we see that indeed murder is prohibited. In fact in many ways in Muslim Sharia Law the same is true. The common threads are natural law, the variances are human. Natural law in your third definition then is deduced from facts and processes that man has produced independently in differing venues. That definition makes great sense. Whether Christian, Jew, Muslim, Pagan, there has evolved a set of such common representations. This then is a window onto that law. Excellent!"

Ockham was pleased. The process of give and take in the argument left him with a strong feeling he had a basis upon which to develop his ideas. I even began to have such an understanding. This third approach was based upon facts, laws in place and surviving. Facts are always better than pure speculation.

Church vs State

Ockham, Marsilius and I spent time discussing the issue of Church and State. I asked:

"By what authority does the Pope have to control, command, condemn, Kings and other rulers? I keep remembering that Christ set a strict barrier between Church and State. The State rules our daily lives, the King can send us to war, the King can tax, because they are all worldly functions. Christ did not in any way usurp those powers, in fact he denied he had them. However a ruler is determined, then the rule would have the power granted to him."

Ockham replied:

"I agree. But let us first examine the Pope. I would contend, and Scripture bears with me out here, that Peter was special. The Gospel says he was commanded to "feed the sheep" if you will and since the beginning the Pope had such authority and powers. Yet this command was regarding religious matters only."

I replied:

"But a moment. Consider the example of Pope Gregory I. Gregory the Great. A Saint. Yes he was the Bishop of Rome, but as a singular Pope he was not. There were many "popes" as senior bishops. Alexandria, Constantinople, and the others. In fact Gregory had to agree to follow the Emperor. Just look back before him with Justinian. It was the Emperor who ruled in toto, and the Bishop of Rome was just that, a Bishop."

He countered:

"But would you not agree that Peter has a special position. In Acts we see this again and again. In addition the early Church recognized his superiority on Church matters and that his successors had been assumed likewise to have such authority."

I replied:

"I grant you that Peter was the most equal amongst equals and that indeed the Apostles looked up to him and as such this enabled him to exert authority. I would then argue that when he went to Rome, that as Bishop of Rome, a somewhat unique position, he held on to that authority. But nowhere does it say that Peter is Bishop of Rome and as such has authority. Peter, persona singularis, would have that no matter where he was, Jerusalem or Rome. Then the authority goes to the descendent of Peter, not the place, and as such the argument about Avignon has no merit. Thus the Pope is a person, and a person having received the authority via Peter as a result of a selection by the Church. Unlike a King, whereby heredity determines selection, a Pope is more akin to an Italian City State wherein the "leader" if you will is selected by some body of individuals in the Church."

Ockham replied:

"I would agree with all you have said. But even more so. Peter was in Rome, but Peter hardly ruled what the Emperor did. In fact the Emperor had him put to death! Thus at no time did Christ or even Peter assume the mantle of worldly ruler. I also agree that the process of selection is just that; selection. It used to be the people of Rome, but since Rome is not a necessary element as

you noted the people who select moved to the Cardinals. And as you know, Cardinals are not necessarily Bishops nor even priests. They are "Princes of the Church", albeit politically influenced princes."

I then continued:

"Then how does the authority of the Pope relate to the authority of a King. Must a King defer to a Pope?"

Ockham continued:

"The Pope's jurisdiction is inferior to the King in those things that relate to the realm of the King. The Pope's authority is regards only to those things which relate to the spirit."

I then asked:

"Then does that mean that a King has temporal authority, for example, over a priest, a religious?"

Ockham answered:

"Indeed a King has such authority. If a friar murders a person, then that is a worldly crime, and the friar comes under the authority of the King. If another Friar attempts to conceal such a murderous Friar then that Friar is also coercible under the power of the King. The Pope may control the spiritual element, namely an excommunication perforce of murder but not the temporal, say a trial and execution."

I then began a discussion on who should choose the Pope. Namely I asked:

"If we assume that as Scripture states that Peter and his successors have a superiority of spiritual powers, let us call it a tie breaking authority, since Councils have been and remain a means to resolve spiritual issues, then two questions. First, who and how should a Pope be selected. Second, if a Pope errs, as you have determined, then who has the power and authority to remove him?"

Ockham replied:

"I see no problem with the selection by Cardinals. Yet, as we have already noted, Cardinals can be influenced by Kings, as with the Avignon papacy. The way to avoid such a conflict is by having a wider distribution of Cardinals, not just a predominance of French or Italians. As you yourself have noted, the appointment of the wrong Cardinals can and often does result in the selection of an inappropriate Pope."

"Now as to a Pope who errs. As I have indicated a Pope may from time to time err. Popes are not per se infallible. We have more than a millennium of errors. Why Peter himself erred by denying Christ! How much greater error could there be. But a Pope who errs may be faced with this error, say by a Council, Bishops, or even a humble theologian. If there then general agreement of this

error and the Pope holds to the error, then the Pope would be excommunicated, and as no longer a Catholic would lose his position as Pope. It is the deliberate and knowing act of defiance to a presented contradiction of the Pope's position that results in his excommunication. A Council could then recognize and say as such."

I then responded:

"What you are proposing as a means to insure spiritual compliance at the very top is a process of intercessions and accommodations. Intercessions to recognize error and accommodations to resolve errors. You further propose a means to select a Pope which is not a form of hereditary selection, but shall we call it a federation means, where each ruling entity will have the ability to select the electors so that can reach a consensus on a papal selection. Is that what you are proposing?"

Ockham replied:

"Exactly, that would allow for some semblance of representation. And yes, the mechanism for the recognition and elimination of error is essential."

I replied:

"Then, I ask you, why not do the same for secular rule. As people choose their representatives and then these representatives chose a King. Also the representatives act as a check on the King, insuring equitable treatment."

Property

We continued our discussions. I was finding this more of interest and having spent ten more years thinking of this with his base in theology and philosophy, Ockham had developed a great expertise in expressing political and legal concepts anew. Poverty and property were intertwined concepts. To me, poverty was interpreted in a simple sense, namely I had no possessions which I could deny another of. As one with no interest in the debate with John XXII, that was as far as I went. Books were shared, food was consumed, but the ownership question of food was uncertain.

I reminded Ockham that Francis said two things of importance. First, we as Franciscans accepted poverty as an obligation to own nothing. However we could collect money for the sick. As a physician and a Franciscan I had the blessing from Francis to collect for those sick, which was not in the main of what the controversy was. Secondly, as a Franciscan, obedience was even limited, since I did not have to violate my own conscience if told to do something.

Thus Ockham was well within the domain of Francis and his rule of obedience, since Ockham believed that the Pope, namely John XXII, was in error, and he did so with substantial justification in Scripture. Ultimately, as Ockham and others have noted, it was Scripture which was the ultimate rule, not the words of some mortal, even a Pope! Strangely as I was reminded of these facts, all that left me with was Chastity, the vow to essentially avoid entanglements.

Having seen Queens and their machinations, Kings and their distortions of humanity, Chastity was frankly a comfortable protection against the ills of the world!

In some primal fashion I felt that I returned it to the earth from whence it came. But I did not openly share my views. After all, as a physician all my concerns were with the human body and not with the soul. Yet as a priest, now I did have some of that concern as well. But my priesthood was an artifact to my being a physician.

Ockham then moved this entire debate from scriptural to conventional premises by defending the proposition that God had ordained neither primitive communism nor private property. Ockham looked to the Roman-law doctrine of *res nullius*-the rule that anyone may take a good belonging to no one-and concluded that, after the Fall of Adam, the whole world was in this state. Adam and Eve and their progeny were able to parcel out the world's property by using a certain innate power to appropriate.

Private property, Ockham argued, "emerged... in a historical process that involved a long series of voluntary arrangements among humans-compacts, customs, the laws that peoples made for themselves, and finally the laws of kings and other rulers."

First, Ockham notes that this is an argument about the first acquisition of property. An earlier generation of scholars had contended that it was precisely this concern that distinguished the constitutional theorists of the seventeenth century from their medieval counterparts. The problem of first acquisition had already surfaced in the twelfth century among canonists faced by the tangled texts of Gratian's *Decretum*, and it became an issue of central importance in the fourteenth-century Franciscan dispute."

The second and larger point about the Franciscan poverty disputes: notions of the right of property thought to be distinctive to the seventeenth century actually have a deep medieval substructure. When one listens to Ockham after studying earlier canonistic texts on the origin of property there is sometimes a feeling of having seen this once before.

Ockham argued that both the emperor and the pope were obliged to respect the rights of their subjects. Ockham maintained that the emperor derived his power from the people, who "could not confer more power than it actually possessed." I found this discussion very provocative. It went beyond Marsilius, who still voiced a strong support of the Emperor. Ockham was arguing that all power, secular or religious, in a person selected to wield it comes from the consent of the people. It does not come from some Divine assignment. The Pope is selected Bishop of Rome by the people of Rome. The Emperor or the King is selected by the consent of the citizens, not subjects. In fact, subjects no longer exist in the view of Ockham!

A provision of the canon law of corporations, Ockham continued, limited this power, holding that a governing majority and, by extension, the emperor-could infringe on the rights of the other members only in the case of "necessary actions." The pope, furthermore, was limited by the canonistic maxim that no one was to be deprived of rights "without fault" (*sine culpa*), and the fundamental principle of evangelical liberty: Ockham's favorite way of proving the restraints on

papal power was to argue that the evangelical liberty proclaimed in scripture limited papal power by safeguarding the natural and civil rights of the pope's subjects.

Christian law was a law of liberty, indeed, "a law of perfect liberty" according to the Epistle of James. Paul too wrote of "the freedom that we have in Christ Jesus" and declared that "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

But, if the pope could command anything not contrary to divine and natural law, then Christian law would be a law of most horrid servitude. All Christians would be made slaves of the supreme pontiff, for to command anything not forbidden by divine and natural law was precisely the kind of power that a master held over his slaves.

The proper limits to papal power were set by the liberties and temporal rights of emperors, kings, princes and other persons, rights that came to them from natural law or the law of nations or civil law. Without cause and without fault the pope ought not to disturb these rights of others.

Overall it was clear that Ockham as an innovative destroyer of the Church and defender of the Empire. He was a non-political theologian, yet his logic and words were more than just potentially a major threat to the existing secular and religious structures.

These three visions resulted from different reactions to the single question whether there is a link between Ockham's theology and/or philosophy and his political thought. The reduction of Ockham's political thought to his nominalist philosophy produced the image of an innovative destroyer of the Church. Conversely, reduction of Ockham's political thought to his theology resulted in the figure of a non-political theologian. The rejection of any attempt to reduce Ockham's political thought to either a philosophical or a theological paradigm generated the vision of Ockham as a traditional constitutional liberal.

For Ockham, property is not natural but rather a creation of human positive law. Nevertheless, property is immune from expropriation by both pope and emperor.

Overall, my discussions with Ockham let me see the world in a totally new light. I was still his student, he was still the Master. My question was; how would this set of ideas get spread, and then, what would be the impact.

The Individual: Citizen vs Subject

Along with the many discussions we spent almost a full week in intense development of the individual. As nominalism says there is no abstract existence of a flower but only a collection of many such flowers all individual and distinct, so too are humans, each slightly different, and thus each having humanity and equal rights as citizens, not a commonality as subjects. Subjects had duties whereas Citizens had rights. Natural Law of which Ockham was fond, was a basis for these rights.

I began by asking Ockham as to the nature of sin and salvation. Not so much in classic theological terms but in the context of his view of individuals. I posed the following:

"William, let us assume a town has a poor sick man. We all know he is ill and we all know that we should care for the sick and feed the hungry. Scripture is clear on that point. Now how do we go about that in both a religious and social manner. Consider that we have a religious duty. We agree. Now consider that we have two approaches. The first is the King taxing all the people and the King then deciding how to distribute what he collects to the needy, as he so understands them. The second approach is each individual who recognizes the need, in their own way, takes individual responsibility for feeding the poor and caring for the sick. First, are these morally equivalent, and second, you mention intent, how does that apply if the individuals provide the support as mandated by Scripture?"

Ockham replied:

"You pose a significant question. First, I agree that Scripture mandates action. However to act needs first to recognize the need. Thus not all people may recognize, only a few, and thus the burden would be on those few. For how could those who know not this person be called upon to act. Thus the first solution, what we would call the communal solution, is not a moral or socially equitable solution. It takes away the need for the individual to follow the Scripture. Further it takes away the need for the individual to accept their fellow man as one in need. Second, as you ask, is intent essential. For I can publicly give to the poor, even have my name associated with the gift and seek praise or even financial gain from such an act. Thus the act is necessary but not sufficient. Not only must I act but I must act individually with intent. Thus individualism, the understanding that we as individual citizens must not only act in accord with Scripture but to do so in a manner where intent is more important than the act. For a man who may give a little but with intent is acting morally and socially much more efficaciously than a man who gives for personal aggrandizement. Intent, the right mind, the action for a purpose, is essential."

Ockham argued that both the emperor and the pope were obliged to respect the rights of their subjects. Ockham maintained that the emperor derived his power from the people, who "could not confer more power than it actually possessed. He stated:

" A provision of the canon law of corporations limited this power, holding that a governing majority and, by extension, the emperor-could infringe on the rights of the other members only in the case of "necessary actions."

All Christians would be made slaves of the supreme pontiff, for to command anything not forbidden by divine and natural law was precisely the kind of power that a master held over his slaves.... The proper limits to papal power were set by the liberties and temporal rights of emperors, kings, princes and other persons, rights that Without cause and without fault the pope ought not to disturb these rights of others came to them from natural law or the law of nations or civil law.

Natural Rights, rights in general and the individual made a great deal of sense. Rights, as in contrast to Laws were permissive. Laws were proscriptive, Laws restricted, while rights enabled. Laws ruled a society, they ruled subjects, rights empowered individuals, they enabled citizens.

Citizens selected rulers. As the Pope was selected Bishop by the people of Rome, so too, Ockham argued, the ruler of any land, any group, should and must be selected by the people. I told him of the advantages of this in certain Italian City States, but that even such an open empowerment of citizens all too often collapsed into chaos, the Guelphs vs the Ghibellines. The Blacks vs the Whites. City State against City State.

Heresy and the Pope

After about a month in Koblenz, I got Ockham around to discussing his issues with John XXII. This I knew would be a sensitive topic. John was now dead and Benedict was pope. Yet no matter how I had tried to intercede, the French Crown continued to insist that Ockham, Ludwig and all remain excommunicated. This was clearly a political decision. Benedict was upset but the political pressure was overwhelming and frankly Benedict was just too kind to confront the French. Thus the issue lingered. It was clear that Ockham had not gone to intellectual war with Benedict. But I sought to better understand the details with John. It was now a decade later and Ockham had continued his political writings, but had mellowed in his attack on Avignon.

I spent a day speaking with Ockham on this issue. He began by saying:

"Brendan, recall that what we call "Catholic truth" is that set of ideas it is necessary to believe to be a Catholic. The source of those ideas have been given to us by Christ and through his words in the Gospel. Now one generally considers any view inconsistent with this Catholic truth to be a heresy. Remember, Brendan, and this is critical, what we call Catholic truth is one of three things; first, anything that has been specifically taught in the Bible; second, anything that is universally accepted as Catholic truth by all Catholics at any given time; and third, anything revealed through divine revelation. This is the three-source theory of truth, and all three sources ultimately trace back to God. The first and last sources, the Bible and divine revelation, are relatively straightforward in how they provide truth. But the second source of Catholic truth, universal Catholic acceptance, is crucial to understand when considering the condemnation of John XXII as a heretic."

I stopped him and asked:

"But William, where do we find these three sources you refer to, why not just the Bible, and if we consider Divine Revelation, who has to get this revelation so we can all agree it is indeed Divine and not the ravings of some lunatic? The Bible is the Bible, yet even there we deal with interpretations. Consider just Augustine and Paul. Augustine interprets Paul in several ways, and they conflict. Then how do we get a resolution of conflicts amongst many people."

Ockham replied:

"The Bible is the essential source, it is the Word of God and it is for us to understand."

I continued:

"William, as I have traveled, I have seen and now speak at least a dozen tongues. Italian alone can change from town to town. A word in Bologna, is not the same in Florence, nor in Ravenna, nor Padua. Moreover the Bible was written more than a millennium ago and in languages which even then had variations. It was not Latin, not even Hebrew. Some were Aramaic, others Greek, a Greek spoken a millennium ago, and if a language can change over 50 miles how much more can it change over 1,300 years! Thus a reliance on the Bible is more than a reliance on the old Vulgate. As Augustine would rely upon a fourth century Latin word, we now must try to interpret, and who says we do so properly?"

Ockham looked concerned. He was thinking before responding, something I had never seen before. He thought longer than I had ever seen him. He then replied:

"Brendan, your point is well taken. Let me try to answer. In the early days of the Church we had similar problems. We had heresies, or what was seen as heresies, such as Arianism. The solution was to use the Bible and to have a Council, and to then through the Councils reach a consensus. Councilarism has values, It allows a give and take but a process fundamentally relying on the Bible, so we can resolve these apparent or potential ambiguities. Would you not agree that the word and the process are then adequate?"

I replied:

"Possibly, it would be better than no process. As you also not it is better than a single person reaching such a conclusion. For the Bible does say somewhat unambiguously that the Apostle met and agreed, not that Peter mandated."

He replied:

"Well said. I agree. Now let me continue with heresy. Once a Catholic becomes a heretic the individual is no longer a genuine Catholic, because he doesn't believe the Catholic truths. Thus it is impossible for all Catholics to be mistaken about the same aspect of their faith at the same time, because this would result in there being a moment where all Catholics simultaneously fall into heresy, and so are not actually Catholics at all."

I replied:

"An interesting argument, William, continue."

He did:

"I would consider this to be impossible, because in the gospel of Matthew, Christ promised, "I will be with you always, until the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). If a time existed after Christ when because of universal heresy there were no genuine Catholics, then Christ's promise would be broken, and that is not possible. The faith could feasibly dwindle down to a single true individual, whilst everyone else is preaching heresy. But as long as one individual maintains the truth faith, Christ's promise will not be broken. It follows from this that if all Catholics believe a

certain proposition and there is absolutely no dissent, then it must be true. For all Catholics cannot be wrong at the same time, or they would all be heretics."

I smiled and said:

"Ah, that is Ockham speaking. I agree with your interpretation of Matthew, and your logic is as usual unassailable. Continue:

He did:

"Therefore if all Catholics have at some point agreed with a particular view, but some later dissent from that view, then the dissenters must be believing a heresy.

"But let me continue with this argument. Simply believing or espousing a heresy is not sufficient to make one a heretic. One may defend a heresy, and even: "if the individual were to defend heresy a thousand times, unknowingly mind you, with the express or implicit protestation that the individual is prepared to be corrected as soon as the individual recognizes their opinions to contradict the Catholic faith, then the individual should not be judged a heretic, even in front of the Pope."

"To become a heretic, one must not simply believe or espouse a heresy, but rather must believe it, and do so 'pertinaciously'. To believe something pertinaciously is to continue believing it even after a clear demonstration of it being false. Then and only then is it heresy."

He continued:

"There are many indicators that a heresy is being believed pertinaciously, such as when someone "shows by deed or by word that he does not firmly believe that the Christian faith is true and sound," or if he "says that some part of the New or Old Testament asserts something false or should not be accepted". Other indicators of pertinacity include attempting to force others to believe a heresy through violence, threats or decree rather than argument. Furthermore, if one is not willing to allow his view to be subject to the scrutiny of others, or is otherwise not open to "legitimate correction", then he may also be considered a heretic. A person is allowed to argue in favor of a heresy without punishment, if he honestly believes it is a correct interpretation of the Catholic faith, but he also must be open to opposing arguments that would serve to correct him. Furthermore, not only is this individual not to be punished, but other Catholics have a duty to protect him, at least until he has had the opportunity to present his case and potentially be corrected. This limited right to dissent is only granted to Catholics: anyone who explicitly rejects Catholicism need not be given such a benefit. What is important here is that one argues over how to interpret or practice Catholicism, and not over whether Catholicism per se is right or wrong."

Recalling the promise of Christ as relayed in Matthew 28:20, Ockham concludes that while the Church cannot err, any member of the Church is capable of erring, even to the point of becoming a heretic. The Pope, the bishops, clergy, or lay people all can become heretics. In this sense, the Pope is not in a position any different from anyone else in the Church. When something is Catholic truth, the Pope is under just as much an obligation to believe it.

By the time Ockham fled to Munich, he had examined three constitutions by Pope John XXII, and came to the conclusion that the Pope had fallen into heresy and was therefore no longer the legitimate Pope. Ockham said he found in these constitutions “a great many things that were heretical, erroneous, silly, ridiculous, fantastic, insane, and defamatory, contrary and likewise plainly adverse to orthodox faith, good morals, natural reason, certain experience, and fraternal charity.” (‘A Letter to the Friars Minor’ and Other Writings 4-5)

All three of the constitutions issued by John XXII and examined by Ockham were directed against the Franciscan doctrine of apostolic poverty that had been previously affirmed by Pope Nicholas III. As a Franciscan, William of Ockham defended this doctrine of apostolic poverty as a genuine interpretation of Catholicism. Apostolic poverty was practiced by followers of St. Francis, who took a vow of poverty in an attempt to emulate the lifestyle of Christ and forego earthly possessions in favor of spiritual rewards.

Franciscans, like Ockham, argued that Scripture justified apostolic poverty as seen in passages such as: “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven” (Matthew 19:21) or “No one can serve two masters... You cannot serve both God and Mammon” (Matthew 6:24). The Franciscans survived, despite their vows of poverty, by begging for food and the barest necessities of life. They did not own anything, individually or collectively, as other religious orders that took vows of poverty often did.

John XXII’s constitutions attacked many of the Franciscan arguments in support of their vows. Ockham considers this heretical. First, John XXII was espousing a heresy by repeatedly condemning the doctrine of apostolic poverty that had been established and agreed upon prior to John XXII being Pope. The Franciscans considered apostolic poverty a Catholic truth because they thought they could show that the Bible supported it. Second, the Pope held this heresy pertinaciously, as evidenced by his attempt to impose it on all his subjects, particularly the Franciscans. He issued his anti-poverty views as decrees, not as opinions to be considered or discussed. But once a heretic, John XXII forfeited any claim to be the genuine Pope and so needed to be removed.

Remember, a heretical Catholic is not really a Catholic at all. Consequently, when a Pope becomes a heretic, he is no longer the genuine Pope. The term “heretical Pope,” is strictly speaking a contradiction to Ockham. Thus John XXII was to be considered only a pseudo-Pope, and the dignity of the Church required that he be removed.

Ockham replied:

“There are some people who say that the Pope is of such great authority that as it pleases him he can condemn any assertion as heretical. Further, that the Pope cannot be damned but would be saved whatever he did. Yet to invest this much power in the Pope is to make slaves out of all Catholics, and that this is in conflict with Scripture.”

I replied:

"Has the Pope, any Pope, ever claimed to be infallible? If so, did any Pope have a Scriptural basis for this power of infallibility?"

Ockham concluded his commentary on heresy by saying:

"The Pope is not infallible. The Pope can fall into heresy just as easily as any other member of the Church. I tell you Brendan that Catholic truth is best established when dissent is allowed amongst the faithful. Yet it demands that the faithful be open to changing their views when confronted with evidence that refutes it. Dissent, based upon Scripture, dissent which is constituted by the Faithful, can and must overcome a heresy of even the Pope."

The Impact

After more than a month or so in conversing, I as the Student and Ockham as the Master, I thought that I had begun to see some understanding. But it was complicated, innovative, and required a sophisticated yet open mind. I wondered if anyone else would take the time to understand this. How would these ideas spread, how long would it take? The very concept of rights, people selecting their rulers, even their popes, property and the rights related thereto. After several months, peaceful but intellectually trying I had to return to England. King Edward had called me back to tutor his son, and I bid farewell to Ockham and Marsilius. Ockham was clearly delighted in the exchange, whereas Marsilius still stayed in his rigid mode of defending the Emperor. I desired to get back to being a physician, not just an adjunct thinker. But I was now returning with a totally different view of the world, a secular world, where people are citizens not subjects, and people are capable of making decisions on their own existence.

THE GAUNTLET (1340)

Travelling back to England was just reversing my way there. The King had returned before me with his entourage and I returned as just a mendicant Friar. As a Friar I could now just be part of the shadows that a King may see, but as a shadow I saw the individuals. I saw people as persons, I saw butchers, bakers, vintners, farmers, and each had their own tale to tell. Unlike Dante and his Divine Comedy with a collection of well-known persons, these were what would be called the unknown persons. Yet without them and their contributions the King would be of no use, no value.

I had been back at Greyfriars for a short while. On January 26 of 1340, Edward took the final step. It was not a battle but a proclamation. Namely, he proclaimed himself King of France. Needless to say this aggravated Philip and I gathered also seriously concerned Benedict. Thus far there had been skirmishes and contests, but this would mean an all-out war between Edward and Philip. I could see this as a battle between two personalities. Edward was becoming his grandfather, as I was to learn. Philip was assuming that France as an entity now existed and he was its King. Borders and land shifted like sands in the wind as did loyalties. Local lords treasured their lands and incomes but in both France and England the people were becoming mobile, moving from the serf like lives of a century earlier into the ever growing urban areas. Trades were expanding and the density of people in cities increased. Roads, which I gathered had

been of limited use a century before, now connected almost all major cities. Paris and Avignon were more than a trade route apart. It was a highway with a continual flow of people. Now Edward had declared himself King, and the next move was that of Philip.

DEATH OF BENEDICT; AVIGNON (1342)

Pope Benedict died in Avignon. I thought highly of him and was sad to see him pass. I knew his health was always poor, even as my patient, so it was no surprise. His successor was Clement VI. He was Pierre Rogier, the Benedictine who I had met at Fécamp Abbey along the Seine years earlier, in 1328 if I recall, and he was a tutor to a young Prince Charles, the son of the King John of Luxembourg. I recalled how we compared some of our efforts of tutoring, I with King Edward when he was the young Prince and his time in Paris, just a few years earlier. Frankly I never expected him to be selected Pope but given the French control over the Papacy there would be no other choice. Regrettably I saw Clement as an opposite to Benedict. I knew Benedict well, a humble and holy man.

I had seen him in his Bishopric and as Pope. Clement was akin to John, Benedict's predecessor. He most likely would return the papacy to a royal standing. Where Benedict was humble, Clement was effusive and self-promoting. His tutoring of young Charles he saw as an entry to royal status.

Edward asked that I return to Avignon. Before leaving I had to deal with young Thomas. He was now of an age to be formally educated and I obtained a position for him at Merton College. Thus before leaving I took him to Oxford and when he left Greyfriars I could see tears in the eyes of Sister Eleanor. She had done a wonderful job but now he was on his way to manhood. He was to study in the Arts and hopefully seek a career in the law. That would ensure him a position and an income. In fact he could return to London and seek a position at the Bar. But for the moment he would be safe in Oxford.

On my return, Edward had transport for me to Avignon. I travelled by ship, which I frankly preferred. Weeks on a horse even with comfortable stays in Inns gets wearing. I had a good ship's captain and I did not suffer from the sea sickness of many of the Royals. It took about three weeks, around Brittany, down past Gascony, along the Spanish coast, around the entry to the Mediterranean and to Marseille. A dual journey for the captain, trade and transport. More importantly, in each port I could listen to many people and gather information of great value. This is noted by writing it in Arabic, hoping that if lost and in the wrong hands they would be distracted at the least and oblivious at the best.

CHARLES AND KING JOHN IN AVIGNON (1343)

I arrived in Avignon and went to the Papal palace to announce myself. I had not yet seen Clement since he became Pope but I expected a presence similar to that of John. I was not then surprised when I was told by the Papal Secretary that I was to have an audience with Clement the following day at noon and I should come prepared. I was certain he knew I was there at the behest of Edward and as such I was an English agent. Yet he also knew that I had developed many close contacts in Avignon and he could not ignore this.

I stayed at the Franciscan convent, a places I now knew well. I cleaned and had a clean tunic. In fact the Friars insisted I wear a relatively new one since I was meeting the Pope. I went early as was my style and when I arrived the Secretary, a Dominican in an elegant black and white tunic, immediately ushered me to the Pope's large dining room. Large windows, wonderful light, as is the case in this part of the world. He was standing speaking with another Dominican when I entered and he turned and smiled as I approached. I greeted him and it was clear that he had assumed all the trappings of the Pope John days. But alas he could do whatever he so desired. He then said to me:

"Father Brendan, we meet again. Are you still tutoring the good King Edward?"

It was a strange way to greet me but it told me several things. First he knew I was Edward's agent, second that he did not like Edward, third that he was pro French, and fourth that I would be carefully watched. I chose my reply carefully:

"Your Holiness, it is good to see you again. As for my days tutoring, I have done so with orphans and not Kings. As we all know, Kings do not take to tutoring very well."

He laughed and ask that I sit. Then a wonderful meal was delivered to the table. As was my wont, I drank the red wine and ate but the bits of bread. He then said:

"Brendan, we know your position with King Edward, and you have been his agent from time to time. I will treat you as such, and you must realize that others will also. But since as my predecessor sought that peace is the best alternative, then we both can work towards that end. Yes?"

I replied:

"Your Holiness, I am the messenger for Edward, perhaps as you are aware only one such messenger, for we all know there are many voices here at Avignon. I agree we want peace. I truly hope that King Philip feels the same. I will be honest and direct with you, Holiness, and since we both know Avignon, we shall do our best."

He smiled and said:

"You have become a better diplomat with time. How is Ockham and your other Franciscan friends?"

I knew it would eventually arise. It was clear Clement read Ockham which would do nothing but set a fire. I replied:

"William is a good friend. Yet as you know his opinions may at times be seen as quite, shall we say, at odds with Kings and Popes. I am a physician by training, that I am good at and enjoy. Philosophy and theology, and especially politics, they are areas I try to tread lightly upon."

Clement responded:

"That is good. Ockham has developed many enemies, and yes many adherents. As for medicine, we have a hospital here in which I am pleased to see you assist. I shall see that you have complete access. Now, try some of the berries, they are wonderful with the fresh cream."

The banter continued for an hour more and then we parted.

I remained in Avignon at the request of Pope Clement, and continuing to serve at the local hospital for the sick. From time to time I was drawn into the Papal Palace to discuss issues regarding the French and English but this time it was different. King John of Luxembourg was arriving and accompanied by his son, now called Charles. Charles had been educated in France, at Paris as well as elsewhere. John was known to be a wandering monarch, although he was titular head of Prague and Bohemia. From my understanding, John was disliked in Bohemia as an absent monarch. He come to collect funds for his wanderings and did nothing for the people. Charles on the other hand had taken up the interests of the Bohemians and sought Prague as his home. I had never been to Prague but it was a deeply religious city as was all Bohemia.

The Pope sought my attendance for two reasons. First to understand the young Charles and second because John had been having serious problems with his vision and the Pope asked if I could examine the King. The two of them arrived in mid-March of 1343 if I recall correctly. They arrived at the Papal palace about mid-day. They were greeted by a Bishop, whose name I did not recall, and then were shown to quarters to refresh themselves.

Early that evening King John and Charles came to the great Papal Palace hall for a dinner at which I was requested to attend. King John did indeed show his age, I suspect from a great deal of travel and poor diet. John was of medium height and Germanic in face but thin and almost gaunt. He was not a muscular man but he dressed well. His son Charles, who had been tutored by Pope Clement when younger in France, was of a different facial feature, one I had seen from time to time in Bologna, the Slavic race seen in the cheekbones and eyes. He was fair, well-built and had a self-assured presence.

The Pope embraced the King, formally, whereas he embraced Prince Charles warmly as a former loved tutor would. Clement then introduced me to them both. He said:

"King John, Prince Charles, this is Father Brendan, a physician and presence here at Avignon. I have known Father Brendan for some time, and I thought it may be useful for us to meet. As I was your tutor Prince Charles, Father Brendan was tutor to King Edward. Thus he and I have some important things in common. Also Father Brendan is a well-respected physician, educated at Oxford, Montpellier, and Bologna, from whence he holds a Doctor's degree, which I am told even makes him a Knight! We don't call him Sir Brendan though, in fact he insists we just call him Brendan. It must be his Irish heritage. Come let us sit and tell me how things are going in our somewhat troubled world."

I am continually amazed how I am introduced to people. It all too often tells me more about them and their agenda than anything about me. Politics is such a messy trade. The sick often are so

difficult to extract the truth from, yet politicians are much worse. I keep being drawn into this world, but it is interesting to watch them all play out the same script.

I sat across from King John, and as I examined him from afar I was shocked to realize he was a year younger than me. He was born in 1296 and I in 1295. I was now 48 and he 47. But his face was lined, his eyes sagged underneath, the color was gone from his eyes, it was what I had seen in both Montpelier and Bologna, the clouding in certain older people. Yet he was not as old as some I had seen. It was the whitening of the eyes. I could see he had some difficulty seeing but he still had some vision. I could also see that he and his son were potential competitors for power. I guess this was a common trait.

King John, after common social discussions, led to the issue at hand. It appears that Prague, the main city in Bohemia, wanted to have an archbishop. Prague was the only city of its importance in this part of Europe without any such position. John said:

"Your Holiness, Prague and all of Bohemia are left behind if we cannot attain such a position. I ask that you grant us such a recognition."

The Pope, as any politician, deflected this a bit. He had done his preparation, and no Pope answers a question when one is posed. They all seem to have the art of elegant deflection, oftentimes making the petitioner feel less worthy. Thus Clement replied:

"King John, I understand that you spend little time if any in Bohemia, especially Prague, despite the fact that your Queen herself is from there. Thus, perhaps that is more a reflection of the lesser importance. Or am I to gather a change is occurring?"

John tried to answer but young Charles caught the intent and he responded before his father could:

"Your Holiness, you know my love of my homeland, and especially Prague. Our people are true believers, true spreaders of the faith and loyal and faithful to the Papacy. As such, perhaps some understanding. But first, let me assure you, when I become King, as you see my father is ailing, I will take up residence in Prague, and there clearly will be the need of such an archbishop. Prague will become the bastion of the true faith, home to supporters of the Papacy."

One could see the almost annoyed astonishment on the face of King John. Then Pope Clement turned to John and spoke:

"My son John, I can truly appreciate your sincere approach to us in granting Prague such a position. Permit me to consider for the night and in the morning I shall give you my answer. I just need some brief moment to pray upon this. Now let us enjoy the dinner."

We ate a wonderful meal, but in my standard fashion I passed on many of the delicacies, wondering what the poor starving people just a few miles hence would wonder. John consumed much wine and Charles chattered with the Pope as a young student with a teacher. John asked me about the intentions of Edward and his battles with Philip. I deflected all speculation.

We retired and the next morning we were told to meet mid-day, again in the Papal reception room. The Pope entered and we all sat. Clement then spoke:

"Upon consideration, and consultation, I will appoint an archbishop to Prague. I am assured that with you King John and in turn with Charles, that the Church will prosper in all of Bohemia. You and go back and tell your people that we honor their great faith with this appointment."

John and Charles were quite grateful. The Pope gave them a copy of the appointment and as we finished the Pope called John to his side and in my presence said:

"John, my son, Brendan here is a highly talented physician. He has saved many lives and helped many sick. If you are so inclined I offer his services to see what can be done with your sight. Will you have an interest in meeting with him privately. We assure you that all would be kept in the closest of confidence."

John looked both surprised and grateful. I was shocked how bluntly the Pope presented this but there clearly was a problem. John agreed to stay and that he would submit to my examination. The Pope assigned a time and location and we departed until then.

The next day King John came to a private room in the Papal Palace which was secluded but beautifully decorated with some Roman and Greek statues. That surprised me since generally such art was not held in great esteem. The King sat before me in front of a window with the morning light. I managed to examine his eyes by holding his head and moving it while I asked him to hold a steady forward view. I then tested his vision from lateral to up and down. I examined the color of his lens, it was somewhat clear but had the greenish hue. The oculist Grassus had used the term gutta serena to describe a form of blindness. The eye did not have a white blockage of a blocked lens but the greenish hue of a more solid orbit. The King could see in certain directions but not in others.

I wondered if a more complete examination would be worth the asking but I realized the King was more concerned about his vision. He then asked:

"Well, doctor, what do you say?"

I replied:

"Your Majesty, unfortunately your vision is slowly disappearing. There is a blockage of the lens which is developing in the orbit, the body of the eye. If this development is not stopped you will go blind. Now for stopping it..."

He was not surprised. He did reply:

"How long do I have if I cannot stop it?"

I replied:

"It is uncertain, it varies. Yet from what I see, you may have two, perhaps four years until your vision will be unusable."

He then asked:

"What medications are available?"

I replied:

"I have seen some Arab medications and some Greek ones. I have read of a plant called pilocarpus, whose extract can assist. Also a belladonna extract, the vine with the purple berries, may help. Yet as you yourself already know, there has been great damage. I suspect you have had this for several years already."

He answered:

"Yes, I have. Can you try to get the medication?"

I replied:

"I will try. I will stay in contact. Does your son know?"

He replied:

"Yes, he suspects, but he is not aware as to the severity. I will tell him. Thank you Doctor."

I replied:

"My prayers are with you your Majesty."

He rose, walked slowly from the window into the shadows and back to his room. The Pope came in shortly thereafter and said:

"I spoke with him. It is always a shame to lose one's vision. The world slowly disappears and you drift into yourself. He sees himself as a warrior. That may very well be over. I thank you for your care and kindness. I ask you to get to know his son. Charles will soon be the successor. We need to have him hold the center for the Church."

I replied that I would. The following day Charles came to see me. He asked to walk in the Papal Gardens, to talk. I did so and he said:

"I want to thank you. My father told me the results. I will be available if you can get some medications. He still wants to continue as King and as a leader of his army. That will be difficult. I did want to talk with you about a separate issue. The Pope said you went to Oxford, Montpellier, Bologna. You have the best universities in the Christian world if not all the world. I

want to bring this to Prague. I want Prague to have a university as great as others. Could you help me to this end? Some thoughts, on what to be studied, who would be the instructors, how to organize. Would this be possible?"

I replied:

"Yes your Highness, I would be pleased to do so. As things progress, I would be pleased to visit Prague. I have been to Munich, but no further east. Let us continue to communicate and I can arrange a trip to visit you shortly."

That was the last we spoke for a while.

After a few weeks I was to return to London. The Pope asked that I go through Paris and meet Philip to assess his intentions. Then to speak with Edward as well and then to let him know what the status of the engagements are. There had been several exchanges of hostilities but we all feared that Edward would retaliate against Philip. Furthermore Philip would do in kind and this would quickly get out of hand. I set out by the land route north to Lyons and then on to Paris.

My greatest concern was that unlike Benedict, who was a realist, Clement was a Frenchman first, Pope second. He believed that he had control over Edward. I had tried gently to let him know that his assumptions were wrong. Also unlike Benedict, Clement saw Philip as mature and rational, and that in this succession battle where Edward had the facts behind him, that Philip stood on weak grounds. Furthermore, no matter how I tried to let Clement understand Edward, he saw Edward as a vassal. Edward was clearly no vassal of any Pope. In fact the English as a people loved Edward and respected him more than any Pope. Clement, like John, did not understand the changing times. They totally missed the evolving thoughts from those like Ockham and Marsilius. My assignment to cajole both parties was an unlikely task targeting success. I would expect Edward, respectfully, to listen to my report, then do whatever he so desired. That would not entail peace with France.

BACK TO LONDON (1344)

I left for Paris in January of 1344. Why January I really did not know but Clement wanted me to meet Philip and then Edward. There was somewhat of a peace, Edward was back in England and Brittany was a bit calm. It was clear that Clement, unlike Benedict, was pro French, and he was using me as well as many others to provide a balance between Edward and Philip. Edward clearly had reached a level of confidence and capability but he was also running short on funding his war. I would travel through the mountain roads and it was both a cold and snowy winter. I was accompanied by several other Franciscans going on towards Paris, and we may have appeared as just an ordinary group of Friars. Hopefully we could be kept free of the war.

Unfortunately when arriving in Paris the King was not there. I stayed a few days but to no avail. I then proceeded back to London and reported to Edward. Listening to Edward and his complaints I knew the next step would be war. Just what type of war I did not know.

OFF TO FRANCE (1346)

Thomas finished his Bachelor of Arts in June of 1346. He was just about seventeen and as he saw war pending with France he got it into his head that he wanted to be part of this.

Unbeknownst to me he had met Prince Edward, the two almost the same age, when the Prince had gone up to Oxford. The two became friendly. Thomas then asked the Prince if he could be one of his squires, and without hesitation the Prince apparently said yes. Unfortunately Thomas had not asked anyone, not me, not Sister Eleanor, and definitely not Isabella.

Thomas came down to London in June and met with me. I asked what he was to do now and he said:

"Oh wonderful news Father, I am to be a squire to the Prince, is that not wonderful."

Needless to say my response was less than glee. I said:

"Are you out of your mind! You are a scholar, off to study the law! You have never seen a sword, you have never helped a knight with their armor, you are clueless about warfare! Whose idea was this!"

Poor Thomas had never seen such a response. He then proceed in a logical manner to "explain" to me that he knew the Prince, they were friendly, the Prince had trained him as a squire from time to time at Oxford, and that he had asked the Prince and the Prince was delighted to have his new friend. He then told me that the King apparently was happy since the King was my friend.

I nearly stopped breathing. How did all of the pieces come together and I never had a clue. Some spy I was. I could tell the King of the moves all over the continent but had no idea as to my own "orphan". I now dreaded Isabella, she would be on my doorstep.

Indeed, the next day her royal carriage came to the Greyfriars, and she bolted from the carriage and screamed as she entered, her garments blowing in her wake:

"Where is Brendan, get me Brendan!"

Her rants were not "Father", "Friar", "Doctor", no, it was screaming for an errant child. I came out and said:

"My lady, let us take a walk, away from the convent, we assuredly do not want to advertise this to all about."

She kept her mouth shut until we walked to the herb garden, empty of friars, who saw us coming and ran like birds on a beach. She then said:

"What have you done! My son, my grandson, my other son, my cousin, and my nephew, they are all to slash each other up in battle. How did Thomas do this, this is insane!"

I replied:

"My lady, first let me tell you about Thomas"

I proceeded to tell her. She at first thought this a conspiracy from the King, then the Prince, then the Pope, then King Philipp, then to me she said finally:

"You mean this all "just happened"?"

I looked calm and said:

"Yes my lady, they all know nothing, and it just happened."

She walked intently around the herb bushes as they were growing in the early summer. She then came to me and said firmly:

"Then you are going with them. You are to be there to be certain that no one is hurt! Do you understand?"

I replied:

"In a battle between French and English knights, on horse, with swords..."

She stopped me and said:

"Don't make excuses. You can do these things. You have this power, whatever, to make things happen. So make them happen. I put my family in your hands. Bring them back, do you understand me?"

I replied:

"Yes my lady."

The she turned again and said:

"Oh yes, and under no circumstances are you to be hurt. No circumstances. You are to return to me as you are now. Do you understand!"

I replied again:

"Yes my lady."

She turned and went back to the carriage. A young Friar just recently come to London was hiding behind a shrub. He poked his head out with eyes bulging. I smiled and said:

"Women!"

He jumped up and scurried away.

The King saw that war was inevitable. We were to go to France and address the issue with Philip and his forces. I had managed to get Thomas to go with me. He would now act as a squire to the young Prince Edward. Strange how these things work. Isabella was concerned, and I told her I would take care that Thomas would be safe. Yet as I was to find out, the squire can be in as much is not more danger than their knight. An even more so that Edward was at times a bit reckless, desiring to prove himself. Little did I know but that the King had me along to be there in the event that the Prince were to be injured in battle. I was his guardian, somewhat after the fact. I had never been in any battle but I knew that the risks were.

I went with the King and Prince to Portsmouth and after what seemed a long time, several weeks, we finally sailed out of Portsmouth. It was July 11, 1346, and the weather was finally clear and the winds in the correct direction and steady. There were, what some said, as many as 1,000 ships, a collection of many types, carrying what may have easily been 10,000 men, horses, and supplies. It took a short time to cross and we arrived on 12 July, 1346 on the Normandy coast just south-southeast of Harfleur at a town called Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue. The Normandy coasts are rocky with some sand and many have steep inclines rising up to the land. This often meant that moving men and material and horses was a long and complex process. However here we met a combination of marshy land and a small harbor, well less that what we would need for the number of ships. I wandered ashore and up to the small ridge to watch the process. I could see the King and his men coordinating the move and the young Prince was in the thick of this mess. This would be the Prince's first pass through real battle. I hope that if he did come to some harm that my facilities would be up to that moment.

The horses were anxious to disembark and they often jumped before they could be led, and this was risky because they could easily land on the rocky subsurface and break their legs. Much of the shore here was sandy, but with stones within the sand. The tide was going out and it would leave many of the ships stranded on the sand flats themselves if they were not unloaded quickly. There was thus a rush to unload as quickly as possible, and unfortunately the ships could not get as close to shore as possible. If the tide did go out then getting to solid land would be through the sandy beach which was not solid enough and was nearly mud like.

Ten thousand or more men, the horses, the equipment, the armor; it was a massive undertaking. I continued to wonder why the King was so anxious to go this full way. He felt slighted by Philip, and Philip was both stubborn and frankly a bit slow, for this war could have easily been avoided by Philip accepting Edward, and Edward respecting Philip. But now it was one ego against another. The reckless driver of "honor" was sure to lead to unnecessary blood spilled on both sides. I frankly saw this as an immoral act, but Popes have never said a great deal about this. Thus I held my counsel.

By July 22 we reached the town of St. Lo. It had been ten days of destruction thus far and St. Lo was no exception. The men rode into the town, weakly defended, and set fire to homes after having taken what few things the resident had. Livestock was slaughtered, animal blood made the ground red and the air heavy with blood. Men, old and young were hacked down by the

Knights on horseback. Even the churches were invaded and church chalices and other gold remnants ripped from the walls and altar. The gore of these men, driven not by and form of defense, but by sheer evil, destroying and killing, with a lust. The King gave them permission, the Pope was without comment. I now understood why so many Irish hated the English, since this was an all too common practice. Edward and now the Prince showed pride in their troops destroying the small town and its inhabitants.

On 26 July Edward attacked and captured Caen. Again a raping of the town. He spent a short while here, sleeping and replenishing his food and drink, and the next day, leaving a small number of troops behind he drove forward. The dead lined the streets. They were unarmed civilians, many older and women, also many children. Again, I asked myself why he was so blood thirsty. Why this brutal treatment of just local people, unarmed, innocent!

On August 1 we entered the town of Lisieux. We were met by two Cardinals sent by the Pope. I had hoped this would slow Edward down from his rampage. Edward asked that I accompany him when he met with the Cardinals. I was anxious to see what they had to offer. It was comforting to see the Pope engaged. The Cardinals presented Edward with various concessions from Philip, ranging from marriage proposals amongst family members, and others. However, it was clear that Edward had tasted blood and he rejected them all. The Cardinals said they would confer again with Philip and return to Edward, wherever he was. I was convinced that Edward was now filled with rage and his only goal was to engage in a battle, wherever with Philip. When the Cardinals left, the town of Lisieux was pillaged. One could, I imagine, if one were a bird, look down and see a smoldering path of destruction outlining Edward's path. Was this a strategy to draw Philip out and meet Edward, or was it as I suspected just the immoral madness of a King.

DOWN THE SEINE (1346)

For the next month the Army moved towards Paris, with the intent of engaging Philip and his forces. Edward marched in such a manner so as to cause as much harm and damage as possible, burning every town, crops, farm animals. He and his men slaughtered many local people, men, women and at times even children. This was more of the chevauchee, the attack on horseback of Knights and other men at arms, living and prospering off the lands. They plundered and stole whatever they could find, loading their booty upon wagons to be taken back with them to England. War was a game to them and a game where the winner got whatever they could collect from the loser.

On August 8th we reached the Seine. The scouts told Edward that across the Seine was Philip and his troops. The question now was: where to cross. Philip had downed many of the regular bridges and there was now means. Thus day after day we travelled south towards Paris, and getting glimpses of the following of Philip, yet no point to cross. From August 13 through the 16th Edward tried to cross the Seine as we approached Paris. I recalled the river well from my prior trips. It winds back and forth, yet is impassable for a force such as Edwards. On the 16th Philip abruptly turned north and away from Paris. Scouts from Edward's forces had been tracking his movements. It was a game of cat and mouse, and I wondered if the two armies would ever meet or was Philip merely trying to exhaust Edward.

Edward thought of entering Paris now that it was unattended but instead we headed north to follow Philip, this time crossing the Seine south of Pontoise. Then for the next week, until August 22 we tracked Philip north to Abbeville. Here we faced the problem of crossing the Somme. This I had not seen before. The French forces had reached the Somme well before Edward and his forces. The problem now was to cross this river. Like the Seine if needed a place where all the forces and support could cross without attack.

Edward had scouts recommend a shallow part of the Somme, where he could get his entire army across. This was called the Blanchetaque ford, a wide but shallow ford in the river, and shallow enough to get all the forces across. Initially some Genoese scouts saw they army and tried to stop them but to no avail. It appeared as a waste of human life but these men seemed to thrive on combat. I had never fully understood this. Whereas the foot soldiers, drafted by their lords to serve, gathered around fires and complained, and were fearful of a useless death and the waste of humanity, the more royal the man the more intense the desire to go into combat. It was reckless behavior if anything.

CRECY (1346)

Having finally crossed over the river Somme and heading towards Abbeville, and I could see that the action would occur only when both armies were across from one another, and that would mean that Philip had chosen the location, not Edward. We headed past Abbeville towards Crecy and a field just outside, past a small forest. This took most of the day.

I had seen some skirmishes along the way, but this would be my first exposure to a true battle. There was a large field, many acres of open land. Edward had some 9,000 troops, a goodly number by the French had, including their supporters some 27,000. That was a three to one advantage in forces. King Edward asked that I stay close to the young Prince. This would be the first battle of size that the young Prince would be in and it was expected that he would want to present well to all.

The field outside of Crecy then would be where the French would be joined. It was late mid-day on the 26th of August, about 5 PM by the clock. Edward lined his forces on the west side of the field outside the woods of Crecy. Philip aligned his on the east side, lower down from the incline that was an advantage for Edward. On the south side of Edwards forces in the vanguard was the Prince and I was behind him. It had been a long and hot day and all the men were in full armor, and most likely with increasing thirst. Aside the Prince were the Welsh archers. I wondered how this more opportune positioning of opposing forces occurred. It appeared to be by default the choice of Philip.

Edward's troops were lined upon a rise, with the sun to their backs, Philip had his troops coming across the meadow. Just before the battle it rained, a short brisk rain, and suddenly the field became a slippery mass of mud. I also noticed that Edward's archers took their strings off to protect them from the rain, placing them under their helmets. I wondered what Philip's Genoese

archers would do with cross bows. One could not remove them as easily. Left on and getting wet would stretch them and reduce any force on the arrows by a great degree.

The sun came out and the Genoese marched forward. As they began, two large black crows abruptly rose from the field and screeching, moved skyward. I suspected that many of the troops would see this as some omen. For me it was just a wise thing for the crows to do, anticipating the thousands of armed men soon on the attack. The Genoese walked again and again, and I could see them slipping on the mud, making it worse each time they stepped upon it. At 200 yards they fired their cross bows, no success, at 175 yards they did the same and no effect. At 150 yards they again tried, no effect. Their wet strings just did not work. Then Edward's archers let loose with their volleys. It was as if Hell opened up and a rain of death ensued. I thought of Dante and Inferno. Hell's shafts of death set loose piercing human and horse equally! The sky was almost black with the cloud of arrows flying towards the Genoese. They then turned to retreat but as they did, slipping in the muddy field, falling under the continuous flow of arrows, the cavalry of Philip and his allies charged, charged and drove right over the Genoese. The death toll mounted by the second, crushed bodies and the ground turning red with blood, cries of men being crushed.

Then another mass of arrows, and the Knights in the charge are thrown from their mounts, as the horses are killed with the multiple arrow strikes. The Knights have some protection but the closer they get the stronger the arrow blows and the more likely they pierce the armor, and blood appears below on their legs from multiple body wounds. The sun was getting lower and it was not almost directly in the eyes of the attacking forces. Not only the arrows, but they were blinded.

Finally as the Knights approached the Prince's line, the new cannons roared forth. This I gather was the first that such a weapon was used. The noise was alone terrifying. Then the charges, the chunks of sharp metal, flew out into the charging Knights ripping both horse and rider. The level of blood just jumped tremendously, the ground now truly red with blood, horse and human. I thought that once these cannons could be perfected, and they soon would be, they would likely replace the horse. I saw Thomas on the side of the Prince. The two of them were close to the front, well exposed to the attacking knights. Then suddenly a French knight managed to get aside the Prince and hit him with his sword knocking off his horse and upon the ground. It was then when I saw Thomas run in front of the prince with a sword, with no armor, and swing the sword in a manner that kept three other knights at a distance until the Prince could right himself. Then the two of them stood the ground, fending off what was now almost half a dozen French knights. I turned on my horse and rode full speed to the two of them, for all I could think of was a screaming Isabella! One English knight picked up my pace, threw me a broad sword, and the two of us took on what were now eight French knights. This small battle lasted a few minutes but soon the French were surrounded by English knights and the Prince and Thomas were relatively unharmed. I dismounted and ran to the two of them. The Prince was fine but Thomas had a deep sword cut on his left calf. I told the Prince that I must care for him and he had Thomas carried back to the tents. There I cleaned the wound and sutured it up. Thomas wanted to rejoin the Prince immediately. I held him back until he was ready to do so. I then went back to the battle.

DEATH OF KING JOHN OF LUXEMBOURG MEET CHARLES (1346)

The battle had been joined and the English archers has masterfully laid a sea of deadly arrows across the French men at arms. Death was everywhere. As the battle raged, King John of Luxembourg led an attack on the English left flank. He was now quite old at the time, a year younger than I was, but to go to battle one needs youth and strength. I was also led to understand he was now almost near blind. I had examined him a few years back while he and his son were at Avignon, and even then his vision was poor. Why this man was even in a battle, no less leading the charge, was incomprehensible. Yet he was the only one who did not see the impact of the sun on the attack. Perhaps that is what controlled his judgement. His men followed without question. Philip's Knights retreated and John decided to take one last charge.

As he charged, apparently his horse gave out from under him and he was toppled off the horse only to be covered by the beast, perhaps the horse was killed by the cloud of arrows. But the ground at this point was so slippery with water, blood, mud, from all the action that it was to any other man just a killing field. He was recovered, again apparently with little harm but then again in battle he was severely wounded. King Edward was told of this by his son, the Prince, who wanted to finish the attack and slay John. I found that an immoral act, but this being my first encounter in battle I kept my peace. Yet the King, having a true Christian sense as well as a semblance of what we called Chivalry, asked me to see John. King Edward called me to his side, and said:

"Brendan, the battle still wages but King John deserves respect of a King, and if we can do anything to assist him we should. Please attend him and we shall hold our attack so as to protect you. He lays to our right flank, and his son Charles may be there as well. I believe you may have known him from Paris? I shall have Sir Steven of Bristol accompany you holding a white cover, that should alert the French and their allies. You will have a white sleeve covering as well. Be cautious my friend, and God be with you."

Sir Steven and I rode towards where King John was struck. The English gave us liberty to move freely, and the French forces also were laid aside. Frankly I had a sense of abject terror, my first time on a battle field, amidst death and dying, pain, blood, and body parts. War is obscene and this was a reminder of my days reading Dante. Dante must have experienced this useless act of humanity. We arrived at the site where King John lay and he was still breathing but I could see him wounded and covered in blood. I met a Knight in their retinue, one Vaclav, apparently a Czech from Prague. He spoke a little German and no French. He saw me as a Friar and stepped back. I got to the King and bent down to examine him. He opened his eyes and said:

"Friar, can you give me last rites, for I have no way to survive these wounds."

His eyes were not clear but now translucent at the very best. I had seen this many times before, the eyes of the aged clouding over so that sight becomes so limited that one is blind. The disease I had diagnosed in Avignon had progressed rapidly. His wounds were in his abdomen, and the bleeding was significant. He must have been cut with a sword. He was quite old for someone in battle, and clearly he should not have been in this position. I began to remove his tunic, his armor had already been removed. I cleaned the wound with some clear white wine, carefully removing whatever dirt remained. The wound was deep, penetrating into his bowels. I knew such a wound

would be fatal. The King could not see me as a result of his blindness and I spoke softly so perhaps he could not hear as well.

As I finished my cleansing, and tried to make him comfortable, a rider approached dressed in the most elegant of armor. He was helped off his horse and walked towards me and the King. He removed his helmet and I saw at once it was the young Prince, King John's son, Charles.

Charles did not see me at first, just my tunic. He said:

"Priest, clear the way, I am here for my father!"

Charles always did have a sense of the regal but the three years and the battle reinforced that tendency. He acted without seeing what was about him. That is a common response of all nobility. My time with Ockham and especially Marsilius taught me that. I slowly turned my head towards Charles and said:

"Prince, be cautious, he is in great discomfort."

The Prince stepped back, suddenly recognizing me from our days in Paris. He replied now softly:

"Friar Brendan, my apologies. My father, how is he?"

I stood and drew the Prince to the side, holding his shoulders in the broad metal suit he wore, and said:

"Prince, I feel he shall not live long, the wound is deep and in a bad location, cutting through where it did. I suggest you speak with him and he has asked me for Last Rites, which I will give when you both agree. My sorrow goes with you. This war is bloody."

He said:

"Brendan, how did you arrive here? From whence did you come?"

I replied:

"King Edward had me as a physician to his son. The King, when he saw your father had fallen, had me come here to assist, whatever I could do. Sir Steven is my escort. I have brought my physician supplies as well as my priestly one. I suspect the latter will be of use."

He bowed his head, thinking, then said:

"I would then guess that at least there is still some chivalry in this battle. Let me speak with my father."

The two spoke for several minutes and then the Prince arose and said to me:

"It is time Brendan for the Last Rites."

I bent down, heard a last confession, gave absolution, then communion and proceeded with the anointing. Just as I finished the King expired. I closed his eyes, folded his arms across his chest. The Prince came over and looked upon his father as Knights laid him upon several shields joined together and his body taken from the field. The Prince came to me and embraced me and I him. He asked that I pray for his father's soul. I agreed. We then parted.

As I returned to where Prince Edward was I saw all the bodies, strewn across a field of blood, hacked arms, legs, heads, idles swords, dying horses and men. One could smell the fresh blood in the air, it was overpowering. I wondered what these men are doing all of this for. This land has been moved back and forth between rulers for ages.

When I dismounted and went to where I could rest, I saw that my tunic has been splattered with blood. The bottom was soaked from the splashed bloody grounds as I rode across the field of battle. I had managed to give a Last Rites blessing to all across the field, but death in battle is a futile attempt to achieve glory, and I began to feel it was glory of but one man! Marsilius was right.

The battle continued, the English long bow archers sent cloud after deadly cloud of arrows flying across the skies into the French troops/ The power of these projectiles was terrifying. One could see them hit their mark, piercing through a shield and then the bodies behind them. Men were pierced with several arrows, falling upon the bodies of others. This was not so much a battle than a slaughter. I saw young Prince Edward show almost glee in the blood sport.

As I moved backward from the line of fire a stray Genoese arrow made its way to me and I was struck down with a steel tipped arrow through my calf. I fell into the mud, and at first the pain was un-noticed, but the arrow stuck out through my soiled tunic. My indication of damage was seeing my own blood coating my right foot, and deepening as the moments went by. Then the pain set in. I dropped to my knees and the Prince saw me and sent three Knights to assist. They carried me back to the Prince's tent and I was placed upon a cot. A surgeon arrived but I demurred and told him I would take care of it myself. I ordered my kit and washed the wound first in distilled wine, then cut the arrow shaft so as to remove the arrow head. I pulled it out swiftly, and the pain was somewhat severe. I cleaned the wound again and then wrapped it in clean cloth, allowing it to drain. The bleeding continued for a short while and I could feel the light headedness that many who are wounded suffer from. I managed to lie still for a while and kept my leg raised. Later the Prince arrived and was pleased that I had survived. I assured him that I was equally pleased. He did not notice my response and started to recount the victory of the day. For me, I was to return to London as soon as possible, and keeping my leg intact. I had moved from the healer to the healed. Hopefully.

The next morning the King came to me to see my condition. I was in some discomfort but I guess I now qualified as a military surgeon, albeit self-taught. He thanked me for treating John. He then said:

"Brendan, you know that young man, Thomas, he saved the Prince and fought gallantly. He was truly brave and I gather he just finished Merton. He has a great future. I am to knight him today for his gallantry, can you come with us?"

I was more shocked of this than the arrow. What will Isabella say to me now. I had more fear of Isabella than any in the battle. I agreed and that day Thomas became Sir Thomas Maynard.

LONDON (1347)

I was sent up the Somme to the Channel with several other Knights and with the booty collected along the way. At the mouth of the Somme we waited two days and we were taken aboard one of Edwards ships which was sailing in anticipation of a retreat. We got aboard and sailed north towards Calais a bit then across the Channel, it took but two days and I kept treating my wounds, which had ceased bleeding and seemed to be healing. I tried to deal with the others who were injured but the Knights feigned strength and yet I could see that their wounds would leave permanent harm. I managed to regain my strength but after weeks of not bathing or being in any manner clean, I longed for a chance to return to normalcy. We sailed to Dover and then north east around Margate to the mouth of the Thames and then up the Thames. Passing Greenwich made me have a sense of comfort.

I wondered where Edward and the Prince were off to now. Clearly Crecy was a victory, but of what value. It is not as if he would be any better off, he was still King of the Brits, and Gascony was still a mess, and Philip, albeit a loser on the field of battle, still reined. A victory, yes, but strategically for what? Kings did not think strategically. As I recovered, several things came back to me in my talks with Ockham. Here is a King and a Prince, who seem to get more blood thirsty by the day, and they are taking from their subjects as if it was theirs to do what they will. The subjects have no voice, and further many can be forced to fight, with little to gain and their lives to lose. How, using Ockham's ideas, could these people choose their own leader. Also by what right does a King, a Prince, have to slaughter innocents, town after town, butchered, men, women, children, driven into the dirt by Knights, who all felt they were on some holy mission. Where is the Church, it defends, it excuses, it allows this to happen. Until one sees the waste, the abject slaughter, on a field of battle, the words of Ockham are just abstractions, in contrast to the dying screams of the innocent.

When I arrived back at Greyfriars, news of my arriving had reached Isabella and she was there. I walked from the river's edge to Greyfriars and she was pacing in the front. Thomas had returned

and his wound had healed and he went first to Sister Eleanor. He did not see Isabella, which I believe added to her pretended fury. When I walked to the front of Greyfriars she first said:

"We must talk, Brendan, now, to the herb garden."

Again the friars in attendance fled like a flock of birds as a cat approached with its catch in tow. As we reached our now usual conference location she said:

"Thomas is injured!"

I replied:

"Yes my lady but I took care of him. It meant I could send him home."

She continued as if I said nothing:

"And now he is a knight! How did that happen! I thought he was an orphan, now he is welcome at Court, how does this happen, can't you control anything! I am to see him now at Court, what am I to do?"

I tried to reply:

"My lady..."

She ran on:

"And you, I told you not to be injured, you were struck with an arrow, it could have killed you..."

I stopped her and said:

"That is why they call it war, my lady."

She replied:

"Don't interrupt me when I am yelling!"

She then just walked around saying nothing. Finally she said:

"How are my son and grandson?"

I replied:

"They seem to be having a fine time my lady. Crecy was a victory and Phillip must start to reconsider his actions."

She turned and said:

"Thank you, thank you Brendan."

Tears were in her eyes as she went back to her carriage. Then the dozen or so friars who had been there came back in and looked at me with pity. One actually patted me on the back and said that they understood. I did not, but it is Royalty. Back I went to Saint Barts!

CHAPTER 12 (1347-1352) THE PLAGUE AND PRAGUE

In the early Spring of 1347 I received an invitation from King Charles in Prague to come and advise him regarding the establishment of a University. He had received Papal permission from Pope Clement, who had been his instructor when Charles was in Paris. Charles asked that I advise him on several issues and he also requested that perhaps I could speak with Petrarch and try to get him to become part of this university as well. I first had to obtain permission of the King, not knowing what the politics of this would be. The Prince was now a full man and more than capable of playing his own war games. King Edward thought going would be useful, it would perhaps be a way to neutralize Charles from the French. I was no diplomat but Charles had taken a close interest in me after the death of his father.

I wanted to see Ockham on my way to Prague. I was prepared to go to Prague and see Charles because the weariness of the wars was getting to me and I had managed to train several excellent physicians at Saint Barts. Oxford had improved its education yet the academics still dominated theory over facts. I realized that it may always be that way with academics. Perhaps a stay in Prague, which was at the center of Europe, would open new ways to examine medicine. Also Charles had desired to establish a University and wanted to get Petrarch to be part of this. I believed that meeting him again would be delightful.

A CONVERSATION WITH OCKHAM (1347)

Ockham was still being protected by Prince Ludwig and resided in his castle grounds in Munich at the time. I had left London in early February, and had a rough crossing of the Channel and then a circuitous route down the Rhine, then cross to Munich. It was a six week journey when I arrived in mid-March, and Spring had yet to arrive. Ludwig was at war with some and aligned with others. He was close with Edward, King of England, and this allowed him some leverage, since he had positioned himself against the French King John, the rather stumbling egoist who was attempting to rule France. Although I was off to see King Charles in Prague, a putative adversary of Ludwig, as a Friar I could hopefully navigate amongst these competing players. The Battle of Crecy had been a bloody mess with so many killed and yet there was no peace between England and France. It encompassed almost all the Principalities and Kingdoms in Christendom. Added to this was the continual turmoil in Avignon with the Popes in residence. John XXII was dead several years now and despite attempts to come back to a sense of normality after his extremely arrogant dicta, some thought heretical, having the Bishop of Rome appointed by French Cardinals rather than the people of Rome had always been a stumbling block.

It was Ockham, my old teacher and friend, who had spent the last twenty years under the protection of Ludwig, with his writings had introduced concepts in political governance, secular as well as religious, which I saw as the basis for dramatic changes, whose time would eventually come.

Ockham had examined several areas whose influence was slowly penetrating the minds and thoughts of those would in turn were to spread it across our domains. First was his understanding of nominalism. Namely that there are only individuals, and there is no ultimate single essence,

man is nothing more than a collection of people, men and women, and there is no abstract whose existence we refer all to. Namely individuals are the elements of the world, and individuals who are born free, no matter what their ultimate state may be, individuals who are equal as humans. Second, the derivation from the poverty debate with the Pope. Namely, poverty needed to have a clear definition of property, and property meant the understanding of rights. Rights in turn linked to individuals, since ownership inured to a person not some class. Third, was the concept of how our leaders should be chosen, namely by the people. For it was for centuries that the Pope was the Bishop of Rome selected by the people of Rome. Now we had a "Pope" selected by a class of incentivized "Cardinals" selected by Kings and Princes in many cases. The Pope had managed to interject himself into secular matters in contradistinction to the Gospel. Fifth and finally he had stressed Faith and the Bible as the two elements of our religious belief. It was not to be left to the complexities of reason as attempted by Aquinas and the Bible is and must always be the cornerstone of what we believe in.

These elements had been mulling in my mind over the past decades, even though my focus as a Friar was to be a physician to the body, rich and poor alike, but Ockham was always in the back of my mind. He had a sense of clarity and a sense of correctness that was overwhelming. All one had to do was to see to what irrational ends John XXII went to try to silence him, and then to see that Ockham's assertion of the heresy of such actions of John, for all this was enlightening. The Pope was not infallible, he was a man and as a man prone to error. As our Saint Francis has said to his followers more than a century ago, we must follow our vows of poverty and chastity, and we must be obedient only to the extent that it does not conflict with our Faith. Obedience for Francis was the delimited vow, poverty and chastity had bright lines.

I looked forward to seeing Ockham again. I suspected that like many of us he was aging, and although a somewhat healthy man he was always somewhat on the frail side. Ockham resided in a residence aside the main castle. Munich was an interesting city, it has its strong Germanic ties, and the people were themselves Germanic but lively. They lived in relative peace and there were many craftsman resident in the city. What amazed me each time I came here was that beer was consumed like water. There were open halls where men would congregate and consume what appeared to be volumes. Even in winter one saw this phenomenon.

I came to Ockham's residence and asked the young man who greeted me for Ockham and told him who I was. In a matter of mere seconds Ockham came forth with a great smile on his face. I was a bit set aback because the gaunt man I knew well had put upon himself a great girth. I gathered it may have been the beer. Yet it may also have been the proximity to good food and the lack of the arduous travel I have set myself upon over the years. He was cheerful, a ruddy face with a grey beard, and he retained his tonsured and wore his Franciscan attire. We embraced and he ushered me to the rear, which was a small room with a fire looking out onto a small garden area, still barren from the winter.

We sat down in front of a large fireplace in a heavily beamed room. It was warm, pleasant, and a far cry from the rather Spartan quarters we had in London. Ockham asked how I was doing and what news I had. I recounted the past few years and he was a bit surprised as to my proximity to King Edward. I reminded him that I had spent time as his tutor and knew his mother, the Dowager Queen. Ockham expressed his concern as to Isabella and her reputation as a rebel who

had worked to overthrow her husband with her lover, Mortimer. I muted my reply saying that royalty seem always to be at each other's throats. Ockham smiled and said it reminded him of theologians as well. I smiled and said it did, the difference is that royalty hacks each other to death, theologians burn each other to death! To that he let out a hearty laugh. I let it sink in a bit and then continued:

"Yet William, although Royalty use the ax, sword, and arrow as means to death, they fight equally, no side claiming Divine correctness. In contrast, and perhaps this is from my associations with Gui and the Inquisition, the battle between believers, over differences in interpretation, is a bit one sided, with the Church having the ultimate say, and any new voice silenced by fire."

His smile disappeared and he looked at me and replied:

"I know that all too well. Yet I have continued to write, excommunication and all. Now tell me, I gather you were at the Battle of Crecy, a bit of a hero on the battle field, a physician at war, so they say. Tell me some details."

I now began to understand the phrase, "War stories". Those not there want to hear what they want to hear, perhaps glory, perhaps fine deeds. I replied:

"William, I was there as a physician to the King and his son the Prince of Wales. Yet the brutal battles, the blood shedding, the dismemberment, left me more as a priest administering Last Rights to dying men. William, there is no glory in war, no dignity in a battle. The Knights take glory of a conflict, in the killing of an adversary. In reality it is an argument between two men, King of England and King of France over who is to claim what under what conditions. All that will change with the next succession, yet men go to kill each other. The reality as I saw it was that the battle enriched those who survived, taking whatever they could, and often choosing who they would slay based upon what they could get in ransom if they kept their captive alive. On one hand it was a battle of Kings, on the other, and this I believe is the true reality, it was a barbarian assault of one group upon another. The men at arms as they went to battle, and then upon their return, took freely from those whose lands were in their path. They committed acts that they confessed as they died in my arms, and as a priest I gave them absolution, knowing full well that these men if allowed to live by God, would continue their barbaric acts on a successful return. William, war brings out the evils of the human soul, and I can do more as a physician than as a priest, that at times is truly terrifying. The beasts of the forest are often more gentle than a good Christian soldier."

I gathered that Ockham was a bit taken aback by my response. It had been but a year from Crecy but I at times still has the scent of the spilled human blood in my nostrils, the sight of hacked limbs in my eyes, and the screams of dying men in my ears.

We sat quietly for a while, Ockham drinking a large stein of beer, and I a cup of a white wine, for I never truly had a taste for beer, the drink that was everywhere. I then told him of my travel to Prague and my meeting of King Charles. He said he had never been to Prague and that he

heard it was a beautiful place. He knew little of the Czechs, the Slavic people, yet he did indicate they were unlike the Germans, more quiet and thoughtful. We had dinner and rested.

Over the next few days we had long conversations regarding the development of his thought. My objective was to distill what he had developed in a manner in which I may be able to convey to other people, those not trained in the Scholastic manner. Ockham's work was elegant but ponderous, enlightening, but demanding too great a preparation to absorb. The following recounts my discussions. I have left it in a dialog manner to demonstrate my own need for clarity. Although trained under Ockham, my reach was as a Bachelor of Arts, a mere tyro in a land of giants. Yet perhaps to spread his insight, such a simplification was demanded. Besides, as I was to spend time in Prague with Charles and the many who would come and go there, this would be an opportunity to develop a precis, as accurately as I could, regarding Ockham and his work.

Individuals and Nominalism

We started our discussion on his now somewhat accepted understanding of nominalism. I began by phrasing what I saw as his proposition:

"William, as I recall, your acceptance of nominalism, namely that there are no universals and that the terms we general use as a universal is nothing more than a name, thus nominal. There is no ideal "red rose", there is only this red rose and that red rose. That the accident of redness is merely an attribute of a specific red rose and not a manifestation of some ideal, some abstract essence of redness. Is that a reasonable approach to your thought?"

Ockham replied:

"Yes. One can also say that "The red rose is a plant" and yet this does not imply the existence of some universal essence called a plant. It is a plant because it has a root, it grew from a seed, in a soil, and it needs the sun to exist. Now even more deeply, it needs this specific soil, or perhaps that soil over there. It needs a specific embodiment of soil, not a universal called soil. Indeed the universal does not exist. It is not the argument between Plato and Aristotle, that the universal flow from the individuals or the individuals are manifestations of the universals. There are just individuals. The rest are just names we throw about to try to get the listener to stay attuned to what we are arguing or explaining. Redness is an abstraction, the reality is the specific red we observe. Remember that when we say red, we can hold in front of our eyes say a dozen roses, and each we call red, but each may be slightly different from each other."

"Then is it fair to say that the redness of the rose is the result of what specific rose plant I have, and what soil I have grown it in, and how much I may have watered it, and how much sun it is exposed to?" I continued, "Thus indicating that the redness is an accident at best but one based upon some specific set of processes in the growth of the flower over time."

"Interesting" he replied, "Indeed we can always take this accident related to color and explain it more so in terms of things, individual things, that impact and result in that color. Yes indeed, this is a good simple example."

"Now on to the issue of Individualism." I replied, "You have essentially used the term regarding individuals as individualism. The meaning here is that each human is an individual, and individual person. You then investigate this in terms of individual rights, or Natural Rights coming from Natural Law. You also argue if I am correct that the Bible focuses on individual salvation, individual good deeds, individual redemption. Christ did not demand that Rome and the Emperor follow the Gospel teachings, only those who were individual Christians. In fact the Gospel teaching separates the Church and the State, more so, the individual's commitment to God from the individuals commitment to Rome or the State. It was even Saint Francis who in his rule of obedience gave a caution that the individual member of the order would have to make the individual decision. Finally, in the argument regarding poverty, it was driven by the individual possession and use of property, use such as consumption of food, and ownership of that food. It was the individual member of the Order, be they a Friar, a Third Order, a Poor Sister, we were equally and individually so obliged. From this amalgam of insights, we then can understand that the individual person, be they man or woman, free or slave, have a duty but moreover we have individual rights, Natural Rights, given equally by God to all people. Is that a reasonable articulation of what you have said William?"

He sat back and smiled. He then said:

"Brendan, you have simplified my many words, you sound like a preacher. Yes that is the non-academic answer."

I then replied:

"The advantage that one has with many hours riding a horse, a boat, waiting in a battle field, is that one thinks. I have tried from time to time to explain your thinking, but I learned that most men have to be fed simple yet compelling ideas. They do not sit for long periods of contemplation. I have an opportunity with King Charles to perhaps convey some of these ideas, yet simply. I have tried in the Court of Edward, not the best place to convey my thoughts, I have even tried with good Queen Isabella, the strongest supporter of royalty I have seen, but a willing listener."

"Your approach, William, takes a person from a subject to a citizen, from a part of a collection to an separate and independent individual. As Marsilius of Padua had also noted, I believe, the individual has both status and rights."

"Indeed" replied Ockham, "And there is both a civil as well as theological issue here. For being just a subject one has to obey no matter what. As a citizen, one has a duty and in return certain rights. Thus a Knight may have a duty to serve the Lord but he in return has the right to ownership in land. The same is our relationship with God. It is the individual who has that relationship as, if you will, a citizen in the family of Christ. We are held individually to account for our deeds. We are individually given Grace for redemption."

"Then I would ask, if this is the case, why then do we have such a concern for Original Sin?" I asked, "Why have this communal guilt for which Christ came and died for us? After all we as an

individual, with no nexus to our deep dark past, may have had no part in that sin, and thus how does one look back and retain that sin?"

"Your question has merit. But allow me to return to it when we discuss Faith. The day is long, I am getting old. Perhaps a good dinner?" Ockham smiled and went forth to eat.

Rights and the Individual

We spent a bit longer simplifying the idea of individualism. It was not an idea of selfishness, not an idea of separation, but an idea of individual duties and rights. Duties as regards to the understanding of what the individual was obliged under the law of the land and the law of God. The rights were rights rendered by God to the individual. These were Natural Rights. There were other rights, such as those that the King or other ruler may give to their subjects, but those were not Natural Rights, they could be taken away, changed, or even negated without reason. Natural Rights superseded these and were the result of Natural Law.

I began by asking Ockham:

"William, in your work, *Decretum*, you articulate three types of Natural Law. May we discuss them a bit. I understand that a great deal of your motivation was directed at the choosing of and powers relegated to a Pope. But let us leave that to the side for a moment, let us discuss just the definitions of natural Law, and then we can move to Natural Rights."

Ockham replied:

"Excellent, this is always a complex issue but a critical one for the understanding of the Pope and his powers."

"There are three types or understandings of Natural Law. The first understanding is based upon law in conformity with natural reason which never fails. Gratian uses this definition. It means that "thou shall not kill" is understood by all by means of our natural reason as a human. This First Natural Law definition is one concomitant with the existence of humans."

I interjected:

"However, and excuse me if I am inferring incorrectly, but you define Natural Law as something from Natural Reason. This seems to me to have the risk of circular logic, for in both cases the predicate "Natural" infers it is part of our nature as a human, all humans. You then relate it to say, "Do not kill" and unfortunately I have seen much too much slaughter. It thus raises two questions. First if something is "Natural" then it must be inherent in our nature, and our nature must somehow be the same in all humans. Does this not then conflict with individuals? My second point, is that again if in all humans, we see what we understand to be humans slaughtering incessantly then are they not humans or are they then just sinning all the time?"

Ockham smiled and replied:

"Brendan, you have spent too much time in the real world. Let me continue with my other two definitions. You raise valid concerns. On the second, yes indeed this is sinful, unless it is dealt with as an unjust aggressor issue. That you know. It is the basis of a valid war. The first question is perhaps at first sight circular, but as we would have started with natural reason as a philosophical construct we would not have found a circular reasoning. Let me continue to the issue of the other definitions."

He continued:

"The Second Natural Law is the one where one uses only natural equity without reference to any human law or custom. For example it is the law that was present in nature when first initiated. It was the law at the time of the Fall of Man, yet this Natural Law definition can be mutable. Again the definition here is as Rufinus and others has agreed to. It may be disturbing as to its mutability. And yes Brendan, it relies on natural equity, fairness, or even justice if you will. My usage here is I believe consistent with the Gratian and the Decretum. But here in the Second Natural Law, that consistent with the Decretum, I also find that one sees that such things as property were thus created after the Fall, were part of the evolving Natural Law."

"Now the Third Natural Law builds upon the above two. In this case Natural Law is defined as that which can be ascertained by evident reason from the law of nations or some other law or even from some divine or human act, unless the evidently contrary can be established by those concerned. This I call the natural law by supposition. This is a conditional natural law, derived from rational responses to contingent situations. I was to understand this from a statement by Isidore of Seville. He noted that "the common possession of all things" and "the return of a thing deposited or money loaned" These he relates to Natural Law. Thus this refers to property, to the individual ownership of property. Moreover the repayment refers thusly to actual private property. Finally, private property as instituted by man. We thus have both common property by understanding the Second Natural Law and private property as understanding the Third Natural Law. Private property is an alienation concept, the taking of what was in common and making it private. Yet it is a Natural Law. A law based upon a temporal evolution of agreed principles with agreed to equity. As I will argue later, this Third Natural Law also is the basis by which we individuals have the right to elect our leaders, civil and spiritual."

I replied:

"I believe we can relate this one. Yet there is a concerning note. You state that it may be changed if "the contrary to those concerned". Thus this Natural Law is not only a contingent law but one which is changeable, and changeable by those concerned, namely I would gather the people?"

"Yes and the point then leads to the understanding of Natural Rights." Ockham replied. "If one can alienate, change, refine, then one has a right. Can you see where I am going? I am working with those who came before, working within the law as we know it, consistent with the Bible, and from this we can now start to understand the scope of Natural Law and from it the clear presence of Natural Rights. A very basic right is to elect our leaders. That include the Pope, as

was the case from the time of Christ. We elect the leader, not some appointment by those of political stance."

Property and Use

I returned to the issue which had led to the fact that Ockham was here in Munich and not back at Oxford. Namely the issue of poverty, and the driving issue of property and use versus ownership. Until John XXII entered the fray, Franciscans and the Pope were satisfied with the vow of poverty as one where Franciscans had use of things but their ownership was held by the Pope. Now I always felt that this was a splitting of hairs but everyone was comfortable. It was when the conservative Franciscans, called the Spirituals, took the position that poverty was the way of Jesus and the Apostles and it was that way that they were following. That put John XXII in a bit of a tight spot. Here he was turning Avignon into a palatial estate, a castle to compete with any King or Emperor, clothes that shamed all of them, jewels, food, wines, while the poor wandered about helpless. The Spirituals walked about barefoot and with rags, often unclean as well. As Franciscans we spent our time not in a monetary hidden from the world but as an integral part of it. As a physician I was intimately so involved. Ockham was an academic and not truly a Spiritual but when he saw the arguments that the Pope was promulgating he began to study it and in no time saw the Pope was in error. Ockham being Ockham then went and exposed this to the Pope, as well as the Order, and then all Hell broke loose. Popes as it would seem do not like being told they are wrong, after all they are Popes. Academics also enjoy an intellectual battle. Thus off it went. But no sooner than telling the Pope he was wrong, and having is reasonable well accepted the Pope rebelled. But to Ockham, and many others, this made the Pope a heretic. Thus did Ockham state. On to Munich he went. Excommunicated. But many felt Ockham was correct. The Pope is a man, he can err, and he is not infallible. Popes have made errors again and again, and if precedent is any claim, then Popes seems to err more frequently than most. Yet one does not tell the Pope this to his face, especially an English Friar to a French Cardinal, now Pope.

I had gotten to know John quite well vial my work with Umberto Gui, helping him with those who were ill. John was imperious, arrogant, and prone to dicta which were baseless in fact but subsumed in form. He knew the techniques of a Canon lawyer, the Code of Justinian, the twists and turns of battles at court. None of that related to reality. Frankly many who I knew about this man disliked him, yet the feigned recognition as well as adulation. That was the way at Court, it was the way at Avignon.

I replied:

"William, it would be of interest to consider the following. It is an example from commerce called bailment. Bailment is the process whereby a third party take possession but not ownership of an item. For example, my mother's family had ships, and they carried goods from Bristol to Marseille or Brest or Bordeaux. At no time did they "own" the property, they just held it in the possession to transport. At the other end another party held a contract to receive the property in payment. Then my uncle for example would return with the payment, which may have been other goods, again having possession but not ownership. Now consider the case of the "locked chest", tried at Court in 1315 under Edward II. The locked chest case was one where the bailee

had a chest which was locked and the goods or property was in the locked chest. The chest was stolen but while locked. If the goods had been stolen with the chest open the bailee was liable but since the chest was closed when stolen then the bailee had kept his duty and was not liable. Thus in the understanding is that if the bailee keeps his duty of care and security then he has no liability if the property is lost or stolen. However it does not release the bailee or carrier from a duty. There have been several other similar cases recently just before my departure under Edward III our current King. Specifically the case was of a pledge which came up, which seems always to have been regarded as a special bailment to keep as one's own goods. The defence was, that the goods were stolen with the defendant's own. The plaintiff was driven to reply a tender before the theft, which would have put an end to the pledge, and left the defendant a general bailee. The issue was taken which confirms the other cases, by implying that in that event the defendant would be liable. Thus the issue of property and possession is a key to commerce and frankly it supports your position regarding Franciscan poverty! Frankly it may also presage why England may develop an excellent system of commerce, where in France the rules are still too complex and dated."

Ockham replied:

"Yes, I see, and this is an example of the law being reflective of the Third Natural Law definition. It is reflexive and adjustable. As new facts are ascertained it adapts to the facts. This is an intriguing approach, yet so foreign to Roman Law, or worse Canon Law. Gratian would never have considered this. It is a law of cases not of codes. The Civil Law tends to have the ability therefore to adapt. The basic Law from the Bible provides core elements but it too is open to interpretation. One must just think of the tale of the prostitute who sought forgiveness, of the thief who sought the same at the crucifixion."

He continued:

"If you recall, part of my arguments were related to two issues. The right of use, or *ius utendi*, was the legal right of an individual, one not expressly not the owner, to utilize some external entity, which if not warranted by the owner would be illegal. The second is ownership itself, or *dominium*, which is the right of the individual owner who lays claim to an entity and furthermore has the right to deny access or use by any third party. You see that here I have included two elements. First the element of the individual, for the property has been now associated with this person, not the Prince, the Lord, the state, but the very singular person. Second, and this I believe is most critical, is the fact that this is a right, in fact a Natural Right, as we have already discussed. If everything was common in the Garden of Eden as is understood, then after the Fall, mankind began to acquire individual ownership, usually perforce of labor, such as the clearing of a field, the planting of a crop, the raising of a sheep, the building of a house. The result then of man's actions was ownership, by the individual, and then the natural right resulting from that action allowed for an alienation in the use by others."

Power and Rulers

We would spend time discussing rulers and their powers. I recall my discussing with him my observations of the city states in Italy. I stated:

"William, I understand some of your thoughts on rulers and their powers, and what is the best form of rulers. But allow me to give you some observations which I have made in my travels. As you know, I had spent time in Bologna, and as I went about the northern cities in Italy, I found a new form of rule, let us call it leadership. People chose their rulers, not everyone participated in the process, but it often was enough to make many feel they had a voice. Rulers thusly chosen had then a sense that their duty was to the people whom they governed. Unlike Kings, who often believe that they have a Divine Right of ruling, somehow being chosen by God, and the result is that their acts are beyond reproach."

Ockham replied:

"You are aware that it my contention that monarchy is the best form of governing. My reasons are many, but ultimately it comes down to the inability of the masses to act reasonably. The masses become the mob and mob rule is always the worst kind. Your argument of city states has merit, but it does so because of two reasons. First the populace in those states who select their leaders are educated and enlightened. The selection is not open to all, only those who have an interest in good governing. The second reason is size. These are rulers of city states, small with common interests. Now take England, a King must deal with a massive and disparate set of interests. He cannot reflect the interests necessarily of all, but must seek a common good. Furthermore in England, France, and many other locales, the people have no knowledge of what the needs of a kingdom are, they see at most their local and personal needs, their individual needs if you will."

"Brendan, you recall my fundamental thesis. The people cannot render more power to a ruler than that which they possess themselves. There are thus limits to the power of any ruler. The people fundamentally have conveyed willing the power to a ruler, if that ruler be selected directly by them or via kingship, or even if you will the Pope himself."

I interjected:

"But William, as regards to a Pope, we have the biblical dictum that Peter has the power to bind, namely Christ has given Peter, and perforce of continuity, the Pope a set of powers supra to that of a civil ruler. For in Mathew 18:18 we have:

Verily I say to you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on the earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven.

How then can we delimit the powers of a Pope? Does this not give to a Pope almost an unlimited power?"

Ockham replied:

"Your point has been well taken. In my work *Contra Benedictum* and *An princeps* I noted that it is accepted Canon Law, as evidenced in Gratian, that evangelical liberty limited papal power. The very natural and civil rights we possess delimit the powers as presented under Mathew. If

this were unlimited power, religious and civil, then the Pope could overthrow a King, and in contrast Christ also said to give to God what is God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's. There is a natural liberty whereby men are free and not slaves. In *Dialogus* I extended this by the argument with my Student, my interlocutor. The Pope cannot regulate or command things, that would be against our liberty, our free will. Each individual gains or loses redemption by their individual acts, by their individual choices. Not by Papal dicta.

Popes, Kings, and the Individual

After discussing civil rulers we had finally got to the ultimate ruler, the Pope. I had read and re-read Ockham's "Work of Ninety Days", the brutal and brilliant response to John XXII attack on the Franciscans. It left any who read it with the clear understanding of John's heresy and of Ockham's correctness. It was so compelling that the Popes would pretend it did not exist so as not to confront it.

I began by asking:

"William, when discussing the Papacy you said:

We are left with the conclusion that papal principate was instituted for the utility of its subjects and not for its own utility or honour, and. in consequence is worthy to be called not 'of lordship' but 'of service' · In which ... it is assimilated (more than any worldly principate instituted in practice) to the most noble form of royal principate ... and in which it excels all other principates in dignity.

This clearly is consistent with what Gregory I said of himself, namely he was the "Servant of the Servants of God". Namely he was there for the utility of the Faithful, not to rule them. He eschewed the trappings of a religious ruler, at least in his sayings. He entered into dialogue with those with whom he disagreed. The most famous to us Irish is his dialogue with Columbanus on the argument on the choice of the date of Easter. Columbanus and the Irish state, at the time the only remaining stable and educated state in what was left of the Western world, sided with the Greek Patriarchs, and it was Gregory who stood alone, rejecting their selection of a date. But that debate became a debate on frankly a scientific basis of a new calendar, solar versus lunar, and Columbanus gracefully acceded to Gregory. Thus we have a clear precedent of Papal authority and behavior. Yet we have had Popes since who have taken the "purple" if you will. Whereas Gregory was a Benedictine, eschewing the riches, John XXII was regal, and covering himself and his office with unlimited wealth. How do the Faithful come to deal with the changing disparity?"

His response:

"We have a Pope, and originally that Pope was the Bishop of Rome, and that Bishop was selected as were all Bishops by the people they represented. Like your City State examples Brendan. For Gregory I was himself so selected, despite his plea against being so. Yet Gregory was also delimited by the Emperor in Constantinople. So with Gregory we have an example of a saintly monk, selected by his people, approved by his Emperor. Now we have a Pope selected by

Cardinals which in turn he has the authority to appoint. It is circular reasoning, and the Pope now tells the Emperor what to do, and unlike Gregory sees all the Faithful as his servants. The Pope does not see individuals, he sees a mass of people who must comply with his every word, and that often includes the controlling of Kings and Princes. Just look at Ludwig, he was duly appointed but Pope John did not want him. What power does the Pope have to overthrow a leader? Frankly what power does a Pope have over any leader. The leader is an individual and has a moral responsibility as an individual. The King will face God alone, not with his armies."

Faith, the Gospel and God

It was clear that as Ockham spoke he had not only hardened his position but had dramatically strengthened it as well. We began a discussion regarding faith and reason. Ockham commenced:

"Brendan, you have known for quite a while the limits of human reason, do you not?"

I replied:

"William, more now than ever. I am a physician by practice and education. Unlike many, I have taken a Bacon like approach, namely I must observe what is there, not just rely upon what is written, and less upon reason. Medicine is akin to philosophy. It often rested upon the ancients. But for example, when at Bologna, under Mondino, we studied anatomy, and in that context I saw things that Galen had said which were false. Had I relied upon Galen and just reason, rather than facts, I would have made great errors. For example, I have seen men whose hearts are on the right side, very few, but they exist. Reason would have told me otherwise. Actually hearing and feeling and understanding tells me otherwise. There are many things which are well beyond reason. Cancers, the growths that kill, I have seen many, what is their cause, how do I treat them. They are not a result of bad humors, that are unknown but I firmly believe are knowable, yet only with a better understanding of the facts. Moreover, permit me an example. Tools, instruments, which allow me to examine what before one could not see. Each time I get a new tool, such as a lens, I can see more and understand more. It is the reality of what I observe rather than the internal process of just reason which allows me to expand my understanding.

Ockham replied:

"Yes then I have asserted that human reason is not up to many tasks and especially many that relate to our religion. I take the example of the Trinity. It lies beyond any reason. The same holds for the Eucharist. The complexity of the Trinity requires, no demands, faith, not reason. In the case of the Eucharist one believes via Faith that Christ is present. To reason a process which we cannot either understand no less demonstrate makes the result a farce. Thus *sola fide*, by faith alone, do we come to this and many other mysteries of the Faith. We have had many, especially amongst the Dominicans, who try to create what are at best word games to explain these Mysteries. They are Mysteries of Faith and by Faith alone can we accept them."

"In many such cases we see a dilemma." I replied, "A dilemma in that adherence demands belief but that belief is to be buttressed by reason, and yet faith abandons reason and is then the only

door to belief. We must abandon reason, and thus our very humanity if you will, if not also our very individualism. Are you saying then that we must accept all just by faith?"

"No," he replied, "like you and your medicine, reason is a tool, to use the tool you need something tangible to work upon. Your lens is an example. You mention the man sick with what you say are worms. You can examine his droppings without a tool and you see nothing. There are no worms. Yet you use the lens as a tool and you get to see the worms, what was small is now large, what was unseen is now seen. In my view faith is such a tool. What was unseen in the Trinity, faith allows us to see, what was unfathomable in the Eucharist, faith allows us to accept. Moreover as you note, these tools evolve, improve, overtime, and as we the Faithful do likewise, we will be better able, through Faith, to grasp these facts of our belief."

Words, Meanings, and History

As we got to the end of our discussions I raised a critical issue with Ockham. Namely the issue of words and their meaning, especially as they may change over time. I began by asking Ockham the following:

"William, as we have been discussing these issues, and I believe that now in our later years they become more clear and concise, I have noticed that we often use words, such as *ius*, in a manner which is not necessarily what it may have meant not a millennia ago but even a century ago. As such this raises several issues. First, and this is most critical, when reading the Bible, are we seeking understanding in the words as they are understood now or as they were understood then? Furthermore, if we seek clarity, who has such clarity to give, a Pope, a Council, or is it to be left to each person. All have faults, all are subject to error. Second, when looking to the Bible as God's word, we look at translations. Not only in Latin do words change over time, namely the same word gets a different meaning, but in translating we get a double problem; first the selection of a Latin word for a Hebrew or Greek word, and then the time at which the Latin word was selected may have been of such a past that we no longer accept its meaning now. How do we ever try to reconcile these issues?"

"You raise a very good point. I give you a simple example. Take the word *fundus*, a field, a piece of land. To the Romans a *fundus* was not just the earth, the field, but it entailed all rights we have to a field." he continued, "Yet to may in our current time, depending on where one lives, it is merely a thing, a piece of land, and the rights of use accrue from laws which are enacted apart from the piece of dirt. We have managed to separate rights and even obligations from the thing itself. Thus in this simple example, we are using the simple word *fundus* and over time its meaning has changed dramatically."

I responded:

"Then it is important to understand that time, and in a sense history if you will, is a progression and reflection of human understanding. The more we learn, and even the more we may forget, changes the way we see the world, the meanings we give to words, which are merely a reflection of our combined understanding of this reality."

War

As we finished our discussions on philosophical issues Ockham proceeded to ask me about the wars. He had heard a great deal but he had never been a part of a battle, had not seen the carnage that I had. As a philosopher he inquired about the issue of a "just war" which was the theologians way to justify this carnage. This was not an area for which he had any exposure or understanding, and mine was limited to that of a physician trying to heal or as a priest trying to comfort.

I told Ockham:

"William, war is as close to hell as one can consider. One side attacks the other. That I can see, armed men trying to overcome one another. But what I cannot understand is the brutality on poor people, unarmed peasants, where the men at arms ride horses, setting fire to homes, crops, killing the farm animals, poisoning the water, salting fields. This is a tactic to deprive the Lords and Kings from profiting from the taxes on these poor people. Frankly William I can see how there could ultimately be a revolt, a revolt against the privileged Knights and Lords, whose sole interest is self-aggrandizement."

Ockham's response was as one would expect from a theologian and philosopher. He came back with the "just war" theory. He said to me:

"Brendan, I understand your intensity. But often war is justified. Is it not, to defend one's own subjects. From my understanding a war is just if it were to meet the five requirement. Permit me to discuss them. They are persona, res, causa, animus and auctoritas. That is the persona must not be religious. I assume that you were brandishing a sword. The second is res, the fundamental cause of the action would be defence of the country or the seeking return of a purloined possession or person, causa was the necessity of the act of war in that there was no other alternative, animus or the spirit in which the war was executed was to be one of justice and avoiding hatred and unjust acts, and finally auctoritas, namely the war must be waged under the authority of a prince or similar accepted lord. If these are met then is not this a moral and just act?"

I replied:

"William, in a world where all is logic and all men are rational and act according to both reason and God's law, then yes, a just war exists and can be a moral act. But I have seen men act as beasts, nay beasts are more kind and moral. God does not permit the bear or wolf to slaughter for pleasure, leaving decaying men, women and children in barren fields. The chevauchees wherein the men at arms ride their massive steeds through peasant lands slaughtering all violates the very rules you have just presented. Yet the Popes never protest. In fact the Popes often embolden the Lords in such acts as they do in attacks in Crusades. The result is often bilateral butchery. Then again, William, who is to say that the cause of action is correct and not just an excuse to engage in war, is the decision of a cause solely in the eyes of the beholder? As to the cause, the necessity to act if you will, if there be a just cause is there then a true necessity to act, that there is not alternative. I await the day when a Pope leads an army! Indeed, with some of the Bishops and

Cardinals in the Italian states, I can see that as a possibility also. That would I believe be a fundamental violation of the persona clause, would it not?"

Ockham burst into laughter and noted:

"A Pope leading an army! Yes, that would perforce of definition be an Unjust War!"

We both laughed but I privately wondered if the Church would ever be exposed to such. I have seen Kings, Princes, leading charges, being slaughtered and laying in pools of their own blood. I have heard the same voices from Popes, and wondered what it would take to get them to the field of battle. At least in Avignon they were too comfortable and not inclined to act personally. Yet.

Expositions

I would bade Ockham farewell soon as I went forward to Prague. Spring was on its way and the Bavarian country side was just about to turn green. I wondered how I would tell Charles some of these things. Kings are not the best of listeners, and as we have found Popes are even less so. Thus far I have seen three Popes, and John XXII was clearly the most intransigent. A lawyer, Canon Lawyer, trained in the Justinian tradition with the Decretum of Gratian. Ockham, a Theologian, and Philosopher. Each talking past each other, each with strong egos. I knew enough to understand some of the moves, some of the games. As one would say, my main task was as a physician, and yet even there I could often do so little. I tried to follow Friar Bacon and his method of scientific proof, namely deal with facts, observables. I took it a bit further and tried to measure and quantify, compare and contrast, but always built upon observables. The metaphysician has no solid ground, no independent fact checker, the theologian in contrast has the Word of God, and the believer has but Faith.

On the Morning of April 9, 1347, I went down to say Mass at the Friars convent in Munich and was joined by Ockham. He looked pale and uncomfortable. I asked him if he was well. He replied:

"It is just a bit of bad food I believe. Just bad food."

He then suddenly sat on the bench in the entry to the chapel and his right hand went to his chest, just above his heart. He took a deep breath and then slumped. He looked up at me and said:

"Brendan, I think I am being called back. Can you give me the sacraments?"

I blessed him took a Confession and applied an Extreme Unction. He was gone in less than a brief few minutes.

I stayed for his funeral and said the Mass there. There was some confusion with the Bishop in Munich since Ockham was supposedly excommunicated, but he knew who I was and fortunately deferred to my decisions. We buried him locally. It was as if my old life had just ended, all that I had been and hoped to be was now in the past. Ockham was the man who opened my eyes, he

identified the critical importance of the individual, both as for respect and freedom, and as the ultimate entity with a duty to God.

I then continued on to Prague. After the sudden death of Ockham many thoughts of my years and understanding started to go through my mind. I had no idea how long this would take. I travelled down towards Mainz, then across the Main river to Frankfurt, and Eastward to Warburg and Bramburg, slow but constant. It is always good to travel under Royal script. From Bramberg I travelled overland to Eger and then by the Vlatava river down towards Prague.

One can sense a change in country by looking at the faces. The Germans were general square headed and thick necked. They often had blond hair but it was not consistent. Germans spoke their local dialect, some of which I could handle. By the time I came to Bohemia I saw Czechs, who were Slavs. They had longer faces, higher cheek bones, more intense than even the Germans. In a sense the Czechs were quite affable yet they wanted to be Germans yet were somewhat fearful of them. That was strange.

CHARLES AND UNIVERSITY (1348)

Having arrived finally in Prague I went to the Palace to meet Charles, who I had not seen since the Battle of Crecy. I had stayed in the Old Town, the Stare Mesto, and to get to the Castle I had to cross the river, then climb the hill to the Castle which was high on the hill overlooking the city. It was a bit of a climb but the weather was warm and the sun out. Prague has hills, not mountains and the river which separates the Castle from the town is not very wide, not like the Rhine, nor even the Thames at London. But the rivers flows freely and appears cleaner than many I have seen. Charles had apparently been repairing and upgrading the Castle since his father when alive spent little time here in Prague. I gather Prague was convenient since it allowed him access to the German states to the west and south, to Austria in the south and even down to Italy.

It was strange that after such a meeting he should ask me to come but here I was. Prague was a small but beautiful city and Charles was actively expanding it. I met Charles in the Castle and now he was in his regal clothing. Charles came down to meet me and I was a bit taken aback. He was dressed in what best must be described as Czech garb, tight fitting stockings along with a short skirted covering, in bright gold and red color. He was shorter than I had remembered, again I am quite tall, and Charles was almost a foot shorter, but he wore very fancy shoes with heels. He was somewhat hunched back, I suspect from his many jousting injuries but also I suspect from a birth defect which I have seen many of. He was bearded as were most men of royalty, and it tends to give them a look of royalty. Surprisingly he came to greet me like an old friend, I who held his father's hand as he died, death from Edward's attack.

He greeted me with a hug, one which I bowed to accept not to place him in an uncomfortable position. He said, in French:

"Welcome, Brendan, I am so pleased that you could come. How was your journey? Long, tiring? Come, we will eat, and you can tell me everything."

Then off we went to a large dining hall, just Charles and myself. Edward never met anyone alone, nor did the Prince. Philip always had a mass of followers and any Pope was never alone. But Charles had a sense of personal confidence.

Dinner began and Charles had a predilection for massive amounts of meats, as well as his beer, a bitter and heavy drink. Charles tried to entice me to eat with him in bulk but I convinced him that as a Friar I had limits on consumption. He laughed and said I must belong to some Order he had never met before. I too laughed because it was becoming more common to see rather obese Friars even to the extent of this being a farce of our order.

He commenced discussions:

"Brendan, as you know, the Pope, one of my oldest and most loved teachers, has allowed us as of January of 1347 to establish a University here in Prague. You, as I know, have a somewhat unique experience having actually obtained degrees from three of the more prominent universities; Oxford, Montpelier, and Bologna. I would like to seek your advice and support in how best to do the same here in Prague."

I thought it best to be direct in my reply, hoping that I would not be immediately sent on my way. I thus replied:

"Your Majesty, first as we both know you have sought insight from groups of Dominicans and Augustinians, and I am a Franciscan, so perhaps some conflict. Second, and this is more important, I am a physician, and although I have had some training at Oxford, I am in no way the academic you seek. I hope I have not been too direct but I still practice medicine, and have taught very little."

He smiled and replied:

"Brendan, first as to the Augustinians and Dominicans, they are from my days in Paris. I am a great reader of Augustine himself, and of Aquinas, the great Saint of the Dominicans. As to why no Franciscans, except quietly you my friend, it that as you are all too aware your colleague Ockham and Ludwig have been somewhat of a burden to me and the Holy Father. You on the other hand have managed to still be on good terms with the Holy Father, and also Kings, even Philip appreciates your insights, he has told me so. Thus I look less at you as a Franciscan and more as one who has let us say a sense of maturity and discretion. Now as to being a physician, I suspect that the academics I have brought here all want to propose just their own ideas. I need someone to seek what is best for a new University. That my good friend is why you. You may still [practice medicine here in Prague if you so wish, but I would like you to advise me on what these academics are proposing. Is that reasonable."

I replied:

"Your Majesty, not only reasonable but I would be quite honored. What else do you propose?"

He then replied:

"Well, this may be a bit more complicated, but I would like while here in Prague that you dress less as a Franciscan but more as shall we say one of my advisers. That way it will not excite the religious members seeking to influence me. A simple garb, and yes not as fancy as me, after all I am Emperor as well."

I thought for a moment and realized that unlike my many brothers, I have often used some mufti to achieve a result. I agreed. The King replied:

"Fine, just to make you more comfortable, Pope Clement has already given you any absolutions you may need to achieve what is necessary. We all have begun to call you the man in the shadows, "Hominae umbrae". It does have a bit of a ring about it, does it not?"

He then laughed and drank another tankard of that witches brew of beer. At least I will not go down in history, especially if I were to make any massive mistakes!

I spent the following few months in conjunction with the Dominicans and Augustinians. As somewhat of a free agent I could just sit and watch them argue. Each time I suggested that perhaps Medicine or Law should be included they went into long discussions on the importance of Philosophy and Theology. I was "instructed" by these luminaries about the critical importance of these areas. They ultimately knew who I was despite the King's attempt to hide my identity but that made little difference. Having been out of the more classic portion of the University life for such a period I had to be slow in coming to grips with their types of arguments. Perhaps Prague needed another school of theology and philosophy but that was not the way the world was turning.

I tried at length to explain the needs for people educated in the natural sciences, the philosophy of the real world. They thought that I meant craftsmen, not thinkers. I also tried to stress the need for Medicine, its linkage with the Arts, but that too fell on deaf ears. The professors, if that were the best term, saw this as an opportunity to clean the slate and go to the past, what was good for 1100 was good for 1350! As if we have made no progress since then.

PLUTARCH AND PRAGUE (1348)

The King asked me to try to attract Petrarch.

He replied to me as follows:

If you wish to bemoan the fates of all mortal men, one breast and one tongue will not suffice for you. You have taken on an enormous, miserable, and irksome subject, useless, inexplicable. Tears must be sought from another source: Indeed, they are always springing up out of some recent and unending cause of sorrow, and the two eyes, already worn out, exhausted and dried up, can pour out only a little melancholy moisture. What therefore can you do to forget, except spread the poison, proffered as medicine, to your friends, not being content with your own misery and sickness, in which you keep knowing and wishing that you would fall? . . .

In the year 1348, one that I deplore, we were deprived not only of our friends but of peoples throughout all the world. If anyone escaped, the following year mowed down others, and whatever had been passed over by the storm, is then pursued by a deadly scythe. When will posterity believe this to have been a time in which nearly the whole world — not just this or that part of the earth—is bereft of inhabitants, without there having occurred a conflagration in the heavens or on land, without wars or other visible disasters? When at any time has such a thing been seen or spoken of? Has what happened in these years ever been read about: empty houses, derelict cities, ruined estates, fields strewn with cadavers, a horrible and vast solitude encompassing the whole world? Consult historians, they are silent; ask physicians, they are stupefied; seek the answer from philosophers, they shrug their shoulders, frown their brows, and with fingers pressed against their lips, bid you be silent. Will posterity believe these things, when we who have seen it can scarcely believe it, thinking it a dream except that we are awake and see these things with our open eyes, and when we know that what we bemoan is absolutely true, as in a city fully lit by the torches of its funerals we head for home, finding our longed-for security in its emptiness? O happy people of the next generation, who will not know these miseries and most probably will reckon our testimony as a fable! I do not deny that we deserve these misfortunes and even worse; but our forebears deserved them too, and may posterity not deserve them in turn. Therefore why is it, most Just of judges, why is it that the seething rage of Your vengeance has fallen so particularly hard upon our times? Why is it that in times when guilt was not lacking, the lessons of punishment were withheld? While all have sinned alike, we alone bear the lash. We alone, I say; for I hear it affirmed that compared to the number we receive at present, the lashes inflicted upon all men after that most famous ark [of Noah] had borne the remnants of humanity upon the formless sea would have been a delight, a joke, and a respite. Even when it behooves us to wage countless wars against these evils, in the course of which many kinds of remedies are tried, in the end it is not permitted to men to at least die with dignity. For it is a rare solace of death to die well. No remedy is exactly right, and there is no solace. And to the accumulated disaster is added not knowing the causes and origin of the evil. For neither ignorance nor even the plague itself is more hateful than the nonsense and tall tales of certain men, who profess to know everything but in fact know nothing. Nonetheless their mouths, although accustomed to lying, are in the end silent, and although at first impudence had opened them out of habit, at last they are closed by stupidity. But I return to my inquiry: Whether for those making a long journey it happens that one part of the way is tiring, another easy. For so it is with us that Your forbearance, God, has slackened little by little toward human crimes, and under the heavy burden of Your yoke, the Omnipotent now must set down His provisions, and You, the best traveler, no longer able to support us, throw us onto Your back and in Your anger avert Your eyes of mercy from us. What if we are making atonement not just for our crimes, but also for those of our fathers, whether these be worse I do not know, but certainly they were more pitiable. Or could it be perhaps that certain great truths are to be held suspect, that God does not care for mortal men? But let us drive these foolish thoughts from our minds. If God did not care for us, there would be nothing left to sustain us. For who will provide these necessities for us, if they are not attributed to God, but to nature; what feeling will be left to us, why give ourselves over to the quest for truth? Since Seneca calls most ungrateful all those who neglect their duties to God, under a different name, are they not denying His due of heavenly majesty by impiously mocking Him? Surely You do care for us and our affairs, God. But there is some reason, hidden and unknown to us, why down through all the ages we, who are the most dignified of Your creatures, seem to be the ones most severely punished. Not that Your justice is*

less because it is concealed, for the depth of Your judgments is inscrutable and inaccessible to human senses. Therefore either we are truly the worst of all beings, which I would like to deny but dare not, or God is reserving us for some future good the more He is exercising and purging us from these present evils, or there is something there that we are altogether unable to conceive. In any case, whatever the reasons may be and however many are hidden from us, the results are most evident.... Where are our sweet friends now? Where are the beloved faces? Where are the agreeable words, where the soothing and pleasant conversation? What lightning bolt devoured them? What earthquake overturned them? What storm submerged them? What abyss swallowed them? Once we were all together, now we are quite alone. We should make new friends, but where or with whom, when the human race is nearly extinct, and it is predicted that the end of the world is soon at hand? We are—why pretend?—truly alone.... You see that our great band of friends is reduced in number. And behold, even as we speak we too are drifting apart, and we vanish like shadows. And in the same moment that one hears that the other is gone, he is soon following in his footsteps— Never does it seem to me to be a sadder occasion than when one inquires with trepidation after a friend. How goes it? How is our friend doing? But as soon as he has heard you say “farewell,” he is filled with dread and very quickly his face is wet with tears. And indeed he—I cannot say this without shedding many tears, and I would shed many now when I say this, except that with all the evil events that have happened these eyes have become exhausted and I would rather save all the rest of my tears, if there are any left, for when they are needed—I say that he is suddenly seized by this pestilential disease, which is now ravaging the world, toward evening, after a dinner with friends and that at sundown he goes to bed, after having digested so much from our conversation in the remembrance of our friendship and our exploits together. He passes that night among his last sorrows in a greatly terrified frame of mind. But in the morning he succumbs to a quick death, and as if this misfortune were not enough, within three days, his sons and all his family follow him.

EARLY NEWS OF THE PLAGUE

By early 1348 in Prague I had begun to obtain news of a plague, spreading throughout the Mediterranean. The disease was causing tremendous deaths from the south along the Mediterranean coast and now possibly upwards towards Paris and possibly on to England. At first I had little concern, since diseases of all types were common, especially along the warmer coast cities. Yet this time the reports were more dire. The disease seemed to spread at such a rapid rate and death was almost assured once one was with the illness. The reports were at best sketchy and it was difficult to determine what it was and how to treat it. What further surprised me was that it was Winter and the cold often kept away some of these diseases, where the heat would normally inflame them.

What further concerned me was the news that it killed often in less than a day. It had two forms, a slower, a week in length, form where there were large black tumor like lesions, buboes, which appeared and spread. Death took a week. The second was a coughing up of massive amounts of blood, resulting in death often within less than a day. The most terrifying fact was that when it attacked a town, death took almost all of the residents. It then spread from town to town. The first reports were from Sicily, but now I had reports from Venice, death and hysteria. Bodies left lying where they dropped. Stench and decay, loss of any semblance of control.

I spoke with King Charles relating my concern. If this moved north to Prague then we could see total devastation. The disease seemed at this point limited to the Mediterranean and especially port cities, but it had managed to spread inland. I explained that it was something we had not seen in medicine to this degree. I asked King Charles permission to go and see if I could assist, perhaps Paris or London. Charles said to me:

"Brendan, I understand your concern. But I need you here. For two reasons. First, if it is spreading, then you can protect us and you will have some warning as to what it is. Second, frankly, from what we know, you may be dead before you can help anyone. Now, stay here, I will get you what you need. Try to understand this plague, try to see what we can do to prevent it from coming here."

I replied:

"There is one place in the Italy region which I hear which has remained free of plague, it is Milan. But word is that Milan placed a wall about the city, preventing any from coming in, it is a quarantine. The Milanese believe it is a disease spread from one person to another, by some vapor, some fluid, something we know little about. Notwithstanding, the Milanese approach is working. Thus I suggest you do the same for Prague, keep strangers and shippers out. Prevent the entrance of this plague, and hopefully we can also be disease free. But your Highness, if there is one thing you can do, it is to get information from all places. I need to know when it was first seen, how many deaths, by day after it started, and how it is spreading. Perhaps Pope Clement can assist, perhaps we can use the Bishops, since they record the death rolls, then I can work on seeing if there is some pattern."

Charles replied:

"Excellent, I will send messengers out promptly. I will also communicate with Milan, and try to keep their status current."

I responded:

"Your Highness, what is most critical is reports of facts. All too often people exaggerate, make up stories, tell what they want to tell, not what is there. If your Highness can stress accuracy, facts, specific facts, then we may be able to see the patterns. This will be a form of a puzzle, and we will have to try to put it together, not knowing what we are looking for. If we cannot cure it then we must be able to prevent it!"

The King went immediately and mandated my request. I assembled some of the brightest young Czech scholars, told them what we were to do, and set to work planning. In addition I told the King:

"Your Majesty, if this pestilence is spread from person to person, or even from something carried by or upon a person, then as in Milan, we should not only isolate the city, but with those coming here, we should set them apart for a time, clean them of whatever they have arrived with, clothes, belongings, and even horses. Then I suggest we isolate them in a location far from the city, well

kept, not a prison in any manner, for say seven to ten days. While there they must be kept clean, and not communicating with others. Isolation, if one could call it. But keeping any contamination away by the most means."

I left the Palace to go down the hill and across the river to my place in Old Town, Stare Mesto. When leaving the palace one saw the massive cathedral that was being completed, the Cathedral of Saint Vitus. It was massive but unlike French cathedrals the facade stone was darker, not the bright light stone in Paris. On an overcast day in Prague it did look morose, not elegant or grand as I had seen elsewhere. It was somewhat French in style but did express a Czech overtone.

In the New Town where I was soon to move, albeit a bit more distant, was an interesting formation of churches, in a crucifix like manner St Catherine at the head, the Annunciation at the feet, Saint Appolianus at the heart, the left hand the Assumption and the right hand the Abbey of Emmaus. I often said Mass at St Catherine.

THE PAPAL COMMAND

No sooner than when we commenced our efforts when a messenger from the Pope, Clement, arrived.

There was a letter from Guy de Chauliac, the physician to the Pope, Clement, at Avignon, one whom I had met previously both there and while at Montpellier, he stated regarding the buboes:

"There appears to be two types of the disease. One deadly as all are and a second even more aggressive than the first. Overall death from the plague lasted for seven months. The type of the first two months was one of a high fever and the spitting of blood. Death from this form was in three days. Then for the next five months they type was of a continuous fever but with apostemes and carbuncles on the external parts, primarily the armpits and the groin. From this type one dies in five days."

He stressed the difference as one where there was a coughing of blood from one where there were the buboes. Death in three days as compared to five days was less of a factor than the coughing of blood as compared to the swellings. I wondered if these were two diseases or different forms of the same. The question was one of time difference and one of severity.

As I plotted out the expansion of the plague I could see it ever more encompassing Prague. I now had begun to assemble a time and location history of this disease. Perhaps one could understand it better, how it was transmitted. Some places were spared others were infested and more than half the population killed, and even in some towns all who lived there were killed off. Bodies just left to rot and the town becoming what could best be called a dead zone.

Charles asked me for a current summary. As for the development of the plague, I told him that I had gathered as best I could.

I began corresponding with fellow Franciscans in the many locations throughout our lands as well as those at the Universities I had known. Hopefully they would be at least able to report

back if such channels of communications were sustained. My first step was to speak with my colleagues at Bologna. They would most likely have information. I also communicated with the Franciscan convents in Venice, Florence, Pisa. We sent messengers out, yet I suspected the risks would be great, for they too could be exposed to whatever was the cause.

1348 MAY

I started with the information which we had gathered. As some have recorded, the plague had started in Constantinople. At this time its origin is yet unknown. But it is reasonable to believe it was carried by ship. Most likely from the East, possibly out of the trade routes that Marco Polo had recounted. Constantinople was open to a great deal of trade and as such it was also open to whatever came along with such trade. Apparently it managed to spread to Alexandria by the Fall of 1347. One suspects that it was again on board a ship traversing to the port.

Death was rapid, and again from the limited correspondence I had it was apparent that infection was initially by those on a vessel and then it spread especially fast from the port areas. I had no information on the symptoms from these reports and little information on the size. I had obtained several Arabic reports which I was fortunate enough to read. They were complete and told the terrifying tale; death everywhere.

In meeting with Charles he brought with him his personal physician, Gall of Strahov. Gall had been educated at Paris and was especially erudite in mathematics and astronomy as taught at Paris. Gall apparently had his medical education at Paris as well but in my opinion he was much more a classic scholar. He quoted Galen and was strongly dependent on astrology. He appeared much younger than I and was much shorter. He had classic Slav features of high cheeks and angular face, with the somewhat closed eyes. He was about six inches shorter than me and dressed quite elegantly, and was due the royal physician.

At first our relationship was at arm's length but he soon saw some benefit in my help. This became easier as I articulated to him my desire to return and not spend too long a time in Prague. Little did I know then but I would be spending more time than I had ever anticipated. The Bohemians are somewhat decent folks, not as morose as the Germanic tribe people.

Gall at first was one of the believers that this plague was a punishment from God. Yet when he heard that Pope Clement thought otherwise his medical opinion turned immediately. He and I spoke at length as to what I would do and what he should do. My concern was to protect Charles and the city. As such, in light of the building of the New Town we had lengthy discussions regarding its layout. Here was my point to discuss cleanliness. Early on, I knew little of the plague but I did know that cleanliness helped in almost all diseases.

We spoke of the streets, the water, the sewer. I told him:

"Gall, we have a unique chance to avoid the pestilence common in many a city. Paris, London, and even Florence have crowded streets often filled with human waste as it flows down gully. The stench and the ensuing diseases can run rampant. I suggest wide streets, sewers in underground pipes, collection stations for sewer deposits, and a separate system of water supply.

I would not use the water from the river, too many people drop waste in it. We have many good wells and properly laid out the city can get its water from below and dispose of waste into remote cisterns. Keep it from the river at all costs."

His reply was cooperative and pleasant. He said:

"Those are good ideas. Are you to present them to the King?"

I saw this as an opening to good relations. I replied:

"No Gall, that should be you. I will be assisting on the plague issue and hope to get your advice as we progress."

He smiled and seemed to be more comfortable. It became more clear to me that the Bohemians were very smart but as Slavs they often felt inferior to the German and Italian and especially the Italian groups. Even though he had been educated in Paris it was as an outsider. He looked at me as one educated in several major institutions but I was not English, and as Irish I too was an outsider. Perhaps that was a source for some bonding.

We then discussed the issue of cleanliness. The Bohemians seemed much more accepting of these ideas, and Gall especially saw this as a unique chance to combine what he was learning to support the King and to influence the buildout of the New Town.

Gall assisted me greatly in gathering information and in helping to inform the King. Moreover he was instrumental in establishing the hospital on the edge of the New Town.

Our most productive conversation related to cleanliness. I explained to him the observation that if a bone is broken and not the skin, then healing can be trivial. If the bone breaks through the skin, all too often this is fatal. I then discussed wounds in battle. It was clear he was an academic and this was all new to him. He asked about anatomy at Bologna and Mondino and his classes. I explained the insight obtained by actually examining the body, it was much more than Galen, and there were times Galen was wrong. To a degree this horrified him, he would see error in a Pope before Galen!

Yet I used this as a door to open discussion on cleanliness. I explained that decay from without can enter a body and do fatal harm. I explained that clean water was needed because contaminated water often had human or animal waste, and as seen in a simple case of a knight falling off his horse and cutting himself upon horse droppings often is fatal, we need to clean the wound. Thus pure water, soap, and clear distilled white wine. In that order.

I showed him how to build a still, and we did so several times using glass. Prague had some brilliant glass makers and they made stills that worked well while allowing us to see the actual process.

We also worked on new soap formulae and Gall managed to instill in the soap a Parisian method of fragrance. This made it use even more acceptable.

I felt that I had a potential ally for the events which could be unfolding.

1348 OCTOBER

The plague had reached Messina in Sicily by the Fall of 1348. This I had already known but now I could start to examine dates and locations, ascertain possible means of dissemination. Again it most likely had moved by ship. It killed more than half the population in just a few months. Yet my question was; if by ship, then we know that the disease is very aggressive so that those on the ship most likely would themselves be infected, and if the ship was from Constantinople, If the ship travelled without stop from Constantinople to Messina, then that is about 1,000 miles, and if the ship traveled at 10 miles an hour that would be 100 hours or four days. That would be the shortest possible time. Also if the crew was new and uninfected when it left. then let us say it was a 10 day trip, stopping for provisions or even storms, then would the crew have symptoms? If they did, would anyone have noticed? Did it start earlier than October? Just with these two points I had so many questions. Also the issue of Alexandria, perhaps the spread was from there to Messina.

1348 NOVEMBER

Just one month, it goes from Messina to Genoa. Now we have 700 miles, and some three to five days at sea. Was this the same ship, the same crew? Clearly to me it needed to move by ship. At best if by land the trip would have taken two to four weeks. That would have been too long for it to spread that way. Thus it must have been by ship. But how did it spread? What was the cause, and if we could know the cause could we prevent further spread.

By this time I had a location in the New Town, Nove Mesto. I was also starting to learn the Czech language. It was a Slavic tongue with pronunciations I am told somewhat like Polish and Russian. The difference was that Russian had used the Cyrillic alphabet developed by the monks from Greece who proselytized the country. Saints Cyril and Methodius. It was interesting since the alphabet was Greek in form, so I had some understanding but it contained letters I had never seen but they were for sounds we do not have in Western languages. The Czech language used our Western alphabet but to give the sounds they annotated a letter so an "s" became a "sh" or "shsh" and so forth. I am told the Poles did it another way by using pairs of letters, less common pairs, to achieve the same result. The more I learned Czech the better I could treat patients. The more I learned Czech, the more I could hear the politics at the Castle on the hill.

1348 MARCH

By March of 1348 I was now receiving somewhat current information. Four months later it is in Marseille. This is 300 miles or so by ship, a journey of about three days at most. Now why the delay in exposure? Perhaps winter slows it down, whatever it was, perhaps the original men who had the plague died in Genoa and others infected moved it forward. Perhaps there is another means for the disease, say the transport of some spice, consumption of which transmits the disease. Perhaps it is some vapor in the cloth the ship carried. We knew so little of the specifics

of what and when, we knew only when it was suddenly thrust upon the city. Marseille was nearly destroyed.

In fact all the Franciscans in Marseille succumbed to the plague in four weeks. It was also at this time that the plague entered Avignon, and I suspect Montpellier as well. Our correspondence with Guy de Chauliac indicates that the first deaths were in the market areas of the city and that Pope Clement sought to close off the city as much as one could. In fact the Pope closed himself off in the Papal palace, and was purported to inhibit the plague by means of smoke from burning fires.

Guy de Chauliac surmised that the plague was spread from person to person, perhaps by the air, and it was for this reason the Pope kept himself free of contact. Yet de Chauliac noted the Pope demanded that he and all the physicians do their part tending to the ill. That thought made me a bit uncomfortable sitting here in Prague, yet free from the plague. Yet as I was noting, the plague would most likely soon be on our doorstep. Yet the idea of limiting contact was compelling, it made sense, if the spread was from person to person. de Chauliac and even the Pope rejected such claims as astrological causes, and worse yet that it was the Jews. My data was indicating that the plague was rampant on all, Christian, Jew, Muslim, and non-believer. It was hardly a punishment from God. It was a challenge for man to comprehend its means of spread and cause, and use our intellect to seek a remedy. That much I had learned from Ockham and my old friends and mentors.

By early April it is spread to Toulon, and there begins the killing of the Jews. The Jews dies both at the hands of the plague and the populace! The people believed that it was spread by the Jews, since the spread was from the market outwards. This was despite a Papal mandate that it was not the fault of the Jews. Terror leads to the worst of human tendencies.

If we were to believe the spread direction, that would perhaps lead us to believe it to be spread by people selling or the goods they sell or what may be in the goods they sell. Perhaps this is a clue. But also by early April, perhaps a bit later, the plague is in Venice, then spreads like a fire to Orvieto then Perugia, again with over half the population dead in less than three weeks! It appeared as if every city in Italy suffered with the exception of Milan.

It was also at the end of March 1348 that King Charles laid the foundation stones for his New Town, Nove Mesto. It extended the Old Town or Stare Mesto along the river and back up towards a hilly area. The plan for this development was one of anticipation of Prague becoming a modern city, a place of pride for the Czechs, the Bohemians, especially. Charles spoke proudly of this new area and it was to be pocketed with stately homes and areas for commerce. It would be a bit of Paris, an organized set of streets, tree lined and with the most modern of facilities.

1348 APRIL

Now it is in Coruna, on the north east coast of Spain. More than 1,000 miles by ship, and a perilous journey. In one month it jumps, jumps a thousand miles! Unlikely the same ship. It must be that two ships left Genoa, one for Marseille and one for Coruna. But if that were so, why did those to Marseille get ill so quickly while those to Coruna survive so long. These facts seem difficult to understand. I have about a dozen students collecting the data and now laying out

maps with dates and deaths as best we can gather them. I am trying to see what this can tell us. The spread is now becoming somewhat erratic. It is also on to Lyons, up the Rhone, and from the Rhone outward. It is spreading to Savoy, on both sides of the Alps. From Aosta on the East to Annecy on the West, up to Geneva. A swath of dead bodies. Why? There are no sea routes there. How does it spread? The Pope still lives in his exclusion, as best as I know, and poor de Chauillac is out caring for the ill.

1348 MAY

Now it appears in Normandy! In just a month. A ship from Coruna to Brest? Then from Brest to Cherbourg? Then to all of Normandy? Perhaps.

Also there was a concern that the plague would be coming from the south, near the German states borders. I asked to go there and see what the status was. Charles and Gall agreed and I went off with a guide from the Palace and two of my staff. We rode southeast into what was the mine areas. The Czech region was famous for its silver and copper mines and that was a significant basis of the wealth of Charles. I rode to the town of Jáchymov which had massive mines. There I met the local bishop who understanding me to be a Physician asked that I advise him. He said the mines produced some metals but that all too often the men who worked in the mines died of lung diseases. He said they worked a year or two and soon thereafter they began coughing and spitting up blood. Their bones broke and they died in great pain. He asked if I had any idea what to do, how to prevent this disease and if it were contagious.

He took me to a man who clearly was dying. He was emaciated, sunken face, and clearly in pain. I asked his age, it was but twenty five. He had worked in this local mine.

The Bishop asked:

"Father, is this the plague? Are we to be fearful?"

I replied:

"No, this is not a plague. If it were it would not just be the miners. I suspect that there is something in the mine that is the cause? Has this been so for a long while?"

The Bishop replied:

"Good Father, yes, many young men die. The mine is no longer bearing its ores since men fear it, as some evil place. Should I try to expel the evil, some way to pray for God to chase away the evil in this mine?"

I realized that I was far from the cities. The old ways still survived. What the cause was I had no idea. I explained to him that we do not know the causes of every disease and that if a mine kills people then perhaps they just stay out of the mine. His reply:

"Then Father if a wheat field kills people are we too then starve? This mine is the source of our very existence."

I replied:

"Then I guess you have but prayer good Bishop."

He was not at all satisfied.

We went on to Horšovský Týn a town on the river Radbuza, a small river. The town was another land owned by the Archbishop of Prague, and Charles also gained from it. There was a small square and on the south bank of the river was a large grain mill. I met the owner and we spoke at length. He took me in to show me the mill, he was quite proud of it and its workings. I saw in the clean and complex mill that these Czech people were both hardworking as well as very intelligent. There were many significant improvements in the mill that I had not seen in English mills. Moreover the very organization was better than any I had seen elsewhere. I was getting to greatly appreciate these Czechs.

I then went on to Klatovy, another small town, and as before I met another mill operator with the small river going about the town. There must be mills everywhere. He also showed me his mill, as if we were fellow millers. I shared with him my experience with other millers, my experience in England, France and elsewhere. I stumbled with my Czech but each time they were patient and each time I got better. I was up to well over a thousand words, yet declensions and conjugations were still a mystery, yet one could be clumsy, I was not writing for the Academy!

Nowhere did I find any plague. That made me feel that perhaps we had one avenue blocked. I knew that coming from the south, such as Vienna was a concern. The river there, the Danube, not only flowed through countries and domains but opened well to the East into the Black Sea, and that was a source of plague. Thus Vienna had to be blocked.

1348 JUNE

The plague appears in Bristol in the southwest and in Weymouth in the south of England. Again it seems a simple transmission by ship. At this point I was concerned for Ireland. Dublin traded with Bristol, and my family went back and forth continuously. I also was concerned with the Franciscan convent there. It was where Dismas and I had met, God rest his soul, for he had gone to his reward a decade ago. Fortunately he would not be affected by this Devil's attack on humanity. I had no word from the convent there, and that concerned me. They most likely threw themselves into aiding the people, and as such would come in direct contact with whatever was the cause.

1348 AUGUST

The plague now is in London! That was hardly unexpected. In fact I was surprised it took so long. Worse yet, it has hit Dublin. My family may be at total risk, since they are in the sea

trading business, exposed to all that is there. It will take quite a while before I can determine their fate.

I also have received notices from Greyfriars in London, death is spread all over the streets, from the Thames edge outward, bodies lying in piles, the smell of death, in the summer air. Worse yet, the convent at Greyfriars reports that the convent at Oxford is no more, all died in the convent. Every person I may have known, young men, the nuns across the road, bodies left rotting on the chapel floor. Death spread like a fire, killing all it approached.

But the lowest point in the month of August was the sudden death of the Queen, Blanche of Valois. She was but 32 and had two daughters. Charles had sent his personal physician to her and I was also called in. I suspected that she had an aborted pregnancy and was full of infection. She had a very high temperature and was not alert, in fact I suspected that she may not make the day out. She died at dusk on 1 August 1348. It was not plague, but the often horrible burden of child birth.

Charles was somewhat concerned but as I had noted since the Queen had not produced a heir Charles was now free to seek another wife and from that try for an heir. Royalty saw death as another move on a political chess board. What new alliance could be achieved, what option to expand and consolidate an empire. I just saw the death of another young woman. Here I was at 53, daily fighting diseases, but not succumbing to the threats that all women in birth have to face.

In less than six months Charles was to marry a second time, one Anne of Bavaria, a young woman and in hopes of a male child. That she gave Charles, yet the child and Anne died in less than a three year time period. Another young woman, not heir, and I gathered Charles would seek another wife. The loss of wives and children was all too common, even amongst the most royal. There were times that I felt that more than half my efforts were serving the dying and dead, with so little to do for the sick but living.

I had little opportunity to know these young Queens since they were on the hill in the Royal Palace while I was ensconced in my dwelling in what was becoming the New Town. It was clean, bright, and devoid of vermin. I had my assistants and dealt with the couriers almost daily as news of the spread of the plague came to us. I did leave and go to the Castle to speak with Charles almost weekly and in passing would see some of the Royal household. But it is always safer to keep one's distance. That way hopefully one can keep one's head.

1348 SEPTEMBER

Sadly, King Edward's daughter, Princess Joan died of the plague while in Bordeaux on her way to be married in Spain. The shame is that the plague was well established in England before her departure, that given what we know as what I have just described, the plague is most prevalent in shipping ports, and Bordeaux is such a port, then why send the poor child there! In fact almost the entire crew and passengers of the ship die of plague.

Now I also have letters, for example from Louis Sanctus who was in Avignon and which states:

In the same year, 1347, in the month of September, a great mortality and pestilence began, as I have seen in a transcript containing the letters of a cantor and canon of St. Donatian [Louis Sanctus] who at that time was staying at the Roman [papal] court [of Avignon] with his lord cardinal [Giovanni Colonna]. These letters he had sent to his companions in Bruges for the purpose of giving them news and forebodings: Namely, that near Greater India in Eastern parts, in a certain province, terrible events and unheard of tempests overwhelmed that whole province for three days. On the first day it rained frogs, serpents, lizards, scorpions, and many venomous beasts of that sort. On the second day thunder was heard, and lightning flashes mixed with hailstones of marvelous size fell upon the land, which killed almost all men, from the greatest to the least. On the third day there fell fire together with stinking smoke from the heavens, which consumed all the rest of men and beasts, and burned up all the cities and castles of those parts.

On account of these calamities, that whole province was infected, and it is conjectured that the whole sea-coast and all the neighboring lands were contaminated from that infection through the fetid breath of the wind blowing southwards from the plague regions. And always from day to day more people were infected, and now, by the will of God, it has come to [our] maritime parts in this fashion, as certain men suspect.

For on December 31, in the year of our Lord 1347, three galleys horribly infected and heavily laden with spices and other goods landed at the port of Genoa, after having been forcibly expelled from eastern parts. When the Genoese observed that these [sailors] and other men were suddenly succumbing without remedy, they were expelled from that port with flaming arrows and diverse engines of war, because anyone who dared touch them or have any business dealings with them immediately died. And thus one of the aforesaid three galleys, after having been driven from port to port, finally put in at Marseille. As before, the sick men did not give any warning of their arrival, so that [the inhabitants of Marseille] themselves were infected and suddenly died. For this reason, therefore, the said galley was expelled by the people of Marseille. In the meantime, having joined up with the other two that it found wandering on the sea, these remaining ships, it is said, are traveling toward the Atlantic Ocean via Spain, and by following [the coast] they will come, if they can, to other regions to the south so that they can unload their wares there. Moreover, these galleys have left behind in the wake of their entire journey so much infection, especially in maritime cities and places—first in Greece, then in Sicily and in Italy, particularly in Tuscany, and subsequently in Marseille, and as a consequence throughout the whole of Languedoc—that the duration and terror it holds for men can scarcely be believed, let alone described.*

Now too I have received from Guy de Chauliac at Avignon the following letter:

Therefore the said mortality began for us herein Avignon in the month of January of this year, 1348, and has lasted seven months. And it took two forms: the first lasted two months, accompanied by continuous fever and a spitting up of blood, and one died within three days. The second lasted the rest of the time, also accompanied by continuous fever and by apostemes [tumors] and antraci [carbuncles] on the external parts, principally under the armpits and in the groin, and one died within five days. And the mortality was so contagious, especially in those who were spitting up blood, that not only did one get it from another by living together, but also

by looking at each other, to the point that people died without servants and were buried without priests. The father did not visit his son, nor the son his father; charity was dead, hope crushed.*

And I call the mortality great because it overtook the whole world, or nearly all of it. But it began in the East, and like shooting arrows it passed through us on its way west. And it was so great, that it hardly left a quarter of the human race.

And it was unheard of, because we only read of the mortality in the cities of Thrace and Palestine in the Book of Epidemics¹ written in the time of Hippocrates, and of the mortality that afflicted the Roman subjects in the book, De Epidemiae in the time of Galen some six hundred years later, and of the mortality in the city of Rome in the time of Bishop Gregory seven hundred years past.

And none was as great as this one, because those others only attacked a single region, [but] this the whole world. Those others were curable in some way; this in none. For the mortality rendered doctors useless and put them to shame, because they did not dare visit the sick out of fear of being infected. And when they did visit them, they could do little for them and were paid nothing. For all who got sick died, except for a few toward the end, who escaped when their buboes ripened.

Many were uncertain about the cause of this great mortality. In some places, they believed that the Jews had poisoned the world, and so they killed them. In some other areas, that it was a deformity of the poor, and they chased them out; in others, that it was the nobles, and so they [the nobles] hesitated to go out into the world. Finally, it reached the point where guards were posted in cities and towns, and they permitted no one to enter, unless he was well known. And if they found anyone with powders or unguents, they made him swallow them, fearing that these might be poisons.

Regardless of what people might say, the truth was that the cause of this mortality was twofold: one, a universal active cause, the other a particular, passive one. For [the conjunction] made such an impression upon the air and the other elements that, just as a magnet moves iron, so it changed the thick humors [of the body] into something scorched and venomous, and shepherded them into the interior.

And it made apostemes, from which followed continuous fevers and a spitting up of blood in the early stages, when the corrupted blood was strong and disturbed the body's constitution. And afterwards, when the constitution was in remission, it was not so greatly disturbed, and it expelled [the corrupt humors] as well as it could to the external parts, especially to the armpits and the groin. And this caused buboes and other apostemes, so that the exterior apostemes were the effect of interior apostemes. The particular, passive cause was the body's disposition, such as if it was full of evil humors, if it was weak, or bunged up [obstructed]. And for this reason it was the common people, the laborers, and those who lived evil lives who died.

Concerning cures, there was an effort [to find] a preservative before the advent of symptoms and a cure for when symptoms had arrived. For preservation, there was nothing better than to flee the area before it was infected and to purge oneself with pills of aloe and reduce the blood

through a phlebotomy, purify the air with a fire, and comfort the heart with a theriac and fruits and sweet-smelling things, to console the humors with Armenian bole, and to halt corruption with sour-tasting things.

For a cure, there are phlebotomies and purgatives [probably vomit-inducing substances or laxatives] and electuaries and syrupy cordials. And the external apostemes were ripened with figs and onions that were cooked and ground up and mixed with leavened bread dough and butter. Afterwards the apostemes would open and they were healed with a treatment for ulcers. The antraci [carbuncles] were ventosed [i.e., a cupping-glass applied], scarified [i.e., cut open], and cauterized.

And I, in order to avoid a bad reputation, did not dare depart from Avignon, but with a continuous fear I preserved myself as best I could with the aforesaid remedies.

Nonetheless, toward the end of the mortality, I fell into a continuous fever, with an aposteme on the groin, and I was sick for nearly six weeks. And I was in such great danger that all of my friends believed that I would die. And the aposteme ripened and healed, as I have described above, [and] I escaped by God's command.

This brings us up to what we now know. A few facts, and more continue to come.

I had continued to appraise these facts to Charles:

"Your Highness, what do we know from this set of facts, facts which themselves may be in error but given consistencies may tell a tale albeit one with a cloud of uncertainty. First, we know that the transmission most likely is a result of people and goods used in trade. Second we know it travels initially a straight route. Third, we know that if a ship is part of the path that what transmits it must be part of the ship. The parts of the ship that may be of interest are the people, the goods, or what may shall we say accidentally accompany the goods. Given the rapid mortality of the infected, I would gainsay human to human transfer. That would be too slow. As to the goods, many of these ships carry cloth, spices, and the like. We know that these have never caused problems before. As to the accidentals, your Highness, I grew up in a shipping family, and we always had these incidentals. They are rats and other vermin. Our solution was to always have cats on our ships, for the cats killed the vermin. Thus we were vermin free. These ships so I am told do not do this. Thus I conclude that the most likely source could be the vermin. My recommendation is to clean the city, use cats as much as we can, and like Milan, restrict entry."

He replied:

"I am amazed that you can reach these conclusions on the limited facts. But your logic is compelling, and as one trained myself in the field I see that you have compelling merit. We shall do what you suggest immediately. But what of a cure? What can we do?"

I replied:

"I fear your Majesty that we know so little. Prevention may very well be our only method of treatment. I suspect that there are just a few simple steps to protect ourselves. Cleanliness is first, and second is the elimination and prevention of vermin. Prague is not a typical port city. Your building of the New Town is timely, but the Old Town must be kept clean."

He replied:

"I understand that King Philip asked his Medical Faculty to prepare a report on this plague. I assume you have a copy, what do they seem to say?"

I replied:

"Yes your Highness. I have. I greatly respect their work, yet with such respect they rely more upon Galen than even Hippocrates. Galenic thought is to rely on logic not facts. Hippocrates is a balance of facts and logic. That is my interpretation as I have just done. The theory of humors is a base for many, but one should not adhere to such in the face of facts. The facts here are becoming overwhelming. This disease spreads most likely by vermin. And vermin can be fought off, simply by a practice of cleanliness. There are poisonous snakes, poisonous plants, some poisons act quickly some slowly. Some poisons must be ingested, some, very deadly ones, need but a passing touch. That your Highness is what the evidence tells me thus far. I fear the answer is in the facts and not the logic. As Friar Roger Bacon had said again and again, if all else fails looks towards the facts!"

The King laughed and replied:

"You are sounding like a lawyer more each day!"

The plague continued!

1349 AUGUST

In late August, I believe it was the end of the month, a messenger arrived from Paris. Protocol demanded that any such messenger be quarantined for seven days in the hospital on the north west side of Prague. I was told the messenger had an important message for me so I walked the distance and through a window spoke with the man. He appeared healthy but as we now well knew, there was a time between contact with the cause of the plague and its symptoms. I prayed he was not infected.

He greeted me and said:

"Father Brendan, I have been asked to relay the bad news of Bishop Bradwardine. He has succumbed to the plague. King Edward asked that we inform you as such."

I was taken aback. He was one of my teachers and a colleague at Oxford. I asked what had happened and I was told:

"He had been to see the Pope, Clement, at Avignon, and then he was consecrated archbishop of Canterbury, and on his return, well, Father, he fell ill, when he landed in England, and died within a mere five days. It was the buboes that got him, he just went, I was told, and the King had him taken to Canterbury, there he was buried."

I then asked the young messenger as to his health. He replied:

"I am fine, but I gather I must stay here for a full week. But I am well."

I then said:

"I apologize for your isolation. We will make your stay as comfortable as possible. Do you have enough food, drink, anything I can do to make you more comfortable?"

He replied:

"No Father, the food is good, and the beer, Father it is wonderful beer, I understand it is some Czech favorite, but I could live on the beer alone. Other than that, Father, I am fine."

I replied:

"I shall come and see you every day and pray for your good health. Are your new clothes comfortable?"

He replied:

"Yes Father, but why were my old clothes burned?"

I answered:

"We try to make certain that we keep the plague away, and clothes may carry its elements. That is also why we had you bathe as well. Indeed, we suggest you bathe every day, there is fresh water and we do not fill your beds with straw, again to keep any plague elements at a distance."

He asked:

"Father, then does that mean you know what causes this plague?"

I answered:

"As of now only God knows what the cause is. But like any poison to the body, some we can identify and even brew, this we do not know. So as with poisons which may be swallowed, breathed, absorbed through our skin, put in an open wound, the plague poison gets to us, so we treat it as just another poison, and as such put barriers to its entry. Thus the bath, the new clothes, the clean quarters, the cooked food. Frankly my son, I am guessing, I am using what limited

knowledge we have of these things, and as we are learning, it appears to work. So be patient, my prayers will be for you."

He smiled and I hoped that he was clear of the plague. I went to the Chapel in the center of the old town and said prayers for him and Bradwardine. Poor Bradwardine, a brilliant man, and he would have made an ideal Archbishop. Poor man. I then went and informed the King.

1350 MARCH

Winter in Prague was cold and wet. This was good because it kept visitors from wandering in and we still felt a fear of the plague. We had managed to contain any spread. The isolation units had kept the few infected separate and unfortunately all where were infected did die. We managed to handle their remains in as holy a fashion as possible. Adjacent to the hospital was a graveyard, separated by a pine grove, so as not to make the temporary residents too fearful. We had the Sisters of St Bernard feed and care for the sick, when possible, and they were also cleansed before and after entering. We trained them not to touch anything and their clothing was destroyed after each treatment.

In late March of 1350, just before Easter, a young man, a student, arrived from a long trip from Bologna. As with all, he was sent to the hospital for quarantine. In less than a day, he had developed a severe fever and the buboes appeared. I went to visit him. I needed to gather information before he died.

As I approached he laid upon his bed, in the clean clothes we had provided. His face was flushed, and one could see a fever from a distance. I asked that he show me his lesions and he opened his shirt and in both arm pits were large darkened buboes. He said to me:

"Father, am I to die? Everyone I know has died, what is to become of me? Will you hear my confession?"

Before further questioning, and still at a distance, I heard his confession and gave a small penance, for death was his ultimate penance. I then asked:

"Ivan" for that was his name, "Ivan, where did you come from?"

He replied:

"I was a student at Bologna. We thought the plague had gone, but it come back again. We thought the plague was gone in the winter, but it came back again. I and four friends from here, we left and travelled back to be safe."

I asked him:

"How long ago did you leave Bologna?"

He cried, he feared death. I needed to handle that fear as well as get information. Where were his friends, where did he get the plague.

He replied:

"We left in early February, I think it was the 5th and there were five of us. We had horses, good horses, and we rode north. We stopped to rest in Munich for a few days, then we continued here. But my friends began to get ill, about a week ago, just a short while out of Munich, about four days from Munich. Two died in three days, then the other two were ill two days later. We were helped by a group but they left when all that remained was me. I thought I had not been claimed, but death now awaits."

Now I was concerned. Who were these others?

I asked:

"Did the others say where they were going?"

He replied:

"Yes, they were going to Brno."

I then asked:

"Did they take anything with them?"

He replied:

"Yes, they took the blankets and clothing from my dead friends, after we buried them, why/"

Now I was terrified. We must warn Brno. More than likely they would be next!

I saw to it that Ivan was fed as best as possible. He died the next morning. I prayed over his grave, but as with all so infected it is best to keep a distance.

I then went to the King and told him of my concern. If these travelers went to Brno, with the belongings of the now plague infected dead, then Brno was in great difficulty. I asked Charles to allow me to go to Brno and see, if any help can be given. He said no, but that I get a Friar, my best choice, to go at a distance and report back. This I did.

I asked a young Friar, Vladimir of Pilsen, to ride to Brno, and carefully examine what is happening. Young Vladimir was bright, and he had worked with me with the patients we had in the hospital. He was cautious, educated yet I spoke with him before he left.

I said:

"Vladimir, I need you alive, with facts. You are not being sent to treat the sick, you are being sent to keep others alive. I know this is a burden. Your first tendency is to care for the sick and dying. You are not equipped to do so, and in fact if you do it will imperil all humanity. It will be a severe sin of Pride if you act that way. Do you understand me!"

He replied:

"Yes Father Brendan, I understand. I truly do. A dead physician is of no use to the living."

I replied:

"You have learned well. Now be off, God's speed, and write down what you see as soon as you can, and return. Speak and listen at a distance, sleep under a tree, and if your horse is in any way exposed, let it be, abandon it. Wash yourself frequently, wash your tunic daily, carry the extra tunic and sleep alone. Eat only what you bring, or what you may find in a field which you know to be safe. Drink sparingly, water may be contaminated. Return quickly. I will pray for you my son, you are a brave knight on an important quest."

He smiled, I guessed the knight allusion he found ennobling and motivating. Off he went, and I truly prayed he would be safe and more importantly find nothing.

Two weeks passed, we had no new patients in the hospital, and Spring was coming. I was at the hospital when I saw a horse at full gallop approach me, and I saw it was Vladimir. He pulled up and jumped off, and approached:

"Father Brendan, it is a devastation! As I approached Brno, I saw dead bodies along the road, a few still clinging to life, and I kept my distance, remembering my mission. As I got near the town, I saw a man, early in his disease, walking, and he asked me to pray for him. I said I would and then asked what had happened. He said that the plague started with the buboes, then another with the cough, blood splatted across everyone, and in just a few days, hundreds died, the whole of Brno infected, he told me to go! I looked across to Brno, there were no fires, no sign of any life, I gave him my blessing and it was then that he fell and expired, I kept my distance and rode the horse for hours, as if the horse also knew. I touched nothing, I bathed the next day, washed my tunic, and kept riding. Father, the town is dead, dead! The stench of death was everywhere. Then the birds, the vultures, were pecking the eyes, the skin, the stink of the bodies, God forgive me, but it rose a fear in me that Hell was creeping across the Earth!"

I calmed him down and told him to go to the hospital for a few days, there to be fed and clean clothes just to be careful. He understood and was obedient. I had his notes and washed myself and went to the King.

I told Charles:

"Your majesty, all of Brno is gone, the dead line the roads, and bodies are decomposing upon the earth. It is no longer accessible, until all are taken aback to nature. I would wait a year before returning."

He looked shocked, he knew the town and the people. To have a complete town disappear from the Earth, all dead, all by the same plague. He then said:

"Are we still safe here?"

I replied:

"As safe as God lets us be. So we should all pray we keep it that way."

I bowed and left. Then I thought of the vultures. Could they be a carrier of this plague. What is it that allows it to go from person to person? Can something other than a person be the intermediary? Could it be the horse, a pig, a cow? Does the pig, the horse also get ill? I had an idea which we could now test. Is there an animal which transmits the disease? If so, does it get the disease as well? Should we then look for an animal, which also gets ill and dies, and is associated with man? I was now thinking like Roger Bacon, like Bradwardine. One posed a logical question for which only facts would prove true or false. If false then it would pose another such question and again look at facts. If Ockham were still alive and close by. I must record this approach, so that others may follow after me.

1350 JULY COLA DE RIENZI

The Royal Apothecary, one Angelo, from Italy and educated for a brief while at Bologna, had befriended me. He was an excellent source of herbs and other substances we used to treat various disorders. How he obtained these I really did not know, since King Charles had mandated strict import controls in fear of the plague. He approached me and asked to speak quietly.

Angelo said:

"Father, you are not one of the Palace and you are also known to be reliable and to hold confidences."

I sensed this was a question less than a statement. I replied:

"Angelo, if one were to seek my advice in confidence, unless it is seen as a threat to the King, or pure abject heresy, I will honor such. Now what may your question be?"

He replied:

"Father, there is a man, an Italian, a very noble Italian, seeking to speak with the King. I would like to make the introduction but I do at times fear that he may not be all that people say. Yet he has obtained great praise."

I then answered seeking to move this process along. Italians seemed to have a problem getting to the point, we would be speaking of everything except the issue at hand. He continued:

"Father, the man is Cola de Rienzi, he was the Tribune of Rome, a high position, placed there by the people. He seeks to have King Charles come to Rome and be crowned Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, and this as we both know is the King's due. So should I introduce him to the King?"

I replied:

"Angelo, so tell me what is not just right here. We both know that Rome is in chaos. There is crime, masses of thieves, murderers, and here comes a man chose by these people so he says as a Tribune seeking to have Charles come and get crowned. Now tell me why the King should listen to him? Does this not even make you a bit concerned?"

Angelo nodded agreement but said:

"Perhaps a man from the mob is what is needed to calm the mob."

I saw where he was going. I then replied:

"Angelo, then I suggest you tell the King, tell the King all. Tell him what you think there is to gain and what he can risk. Let the King know and then let the King decide. You are but a messenger."

He smiled and kissed me on both cheeks. I never liked this hugging and kissing of the Italians, at least the French just touch cheeks and of course the English shake hands and the Irish, well they are after all just the Irish.

A week went by and Angelo returned. He said:

"Your plan went well. The King wants you to be present when de Rienzi comes. It will be tomorrow in the afternoon, so meet me at the Castle entry, just after noon. Then we can meet de Rienzi and take him to meet the King."

He turned and fled. "my idea" indeed. Now I could see he used me as a means to deflect from him any harm. No matter, I was not a politician and the King was wiser than Angelo.

The next day I climbed the hill to the Palace castle and there at the gate was Angelo and de Rienzi. This Cola de Rienzi was dressed as an Italian noble, somewhat like a Florentine, but the material was worn, dusty, and he was in need of a cleansing. My concern was the plague, I lived with it every day, and here before me was an ideal carrier! I took Angelo aside and asked him:

"Angelo, my fear is always the plague and here you have a man from Italy, how long has he been here, and do not lie to me!"

Angelo was shaking and replied:

"Father, he has been at my home for a month. I know the rules, but he is such an important man..."

I looked at him with the fury of the betrayed and said:

"Angelo, Kings, Queens, Popes and poor men die of the plague. Tribunes, real or imagined are not immune. Your foolish act could have killed all in Prague, including the King. Are you sure he has been here for thirty days!"

He replied:

"On my immortal soul, Father, more than thirty days."

I wondered if Angelo had any sense of smell. If I could sense him by smell here I then wondered what the King would think inside! Thus in we went.

The King was gracious and the conversation lasted almost an hour. de Rienzi was very affable and very praising of the King. He said the King must come to Rome and be declared Emperor. From there de Rienzi stated he could then have all of Italy as part of the Empire, a united Italy, once again. de Rienzi had ideas of the like of my old friend Petrarch, who also dreamed of a united Italy. the King thanked de Rienzi and dismissed us, then turned to me and said:

"Brendan, please stay a bit so we can talk."

I knew that he was to berate me for this idea, at least that is what I thought. The King surrounded himself with those of training and experience, and in addition he sought efficiency in all they did. He was not one for idle talk and especially for those who were mere self-promoters. Thus the tolerance for de Rienzi was a bit confusing.

The King had me sit and then spoke:

"Brendan, yes I know this was not your idea, Angelo is a fine fellow and bound to his countrymen. But here, read this, I just received it yesterday from Avignon."

I looked at the paper and read it slowly. Then aghast looked up at the King:

"Your Majesty, this is a Bill of Arrest from the Pope for de Rienzi! They want to try him for treason and if I am right he will be executed. Does he know this?"

The King replied:

"No, not yet, and you are the only one outside my rooms who knows. Let us keep it this way. You see there may be some leverage here. I want to be crowned in Rome, but the Pope and Avignon in general does not want me to return, politically it will compromise them, do you not agree?"

I did and said:

"Your point is well taken. If you go and get crowned, especially at Saint Peter's then you place Avignon in peril, since they should also return and if not then their legitimacy is in question."

He smiled and said:

"Exactly. So I need de Rienzi here as a bargaining chip in this game. What is your suggestion?"

I replied:

"First I suggest you get him cleaned. Then, perhaps you can house him with the Arch Bishop in his residence, he has guards and can be secure there. You trust the Arch Bishop, he is separate from the Palace, it would look to Avignon that you are following their request, he is not in your hands, yet he must be secured."

The King smiled:

"You should have been a politician. That is exactly what I will do. It solves my problem, and gives me time. Thank you Brendan."

I replied:

"Your Majesty, my fear is less Avignon, it is just this man may not be quite stable. He may have various problems of his mind. I just suggest you beware and deal with him carefully, such a tool can cut on both sides."

He replied regaining a sense of regal understanding:

"Your point is very well taken. To the bath with him and then to the Arch Bishop. Thank you Brendan and we shall see you soon."

I bowed and departed.

1351 GUY DE CHAULIAC

The more I considered the proposition of an animal as the carrier of the plague the more I felt compelled to gather data or facts as to the validity. I started with Guy de Chauillac in Avignon. I wrote him:

"My Most Honorable Doctor Guy de Chauillac,

As I have explained, the spread of the plague is due most likely to some substance transferred from a person to person or from one animal to another animal, and then between that animal and a person. The facts make for the person to person spread compelling. The animal entity would require the identity of some animal which is first in close proximity to persons and also most

likely finds itself so infected and thus vulnerable. To determine if this hypothesis is correct, we should need to see if one can identify such a common animal. Namely one which coinhabits areas where people do and also when plague is present suffers the same mortality.

I seek your support and assistance in ascertaining if at all possible if such an animal can be found."

I dispatched the letter under Royal courier and awaited a reply. To my surprise Guy responded in less than a month. His reply was:

"Father Brendan

My apologies for so slow a reply. We have just recovered from the plague with devastating results. His Holiness Pope Clement is fine but I have suffered from a plague infection, but did manage to recover. Yet I am still slow to repair myself.

Your correspondence is a significant interest. You may not be following Galen but if I recall you and your fellow Franciscan Oxford fellows always seemed to follow alternative pathways. In this case I believe that you may have developed an interesting approach.

Let me tell you regarding my observations. First the animal. This was easy, after you asked the question. It appears in my opinion to be a rat, specifically the black rat. If one speaks with some from Marseille then one hears of massive amount os dead black rats on ships filled with plague. One surmises the rats die first then the people.

Thus the rat may very well be that entity you seek. Yet what is special about this rate we do not know. How it may spread the plague we do not know.

I have sent letters to those upon whom I can rely for good observations and will keep you informed. Please let me know your progress.

I must than you and King Charles for this work. I also thank you for praising my initial efforts to keep His Holiness safe from the plague. It has been a cruel time, and I gather we have both seen our share of devastation."

I found his response both brilliant and humbling. He was in the midst of the battle while I had spent time at best at the ramparts.

1352 WATER AND CLEANLINESS

Charles then asked me a rather serious question. He said:

"Brendan, I notice that you, so unlike many of your brothers and in fact many of all of us, are especially concerned with cleanliness. You wash your hands, you bath almost daily, you wear clean attire, wash your feet. In fact before you see any patient you wash your hands in both water

and wine. What makes you do that. Many in your order eschew such acts, they feel that it is a vanity to protect the body with such cleanliness. Why do you take up such a process?"

I came to realize two things. First that I was truly different. But second, that people were often fearful of confronting me on this. Gui, an Inquisitor, could just have easily thought this affectation, if that was what it was, was some vanity, pagan belief, or whatever. I looked across the table, as the candles flickered the light and responded in a reflective and measured manner.

"Your Majesty, you are not the first to ask me of such. I realize that I may be a bit askew in my practice but let me explain why. In fact I believe I am following the lead of our Lord. As you recall, when Jesus met John at the River, he entered the water and was baptized by him. He was cleansed. Water and washing in it was a cleansing, a spiritual and physical cleansing. At Mass, when the priest, as you yourself did this morning, is to consecrate the bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus, you first wash your hands with water and wine, you cleanse yourself to be able to perform such an act. When people are brought into our Church, they are baptized, in water, cleansed of their sins. Made whole again, the original sin of Adam washed away. Washing with water, and with wine and water, is integral to our belief. Now why with patients? Because it is in respect to their being created in the likeness of God, they have a soul, and I come to treat the body and respect the soul, thus as at Mass, likewise when treating the sick."

Charles sat back and thought briefly. He then said:

"Amazing. I had never thought that way. If I may suggest, does that mean that the hermits who eschew all cleanliness are breaking God's law?"

I realized he was still the Inquisitor. My answer was thus:

"Your Majesty, you are King, and perhaps looking for the wrong acts. I do not know hermits, even many a monk or even my brother Friars. I know only myself and my respect for the human body as a vessel for the immortal soul. I hope I have not been sacrilegious in my belief, that I have not created some heresy. I am doing so in the image of our Lord and in respect for the patient. If I have spent a day in the saddle, my hands covered with the dust of the road, would I not clean that if I were to offer Mass? Not only would I consider such but it is demanded of me."

I then said:

"Your Majesty, let me give some examples of the act of cleansing as a significant element of a good Christian life. First, is the cleaning at Mass, with water and wine. Before the priest can consecrate he must clean his hands with water and then wine. Water to wash away the seen dirt and wine to wash away the unseen. Only clean hands can partake in the act of consecration. Then there is the most important of all cleansings, the Baptism of Jesus by John. The act of Baptism is a washing of the body and soul, the cleansing of Original Sin. Then today we continue with the Baptism of individuals. Other faiths do the same. The Muslims and their washings before they enter the mosque for prayer. The feet, hands, face are all cleaned. Thus we must be clean to meet the Lord, clean to chase out the devil and clean to treat the sick, and we must clean to sick themselves so that they may be healed."

Charles replied:

"Brendan, that is a compelling argument."

1353 PLAGUE SUBSIDES

By late 1353 the wave of the plague seemed to be sweeping north and east, out of Europe, leaving more than half its people dead. Its impact most severe in cities but spreading out to farms, letting land return to its natural state but depriving the few remaining with food.

But like a tremendous storm, the plague was a rampage of death, then it was gone. It spread killing more than half the people, then it moved as if it were some living consuming beast on the hunt for new flesh. Bodies were in piles, often where they dropped. Some were buried, many were just consumed in large fires, constructed atop the piles of where they fell. One could smell the burning flesh miles distant.

We started to collect information on the damage to Charles' domains. Brno is totally gone, other towns as well. Prague had experienced a few dozen cases, but we managed to contain them and not a one of my staff was infected. We kept our distance, and when not able to, we cleansed ourselves extensively. I was chided from time to time by some older religious for being the "clean Franciscan" since so many of the older mendicants took pride in their lack of cleanliness. Regrettably they were often the first to die.

Looking back, the past five years have been a period of trying to hold the tail of a rampaging storm. I asked if I had learned anything? The cause? There is still the rat issue, the presence of filth, the communications from person to person. The two manifestations; buboes and blood from the lungs. Perhaps the blood from the lungs is merely a bubo in the lung which we cannot see. We did not bleed patients, we did not burst the buboes, for fear of spreading by a vapor or liquid. We kept away from those coughing up sputum and blood. We washed incessantly. It seemed to help here in Prague, at least that is what I believed from the facts. I has transmitted these thoughts to de Chauillac, and he was grateful. Also I noted that de Chauillac himself ill, was a survivor. Why, I wondered but kept the question to myself. There are too many questions and now too few minds to deal with them.

de Chauillac still lived and I hoped that in time we could meet again.

1353 NEW TOWN

King Charles had prospered during this very same period as the world about him collapsed. Having generally avoiding the plague, Prague added the New Town, Stare Mesto, to the city, dramatically expanding the city with new homes and buildings. The streets were wide, there was beautiful foliage and gardens. The world around us was collapsing while Prague blossomed with new growth and little impact from the Black Death!

First the University was expanded. Facilities for faculty and then students. I was always cautioning him on carefully admitting those from plague areas. Fortunately he agreed to my admonitions.

Next, Charles had Clement appointed an Archbishop, one who had been in Avignon, and one who I had been acquainted with.

Charles also tried to entice many luminaries to his new University. Petrarch was the most important one. Since he knew I had known Petrarch well he asked me to meet with him and discuss the possibility of attracting him to Prague. Also I was about to leave Prague and return to London, I had accomplished all I could have here and the plague seemed to have dissipated.

In the Palace we met for a dinner. It was just Charles and myself. He began on Petrarch:

"Brendan, what do you think would induce this great man to come here to Prague? We can offer him a great many things, is there anything in particular?"

I replied:

"Your Majesty, I have known Petrarch since he was a young student at Montpellier. We even went to Bologna together. He is now a great writer as considered by many. Yet he is most at home in the Italian states, his language, his culture, his vision of a new Rome. You can offer him a great deal, but his culture is in Italy. Also, your Majesty, he is a man alone, not a Professor, not a teacher. He creates his own tales, poems, stories, and this is not something that a great University has a true place for."

Charles replied:

"Am I to understand that you do not think it is a good idea to have such a great man as Petrarch at our new University?"

I saw he may have been offended so I tried to rephrase my words. One must be careful with powerful men, they offend so easily. Especially if one even in the slightest questions their poorly conceived ideas. So I replied:

"Not at all your Majesty, he would be a great find. My concern would be his happiness here away from what he feels most comfortable with. our idea has great merit but I would not want to see you disappointed, and even publicly so, for Petrarch is known to make quick decisions and then to change them just as quickly. So you may seek a meeting with him and assess for yourself."

I continued:

"But as you know, Universities such as Paris, Bologna, Montpellier, Oxford, and others have a large collection of Professors of many talents and their sole function is to educate the young who

are given to their care. You yourself saw some of this in your brief time at Paris. Thus to have a superb University one needs a diverse group of the best of scholars."

Charles replied:

"I can obtain many of these from the scholars in the local Augustinian and Dominican convents. Yes, I know, you are a Franciscan but do you not agree that the best here in Prague are from those convents?"

I knew what my answer should be and since I had no benefit to argue said:

"Yes indeed your Majesty, they would make fine Professors. The next question you should ask is what areas are you to focus on? Theology, Philosophy, Law, Medicine, the Natural Sciences?"

Charles already had his answer:

"Why Theology and Philosophy, those are the most respected. Perhaps Law, but perhaps latter. As for Medicine, not just now. The Natural Sciences, well, we have no interest there."

I tried to reposition his thinking:

"Your Majesty may want to consider something a bit new. As I spent time across your kingdom I saw that your people are exceptionally talented. They have mines, mine extraction, metal processing, plant pharmaceuticals, mills and the mechanics of these mills, bridge design, water flow and management and many other areas. You have people who understand chemistry, not just the secrets of the alchemists, but the production of alcohols, the extraction of acids, mercury. Why not have such skills at the University, they would add to your country's growth."

He replied in a somewhat offhand fashion:

"Those are things the peasants think of. We must think of greater things, in Theology and Philosophy, not peasant thoughts."

He then turned and said:

"And we do not want to get any of these Professors who cause problems. You know, like that Ockham or that Marsilius of Padua. They caused great distress in Avignon and I have no need of that. You knew Ockham, why do you think he believed that all people are created equal and that we Kings have no Divine Rights, that has been a fact of our existence for, well from the very beginning, was it not?"

I saw that any dialogue on this topic was fruitless. Thus I answered:

"Your Majesty perceives it as it is."

He then finished and said:

"Then so be it, I shall reach out to Petrarch, I shall have Theology and Philosophy, and I shall ask the Augustinians and Dominicans. This has been an excellent talk. I thank you greatly. When are you returning to London?"

I answered:

"I leave in the morning your Majesty. I hope my work here has benefitted you and your people."

He replied:

"Yes, very much so, we avoided the plague, saved our people, and now we move forward, with a New Town and a new University. God has been good to us. Travel safely my friend, and my thanks again."

I got up, bowed, and departed. Five years and more, watching the plague, understanding somewhat its caused, healing the sick, and understanding that there is an explosion of new ways to do things, new techniques, new technology.

CHAPTER 13 (1353-1361) BATTLE OF POITIERS

War always seems like a constant thing among nations. The question is; is war only the battle of the egos of men, or is war ever truly justified. In short, is there a just war? Defending one's self is clearly acceptable with no questions. Yet, what does defending imply. Active aggression, petty squabbles, or what?

1353 THE RETURN

I returned to London in early 1353. Winter still lingered and the cover of smoke from the fireplaces was no longer as evident. The city appeared empty. As did all the lands I traversed to get here. I was used to people, people everywhere. Now, a scant few, here and there, although some still came from the country side to seek work, sustenance. I wondered what the many farms would be doing now that labor was so scarce.

The docks were bare of ships. I was returning to a place that I had called home. But now almost all of the people who made my life round me were dead. All my family in Dublin, all my fellow Friars in Bristol, Oxford, London, Ockham in Munich, person after person, plague and age, and here I was nearing 60 myself, having seen war and pestilence, Popes and Kings, and hopefully I could just practice medicine amongst what was left of humanity. I was no academic, now writer, I had tried to be the best physician that I could be as well as a priest, an accident of saving the life of a Pope.

I walked from the dock, up towards Greyfriars, to see if I still had a home. The grave yard had been repaired but it was now massive. It must have contained hundreds who died in the plague. I also gathered that at one point they just abandoned burying and burned the bodies in large lyres. The ashes were then spread upon the grave yard turf. The convent was still here, a bit worse for the wear. What I noticed was that there were no smiles on people, what few I saw and they all held their heads down. Also what little I could hear I noticed the local dialect of English was expanding with words and pronunciations I had not been accustomed to. I have now seen languages evolve over time and space. Thus any reliance on what one means in Aristotle today may not be what was meant in Greece some sixteen hundred years earlier! Most academics are clueless to these facts.

At the door of the convent were two Guards, dressed in regal attire. I wondered who within deserved such respect. As I walked up from the gate at the street the two came to some semblance of attention and asked me:

"Friar, are your Brendan of Dublin?"

I now was worried that perhaps my return was less than wanted. But I was tired from the journey and all I wanted was a bath. I said:

"Yes, I am, and I have just arrived and would like to clean first. Unless this is a life or death issue, perhaps a bath and clean tunic may be the order of business. Would you not agree?"

The senior guard replied:

"His Majesty the King wants your presence immediately."

I wanted a bath. Hopefully there were no rats on the ship, I did bring several cats with me, and two were even following me along. I had quietly named them Edward and John, for the Kings of England and France, they always seems to get into a fight. Perhaps I should not reveal this to these somber men. I continued to walk into the convent with the two guards in tow, swords clanking on the stone entry.

Friar William was in the entry and he looked terrified as I entered with these two behind me. I announce myself:

I am Friar Brendan, having just returned from Prague. I would like a quick bath, a clean tunic and then these men will accompany me to the King. While I am changing, what is your name?"

He replied in what looked like abject terror:

"William, why William, I mean Friar William, my Lord, I mean Friar Brendan..."

I replied:

"Thank you William. Give these two fine men some wine, and I believe you may have some of those scones, they were good as well. I will show myself to the bath, and seek out a clean tunic. I will leave the books here and you may place them wherever you see fit. Now Guards, my fine men, Friar William will treat you to the best of Franciscan wine and scones, and I shall be down in a few minutes. Oh yes, watch my cats as well."

The senior Guard said:

"Cats, what cats?"

At that point, Edward the roughest cat jumped on his lap and started to rub against his armor. He jumped in fear.

I found the bath, the water was cold, but I still had some soap from Prague. I bathed quickly, found a clean tunic that fit me, and used my existing sandals. There were no under garments so I was doing the best I could to meet the King. I also shaved, with a few cuts, not having any warm water.

In about five minutes I returned seeing the Friar William, the two cats, and the two guards at the table. As I walked in the Guards look disappointed as to my fast return. They gulped their wine, and stuffed a few scones in their tunics. Then off we went.

There were three horses, one of which I was to ride. My steed was magnificent, and outfitted in a manner fit for a Prince. As we rode out to Windsor Castle, along the Thames road we were at a full gallop. Fortunately it was dry and the dust was settled so I remained somewhat clean. After a bit more than two hours we arrived at the castle. As we approached I saw that Edward was in the midst of a massive rebuilding and expansion of the castle. There were workers everywhere. I guessed he did quite well in collecting his rewards from the Crecy battle. I also wondered why he wanted me and more so, how he even knew I was back!

Riding up to the Castle front the stone was English, the design was English. It was that collection of neat cut rectangular stone, devoid of soul, unlike what I had seen in Italy or France. The day was starting to set and the sky was cloudy so there was no enlightenment of anything by the light God has given us. I forgot how dismal England could be. Prague had some of this but in England it was pervasive. The Castle at Windsor was on a slight hill so that one approached it along this long path lined by trees. It was large enough to hold an army.

I entered the main room in the Castle where Edward was meeting with his Earls and Barons. I knew none of these men. But I saw Prince Edward, now a full man, standing like a bold lion amongst the others. The King was around a large round table with maps and swords all about. The King had his head down but the Prince glimpsed my presence, smiled and came to embrace me. He said:

"My good Friar, also my brother at arms. How is the leg, did it heal well? As usual you are clean, not the humble street Friar. You have not aged a bit, plague and all. It is good to have you back."

I had forgotten the arrow wound, my bonding with the soldiers at Crecy. I embraced him and he was now a strong man, no longer just the growing youth from Crecy. I then asked:

"My good Prince, perhaps you can tell me why I am here in such a hurry. I have just returned from my long stay in Prague. What can I do for his Majesty, for you my Prince?"

He replied quietly:

"The King needs eyes at meetings with the French. You know Jean a bit. We need your talents in being unseen but being able to determine what they want and can do. Both the King and I need your understanding of these French. King Jean seems to be a weak king, which may be helpful, but could also be a danger. We do not want to underestimate him. In addition the Pope has demanded we seek a peace again. But you know the French, especially their Kings, they will tell us one thing and then do another."

After the discussions with the King, both the King and the Prince asked me to have dinner to discuss the progress of central Europe. Specifically what King Charles would do and would he try to come to the aid of King John. We discussed this at length and I told them that in my view Charles was looking to consolidate his own realm and had no interest in war or helping King John. The King then asked me how I was doing after Crecy, for he knew I was injured as well, I suspect the Prince retold him. Then the King said surprisingly:

"Brendan, I understand that by law, you are also a Knight, having been so made when finishing at Bologna. Also you were on the field of Battle at Crecy, saved many, and were even injured in battle. You served the Prince and you served me. Now I have created a special order of Knights, those who have been in battle with their King, and those who demonstrated special heroism. You fought without weapons, a bravery exceeding almost all. The new Order is called the Order of the Garter, a tale I can tell you about, and I would like to have you as a member."

I was shocked, none the less by the honor, but how the Franciscans would see this. I told the King:

"Your Majesty, a great honor indeed, but alas, as a Franciscan, I cannot take title to anything, not material, nor even the honor of a title. But if your Majesty would permit, I would be most honored to be the chaplain to your Order, to say prayers for it, to if necessary deal with those who need to understand your bravery and that of the men in the Order. Would that be possible?"

The King laughed and said:

"Let it be so. That is a wonderful dimension to the Order, our Chaplain, our man with God. I will drink to that!"

And with that the wine disappeared. For me the wine was much better than the beer in Prague. Towards the end of the meal the Prince turned to me and said:

"Brendan, do you want to know the motto of the Order?"

I went along, because I knew that both the Prince and his father had a bit of a bawdy sense of humor, and after all this wine I expected some of it.

"It is "Honi soit qui mal y pense" ("Shame on him who thinks evil of it.") Now you may wonder what this means. Well, We were at a Court dance and the good Lady Salisbury was dancing and right there, mid Court, she jumped, and whoosh, down went her lovely blue garter. Of course, we all burst forth laughing, yet the King, my father, walked into the middle of the floor, and all the dancers spread apart like the Red Sea with Moses, and he bent over and picked up the pretty blue garter and gave it back. The good Lady Salisbury, embarrassed to no end, bowed. My Father then said, "shame on any of you who thinks this is evil". Thus the motto. We respect women, we are chivalrous, and we are true Knights!"

Down went another bottle of Bordeaux!

Strangely my concern the next morning was for my cats; Edward and John. Yet how should I address such a concern here at Windsor. I left them in the trusting hands of Friar William, as much a stranger as anyone else here in London after all these years. I had to speak with the King in a more business like fashion before commencing on to Guines. Thus we set aside some time in the afternoon to have such a meeting. The Prince was in attendance as well as the Bishop of Norwich who had been at Guines for the first meeting, along with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Duke of Lancaster.

Sitting at the large dining table the King laid out his concerns:

"There is a problem with King John. We had a treaty but he sees that as a treaty with his father and not him. In the initial meeting at Guise, the agreement seems to be that I shall cease all hostilities and further I shall renounce any claim to the throne of France. In return I have no obligation to pay homage for any reason to John and further that I obtain the Aquitaine, Gascony, and also Poitou, Touraine, Anjou, Maine, and all of Normandy. Frankly that seems reasonable. But John has yet to agree. The Pope, this new Innocent VI, has been pressing both me and John to settle this dispute. I do not know him. Brendan, do you have any knowledge of this person?"

I replied:

"I understand that he is the opposite of Clement and more reminiscent of Benedict. He has begun to shed the royal setting of Avignon and in addition he has tried to again go after the last of the Spirituals of my order. He is alleged to be a reasonable Pope but again he is French and there is no indication of any intent to return to Rome. I had gotten to understand Pope Clement through King Charles but this Pope seems to be the opposite in all ways of Clement. He is considered to be in ill health and frankly he may not last through the year, but anything can happen, especially in Avignon."

The King responded:

"I met this Pope I believe Lisieux in late 1348, I believe, and he was one of the many trying to stop the war. I found him rather indecisive, vacillating. Not a man I would see as a leader. Even then he was an old man, with the gout, of poor health even then. Strange what men are chosen for Pope. Fine, now what of John. What are his weaknesses?"

The Prince replied:

"John is of small stature and is not well liked by his barons. This may make him an uncertain person to deal with since he may very well be out to prove his metal. That is always a dangerous mixture."

Lancaster then interjected:

"Your Majesty, as you know I was in Paris in December last. My intention was to seek a remedy resulting from the Duke of Brunswick and his attempt to have me seized upon my returning from a crusade march. King John interceded and we met and spoke at length. The one who impressed me the most was Guy de Boulogne. He was the one to suggest the meeting this March in Guines, the one we are preparing for now. It is Guy who reports to the Pope. John appears to trust him but then again there is so great an internal strife in the Palace that one never truly knows. My impression is that King John vacillates, is not a man of his word. Thus any agreement is questionable, and the Pope is only as good as when he lives, and one suspects that that will not be for very long."

I interjected:

"Your Majesty, I believe the key question is; what do you desire as an end point? Is the proposal laying on the table acceptable, or do you want more. As I see it, you are relinquishing any claim to France, albeit it has some validity based on heritage. I can speak only of King Charles whose goal was to expand and consolidate his domain. It appears that this is what King John would attain in this agreement. You lose one claim to at best solidify claims to what you already have."

The King turned to me and replied:

"Brendan, you are sounding like a Royal Adviser, and your comments have merit. What do I want? That is the question. Not what will John give me. If he is willing to give this, then will he give even more? And why is he even giving this?"

I thought it best to engage with Lancaster. He impressed me with both loyalty and intelligence. So I responded:

"Your Majesty, I leave much of that to Lancaster here, since he is also the one to bear the brunt of anything that should arise. I am at your service for what I can do."

Lancaster smiled and saw that I pivoted towards him in both respect and deference. The King likewise was appreciative. I did wonder if perhaps I may have slighted the Prince, yet I knew him to be more than self-confident. The Prince then said:

"Your Majesty, leave this to we three, Lancaster will assess the forces needed, Brendan can, let us say, investigate what the parties on the other side are about, and in that Brendan I truly suspect it will be Avignon. I shall commence the assembly of forces if needed to protect Gascony."

The King responded:

"Fine, and I shall deal with Brittany, Normandy and Flanders. I shall also deal with the other nobles to assure their support."

I then noted:

"Your Majesty, being away, and hearing now all the worry about France, what of Scotland, has that issue been resolved?"

The Prince burst out laughing and said:

"That issue is like a boil on your ass. It will always act up and at the most inopportune time!"

That and the laughs ended the conversation.

1353 GUINES MEETING (JUNE)

The next day the King spoke with me regarding the French and the Truce agreed to at Guines in March. There was an outline of the overall terms for a peace but it appeared that the English Nobles and the French were back tracking on the agreement. Edward wanted all of Aquitaine the elimination of any vassal requirements. King John apparently at first agreed but then it appeared that the losses of tax revenue would be prohibitive. John seemed to be in some perpetual state of disarray and not able to manage his nobles in the least. The King then asked that I accompany Lancaster back to Guines sometime in June and I agreed. The King also brought up the issue of the King of Navarre, Charles of Evereux, or often just Navarre, for the first time. Apparently he was a disaffected player in all of these intrigues and Edward thought that perhaps he could be useful. Edward thus asked that if I were to have access to Navarre or his entourage that I try to assess what their intentions could be. To both of these I agreed.

Edward noted that King John had as his first wife, Bonne of Bohemia, the sister of Charles in Prague, my former protector. Regrettably she died in 1349 of the plague but her son Charles was the Dauphin, and putative successor to John. Thus my proximity by family may make for a more open conversation with John, and possibly with Charles the Dauphin and Prince. Edward said:

"I do not believe that John will be at this gathering at Guines, yet I believe he may send his son Charles, to learn of nothing else. You know his uncle in Prague, and of course from Crecy his great uncle. Try to find his measure. Try to see if he is like his father or can he be reasoned with. If we were to go to war again, he may be on the field, secure, but present. Just in anticipation we must get to know the man we are to deal with. I also want you to let the Prince know as well, since he will most likely be facing this man in the future."

I agreed and set out to Guines the following day.

Guines is just south of Calais. A small town chosen I gather as a compromise. Calais we on the continent, reachable from Paris. Calais, was English, across the Channel from the island. Thus to meet there has the flavor of a compromise. King John, Jean, was in my view a weak King. John had been King since 1350, and had to deal with the loss at Crecy and then the plague, which was as bad in France as anywhere. The plague was frankly a massive assault on all of France, from the coasts to each inland town. I suspected that it was most likely a result of the many rivers connecting all of France, pathways for the spread of the disease. John was the second Valois King and I gather somewhat timid. He clearly did not have the aggressiveness of the Edwards. Especially the Prince. His son, Charles, was also a conundrum. His uncle, King Charles in Prague, was a brilliant and wise man, whose interests in war were as a reaction and not a pre-occupation. Would this nephew be the same or just another French King?

I went with Lancaster in mid-June and there were a multiplicity of French in attendance. In fact young Charles the Dauphin was there. He was but fifteen, yet he had acquired the somewhat unique French attitude of superiority. He was of medium height, had the beginning of some modest facial hair, becoming somewhat in vogue, the long French nose, and did not have the Slavic looks that I had expected. I never saw his mother but only her brother King Charles. I also did not know if he would have any recognition of me. I stood behind Lancaster and just kept my peace.

In a matter of minutes, an aide to the Dauphin whispered to him something, and he turned to me as if he had seen a ghost. He immediately dismissed all about him, walked past Lancaster without a notice and came up to me with an embrace and kissing me on both cheeks, a French tradition. Needless to say the people at the gathering was dumbstruck, as was I. After all, I was in my grey tunic, on the English side, and well hidden behind the well attired Lancaster.

The Dauphin then said to me, loudly in a manner heard by all:

"My dear Friar Brendan, my family owes you much, it is so good of you to come, hopefully as a friend to both France and England. We finally meet, we two, my uncle speaks so highly of you for the years you spent with him, and you administered to my great uncle on the fields at Crecy. Come we must talk, I must also get to know you."

At that he escorted me out of the hall, to the shock of all in attendance, except Lancaster who actually found his absence a benefit!

The Dauphin and I spoke for several hours. He wanted, as best I could gather, two disparate things from our talk, and then possibly a third. First he wanted to know his mother's family better. It is quite common that sons who lose their mothers often have such an attraction to family. Then he wanted to get to understand Edward and the Prince. He clearly had been primed for such an information and leaning experience before coming to Guines. Finally, and to my surprise, he wanted to speak with me to learn about life. What I could tell him was debatable, but during this discussion, it was as if I had become a grandfather, answering questions, and sharing his concerns. What became quite clear to me during this meeting was that like his father he was insecure yet with a strong strain of French arrogance and defiance to the English. I had now see several French royals and they all seemed to have a similar manner. In contrast the English Royals were a bit more barbarian, ruthless fighters. He asked me to join him for dinner after the talks. That I did, much to the pleasure of Lancaster.

After several days Lancaster felt we had done whatever was possible. Frankly, there never was a chance of finalizing the Treaty and we agreed to disagree and we then returned to England. Lancaster was satisfied at accomplishing nothing on the Treaty. He felt the understanding of the Dauphin was the victory.

Upon getting back to Windsor and the King his response was the same. The only regret was that we did not meet Navarre. I suspected that we would eventually do so.

1353 PARIS, ORESME AND MONEY (OCTOBER)

I went back to Paris in October 1353 again to meet with the Dauphin and possibly the King. What became clear to me was the overall economic instability of this regime. I mentioned to the Dauphin that money and financing wars was a complex process. Surprisingly the Dauphin suggested I meet with one of the King's advisers on these issues. He was a faculty member at the University of Paris, one Nicole Oresme.

I found out more about Oresme. He was born around 1320 in Bayeux some distance from Caen. He had obtained his Master of Arts at the University of Paris and was teaching philosophy there. In 1348 he had obtained a graduate scholarship in theology at the College of Navarre at the University of Paris. Oresme was considered by the King as a great man of finance and even more so one who understood not just how money worked but how it interacted as an element in the overall functioning of the country. He presented his economic ideas in commentaries and treatises, comprehensive works upon money. Oresme argued that coinage belongs to the public, not to the prince, who has no right to vary arbitrarily the content or weight. By clearly delineating the destructive effects on a nation's economy of a debasement of the currency, he influenced the Dauphin's thinking on how to develop and implement monetary and tax policies. Oresme also is quoted as professing that in a society in which two currencies with the same designation but of different value circulate, the money of lower value drives out the money of higher value.

The Dauphin then set up a meeting with Oresme and myself. The Dauphin joined us at the meeting. Oresme was a young man, of some thirty plus years but had clearly reached his stride as an accepted academic. He somehow had focused upon money and what he called the economy, the nature or process of how goods and capital flow about the land. This was something I had never truly examined. I understood physics and medicine, where we can measure things and ascertain whether we are correct or not. In this study, economics, he seems to try to predict human behavior, and for me this was well beyond anything I had ever seen.

We spoke at length and I asked him about his idea of bad money chasing out good. He explained his views again and he made the point that this was the first understanding and articulation of such a phenomenon. The principle he articulated related to the intent of providing a stable currency of the realm, something that would be universal and not debased. I suspected that the Dauphin as well as Oresme saw this as a means of taxation for the Crown. His argument was that bad money chased out good. That is if one were to have a two coins, one lead and one gold, then a man keeps the gold and rids himself of the lead.

Our argument was one of who created the money. Did the Crow become the banker, the creator of money, and thus the holder of say the gold. Would gold then have to be withdrawn from common usage or would there be some equivalence, such as an ounce of gold equal to some number of Royal ecu. Philip IV had introduced the ecu again into France just in 1296. It was a pure gold coin with a shield on it. I argued with Oresme that the purity of the coin was critical, that a bad currency, one which chased out a good, could easily be a degraded coin, one with more silver than gold. How would one verify such a currency? Would the French Crown validate the worth and trade any ecu for any other ecu, thus establishing some form of integrity, some form of balance. I then asked Oresme as to the exchange between countries, how would he deal with English currency, say in a transaction. Or is gold just gold, and one need have no ecu, just gold, by the ounce. The Dauphin seem amused by these discussions.

I then reminded Oresme that was it not Aristophanes in *The Frogs*⁵ who wrote of just such a process of debasement and I quoted the playwright as follows:

⁵ <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristophanes/frogs.html>

*Often has it crossed my fancy, that the city loves to deal
With the very best and noblest members of her commonweal, just as with our ancient coinage,
and the newly-minted gold.
Yea for these, our sterling pieces, all of pure Athenian mold,
All of perfect die and metal, all the fairest of the fair,
All of workmanship unequalled, proved and valued everywhere
Both amongst our own Hellenes and Barbarians far away,
These we use not: but the worthless pinchbeck coins of yesterday,
Vilest die and basest metal, now we always use instead.
Even so, our sterling townsmen, nobly born and nobly bred,
Men of worth and rank and mettle, men of honorable fame,
Trained in every liberal science, choral dance and manly game,
These we treat with scorn and insult, but the strangers newness come,
Worthless sons of worthless fathers, pinchbeck townsmen, yellowy scum,
Whom in earlier days the city hardly would have stooped to use
Even for her scapegoat victims, these for every task we choose.
O unwise and foolish people, yet to mend your ways begin;
Use again the good and useful: so hereafter, if ye win
'Twill be due to this your wisdom: if ye fall, at least 'twill be
Not a fall that brings dishonor, falling from a worthy tree.*

His response was both a surprise and a bit defensive. The Dauphin looked pleased that his "friend", the old Friar, had wisdom to compete with this younger scholar. Oresme then responded:

"Friar, I appreciate your reference, and I believe that this further substantiates my proposition. Notwithstanding, I have recognized not just the existence and the consequences, but ways to ameliorate the situation. I have thus been advising the Dauphin."

I backed off quickly praising him profusely, recognizing that Academics truly have little more than their ideas. As I was aging I was finding the pure academic often as petulant holders of personal ideas which if held up to the real world of facts, may shatter like glass, along with their own personal perceptions. I was glad that actions had drawn me away from the Academy and into real life, things were so much better there!

When I returned to London I did discuss some of Oresme's ideas with the King but he thought them too extreme. England after all had a strong economy, whatever that meant.

1355 GADDESSEN IN LONDON (MAY)

I was staying at Greyfriars in London and working at the clinics treating many of the people who had returned to the city. Many disease were rampant, infections, lung disorders, and there was a strong undercurrent of poverty. We at Greyfriars served the poor as best we could and most of the funds given to the Friars were directly used in that direction. My biggest concern was sickness in the young. Many die before the age of five, often of some form of fever and

infection. I often went to care for them, and as was my usual approach I first cleaned them and sought to have a clean environment. Many of the Poor Clares were there to help and the Queen Mother had been secretly contributing substantially to our efforts. There were times I had tried to bring these issues up with the King but day by day France and King John were his sole concern.

In early May of 1355 we were visited by my old Master, John Gaddesden, who by this time was getting quite old. He was renowned for his works on Medicine and I had read them many times. My concerns were that he still relied on the words of the ancients rather than always checking with what was real. We were friends from Oxford days and I studied under him when he was at his prime. I gather he had followed my travels and unlike me he had prospered as a result of his medical practice. He always had a quote from an ancient and a tonic or bleeding to be done.

Gaddesden came to the Clinic when I was there and walked in attended by a group of young men whom I gathered was a retinue of fellow practitioners. He came in and smiled as he approached, with his functionaries carrying copies of his works. He said to me:

"Brendan, it is so good to again see you, and working with the poor. You Franciscans work so well. Can you present some of your patients to my colleagues so that they may gain some insight from your approach?"

I smiled and agreed. I suspected that perhaps he was setting me up as a counterpoint to his way, a way of book learning. I recalled from his work which stated:

As Galen says in the first book of his treatise, "Do not frequent courts and princes"houses : "as indeed I never did until I had acquired a knowledge of books,— for Galen in the introduction to the seventh book says that it is impossible to become nearer to God by any other way than by the way of knowledge, therefore I have wished to write this book for the humble to read. Because since no book is without reproach, as Galen says in the second book of his de Crise, so neither will this one be.

But all the same, I implore those who see it not to gnaw it with an envious tooth, but to read it through humbly, for nothing is set down here but what has been proved by personal experience either of myself or others, and I, John of Gaddesden, have compiled the whole in the seventh year of my "lecture". And in regard to the whole book I intend to observe the following order of arrangement :

First of all I try to investigate the name of any disease,

secondly its definition,

thirdly its incidence and cause.

As Isaac says in the fourth book of his Fevers and in his section on Jaundice :

"We can discuss everything which we wish to investigate in a triple fashion : we can consider either its name, which is a matter of arbitrary convention ; or its definition, which indicates its

nature ; or its action, which indicates its effect, and in this use "actio "is equivalent to incidence or cause."

In the fourth place I give an account of the signs, both general and special, and what happenings to the patient are signs to the medical man, in accordance with Joannitius in his treatise on the signs of the official members.

In the fifth place I give the prognosis and in the sixth place the cure, and here following Mesue I give all things which are to be done for the cure of any dangerous disease which is capable of cure.

But before these matters are treated in the first chapter, I wish to give a name to the book, namely, the Rosa Mediciniiae, and I have so called it on account of five appendages which belong to the rose, as it were five fingers holding it, concerning which it is written :

Three are bearded and two are not. Vide Appendix on the Isagoge.

That is to say, three of the parts surrounding the rose are hairy and two are smooth, and the same is the case with the five parts of my book. The first three are bearded with a long beard, for they treat of many things and about general diseases, and for a discussion of what constitutes a general or common disease look in the introduction to the second book. The two following books treat of particular diseases, together with some matters omitted in the preceding books, and they are as without a beard (shorter).

And as the rose overtops all flowers, so this book overtops all treatises on the practice of medicine, and it is written for both poor and rich surgeons and physicians, so that there shall be no need for them to be always running to consult other books, for here they will find plenty about all curable disease both from the special and the general point of view.

He did not change. He proceeded in the same manner, quoting Galen and interspersed with quotes from his own works. We would see a patient and one of his followers would recite a paragraph from Galen, then another follower one other paragraph from Galen. In no case did they talk to a patient, ask a question, seek to determine what the real cause was.

At each patient he proceeded in the way he had done for decades. He would turn to his minions and say:

"Now remember the steps; First what is the name of any disease, and secondly its definition, then thirdly its incidence and cause. Now when we have done these three we go to the fourth place where we give an account of the signs, both general and special, and what happenings to the patient are signs to the medical man. The next step then is the fifth, where we give the prognosis. Finally in the sixth step we present the cure. We must be careful that we do so only for those cases where a cure is reachable and that we give all things which are to be done for the cure of any dangerous disease which is capable of cure. Thus let us examine these patients."

I suspected that for all of these followers that this was the first time they saw so many sick patients, and all in one place.

One by one they went along the patients, asking for urine, determine who should be bleed or not, prognosticating and suggesting cures. Sister Anne, my head Poor Clare assisting me, an older woman from York, actually from a Royal family, came to me on the side and said:

"Do any of these Academics have any idea what they are saying or do they just find quotes they think are appropriate?"

I replied soto voce:

"Sister, we fortunately are the ones giving the care, only the rich can afford their pomposity."

She burst out laughing, and fortunately none of the visitors notices.

Gaddesden finished, thanked me, disregarded all others and like a flock of swallows they all went out to the street and disappeared. I never saw him again. However his reputation would surface later in life.

1356 FRENCH RAIDS (JANUARY)

The French continued their raids on Gascony. I could see this would be a never ending battle. Gascon was difficult to defend and valuable for its taxes and the very nature of the Eleanor of Aquitaine fact. The King was getting more annoyed each day. He had me attend him at Windsor and we spoke about the problem.

Edward said:

"Brendan, these French attacks on my Gascon lands must stop. As you know they reduce the commerce in wines and the taxes on the wine are major sources of income for the Crown."

I replied:

"Your Majesty, when I met the Dauphin last, he had me meet his economic adviser, an Academic at the University at Paris, and his concern was the currency. Yet I saw and now see even more clearly that the plan was an economic war. War is not just with men, as we see it now is with cannons and ships, but it can be with money and trade. Just look at these raids. Each raid costs John little, yet it costs you a great deal. Small bands destroy fields, trash casks of wine, burn ships, then disappear. I believe your Majesty must understand that you are already at war."

Lancaster sat with us and replied:

"Your Majesty, Brendan speaks wisely, as usual. He sees this as it is, a war with new weapons. We must decide how we are to respond. Time is of the essence."

Edward replied:

"I am sending the Prince with massive forces to Gascony to rid us of these pirates."

1356 POITIERS (JUNE TO OCTOBER)

In May of 1356 I was called to Windsor to meet again with the King. He asked that I go to Bordeaux to be with his son, the Prince, who was then, with his forces, spreading out from Gascony up to the central part of French territory. It was just the continuous battle between Edward and John. I agreed to go because the King felt that although the Prince had great strength that from time to time he still suffered from his intestinal problems. This was not known to any at the time and this was why the King wanted me to attend to him. I had been advising the Prince from time to time as regards to what appeared to be some infestation in his digestive track. It most likely was something he had acquired on his prior excursions, and from time to time it would get more severe. However, I had not examined the Prince of late and both the King and his mother the Queen had expressed concern since he was now prowling about Gascony and in the event that a battle were to ensue he would most likely seek to be in the lead and his strength may not be adequate.

I set off to Gascony with orders to meet the Earl of Stafford at Bordeaux. The ship left Southampton, loaded with men and horses, and myself. The crossing was rough since we had a late Spring storm, and the horses seemed to fare better than the men. We came across north of St Vaast and then stayed offshore following to Jersey and then along the coast to Brest. From there we turned south after replenishing the food and water. Then South along the coast until we hit St Rochelle, part of Gascony and finally to the mouth of the River Garonne which empties to the Ocean. It rained most of the time along the coast and once we entered the Garonne the weather cleared. This did not make the men any happier, soldiers are not sailors, and horses were never meant to be on a ship. I had vague memories of this from my childhood, having sailed with my uncle from Dublin to Bristol and then South to the Garonne.

The Garonne was muddy and it flowed heavily out to sea. This meant a slow tacking up river to Bordeaux, and it took some two days to navigate to Bordeaux, where the Garonne had narrowed quite a bit. We passed St Estephe, Pauillac, Medoc, and many of the well know wine growing regions. I could see as we tacked forward why this region had such great wealth. Vineyards lined the shore and the hills, grapes all starting to grow for this year's harvest. The air moderated by the wind off the ocean, with good sunlight but ample water. It was not Ireland as I knew it, and it certainly was not England. There were the twists and turns and the weather improved as we went inland and we finally arrived at Bordeaux. It was a beautiful city on the Garonne, well protected from the ocean and in the heart of wine country. I knew that if one would continue along the Garonne one would finally get to Toulouse. Then to where, decades earlier, Gui and I wandered amongst the local folk. I had never been here, and often wondered if the folk from the mountains ever came here as well.

We disembarked, none the worse for the trip, and the Knights and Squires took off their horses and armor. Then I looked for the Earl of Stafford, who I was to join with and move out to see the Prince. I was off to see Stafford whom I knew as a Member of the Order of the Garter. He also

was at Crecy and unlike many of the younger men he was close to me in age. Although we knew each other in passing, as one may in any Court, I had never truly met Stafford. He was resident in the Castle under construction here in Bordeaux.

The front the of the Castle was filled with a mass of men, horses and arms, all preparing to move out to meet the Prince. I was still fresh from the ship and was in need of some cleaning when out from the door came Stafford. He saw me and smiled and came up to me directly and said:

"Brendan, well it is good to see some more old men here. There are too may boys, all with ideas of glory, none with the taste of the blood of battle. Come with me, we can talk in private."

After a few brief courtesies we reached the small hall in the Castle where we could speak privately. He began:

"I understand why you have come, which is why I am here also. The Prince is suffering from bouts of discomfort, and frankly he looks quite sickly from time to time. He is such a young man. I know the King and the Queen Mother want you to see what can be done. The Prince will not have any physician with him who sees no other path than to bleed him. The Prince trusts you both as a physician as well as one who is discreet. His men have not noticed, only the few of us who have been with him for some length of time."

I asked:

"I will wait until I see him. Where is he now?"

Stafford replied:

"He is in the main hall, preparing for his move from Bordeaux. He plans it for about the first week in July. Presently he seems in reasonable condition, but he conceals his discomfort quite well. Let us talk a bit more and then you can join him after dinner. But I ask you to the dinner, since he behavior shows perhaps some of the reasons for his discomfort. For he eats and drinks much too much and yet does not seem to build himself up. Also, look closely at his face, I feel that it also shows signs of distress. It is critical that he not fail on this movement, for the forces to the North are also on the move and King John has built up a great army which we may encounter as we sweep through his territories."

We chatted a bit more and I gathered more information on the Prince and his state. I also saw many men I had been with at Crecy and they recognized me and spoke about what they called the "old days". I was surprised that the plague did not dismember the men at arms as it had done so many others. This thought kept going through my mind as to what the true cause was of the plague. Everything has some cause, a lesson from Aristotle. Yet I saw we were all getting lax again as to cleanliness as a means to avoid the plague. Many of the men were assembled across the open fields in large multi-colored tents with horses and squires in attendance as well as a large contingent of archers carefully preparing their deadly weapons. This being the summer the sun was strong and one expected little rain. Thus movement would be unencumbered.

At dinner in the great hall I first met the Prince. The last I saw him was in passing at Windsor and I had not spent a long time examining him, for it was not that type of meeting. He embraced me in a strong hug, and I smiled as we all sat for dinner. What surprised me was that the Prince was served a massive amount of wild boar and bear, and he had demanded that it be lightly cooked so that the meat was still quite bloody. I had seen some of this when in Bohemia with Charles and some of the Bohemians would consume pig and boar meat just lightly cooked and that these people often had a progressive but debilitating disease. I could not treat it and it was just slowly progressing. I saw some who had it for many years and they often had wreaked muscles, puffy eyes and facial muscles, and many died of what I could at best tell was heart failure. I had received permission to examine one dead person and saw their heart greatly enlarged. I further examined the heart tissue with one of my magnifying lenses and saw what appeared to be small white worms. I remember also looking into the hearts of pigs from which they ate and could see what also appeared to be the same worm like creature. Thus I suspected that the dead man most like got the infection from the animal. However when people ate the pork when cook well or boiled with vegetables in a stew then we never saw such a problem. Frankly this was my concern and of course there was no way I could cut open the Prince nor even if I were right then there was no way I could treat this. There were some herbals that had been suggested but none which I was certain of. Possible the Prince was infected by the meats.

After the dinner the Prince asked me back to his quarters and I was alone with him. He said to me:

"Brendan, you know why the King asked you here. I have been having problems when I eat, and I cannot seem to remedy them. My attending physician wants to bleed me daily and frankly that just seems to make me weaker. What do you suggest?"

I asked him to disrobe from his tunic and I began an examination from the head down. His eyes were slightly swollen and when I started to examine his arm muscles there was some soreness and when I tested his strength there was a differential difference of note. I also sensed a slight fever but not something that would concern me.

His eyes were clear and I examined his urine which was clear. He had stool from a previous evacuation and it was watery and quite foul. It also was significant in volume. I found that he evacuated frequently and this discomfort was slowly getting worse but not at any rapid rate.

I then asked if he ate normally what I saw tonight. He looked surprised and said yes. I then asked for how long he had been doing this. His answer was simply whenever has was on the march, never back in England. Yet he had been on the march much too frequently.

He then sat and asked me the way most patients who are concerned do:

"Is it serious? Can I still move forward?"

My reply may have been a help:

"First your Highness, I suspect you have a disease caused by some worms that may be in the meat you consume. You eat the meat too rare and do not kill these worms and they take up in you. Secondly, this will not kill you today or tomorrow. But in the long term it may get worse. Thus the first thing you must do is stop eating the way you do. Cook the meat, eat well cooked fish, a chicken boiled, and if you like bear then put it in a stew and cook it well."

I then suggested some herbals, not really feeling they would do any good. Frequently patients feel better just thinking that something works. The Prince needed that now more than anything. I then said I would stay with him and control what he ate. Also he should tell his men that I was here as one who had been with him at Crecy, and not let them to think otherwise. He agreed. But I could see that he was concerned. But movement would at least temporarily ameliorate the situation.

On July 6th we began a march to La Reole, and it was a slow progression, some ten miles a day, a caravan of men, horses, tents, war materials, squires, cooks, and everything else that moves with a Prince and the army he commands. We turned north and marched to Bergerac, arriving about August 4. This was on the border of Gascony and what was claimed by King John belonging to France. He knew that he must leave some forces here to protect his rear and Gascony, so he set them in place and we entered what was considered enemy territory.

We reached Quisser on August 10, then Nontron the next day. There the troops found large amounts of food which they took and consumed at will, and as they marched they destroyed buildings and set fire to the many dry fields they passed. As we marched I could see our trail behind us in the lines of burning fields and smoke rising in the sky. We reached La Peruse on August 13 where we rested and then on to Lesterps the following day. The Prince wanted to attack the church but I tried to negotiate between the monks and the Prince and eventually all went well. The Prince showed the wear but he no longer ate as he had. Thus far we had seen no significant opposing forces.

We reached the city of Issoudun on August 24 but it was so well defended that we stayed but two days and moved on. Again, all that the army saw they set fire to. On August 26 the army took the town of Vierzon. Again it was a source of food and drink. Again I watched what the Prince ate like a hawk. His personal physician was still unaware of my purpose. That surprised me but his ego was so large that I suspect he believed the ruse we were playing. Then again if one looks at a 61 year old Friar as a true warrior one should be incredulous. Then again Stafford himself was almost as old so I felt somewhat secure in my attendance.

On August 31 we departed Vierzon and marched westward and by September 7 we had stopped in Mountlouis. At this point we knew that French forces of the King and others were to our north and preparing to move on the attack. The cat and mouse game was now afoot. Instead of the leisurely move forward we now were in a back and forth movement. I could see the Prince was more intent and as his scouts came back with information we also were looking for Lancaster's forces which were to join the Prince. We reached Le Haye on September 13 and moved on swiftly, for King John was to our rear and on September 14 we reached Chattellerault. From there we went south to just outside of Poitiers, arriving on September 17 and set camp in the forest, aside a wide field. This reminded me a great deal of Crecy.

I went to see the Prince in his tent. He was surrounded by loyal guards and I wanted to see his health. His confessor was there as was his personal physician. I just remained in the shadows until they left. I then walked in and had a fine bottle of Medoc, and we sat and drank it as he thought through the battle. I could see, without asking, that he was ready for the engagement and was not suffering too much from the infestation. Perhaps the diet helped, I really did not know.

On the next day, September 18, we moved downward to position ourselves to engage the French. When positioned, the Cardinal of Périgord came to the camp to try to arrange a peace. I sat with the Prince and he agreed to many concessions, giving land back, and the like but when the Cardinal presented these to King John; John summarily rejected everything, not giving an inch and even demanding more. When the Cardinal returned I could see he was quite depressed and was almost apologetic, for this would result in needless bloodletting. King John was truly a stubborn man and would hold out against all odds.

The battle began on September 19. It was a sunny and cool day, actually a beautiful day to see this lovely country. Just before the battle several Knights, one by one, came to me for Confession. There was a Mass held by the Prince's Confessor and I helped distribute Communion. During the march I had befriended many Knights and Squires, as well as many of the archers. The archers were especially keen to hear from me how Crecy went and what were their best options and how the French handled their cross bow. There would be little hope of rain this day to slow the French archers down.

The English forces were lined with their backs to the woods and the archers on each flank. The French aligned themselves across the English line and there was a cavalry attack first, which the English archers repulsed. The archers were well placed in a swampy area which kept them safe from the horse attacks. Thus each time a horse attack was tried the archers became ever so more deadly. I stayed with the Prince and Salisbury was to his right and Warwick to his left.

On a second charge by the French cavalry, on beautifully outfitted horses, with a field of color, the sound of our cannons came out. The French fell in groups, it was more devastating than any rain of arrows. The cannons were of brass, improved greatly from the ones that was at Crecy, and each cannoneer had his own formula for gunpowder as well as shot. They all were somewhat the same, the shot was jagged fragments of metal, some mix of brass and iron, and the gunpowder was also a mix of charcoal, sulphur, and salt peter. The ratios were often a secret and the purity of each ingredient made for maximum performance. It was a bloody massacre in my view, as the Knights and horses rode toward the men, they opened to allow the cannon to burst forth, and when it did the beautiful scene of men and horses turned into a field of blood and death, horses and men, torn apart with these deadly fragments, as they spewed forth from the cannons. It took a moment to see this, for the smoke from the firing of the cannon blinded the view, but then as if one were crossing the river Styx, as the smoke cleared, lay the bloody mess. I prayed for the dead and dying. The English soldiers were also at first aghast and then they cheered, knowing their own chances for brutal death were reduced. But for those with some insight, here was a new weapon of war which would change everything. I had seen the progress from long bow to cannon, in just a bit more than a decade. I wondered what would happen next.

After several of these attempts the French aligned themselves for a direct assault by foot. There was a back and forth movement but the French could not break the line. Finally towards the end of the battle I could see that the Dauphin and his entourage were escorted off the field of battle but apparently King John remained in the middle still trying to move forward and attack, on foot!

In a matter of what felt like seconds, the call went out that King John had been captured, he having given his glove to some Knight who we did not at that time know. Since he was of such value as a ransom prize the fight ensued amongst the English as to who would own the ransom! Once he heard this the Prince rode to the site and claimed the King himself and gave him safety. I rode to the Prince and there was a dazed, gloveless, almost smirking King John, who appeared happy to have been captured and defeated! Around us were dead and dismembered bodies, and in this mass of human carnage was this immature and inhuman childlike character, King John. I sat on my horse, across from the Prince, looking down on the pathetic character. If the positions were reversed, the Prince would have fought to the last. Instead, here is a King, his troops slaughtered, talking with the Prince, as if they were having dinner! This I had never seen before, and I could hear the Squires in English calling this person the most likely appropriate names.

I spent the afternoon walking the battlefield giving Extreme Unction to all the bodies, and hoping they would receive a holy burial. From the local Franciscan convent I met a Friar Louis with whom I shared my concern. He said that the Friars would seek to bury the dead as best they could. I had the Prince provide them with a donations to be used for that purpose and to say prayers for the dead on this day. There were hundreds killed, many more by hand to hand combat and not as many by the archers. The French learned a little since Crecy but not enough. Now Edward had their King!

The next day the Prince asked that I return to London and speak with the King. I agreed and set off to the North.

1357 KING JOHN AND LONDON (OCTOBER)

I returned to London, and while there I was asked to meet with the French King John. I wondered why he had made such a request, now that he was being held for such a substantial ransom. He asked that I come to Windsor and that we have dinner. It was as if he were some English Baron, if not the King himself! I thus went to see him on a late October afternoon, taking a Royal boat up the Thames. As usual my fellow Friars at Greyfriars saw this as something unique, and almost all enjoyed the potential intrigue in such meetings. As is the case, there were always a few who thought my actions were against core Franciscan values. To them I often argued how Francis himself went to even visit the Calif in Alexandria, and that it was our duty as Franciscans to be in the world, for we were not monks, apart from the world. As I should have expected, this logic did not change any minds. But at this point in my life my concern as to the opinion of a few others was of little consequence. For some like me age mellows us.

The boat arrived at about 3 PM in the afternoon. It was a cloudy day and I at first worried about getting soaked in a typical London rainfall. But to my surprise the boat had a dozen oarsmen, a covered deck area for me and a helmsman, not to mention two guards. I had never been on such an elegant vessel, and just to go some twenty miles upriver. I typically ride on a horse if called,

and always on my own unless a messenger is returning with me. We set off and the majesty of seeing the oars set down in the water and the craft go out to the middle of the Thames and then slowly upstream towards Windsor. Color and comfort, I even had a majestic fur to keep me warm. King Edward would just send a messenger, tell me he wanted my presence and then get there as fast as I could. This accommodation was sent to me by a prisoner of the King! I knew Joh a bit but this was more than I had ever suspected.

I arrived late in the day, and walked up towards the Castle gates. King Edward had been making improvements from time to time and this Castle was starting to look like its own city. As I reached the entry it began to rain, and I hurried inside.

In the entry I was suddenly met by King Edward. He was surprised. He said:

"Brendan, I am pleased to see you, but did I call for you? I must be getting old?"

I replied:

"No your Majesty, I was called by King John, and in fact he even sent a Royal Barge to fetch me, for that I was surprised."

Edward frowned and said:

"I wonder if I am the prisoner and he the King."

Edward put his arm about my shoulder and spoke softly:

"Brendan, I am wondering how I am to rid myself of this man. It seems his country does not want to pay a ransom and I have a duty to honor his position. Moreover he seems to have not the slightest interest in returning to France. He entertains guests, uses the Royal facilities as if they were his to command, walks the streets and receives greetings and warmth from my subjects. He writes to the Pope, and entertains royalty as if I were not even here! Speak with him, but help me rid him from my sight! Even if I have to pay the French to take him back!"

I laughed and said:

"Beware French gifts, my King, and this specific gift seems to be one which keeps on giving! Perhaps the French are glad to have gotten rid of him!"

He laughed and then replied:

"Truly Brendan, but do your best to see how to get him to return. I will be in your debt. In the meantime, pray for me. Oh, and I must tell the Prince, he shall find this amusing."

He patted my back and we shook hands and I went off to find John.

John was in a large hall, with a roaring fire, a large table, and many servants. This is a man who but a year earlier had been defeated in battle and surrendered, an unheard of act for a King. There was no precedent. Yet here was this prisoner, for that is what he was, dressed in royal finery, using the Castle and its staff as his own. Yet unlike Edward who had a kingdom to run and wars to fight, John was without burden. He stood his ground and waved me towards him. He held his hand out for me to bow and recognize his position. I was dumbfounded to see this bizarre behavior. Yet now I had a duty to Edward to see how best rid us of this person.

John then ushered me to sit at the table, to his left, which was a sign of something, and yet he was most solicitous. He served some Bordeaux wine, a St Emilion, I believe. Thus it was clear that he was ordering wine from Bordeaux, and English territory, as if it was in his domain.

He commenced his discourse:

"Brendan, it is good to see you again. King Edward and the Prince speak highly of you. I gather you are back in London, at the Hospital, treating both rich and poor. Your reputation as a Physician is held in high respect."

I replied:

"Your Majesty, I am doing what God has asked me to do, some priests tend the souls and some the body. I try a bit of both."

He continued on this small talk lumping small praise upon me on step at a time and I knew that he would soon ask for something. I was not there for dinner. As we spoke, small portions of the food was served, but I as was my way, ate little, other than to show the cook it was not his fault. When one is in a situation such as this one must be wary as to distractions leading to any unfortunate compromises.

"Brendan, I would like to ask you if you were to be going to Paris at any time in the near future. I would like if you could meet my son, and perhaps engage him in some discussions regarding my release. There is no rush mind you, for King Edward is so respectful but I would like to see how the Dauphin is doing."

That was the issue, I was to be a messenger? Or was I to be his spy and not knowingly so.

John continued to a second topic, his health. I had learned over the years that all too often when a person is ill, in a less than critical manner, that fear of the worst overcomes them and they pretend the problem does not exist, until it is often too late. This seems to have been the problem with John. Towards the end of the dinner, which I now noticed neither one of us consumed very much, he leaned towards me and said quietly:

"Brendan, as a physician, and a confessor, you hold a vow of keeping men's ailments as you would the sins in a Confessional, is that not true?"

I replied:

"Your Majesty, that is correct, what a person would ask of me either as a Confessor or a patient and physician is something I hold only unto myself. I speak of it to no other unless of course you were to give me permission to do so, in fact you were to command me to do so."

He moved about uncomfortably in his seat. I could see he had a problem. He then said:

"I have been having problems, men type problems if you can understand."

I replied:

"I understand very well your Majesty. Would you like to discuss them now or at a later time?"

He replied,

"We can discuss them now. I have more trouble passing water, there are times when it is shall we say uncomfortable, and men can get what you call tumors that can lead to death. Is there any way you can diagnose my problem, treat it if necessary?"

I replied:

"Your majesty, I have seen many men with such problems. Without further examination there is not a great deal I can say. The exam may be a bit uncomfortable and perhaps embarrassing, but it may help me understand better. I would also need to examine your urine, listen to your heart. Are you in any immediate pain, have you lost weight, is there anything else?"

He suddenly looked relieved that the conversation had started, that I was willing to engage him. I now suspected that the trip to Paris was a ploy to make it appear he had kingly motives. I followed him to his quarters, which were truly regal. I performed an examination as best I could, including an examine of his prostate, which was as with most men very uncomfoting. There were lumps, tumors, small, but palpable on the prostate. Thus I knew he had a cancer which there was little I could do. At the completion he asked me:

"Well, Brendan, is it serious, am I to die?"

I replied:

"Your Majesty, you do have tumors on the gland I sensed. That can be serious, but not necessarily in the short term. I have seen men with these live for decades, and yes a few who succumb early. As to what group you may fit in, I cannot tell. Your other signs appear normal, your urine is clear, no blood, your heart seems quite strong. Your overall digestive system seems in good condition."

He abruptly then asked:

"How long will I live?"

I replied:

"Your Majesty, I really do not know. Most men, and I mean many men, live long lives, some discomfort, and they die of old age. Yet, a few, a small few, succumb quickly. As to how to determine which, we seem not to have those answers."

He then asked:

"Must I be bled, bled every day?"

I tried not to laugh. I said:

"Your Majesty, I do not bleed people. There is no evidence that such a process works. In your case, bleeding may very well make you worse. Eat reasonably, drink reasonably, and your risk of death may still be higher from a battle than the tumors. I cannot tell you that you will live forever, none of us do. I can tell you that you will not die on the morrow from this problem."

He seemed more relaxed. He said:

"Many thanks. May I call upon you to continue in your care?"

I replied:

"Of course, your Majesty. And, do you wish me to still see the Dauphin in Paris?"

He smiled coyly and said:

"It would be nice."

With that we greeted a departure and I went to my quarters. No sooner there than the King and Prince came upon me. I had not even begun my nightly prayers or cleaning. In they came. The Prince said:

"Well, what did he want? Tell us?"

I sat them all upon the edge of my bed, it was like having two school boys trying to find out the latest rumor, and I said:

"He wants me to go to Paris and find out if the Dauphin is ready to ransom him."

The King laughed:

"With what, ransom, France is broke, he has his ass in a pot of gold, my gold at that, and the Dauphin seems to be controlled by a multiplicity of forces. Yet this may be a useful task. I suggest you see my mother, she knows these people well, and perhaps she can help in this task."

Yes, my mother can help indeed. She is more clever than any of these French characters. So go Brendan, off to Isabella! Back to London, I will send her a message, it may take a few weeks, but I will try and make it her idea. Back to London, but be prepared for a journey."

1357 TO QUEEN ISABELLA (NOVEMBER)

I was in Greyfriars in early November when a messenger came from Queen Isabella. She asked that I visit her promptly at the castle at Castle Rising in Norfolk. I was given a horse and accompanied by a young Knight who was in the service of the Queen. It was cold and storms were pending I had little interest in taking this trip but over the years when the Queen called I had to respond. Also both King Edward and the Prince had asked that I be responsive and do so with utmost privacy. The Queen had the ability to have a well-known public life and an exceptionally unknown private one. Thus off we started with the grey skies of London and the dampness in anticipation of a cold wet trip. Frankly I was becoming tired of travel but when a Queen calls one attends.

We took two days to reach Cambridge where we stayed for a day to rest. I enjoyed Cambridge, it was like Oxford, but a bit more countrified. The River Cam was cleaner and the town was dominated by the colleges and fewer merchants and business had taken up residence. After a day of rest, and a chance to visit some old friends at the Franciscan convent, without any indication as to where I was going, we headed north east to Norfolk, and by then end of the second day we came upon Castle Rising. We rode up to the castle, upon a large mound or hill, crossed over the bridge, into the gate, and into the Court yard. The stone has a grey brown tinge to it and the design seemed to be that of the 11th century, but I was no historian. We climbed the stairs to what was a waiting room, small hung with tapestries, all French in style. The young Knight, who never identified himself, something I was now quite familiar with when dealing with the Queen, bowed to me and walked out.

It was less than a minute before the Queen came out behind a tapestry that led to the main room in the castle, she wore a heavy dress of brilliant purple and gold. I thought of my days with Gui and the dyes in southern France. Yet this purple was glowing as compared to what I had seen before. She had aged and her face was thinner than before. She came to me and before I had a chance to bow she embraced me like a long lost friend. I knew all too well that Royals had no friends, enemies, yes, many, friends, none. I immediately wondered what I had done.

The Queen then said:

"Ah, Brendan, you are the first man I have embraced in decades! You are safe my friend, and I say that truly. Come, we must talk, I need your advice. We best go outside, the weather is clear, and you could do with some walking after such a long ride. Did Sir Roger treat you well?"

Now I knew the name of my fellow traveler. He never spoke a word, but he had shown respect for me and the Queen. As for the embrace I suspected my walk would help elucidate it.

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Thus the Queen wanted to solve the problem with Charles of Navarre. She needed an ally, one who understood her and the King. Yet one who could be loyal and discreet. I had been commissioned as her body guard, with the help of Sir Roger the "Quiet" I gathered.

We walked outside the Castle in what were gardens. The sun was out and for late November it was remarkably warm. The Queen had added a fur which was elegantly lined in French cloth and surrounded with a gold braid. Her boots were of a black leather and crafted in the utmost style and care. I had my tunic but she had given me a cloak, colored in Franciscan grey, and its hood keep me warm from the wind, blowing across the grounds.

She grabbed my arm as we walked, I being almost a foot taller than she, and it must have looked a sight. Here an old Friar in his grey mufti and aside him a Queen Mother dressed in wealth that matched that of all of Norfolk! I had no idea what was to happen.

She looked up at me and said:

"Now be calm Brendan, we are both at that age where we are but good friends. Your reputation is flawless and mine, well you know mine all too well. Now we must talk. I will be frank, I am told that I have but a short while to live, and no, I have not called you as a physician, I have them by the dozen. But I have time and am in need of someone whom I can trust to see that if I am not here certain things are done. And unfortunately for you, you seem to be the only one I know."

She drew closer as the winds blew. I could see behind us good Sir Roger keeping pace but at a safe distance. We found a large bench which was aside a mound which blocked the North winds. The sun was low to the South but warm. We sat, and as we did I notice good Sir Roger take his stand aside a large sycamore, now defoliated in the late Fall winds. I hope he was protecting the Queen from others and not me.

The Queen sat and was quiet for a bit. Then she said:

"Brendan, you and I are a dying breed. We are the same age we two and we have seen a great deal of the world. We have seen how bad men can be and yes, how we ourselves can stray. Now I have a few more things to do while still here. Yes I have made my confessions, and my poor Confessor was a bit askance. I suspect that such would not bother you, but you are one of a kind. You have no women, no boys, no money, no wants, except knowledge. You are one of a kind. You cannot be bought, which is why I hold you as a friend, and I suspect my only friend. Now my wishes."

She changed from being a woman reminiscing on her life to the Queen.

"First, you have been with my grandson the Prince as I had asked. I gather you find him shall we say a bit too much of a risk taker?"

I replied:

"Your majesty, that is an understatement. He leads in battle, he goes where other warriors will not. Yet he is brutal. On our way to Poitiers he savaged town after town. I came to understand his logic but he and his men slaughtered thousands of simple people. That your majesty did concern me. But again in battle he is so aggressive, yet the troops follow him well."

She replied:

"Do you feel he will die in Battle before becoming King?"

My reply was not what she expected:

"No your Majesty, my concern is that like so many who died in the plague he will expose himself to disease and no matter what I do he cannot be saved. He eats what he finds, dead or alive, drinks what he wills, and fails to maintain and semblance of cleanliness. His men relish the animal like Prince. Yet I have seen him suffer from bad food and drink, from water filled with disease, from, well your Majesty knows without the details, women who are as unclean as the worst latrine."

She smiled and replied:

"The opposite of his grandfather in some ways but the same in others. Sex my dear Brendan can corrupt the body and soul. You are very fortunate to have maintained your vows. But then again he is just a man and most men run like the wild beasts they are, especially those in battle."

I continued:

"But your Majesty, when one adds all of these together, and here I speak as a physician, it greatly increases the chances of an early demise, and not from the sword of an enemy. I have tried to warn him but youth is dangerous, they feel that nothing will stop them."

She replied:

"Then I ask you to stay close to him, and if it appears to worsen then strengthen your words. Now for a second item. The King has asked that I speak with Charles of Navarre. The King thinks he is useful in the battle with France. I fear not. Are you aware of this man?"

I replied:

"Indeed your Majesty. He seems to have no loyalty other than himself. Now that King John is captive and the Dauphin is penniless, he wants to use this to take the throne in France."

She continued:

"Then my request, that you accompany me to Paris to meet Navarre. You will be for all purposes my Confessor, yet you will seek out what Navarre is about. You and I agree that he is a man of little trust, and in fact he may cut the throat of anyone who gets in his way. We will leave in a

fortnight. We can sail from here and then to Paris. My concern is the Winter weather. I do not want to be seen in London, and frankly not to be seen anywhere until we reach Paris. I ask you to let me know if I can even speak with the man. My safety is limited to kind Sir Roger over there, but in reality I rely upon your contacts and wisdom. Agreed?"

I replied:

"Yes your Majesty. What else?"

She held her head down a bit and then looked in my eyes:

"As I am nearing my demise, I would like to be buried at Greyfriars. As you know I have taken vows as a Poor Clare, as poor as I can be as a Queen, but I seek not to be near Edward II nor heralded in any other way. I ask that you have control over what happens. I have added a codicil to my will to make it formal. Agreed?"

I replied:

"I would be honored your Majesty."

One does not argue with a Queen about their demise. Finally she said:

"One last item. You are a Franciscan. You have poverty. But I believe you will live way past my time and I want you to have what you require. In the codicil I have also set aside a sum for your maintenance, not your money, but my donation to what you will do henceforth. I ask that you pray for me, for as you know I have wandered a bit from time to time but that is the cost of Royalty. So Agreed?"

I replied:

"Agreed."

She got up and said:

"Let us have dinner. Sir Roger, back to the Castle!"

The sun was setting and the chill was getting stronger. Poor Sir Roger looked frozen!

1358 TRIP TO PARIS AND CHARLES OF NAVARRE (JANUARY)

We sailed down the coast, and fortunately there was no storm. It was cold, and the seas were high but our ship was sturdy. We were to go to Paris and we were told to avoid the Seine route and land at Calais and take an overland route. That concerned me since the Queen would be vulnerable and we were lightly armed. Sir Roger was in charge and the Queen and I rode in a carriage with four horses. We would follow the Channel route and go to Amiens and then to Paris depending on just where Charles of Navarre was. I also still was to meet the Dauphin and

thus Paris was ultimately essential. It would be a five day journey under constant movement. It was late January and the days were short, which meant we had to make as best with the time we had each day. I thought that five days was much too optimistic but the Queen wanted to press on. Also my concern was the roving bands of now unassigned warriors who were wandering the country side raping and pillaging. Hopefully young Sir Roger and his three cohorts would be of help.

Towards the end of the third day, well on our way to Amiens, we were approached by a band of seven or eight brigands. They galloped up to us and I saw this would become a difficult situation. Sir Roger stood his ground as did his cohorts. Yet the largest man in the front charged Roger and full speed with his lance, and despite Sir Roger's expertise, he was thrown from his horse. The Queen sat beside me and was emotionless. She was not dressed in any elegant fashion but for these men any claim would be useful.

The man who unseated Roger came down from his horse and walked towards Roger to slay him. Instinctively I jumped from the carriage grabbing the heavy metal lance which I had placed along side, and ran to the man as he raised his broad sword and reamed him through the chest, aiming for his heart, which I hit and I skewered him halfway up the lance, then using the end behind me as a fulcrum swung him the full length of the lance upon the ground, the lance bloody and sticking out of his chest.

I then walked to the remaining six in my tunic, somewhat covered in his blood and said in my most fearsome French:

"I am the angel of the Lord and any man who moves one foot forward will be met immediately at the gates of Hell. Your associate is there now and he will await your coming. I will take each of you one at a time and have you departed to eternal damnation. Who shall be next!"

The six looked at each other, and the mangled remains of their leader, turned their horses and sped off as if they had truly seen the Devil!

I then went over to Sir Roger who had been wounded and took care of the wound. Suddenly behind me assisting in the care was the Queen. Unfazed and with a combination of abject terror and total amusement on her face. Roger got back upon his horse, and I dragged the body of the now condemned man to the side of the road, climbed aboard the carriage and we began. All was silent for more than half an hour as Amiens came into view. The Queen turned to me and said:

"I must tell the King and Prince never to get on your bad side. Where did you learn these tactics?"

I replied:

"Taking care of your family members at Crecy and Poitiers, Madam."

She laughed and patted my arm and we entered Amiens. Crossing over the Somme, it was now dark but I could see the ice and snow. We went directly to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, a

recently built edifice, and I was assured we could find rest there as well as safety. We were welcomed at the Bishop's residence and were given rooms, the one which the Queen had was modest by reasonable.

The dinner was served to the Queen, myself, and Sir Roger with the Bishop as our host. The Bishop asked the Queen where she was off to in such a hurry, not so bluntly, but directly. She said she was to Paris on family business. As a daughter of a French King that was adequate. After dinner I had the chance to speak privately with the Queen. I asked her:

"Majesty, who is Charles of Navarre, I gather from some talk he is what can be described as a rather deceptive person?"

She smiled as only Isabella could and replied:

"A family member of sorts. You see Brendan, my father was King Philip IV. His son, my brother became Louis X and one of his children was Joan of Navarre. She had a son, Charles, now of Navarre. So in a sense he is a cousin, a family member to speak. But yes, he is as I know a very untrustworthy man. Yet, the King, my son, asked that I cajole him to assist him with the Dauphin."

I responded:

"But we had captured King John at Poitiers, I was there, when the Prince took him hostage. Why worry about his son the Dauphin. I gather few have gathered about him."

She replied:

"Brendan, you must understand the French. They have been attacked but not defeated. They see King John almost as a traitor. His duty was to the French people and now they see him in London and living what they believe is a life of peace and luxury. While his people are starving, and as we have just seen, being attacked by roaming bands. Also many of these roaming bands are remnants of troops brought over by the English. War has been ravaging France now for decades. They want a leader, thus the Dauphin, and thus Charles of Navarre. Edward wants what he sees as his lands. There have been many treaties, many agreements, and unfortunately the French have no leader. Edward wants to see if Charles of Navarre can be an intermediary. I doubt it but he has asked. He also wants to see if the Dauphin can be pacified. Again, I feel not. But we shall at least try. Too many have died already, but this may be a mere beginning of a long war."

I started to understand. The Royals seemed to have a never ending desire to gather territory, land, control. But there was always a battle with those who had claims, real or imagined, on those lands. In between the people suffered. I recalled the Prince and his chevauchee through Gascony and the rest of Aquitaine. His intent was to delimit what King John had in tax resources but the means was the destruction of so much life. My moral view was that it was evil, however the Pope and Church leaders never seemed to condemn these brutal acts. Men who would come to me to Confess, and tell me of sins that did not matter while at the same time slaughtering women

and children and not even giving such acts a thought. This way of warfare was from the King down to all men. Thus one should not be surprised that those we encountered on our journey saw nothing wrong with their attacking us. My response was moral, it was an unjust aggressor, and each person has a right, or even a duty, to fight the unjust aggressor with all means possible. But innocent people killed just to punish a King for tax revenues hardly meets that level.

We set off the next day for Mantes to see Charles of Navarre. The Queen had received a message that Charles of Navarre was in Mantes and that he would meet here there. Mantes is some 30 miles north west of Paris along the Seine. It meant that we had to cross the Seine and the weather was worsening. I had hoped for no snow or rain but it was January. We set out at daybreak, and the air was cold and damp, the sky cloudy. I kept looking out for snow, for that would make any journey ever more dangerous. Also the cold was now piercing, and the Queen was not as conditioned as I and not as young as Sir Roger.

The road was rough, frozen ruts and difficult jolting but the Queen remained steadfast. We kept the horses going as best we could, hour after hour, and my concern was for them as well. Sir Roger and his fellows rode a fore and aft, always alert, but I now gathered Sir Roger felt more comfortable with my presence. I had become an asset and not a burden. We managed to get to a small town of Magny, nothing more than a way station between Paris and Rouen, but it was a places to rest for the evening. I went to the local church and the Pastor kindly gave us rooms. It was clear he was curious who this older woman was with was to him an older Friar and four Knights. But he was smart enough not to ask. We ate, rested, while I and Sir Roger took care of our horses.

While in the stable, Sir Roger spoke to me for the first time. He said:

"My Lord, I apologize if perhaps I may have taken umbrage of you, for my duty is to the Queen. I always suspect those who might in any way do her harm. But you my Lord, seem more like her kindly brother, nay her loving father. May I offer my apologies if I have in any way offended you my Lord."

I was a bit shocked. I had forgotten how long I had known the Queen and how old we both were. I replied:

"There is no problem Sir Roger. First, I am just Friar Brendan, or Brendan, I am no Lord."

He interrupted:

"But my Lord, we had been told that the King has made you a Lord, and that you are also part of the Order of the Garter, a fact I must admit I had not known but my men did. Your bravery at the last encounter speaks for itself. I am honored to be in your service."

I continued:

"Well Sir Roger, I appreciate that, but let us keep this Lord thing just amongst ourselves. For it may confuse those whom we seek to negotiate with."

Roger replied:

"Ah, my Lord, we are on a spying mission, that is so exciting."

At that point I saw a youth not a Knight. He was now with King Arthur on the search for the Holy Grail! Of all my adventures this would be the most complex. We spoke a bit more and I got his over enthusiasm down a bit. The horses were set and I cleaned myself for dinner. Cold water is refreshing in the summer but in January in the woods of France it can be less than exhilarating. But after a few days journey one must present one's self in an unodious manner.

We had dinner with the Pastor and feigned a trip related to pilgrimage. We slept and rose at dawn to go to Mantes. The horses were refreshed and the Queen looked in good stead as well, not that there was any correlation. By late mid-day we reached the edge of the Seine. There was a bridge across the island in the Seine and we managed to cross it. There was a modest toll which we paid in local coinage not to arise suspicion. I had told Sir Roger that he and his men should ride in local mufti also not to arise suspicion since the town was now in the control of Charles of Navarre and that Charles and his men were ruthless.

We rode to the town cathedral to seek a place to stay. But before entering we were stopped by a group of men who clearly were with Charles. I told Roger to keep his swords down and allow me to deal with them.

One of the men, a Guillaume de Bayeux, seemed to be in charge. He came to the carriage and asked:

"Who are you people and what do you seek here?"

I slowly rose, leaving the Queen seated beside me and got down from the carriage and stood next to Guillaume. His horse was about some fifteen hands, a reasonable steed but I stood well above that which surprised him. He was in light armor with his hand on the butt of his sword, ready to draw it. I then said:

"Sir, I am Friar Brendan of Dublin, and am here with the good Lady to meet with King Charles of Navarre. Perhaps you can direct us to him?"

He replied brusquely:

"And who pray tell is this "Lady"?"

I answered in as strong a tone as I could:

"Sit, it is his aunt, the Queen Isabella, come to speak with him at the request of King Edward. Does that provide you with adequate information or shall we educate you further, perhaps to your peril."

At that point he immediately descended his horse, walked to the Queen and bowed. He said:

"My apologies your Majesty. I shall take you to the King immediately."

He then turned to me and bowed as well offering his effusive apologies and seeking my acceptance.

He then got back upon his horse and we followed him to the residence which housed Charles. This was an auspicious beginning.

At that point it began to snow. My prayers were answered, no snow until we reached our destination.

Guillaume took us to a large building surrounded by many men and horses. He had us stop outside and bowed towards the Queen and went inside. In less than a minute a medium height man emerged, dressed in a combination regal wardrobe and Knightly accouterments. He was young looking, with along chin, long nose, clean shaven, of medium height. He appeared more shocked than regal. He walked to the carriage and I had already descended and stood there, a good foot over him in height, with my tunic and cape blowing in the wind and snow. Charles looked up to me and I just nodded my head as he approached the carriage to assist the Queen.

He said:

"Your Majesty, this is an honor, and might I say a surprise. I had expected at most the Prince, but your presence is ever so impressive."

The Queen held her hand out, but not to him, but to me, and I was a bit surprised but with no stopping in motion took it and helped her down from the carriage. Charles was just put in his place. She walked to him and said:

"Nephew, we must talk, too much blood is being shed over family issues. I am here to see that we can bring this to a stop, and I will be seeking your assistance., Can we have quarters and then speak?"

Charles replied as if her were a scolded child.

"Of course your Majesty. I will also get quarters for your escorts."

The Queen interjected:

"Charles, Lord Brendan, my Friar, and Sir Roger my escort, will have quarters adjacent to mine, on either side is preferable. We shall clean and dress and meet you for dinner to start our discussions."

Charles responded as best he could:

"Of course your Majesty."

This Lord Brendan was getting a bit overbearing but as one ages I guess one can be called anything. I wondered what Charles was thinking right now.

I managed to find some warm water for a bath, and managed to have a clean tunic for the dinner. Why I was to attend was uncertain but I guess between Sir Roger and myself there would be a modicum of protection. I awaited the Queen, and when she came out she wore a gold trimmed emerald green dress, and about her neck was a gold necklace with dozens of diamonds, and a tiara of gold with emeralds matching the cloth. Her shoes also matched. How she managed to stuff all of this in her trunk I did not know but women can manage things like this more than men. These were her weapons of war!

Down we went to the hall for dinner. The Queen was taller than Charles who also had changed into a formal dinner outfit. The French have extremes in clothes, and his were no different. It was clear that the Queen had impressed him beyond belief. She was one of the last Capetian dynasty, and the current Valois respected them greatly.

At dinner after general formalities Charles asked:

"Your Majesty, how did you find me here?"

The Queen replied:

"I first went to Amiens and you were no longer there. I gathered you went there after your escape. The Bishop told me you were on your way to Paris but knowing that the Dauphin was also there, I considered you would stage your entry, and what better place than here, yes?"

Charles replied:

"As usual your Majesty you have perceived the truth. Permit me to be so blunt, but why are you're here, are we to have another treaty, and why me?"

The Queen replied:

"Charles, this is Isabella de Capet you are speaking to, we have the same blood in our veins, and I know what you are thinking before you do, almost always. King John is in London, King Edward wants the treaty enforced, the Dauphin does not know what he wants, France is falling apart, bands of marauders wander killing the people, and you, my nephew, seems to have the power in your hands. So why am I here? Simply, we want an end to this nonsense and the treaty honored. I cannot do this with the Dauphin alone, I need your concurrence."

The discussions lasted for quite a while. In my opinion they talked past each other and Charles was just playing for time. In addition Charles was a manipulative person but dealing with the Queen was something he had never experienced. After dinner we retired to our rooms. After I said my prayers there was a knock at my door and when I opened it was the Queen. She said:

"We must talk. I am so mad. Tell me Brendan, is Charles as duplicitous as I think?"

I replied:

"Your Majesty, that is an understatement. He is in my opinion a person who will say anything if he can advance his personal agenda. He is ruthless, a King not within his own Kingdom, who wants to rule France. He would just as soon kill all of us than look at us twice. Is there any more I can say?"

She walked around in my room in a fury. She said:

"Edward thinks he can deal with Charles. He cannot, never will, even my grandson likes him. How are they deceived by this man?"

I replied:

"Simply your Majesty, we have age and with that wisdom, we have seen men like him before, and we have seen what they can reap. The King and Prince are looking for whatever alliances they can obtain and I assure you that Charles can even convince the Devil himself. Frankly your Majesty I suggest in the morning we leave and go straight to Paris and assess the Dauphin for ourselves."

She turned, and her face showed steel like determination. She said:

"Then it off to Paris."

She turned and went back to her suite. I prayed again.

1358 THE DAUPHIN (FEBRUARY)

The next morning the weather had cleared and the sun shone brightly. It would take but a few hours to reach Paris. As we left Charles came to send us off. The Queen was polite but remained distant. Charles said:

"Your Majesty, beware as you enter Paris. The mobs are running about and the Dauphin has little control. Keep your men close at all times. God go with you."

We were then off. The trip thus far showed the ravages of plague and war. There were empty farms, abandoned fields, and it was this way on our entire trip. It was three hours before we reached Paris. We saw the new wall that was being built about Paris, covering both sides of the Seine. We approaches a gate on the Western wall and there were no guards at the time. The Queen looked about and saw the city which she had known as a child and which she had been at before her return to overthrow Edward II. It was a shambles. People walking in the gritty wet streets, the snow turned black from the soot of the chimneys, trash laying all about, and the ever present stench of all forms of human waste including a few corpses. What had been a beautiful

city had turned into an armed camp of villains. We drove to the Isle de Cite and to the Palace on the island. I had been there before but it seemed a lifetime ago, and it was. At the gate we presented ourselves, and surprisingly we were expected. I gathered there were spies in Charles of Navarre's camp as well!

We entered the Palace and both the Queen and I independently recalled the way. Sir Roger was at our rear as we walked into the great hall. There was the Dauphin, a young Valois with similar features. He was barely twenty, short, thin, with the beginnings of a beard. He wore a cape of French blue with fleur de lis on the outside in gold threads. He wore his princely crown and was surrounded by about twenty men of court.

The Queen walked up to him and held out the back of her hand as said:

"Charles, you have a beard."

The Dauphin was taken aback, he bent and kissed her hand, and replied:

"Your majesty, welcome back to Paris, and the Palace, you look well."

The Queen in what was not clearly her style responded:

"A Queen still with her own head at my age always looks well. So tell me what is happening. Your father the King lingers in London, frankly at the expense of the English people, while you seem to have lost control over your country. What is happening?"

The twenty or so men about the Dauphin looked shocked at such effrontery, but after all she was the last of the Capets and a Queen, albeit a Queen Mother, or Dowager Queen, whatever they decided to call her. The Dauphin said:

"Would you like to rest, change, whatever?"

She replied:

"Perhaps whatever. But let this not be a convention of people I have no knowledge of. I will be accompanied by Lord Brendan, my Counsel, and Sir Roger my protector. Choose your counsel and let us talk."

The Dauphin had not been spoken to this way but he complied. At this point I was really getting used to this Lord Brendan appellation. I am certain my fellow Franciscans would object but I have not been spending a great deal of time in a convent of late. The Queen really had presence. She had a way to not only survive but to control. I can see now why and how she survived the execution of Mortimer after the overthrow of Edward II and why the King respects and may actually fear her. She is not just his mother, which has not stopped Kings before, but she is her own force of nature.

We went off to the Kings private quarters. Along with the King were his two counsellors, Jean de Conflans and Robert de Clermont. Both were young and both were very sycophantic. The Queen sat down at the head of the table and commenced:

"Charles, I am here to try to resolve what is clearly a difficult situation. Let me reiterate. First, at Poitiers your father, the King, surrenders himself to my grandson, Prince Edward. He did so freely and without reservation. As a result he was held hostage and a ransom agreed to. After two years King John wanders about London as if here were a welcome guest of the country, enjoying the services of our country, the friendship of our people, and he receives whatever he desires from the pockets of the taxpayers. We do not want John, we want his ransom and we want the terms of the treaties honored. I am here not at the direction of King Edward, my son, but with his approval. I am here to resolve this issue. What do you plan? And before you start, you very well are aware that yesterday we were with Charles of Navarre, whose forces are assembling to attack you here in Paris. What do you intend to do?"

The Dauphin and his counsellors spoke privately for a few moments. To me it was clear they were taken off guard. The Queen's assertion of their knowledge of spies in Navarre's camp took them by surprise. They spoke to themselves and the Dauphin said:

"Your Majesty, we see your concerns and we agree that we should honor our treaties, all of them. However, as you are aware, and with Navarre in the mix, we are shall we say short of coin. Allow me to try to address this, perhaps on the morrow. A good night rest would do us all some good."

The Queen replied:

"Agreed, I give you two days, how is that for a gift?"

The Dauphine replied:

"Then you are all welcome to see Paris again."

1358 JEAN LE BEL (APRIL)

The following day I was to be free from the Queen and the Dauphin. I understood Jean le Bel was in Paris and that he desired to meet me. I thus travelled to his residence spent time with le Bel who wanted to obtain some further information on the battles which had occurred.

He had prepared his Chronicles which were accounts of the various battles since the commencement of war with France. He starts with Isabella's fleeing to France in 1326 and intends to write to the current time. The King asked that I speak with le Bel and provide him my opinions. I had been in some of these events, more than I would have liked to. le Bel was what could be called a romantic, one who was enamored with the ways of chivalry. I had become totally disgusted with the feigned glory of men slaughtering one another but with a sense of graciousness. I had seen the brutality of Edward and the Prince, and the French, the chevauchee

and its brutality if not bestiality on poor innocents. Towns and farms and the inhabitants slaughtered as a pretext to draw out a foe.

le Bel was a bit older than I was but he was a true lover of the glory of the Knight. And Edward and others loved to have their feats written up as glories. I had first met le Bel in mid-April 1358. He began:

"Father Brendan, the King has asked that I spend time with you to understand certain elements of the glorious battles he has pursued. I understand that you had been with him at Crecy and Poitiers, and others. The King thinks quite highly of you and your insight. I also gather you know Queen Isabella, and I would like to gather more insight there as well."

I replied being careful to limit my comments. I knew that Edward was seeking an adulation from le Bel and that anything I said could be detrimental. In reply:

"Jean, may I call you thus, Jean, I have been with the King as you say but I am no knight. I am but a Friar and was there as a physician in case the King, Prince or others of the Royal escort were in need. I saw the battles but I was not as you would say a participant. I was one who after the brutality of war tries to help those who I can by medicine and comfort those beyond hope with my prayers. Jean, battle fields are bloody fields, and they get bloodier each time."

Le Bel replied:

"But Friar, there were so many gallant deeds, so many Knights doing heroic acts."

I stopped le Bel and said:

"Jean, at Crecy the best killers were the English archers. The Knights in their costly armor, their brave horses, accompanied by equally brave squires were cut down by arrows whose cost was insignificant. The archers sent clouds of deadly steel skyward and never even seeing their victims. War like that is the killing of strangers. It is the mass killing of them. What my good friend Jean is gallant about that?"

He seemed stunned. It was not the tale he wanted to tell. I continued:

"Also Jean, at Crecy, we used canon for the first time. My thoughts were that it may scare off the horses of the knights. But the cannoneers saw that if the plugged it with sharp metal they could kill. Kill indeed. Chards of steel flew through the air, better than ever expected, demolishing horses and men bloody mess of mangled flesh. Again, what glory?"

le Bel was taken a bit off guard. I continued again:

"Also Jean, I have read your first Chapters. Your account is accurate, and it justifies Edwards position. Thus if you seek the approval of Edward you shall have it. If however you seek the approval of posterity, those who follow, you need work. For I fear we are developing technology

that in each battle gives one side or the other greater advantages. That is unstoppable and the consequences are harsh."

le Bel then tries to change the topic. He said:

"I would like to obtain more information on Isabella, the Queen mother. Some think highly of her, some quite poorly. I am told by the King and others that you may be of some help."

I smiled. How delicate. Many know my close relationship with Isabella and yet only the King truly knows. I think. But I tried to give le Bel some insight.

"Jean, the Queen is a proud and decent person, the Kings mother. Mothers have a special place in the world. Christ's mother was to a degree the leader of our Church after the Apostles abandoned Christ, she was one of the first to see him after his resurrection. Mothers play a powerful role. Isabella protected her son, kept him safe. That should always be told. The King's father, a man I met once I believe, was a man with issues. You are of course aware of them. Now Isabella did overthrow the King's father, and it is not at all clear if she had any role in his demise. In my opinion it was all Mortimer. For that he was executed brutally. But the Queen still sees her son, her grandson, and other children. She sponsors an orphanage at my convent at Greyfriars. Overall, I believe that history will see the Queen for more than many do now. Does that give you some insight?"

le Bel was almost open mouthed. I guess he expected some appropriate phrasing but I was as direct as I could be. He responded:

"Then you truly respect the Queen."

I replied:

"Respect is an ideal term, Jean, use that if you will."

We then continued to discuss his initial works, much of which I was unfamiliar personally. I dealt only with those items I was familiar with. Then we went on what he was finishing now, bringing the work to the present. He almost made Edward out to be a new King Arthur. If ever there was such a King.

In two days the Dauphin returned and agreed to have some terms for the return of John.

1358 JACQUERIE (MAY)

Little did we know that while we were still in Paris, Edward and John had reached a Treaty, the Treaty of London, in May of 1358. The terms were excellent for Edward and should have been for France and the Dauphin. We were told the terms of this Treaty. King John was to be ransomed for the great sum of 4 million gold ecu. That amount I found almost prohibitive. Yet John had agreed. Edward had agreed to release any claim he had to the French Crown, which I felt was a small blow to Isabella. Yet in return John would have major territories transferred to

Edward, namely all of the Aquitaine, Poitou, Perigord, Limousin, and the south of Calais including Guines. Other territories were included. John had less than two years to make the payment at which point he could be released and peace would result, hopefully. It was not at all clear to me how the French would raise the money no less if there were even any interest in getting John back at all.

It was clear that in Paris there was now total confusion and discontent. The Dauphin was both immature and arrogant like his father. The Queen agreed that nothing could be accomplished and the Treaty of London, as its terms were understood, just increased the discontent across all elements of society. We decided to return to London but no sooner had we began preparations, going north to Calais, via Amiens. That meant some travel near the Oise River. The day before our departure we were told that mass groups of peasants had begun a rebellion, slaughtering Knights and even all their families. Disemboweled bodies of what little of French control were being scattered across the Oise River area, near to where we were to travel. The Queen, Sir Roger and I discussed our alternatives.

The Queen asked:

"Just who are these people, Brendan, it seems that this may move here to Paris as well. There is just a total loss of control, and the Dauphin is without any direction."

I replied:

"Your Highness, they are just crowds, but crowds who fell, and I believe justly so, that their leaders have betrayed them. Now their actions are grossly immoral, and their leaders are just mobs, but like a rabid animal they can cause great destruction. They are called a Jacquerie and are named after Jacque Bonhomme, the common man if you will. They take pride in such a name whereas the Nobles fear it and use the term as a derogatory. I suggest we just try to stay above any name calling."

Then Roger said:

"Perhaps it is best that we remain here. Can we find a place in the Franciscan Convent, on the Left Bank?"

I replied:

"Yes we can and I suggest that all three of us take a habit, and disguise ourselves. Your Highness, I hope you do not mind. I know the head, Friar Jean-Paul, and he and I go back many years. He will trust me and you two can stay while I try to find a way back out of here."

We all agreed and went to see Friar Jean-Paul, who was both welcoming and supportive. His fear was that the peasants would come and attack any facility they thought would benefit them. I agreed.

In the few weeks we remained, the Dauphin accomplished nothing but it was Charles of Navarre who assembled an army and then came to the rescue of what remained of the Crown.

The peasants revolt was soon suppressed by Charles of Navarre, the cousin and brother-in-law yet mortal enemy of the Dauphin, and the man we had already met with. It was his move to power. Navarre's army and the peasant army of sorts met near Mello on 10 June 1358. Guillaume Cale, the leader of the rebellion who thought he was now on equal terms with the Nobility, was invited to truce talks by Charles. When he went to the enemy camp he was seized by the French tortured and decapitated. The remaining the Jacquerie were defeated on 9 June 1358. In the ensuing Battle of Mello and in a campaign of terror throughout the Beauvais region, knights, squires, men-at-arms and mercenaries roamed the countryside lynching uncounted peasants.

During this short period, Navarre's troops and associates managed to kill an estimated 20,000 peasants in the reprisals that followed. The final events transpired at Meaux, where the impregnable citadel was crowded with knights and their ladies.

On 9 June a band of some 800 armed commoners came out of Paris under the leadership of Etienne Marcel to support the rising. Like many of the peasants, they seem to have seen themselves as acting in the name of the imprisoned king. When the band from Paris appeared before Meaux they were taken in hospitably by the disaffected townspeople and fed. The fortress, somewhat apart from the town, remained unassailable. Two captain adventurers, returning from crusade against the pagans of Prussia, were at Châlons, Gaston Phebus, comte de Foix and his noble Gascon cousin the Captal de Buch. The approach of their well-armed lancers encouraged the besieged nobles in the fortress, and a general rout of the Parisian force ensued.

The nobles then set fire to the suburb nearest the fortress, entrapping the burghers in the flames. The mayor of Meaux and other prominent men of the city were hanged. There was a pause, then the force led by the nobles and gentry plundered the city and churches and set fire to Meaux, which burned for two weeks. They then overran the countryside, burning cottages and barns and slaughtering all the peasants they could find.

I managed to get the Queen and Sir Roger out of Paris, late one night, by boat and north on the Seine. We would avoid the port of Calais, and the eastern portions, even if there were some of the roaming peasants. I had been up and down the Seine many times and the boat we had gotten from the Dauphin was substantial and we had hopefully six reliable oarsmen as well as a sail. I always feared that unknown person upon whom we relied may be tempted to monetize their temporary possession of the Queen, but she was dressed as a Poor Clare and Roger as a young Friar. Thus we appeared as just some religious returning north under the protection of the Dauphin, whatever that was worth. The oarsmen were surprised by my detailed knowledge of the Seine, I knew its twists and turns, its islands and towns, its landing spots and its rocks. Even at night I remembered the details.

It took us a week to arrive at Harfleur, and even in mid-June the Norman coast can be raw and cold. I wondered what would be the best way to cross the Channel. I thought of trying to sail up to Calais and then across, but that would mean exposing ourselves to many of the potential rogue

peasants on the shore, for sure we would have frequent stops. The alternative was to sail directly out in the Channel, and hope for some clear weather, and soft winds.

The weather improved, but I could see this trip was having a great burden on the Queen. I spoke with Sir Roger:

"Roger, the Queen is weary and we still have a crossing and travel to London. We should wait until she rests but fear that our presence may be an attraction to others, and the release of the oarsmen, despite their alleged return to Paris, may result in others hearing of our travel. I think we should press on, do you agree?"

He replied:

"My Lord, I agree, the risks of being found here are much too great. How are you to get a boat to get us a crossing?"

I replied:

"I have a cousin who I have not seen in a decade here in Calais, but he ships to Dublin and Bristol. I understand he survived the Plague and has sons who may help. Let me go and search him out, can you keep the Queen safe and warm?"

He replied affirmatively and I set off to find a long lost relative. The advantage of having a large Irish family was the presence of relatives in the strangest places. I prayed that God had kept him and his family well. Down by the docks I spoke with some seamen asking of Aiden de Bray, and although Aiden himself was not known his sons Padric de Bray was the Harbor Master in Harfleur. I managed to make it to de Bray's home and knocked upon the door. To my surprise a man of some forty years appeared who looked just as my father had when I left Ireland. He looked at me and said:

"Friar, may I help you, do you seek lodging or food?"

I replied:

"Padric, I am your Uncle, Brendan, may I come in?"

He turned white and then grabbed me closely and called for his family. It was the first family like gathering I had enjoyed in most likely fifty years. His wife was French, one Francoise, and his children, numbering nine, if I recall, were all shocked to have this old Friar in their home. Once I was introduced as Uncle Brendan, then my mufti became transparent and all they saw was a relative from Ireland. We spoke briefly, Francoise insisted I eat but I said I have colleagues and were in need of assistance. Francoise said to bring them to the home and we could eat and talk in the warmth of the fire.

I then went and got the Queen and Roger, it was a short walk to the home, but I could see the Queen getting more tired by the step. We arrived, and I introduced Roger as Friar Roger and the Queen as Sister Isabella. We sat and had a large meal, at this point some fourteen people!

Padric said he had a solid ship to take us across, and that we could leave on the morrow. That made us all feel a bit more comfortable. We discussed the peasants revolt, the fears of constant wars. The Queen just listened. Then Padric's younger daughter, Heloise, walked up to the Queen, who was still dressed in her Poor Clares robe, and looked her in the face and said:

"Lady, you are beautiful. I want to look like you when I get older!"

The Queen burst out laughing and picked up Heloise and hugged her and said:

"You will look more beautiful than any woman, I promise you that!"

It was the first time I saw this in her, a true warmth of humanity. We continued small talk and I hoped that Padric and Francoise would not ask too many questions. Roger was just amused by the talk and the roaming children, for this was so unlike the English world he was brought up in.

The next morning we arose early, Francoise had packed a large amount of food and wine, and we went down to the dock. Heloise walked with the Queen holding her hand and gave her a big kiss and hug as she boarded the ship. I was the last to get on and Padric and Francoise embraced me, and then whispered in my ear:

"Uncle Brendan, just who are these people? You do not have to say, but the Lady is no Poor Clare, she looks like a Queen."

I smiled at the two of them and said:

"So she is."

Their faces turned ashen, then they smiled as Heloise and the Queen traded waves as we departed.

It took twenty hours of fine weather to cross the Channel. The Queen looked better as she rested and got some sun, but I was worrying. This had been a brutal trip and hopefully we can advise Edward. In Portsmouth we obtained a carriage, a Royal transport that Roger secured, and we then drove on to Windsor. It was another three days and the Channel crossing seemed an easier trip now that we were on English roads. As we rode I looked out and wondered if the peasants we saw would soon revolt as well. That fear would stay with me.

We finally arrived at Windsor. Despite the Royal transport, the Queen and Roger were still in Franciscan attire, and we must have looked a bit strange entering the castle. The guards knew who I was but they did not recognize the Queen. I wondered if they would regret it but she played along with what we did. We waited in the large hall not far from the entrance when Edward arrived to greet what he thought was just me:

"Brendan, I am glad to see you returned safely. How are you? Yes and how is my mother, did she return to her castle?"

I almost said something when the Queen stood and said:

"Edward, here I am, your mother, returning from wars, battles, revolts, and rides across English roads, which you must do something about."

Edward looked white, he suddenly saw his mother the Queen, dressed in a grey Poor Clare robe, standing erect and Royal like telling him what to do! At that moment the Prince arrived, and without a pause went to the Queen and gave her a big hug saying:

"Grandmother, next I shall see you dressed as the Pope, Rome will have a lot to fear from you. Have you won the war for us, shall we just rest at this point?"

He then picked her up and spun her about in a hug! It was Calais but with the English!

The Queen then changed as did Roger, and I found a clean tunic and bathed as well. The King agreed to compensate Padric handsomely for his services and the Queen also set said a significant gift for her new found French admirer, Heloise. In fact she insisted that Heloise be brought to the best Ladies school in England when she reached the age of twelve, as she herself had come to England, and a substantial amount set aside for her was created.

The next day was spent in advising the King of the politics in France. He was especially concerned to hear of the peasant revolts. I told him that one should be concerned in England as well, for this is a movement that may have just begun. Also we spoke of the Dauphin. The King may have treaty with John but that does not include the Dauphin nor especially would it ever include Navarre.

I stayed a few days to rest and see the Queen recover. My concern was that this trip may have just been a strain which could have over done her heart problems and suggested she return to her castle and rest for the summer. We parted and I returned to Greyfriars and the Hospital. In a strange way it was comforting to deal with the sick and try to make a difference.

1358 DEATH OF ISABELLA (AUGUST)

I received a request to again join the Queen. She had been ill and as I suspected it was nearing a final stage. Her heart was weak and she had a personal physician and personal confessor. My role was, as I had suspected, that of a "disinterested" third party to whom she could speak somewhat freely. I was not judgmental regarding her prior efforts and also she and I were roughly of the same age and thus had similar perspectives. I was learning that as one ages one sees the world differently because we tend to bring to our view the events of the past and concatenate them into what we see at present. Unlike the young for whom each experience may very well be new, for those like myself and the Queen, we have seen many variation of themes and responses.

I had seen death many times before. Some fight till the end, some just succumb, some are accepting, others see it as a welcome finish to life. I saw the Queen on her final day. It was a delightful day in August, the breeze was fresh from the water to the north. She lay in her bed, dressed in plain bed clothes. Her breathing was slow, and it appeared a bit painful. Her personal physician Master Laurence was at her side as well as her daughter Queen Joan of Scotland. She motioned me to come close and I did so and blessed her. She already had the final sacraments and I gathered we all expected that this would be her last day.

When I got close she asked me to bend down and listen to her speak. I did so and in a low nearly silent whisper she said:

"Brendan, thank you, the fun never ends."

With that in my ears, she breathed her last. Those around asked me what she said. I had no way to really answer, but what she said was simply, "Ludus numquam finit" and how do you try to explain that to people. I guess the Queen had a sense of humor after all.

Queen Isabella had asked to be interred at Greyfriars in London. I dealt with King Edward and also the Prince and I arranged for her internment. It was a cold and rainy day in mid-March, the middle of Lent, and I officiated at the Funeral ceremony. Yet the burial in Greyfriars in London would not be until mid-November. There were fourteen local people who watched over her coffin in the Castle before it was transported with great respect to London.

On November 27 1358 there was a second and official Funeral ceremony held in London. She was then interred at Greyfriars as she had requested. At here internment were the King, her son, his Queen, the Prince her grandson, and Sir Thomas, her unannounced son from Roger Mortimer. By this time King Edward had reinstated the Mortimer family as well. It was a cloudy and cold day for the internment. We had selected a patch of Greyfriars near where she would sit and speak to me and watch Thomas in the garden. Thomas had no knowledge and for him she was just the kind lady who took him from poverty and being just another surviving orphan. The ceremony was relatively brief and a small monument had been in place. Thomas, the Prince, the Queen and others retreated and I remained sitting on the bench which Isabella and I used to have our conversations on.

Then alone the King approached me and sat down as well. He looked at me and patted my leg. I suspected he wanted to have a private conversation, death often does this to people, I had seen it frequently. He then turned to me and said:

"She truly loved you Brendan."

I did not know exactly how to respond but I suspected grief and I said:

"I believe she truly loved you as well my lord."

He smiled and said:

"No Brendan, I mean she loved you, you were the true and faithful husband, at least in spirit."

I was shocked. I said somewhat apologetically:

"Your Majesty, I have never in any way, never, have I even tried..."

As I stumbled to defend myself he laughed:

"No Brendan, everyone knows you hold perfectly to your vows, at least poverty and chastity, we do of course wonder about obedience, but so far no one ever worries about that. Your adherence to your vows was made her love you. She felt that you would never take advantage, she could trust you."

I replied in shock:

"My lord, how, how, do you know this? The Queen never in any way ever showed such an interest."

The King laughed:

"Brendan, first wherever we were together it was always, "Brendan and I did this" or "Brendan and I think that.." Her opinions, her actions, they were always you and then her. But the key is how she treated you! Pardon me if I say this my friend, but she treated you like a husband, telling you to do this, to improve that, to, yes whatever! A lover would be treated much more carefully, a husband, well, especially for a strong woman is to be controlled in their presence and praised in their absence!"

I was now in total shock. The King seemed comforted by this telling. I had no idea what to think. Yet I had retained many other confidences. He then continued:

"And finally Brendan, for a woman some twenty years ago who was near execution for treason, and not to mention her, let me say, other indelicacies, she became a true believer, truly holy, and here she lies as a Poor Clare! Redemption if ever there was any! The people even like her, a little bit!"

I replied:

"Yes my lord, many do. She did many good works. And frankly, my lord, she was at times a bit, shall we say, demanding on details."

The King laughed and continued:

"One final thing Brendan. Between you and me. I have no proof, and I seek none from you for I assume it may very well be in your vow of the confessional. But I suspect that young Sir Thomas, that boy who was an orphan in the orphanage founded by mother, may be a bit more

than an orphan. No need to respond, Brendan, I feel that his bravery, his style, if not inherited from mother, was well learned from her. I want to let you know that I shall see he is well taken care of, and this shall remain between you and me. I say this close to where mother is interred, so perhaps she too can rest safely. Now my friend, my thanks for all you did for mother. We must now try to resolve the issues with France. There are times I think this war may last more than a hundred years! Farewell."

The King and I embraced and he departed. I sat there for a while speaking to Isabella.

1360 REIMS AND MEETING YOUNG CHAUCER (FEBRUARY)

In late October of 1359 Edward wanted to return to France and assert his claim to the French Crown. The Prince asked that I again accompany them and this time he wanted to watch for his younger brother, Prince Lionel. Lionel was young and inexperienced and would be attached to the Prince's forces. Thus the King, the Prince, and Lancaster assembled their armies to cross from Dover to Calais. Late October and the Channel are a poor mix, even though it was a short trip, these three armies came equipped for a long stay, tents, armor, archers, and the like. The intent by Edward was to march to Reims and have himself crowned King. That meant that they would have to march with this massive force across this region of France in the winter, which in my experience would be a difficult task under normal circumstances, and near impossible now. I had told the Prince that the weather alone could be an adversary which would be unbeatable.

We reached Reims in mid-December. It was a heavily fortified and well provisioned city, as one should have expected, and there was no interest in allowing Edward and his masses anywhere near the Cathedral. Reims was manned by Gaucher de Chatillon and no matter what means Edward and his band used, defeat was not in the offing. Then it began to rain, a rain that was at time ices, cutting into your face, and making the ground a mass of mud and half frozen slush. I was fortunate having a reasonable set of coats and boots, and not being part of the daily attempts on the wall. I could see the Prince was weakening, his health has never returned. His diet was improving but he spent hours in the field directing his men. The King was aging quickly. I recalled him as a child but here he was just weakening every day. This was not Poitiers or Crecy. This was Champagne and winter, snow, ice, mud, and no real progress.

We spent Christmas at Verzy, to the south east of Reims, while the other armies were scattered about. I celebrated Mass each day and Edward would be present as would the Prince. Sermons were not of any interest, I gathered attending Mass was just a manner to justify their brutality.

Provisions were always a concern for the large number of men we had. Laying siege to a city is often difficult, because it is a slow process, and if the adversary is well provisioned and secure in his fort, then it is a day by day repetition of trying to break walls and seek out a weakness. Edward asked if I would go to the city and try to negotiate. I agreed but I had little hope of achieving anything.

On January 3 I went to Reims and met with the Bishop. It was clear than there would be no access while they could defend the city. Looking about they clearly had more than adequate

provisions as well as men at arms. In fact they were better equipped than we were and they had not been spending two months in the rain and ice.

On January 8th Edward attacked Cormicy, north west of Reims, a small hamlet, and I wondered why he did so other than to keep his men active. On January 10th I sat with Edward and the Prince and Lancaster and it became clear that the winter would just get more severe, make it more difficult for us and not achieve anything. Already I was treating men for fever and dysentery. It would just get worse. Thus Edward decided to leave Reims and try to engage the Dauphin directly. It would at least give the men something to think about. On January 11th, amidst another cold and rainy day, we broke camp and marched towards Paris. What roads there were, became swamps of icy mud, carriages barely moving, men at arms draped in covers to keep from the pelting rain. Why Edward decided on a winter attack one will never know.

Lent began as we marched. If we covered 10 miles in a day I would be surprised. The workload for the men was over bearing. Setting camp, breaking camp, marching in the cold and rain, and repeating this again. The distance between Reims and Paris is not great but it took almost three months, with weeks encamped due to weather.

On 1 March Edward still wanted to be crowned but this required him to get to Paris, where the Dauphin as well as Navarre were, at least as he thought. Before leaving we managed to get the return of almost all of those captured. My new young friend, Chaucer was released for sum 16 pounds, paid by the King, and was to be sent back to London. However Chaucer approached me and said:

"Friar, I greatly appreciate the reprise, and thank the King for my freedom. I gather Prince Lionel is remaining and I would greatly like to remain as well. Can you ask the King for me, I have learned a great deal from you and this journey? Please?"

I replied:

"Geoffrey, I will ask the King. But I suggest that you accompany me and keep off the field of battle. You think too much, that can get one in trouble when butchery is afoot. Stay close and we can talk."

I proceeded to ask Edward. I had spoken with Lionel first and he was pleased that young Chaucer was staying for he valued his insights. Chaucer was not the usual yeoman seeking to use the men at arms as his path through life. I told Lionel:

"Prince, he is a smart young man, quite articulate and I can help him upon his return to London. Permit me some time with him here and we can still assist you."

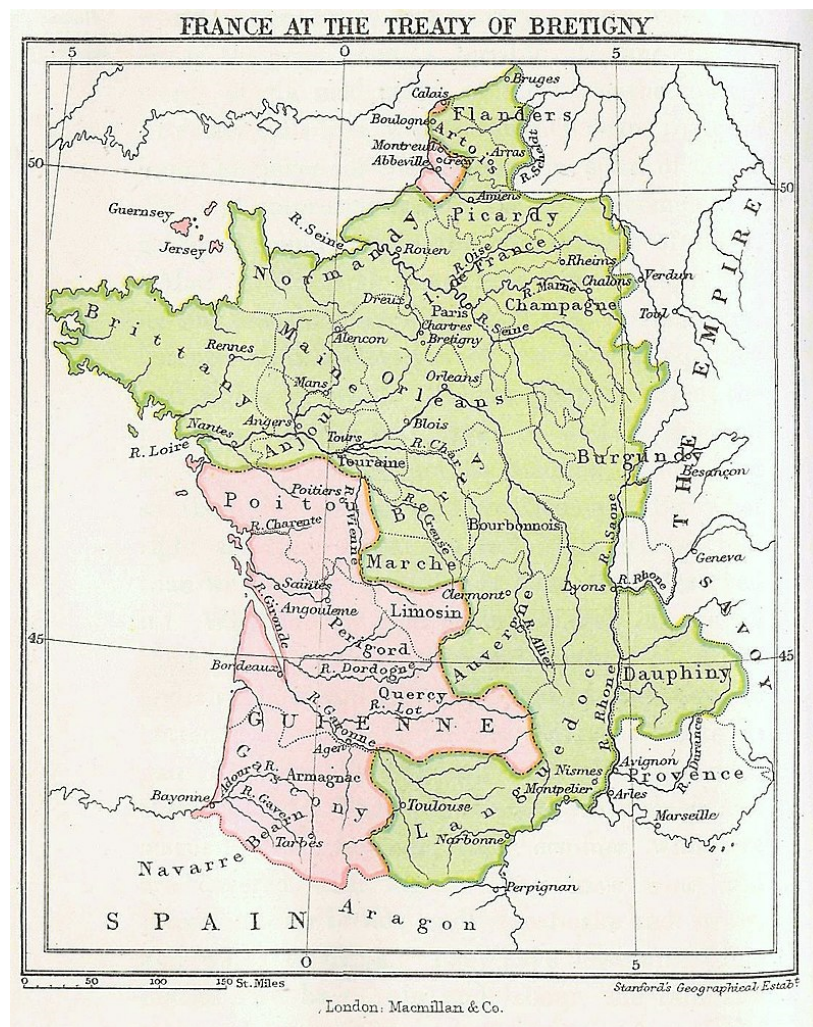
Lionel agreed and thus Chaucer came under my tutelage.

By 7 April after Easter we had made it to Orleans, south of Paris, as a staging area. Then from there we would move towards Paris. On about the 10th of April we had moved to the hill south of

Paris and occupied plateau of Chatillon south west of Paris. We could see the city, its walls, the palace as I remembered it. We were on the University side of the city.

On the 12th of April, Edward, the Prince of Wales, and Lancaster assembled near Saint Marcel just across the Seine and to the East of the Isle. Again the weather was miserable.

On the 13th of April we were in view of Chartres. The weather became solid rain and cold, there was mud and no food. Just what we were to do was not at all clear to me. This was not a position for a battle. We were in the streets, and men at arms had no expertise in such a war. I was hoping that the peasants would not revolt again, because they clearly knew how to attack and decimate in such a location. Edward sent a messenger to the Dauphin suggesting a parlay to negotiate a truce. The Dauphin agreed after a week and the date was set for early May in the small town of Bretigny outside of Chartres.



1360 PEACE CONFERENCE (MAY)

On the 1st of May, 1360 we had a Peace Conference at Bretigny. Bretigny is near Chartres, which itself was southwest of Paris. Thus it was a safe distance and considered a neutral ground to have

a treaty discussions. In attendance were 16 French, 22 English, 3 Papal, one from the King of Navarre. Edward had me attend but to do so unannounced. The Papal delegates were present all dressed in their formal attire. I could see them look at me askance while still in my tunic and standing behind Edward. When the Dauphine arrived, he saw me and smiled. He came to greet me first, to the surprise of all in the room.

He held my arm and spoke in confidence. The Dauphin, short stature, was still quite young. I stood quite a bit above him and clearly appeared my age. He said:

"Brendan, it is good to see you again. I am sorry about the Queen, my good aunt. I heard that you cared for her in her final days. She was a strong woman and will be remembered here as a good French woman. You my friend, we must talk. I suspect this will be a temporary peace, but I will need your advice. You know my father, and you understand what he means as our King, but his reticence to return, is well shall we say an problem. Let me finish this treaty so we can enjoy the better weather. Too bad Edward had to experience the rough French winter, it was stronger than all my troops. Also, beware Navarre. As I understand you as I have no faith in that man. He is not here today, but that man at the end of the table is his. Trust him not."

He then turned and bade greetings to Edward and the Prince, nodded towards Lancaster, and then paid his respects to the Papal delegates, who frankly were at best observers.

Edward then read through the terms, and indicated that John had agreed. Simply Edward would renounce any claim to the throne of France and return John and in return Edward would receive 3 million ecu, most of the old Aquitaine, Calais, the Channel Islands and Guise and its surroundings.

By the 3rd May the terms had been agreed to and the resulting 7 May truce agreed to terms were as before.

1360 RETURN TO LONDON (OCTOBER)

We met at Calais to release John and take hostages in his stead. On the 24th of October Edward released John at Calais. Frankly Edward was glad to rid himself of this burden. He had spent his time and the coin of the realm living a luxurious life in London and its surroundings. Rather than a captive, custom meant for Edward to treat him as an equal. As battles went back and forth, John ate well, enjoyed fine company, and unlike Edward had no mud and ice to wade through.

When John we set free across the table, Edward turned and whispered to me:

"Thank God this burden has been lifted. Hopefully these replacements are less of a burden."

One was a Jean Froissart, a young man of some learning who had befriended me. He saw this as an adventure and sought me out as his guide. He said to me:

"Friar, I have never been to London, can you show me about? I also understand they speak a differing tongue, and that I would like to understand. Also I understand you have met le Bel, and

have read his chronicles. Perhaps I could take up where he left off. They were great tales of Chivalry, and one noted to be all true from direct knowledge. I am told you were at Crecy and Poitiers, and perhaps you could tell me of the grand event there?"

I replied:

"Monsieur Froissart, Jean, war is a corner of hell. Chivalry in battle is often an excuse for brutality. Beasts often behave better. I have seen a great deal, perhaps at some time one could tell the tale of those who suffered, the towns people who died or were plundered. War is a brutal act of man, if I can explain that to you, then I will have accomplished something."

He looked stern but enlightened. We would speak of this often.

Back to London before the arrival of winter. I was glad to be back at Greyfriars and doing what I had been good at, treating the sick.

Chaucer and Froissart would come by often to visit. I often took the opportunity to get them together and compare their understanding of war. Neither would ever return to a battle. Both saw the written word as a path forward. For that I was glad.

Young Chaucer commenced the study of Law. In London this was at one of the Bars, in preparation for Courts. He had a sharp mind and a good use of words. A lawyer in England was different than those in Europe. We had the pragmatic use of experience, namely our case laws. A case often was used in a subsequent case, thus building on experience. Ockham would have liked this approach. These men studying law were no like those in Bologna. They had to grasp the facts and then use past example to fit the evidence to the best use for their clients. It was not the abstract law of Bologna and Justinian.

1361 JOHN WYCLIF AT OXFORD (JANUARY)

Off to Oxford to provide some lectures on Medicine. As usual I had to be careful not to step upon the positions of those on the faculty, yet being of age I could not say whatever I wanted.

At the Table at Merton I came upon a young theologian named John Wycliff. Oftentimes in life one gets to recognize not necessarily the intelligent ones but the ones who feel they possess some extra intellect that we all should pay attention to. This was my first impression of Wycliff. He was of average height, and wore a scraggly beard of the type one would expect to see in a committed academic. He was not of any order but was a parish priest, albeit his parish was I gather Oxford. He had an intensity of purpose that was evident in his approach. Unlike Ockham and those of his kind, who were seekers of truth, Wycliff presented himself as one who had somehow already obtained the truth.

He came to my table where I was lunching with several medical students and introduced himself, in a manner which clearly ignored all about us. He said:

"Friar Brendan, I am Master John Wycliff, and I understand that you had been close to William of Ockham. I would like to have the opportunity to share with you some of my work and see how you could compare it to Ockham's. I however am free of the controversy of Ockham and thus present no risks to your thoughts."

I found the introduction rather strange and frankly could not understand just what he wanted. My reply tried to gently deflect him. I said:

"Master Wycliff, I did indeed know Master Ockham quite well, but alas as a physician I can at best discuss some tumor or bone fracture and am not one to engage in any discussion of philosophy no less one on theology. Perhaps if you join us, you can see that now we are discussing fevers, many types, their causes, their treatments, and the fate of those whom we see as patients. As for the complexities of God and his ways I unfortunately leave that to men like you. But please, join us if you like."

I expected this would deflect his inquisitiveness but alas for such a man it was but a mere invitation to engage all of us in his disputations. I had almost forgotten my days as a student of Arts and Philosophy, once considered such a key part of medicine. In those days reality and facts were irrelevant. It was Galen and Logic. Having now been a physician for more than thirty years I was much more keen on facts, observations and the asking of what may have led to a disorder. I had lost interest in philosophy, and even more so in theology. I had seen too many people burned for taking a walk down a divergent path!

But alas, Wycliff sat down, and in so doing did so across from me at the table, edging some of the students apart. He continued:

"Friar Brendan, there are still many adherents of Ockham, his ideas on nominalism, his emphasis on Faith, on adherence of truth from the Bible, and the abrogation of the Holy See as the prime source of religious truth. I seek not your opinions, I understand your own interests, but I seek your understanding of Ockham, how did he think along these lines, what may have inspired him?"

I replied:

"Master Wycliff, I have students and a class, but if you are so motivated, and even if I may know so little, we can talk perhaps on the morrow, late in the afternoon. I will have some time, but I must advise you, my understanding may have gaps, lacuna if you will, and even worse my recollections may be in error. But as you seem to know quite well, Ockham and I were good friends, and even more so I studied under him while at Merton. Thus as a student and as a friend I have a view which may counter with some here at Oxford, after all the Pope at the time, John XXII, had excommunicated Ockham, I suspect more for what he wrote after the excommunication than before! Strange as that may sound, let us say that Ockham was always a man ahead of his time. So shall we meet on the morrow, say in the Common Room here at Merton?"

He smiled as if he had just trapped some small animal. I wondered what I had gotten myself into. Could this man just result in more trouble than less. He stood up, smiled through what appeared to be a set of rotting teeth, and said "Yes, yes, on the morrow."

As I saw Wycliff depart, he spoke with what appeared as students and as he spoke I heard that the conversation was in English, and this was not unique. More and more people, not just the local commoners, spoke in English, albeit with some significant variation. I wondered how Wycliff would conduct our meeting, in Latin, French, or common English?

Faith and Grace

My first meeting with Wyclif focused on the issues of Faith and Grace and the arguments of Ockham regarding the contentions of Aquinas that reason can lead one to many of the understanding of God whereas Ockham brought Faith alone as the means to understand the mysteries. Specifically he wanted to discuss such items as the Eucharist and Trinity and Ockham versus the more conventional views. But first we discussed Faith.

Wycliff started by asking me:

"Friar, whereas Aquinas had developed a brilliant and flow exposition of how to understand God, and that man through his reason can be exposed to that understanding, it seems that Ockham rejected this belief and reverting to everything as being Faith. Namely we believe in the Sacraments, the nature of Christ, the Trinity, not by our human understanding but by Faith, and Faith alone. If that be the case then there is presented two dilemmas. First, it rejects man's ability through his intellect to further his knowledge of God and perchance anything else. Yet you yourself knows that we humans are expanding our knowledge every day, our ability to think allows us to better understand new things, not to be kept as we were in the Garden of Eden after the Fall. The second point is that if we accept by Faith alone, does that not open us to individual interpretations, because what my Faith teaches me may not be what your Faith teaches you. Faith alone may then be a slippery slope to individual interpretation and belief."

I thought for a moment, for these were issues which I had not dwelled upon since Ockham, but I could see his point. I replied:

"You raise some valid points. But allow me to approach this a bit differently. First, your approach is somewhat Augustinian, namely I suppose, if I am correct, that you are a believer in the necessity of Grace for salvation, and that Grace is given by God, and Grace is necessary for salvation. Is that not correct?"

He replied:

"Indeed, you surmise correctly. Grace enables Faith. Grace is a sine qua non. Otherwise one moves towards Pelagian belief, that even unbelievers may have a chance at salvation by doing good deeds. Grace is essential, emboldened by Faith, and supported by good deeds. But without Grace man is lost."

I continued:

"Fine, then we shall return to that shortly. But let me lay out two of Ockham's ideas. First his nominalist views. Second his views of observation. As for his nominalism, as you understand he believed, and I would say even demonstrated through his writings, that there exists only individual creations. That the abstract construct of the ideal, the perfected idea of a flower for example, is but a reflection of a multiplicity of interactions with individual actualities. Namely that I can understand the ideal of a flower after observing a multiplicity of individual flowers. I then abstract that to the idea of a flower as an ideal. That the ideal does not exist unless the individuals exist. Second, that the very ability to abstract depends on having observed, not by having just discussed the idea or read about it. I call it the act of having one's "hands on" the object. Let me give you an example. As a physician I had read Galen as a young man. In so doing he explained the heart and its functions. Yet it was not until I was at Bologna and did a dissection of an actual human heart that I could understand where Galen was right and Galen was wrong. Moreover, having gained that "hands on" understanding I now understood how to detect a diseased heart. Thus nominalism along with observation are essential foundations to Ockham."

Eucharist

These conversations continued for several days. I was surprised by my own ability to reconstruct Ockham and moreover how Ockham and his way of thinking had influenced my very way of life. Not being an academic nor a theologian these ideas had not been part of my daily life. Yet they had, and an integral part. I was sad to see that Ockham had not lived long enough to see the consequences of what he had conceived.

Wycliff continued our meetings. I found them ever so interesting. The next topic was the Eucharist and the belief that it is actually the body and blood of Christ. For Ockham this was a clear necessity for Faith.

Wyclif began the discussion stating:

"Transubstantiation, the belief that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. I gather Ockham had accepted the fact that the bread and wine was the body and blood of Christ, but that he had concerns regarding the construct of transubstantiation.?"

My reply started as follows:

"Master Wyclif, as both Aristotle and Ockham would agree, all knowledge comes from experience. Outside of experience may lie Divine Revelation, as is the case of the Bible. Experience does not teach us anything regarding the Eucharist. On the other hand the Bible does provide such a teaching. In simple terms, for Ockham, I believe that it is fair to say that his view of the Eucharist is that of Faith and not of human logic."

I continued:

"Also as you may have learned, Ockham did not accept the nine categories of Aristotle. Nor did he accept universal essences. The extreme case would be the acceptance of essences and then have the nine added categories themselves become essences as well. Thus quantity is not an essence, albeit an Aristotelean category. For Ockham, with no essence, and with the abandonment of quantity as a category, at best an attribute, then all results to individuals. Thus the red flower is a specific red flower. The ideal red and ideal flower has no meaning and thus no existence. Now as this applies to the Eucharist. We cannot run afoul of the quantity argument. Namely if the bread is a certain quantity, then the quantity is at best an attribute which is observable by our experience, our senses. The Biblical assertion that it is transformed into the body of Christ cannot be proven by philosophical means, especially if we admit human observation. It is, however, have existence as a revealed truth. Does this make any sense to you Master Wycliff?"

Wycliff was puzzled and was quiet for a moment. I sat back, not really knowing where this conversation would go. I know enough theology to get myself into serious trouble quickly. Was Wycliff interrogating me to compromise me, was he an enemy of the King, and other ideas started going through my head. He looked like a lost child, not even knowing if he had parents no less trying to find them. He finally said:

"Then you contend that Ockham fully believed in the Eucharist as the body and blood of Christ, despite the logical problems related to quantity and extend?"

I replied:

"Indeed I do. Where Ockham and I disagree is on the principles of atomism. Namely I consider a simple example of a plant. If I have a plant, and I cut a branch, and treat it to soil and moisture, then I grow another plant. If I take the cutting and divide it, I can get two plants. If I take the two parts and divide them and plant them I get four plants. I have seen people keep dividing and getting a plethora of plants. Thus there must be some divisible vital potency down to some smallest level that enables a vital force. If that be the case then every host is the Body of Christ and every broken host has the same equal potency despite the change in quantity."

Wycliff looked quite perplexed. I finished by saying:

"Master Wycliff, this is my best understanding of Ockham. I suggest that perhaps you find and read his works. We may have some in the Franciscan convent. I can help."

We ended for the day but I knew that this would continue.

The Trinity

It was a week before Wycliff returned. This time the discussion was different. He started:

"Doctor Brendan, now I would like to discuss with you the Trinity. Can we do this?"

The first thing I recalled was now he was calling me Doctor, not Friar. Somehow I had managed to ascend the scale of learning. I was a Doctor, but of Medicine. The highest in the Academy was a Doctor of Theology and I was hardly that. But alas this scholar had considered me to me he window on theology. Frankly I now feared that the result could be catastrophic. He may become a heretic as a result of my opinions, the opinions of a physician, and one spending more time in politics than healing the sick. But alas I continued:

"Fine Master Wycliff. What may I tell you."

He replied:

"Back to Ockham. I think I can understand the classic dichotomy of views, that of relation and that of emanation. What is your understanding?"

Now here was a question that I pondered only some forty years earlier. I answered as simply as I could:

"Master Wyclif, as I understand it, the Dominicans adhere to relation and the Franciscans to emanation. Both to a degree use the Aristotelian categories, especially essence. Both assert that the Father, Son, Holy Spirit are one and the same essence, substance, whatever you may call it. As such each are equally God. For the Dominicans they call upon the category of relation, dismissing all others since any other would diminish God. The relation is thus one of active between Father and Son, as a father and a son, and the second is passive between Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Now for the Franciscans, the explanation is one of emanation, namely how is perceived, not any categorical specification. In fact as you would note for Ockham the alleged category of relation is non-existent. Now for emanation, it is the Son who we see via the birth as a human, a human emanation, and it is the Holy Ghost who we see and a spiritual emanation as in Pentecost. Both are God, both are the same essence, the difference is one of emanation. Now we try to avoid the heresies of Sabellius and Arian. For Sabellius all three are really only one, there is but one God and he appears as three appearances. Thus one person. For Arius there is one God and that is but the Father. In emanation, there is one God but three emanations each a person."

Wyclif retorted:

"That I understand, but what of Ockham?"

I replied:

Let me quote from Ockham:

I say that divine wisdom is the same as the divine essence in all the ways in which the divine essence is the same as the divine essence, and this is also the case for divine goodness and justice; nor is there any extramental (ex natura rei) distinction there at all, nor even any non-identity... such a formal distinction or non-identity ... ought only to be posited where it evidently (evidenter) follows from the things believed (credita), handed down in Sacred Scripture or in the

determinations of the Church (on account of whose authority all reason ought to be held captive). And thus, since all the things handed down in Sacred Scripture and the determinations of the Church and the assertions of the saints can be saved without positing, a formal distinction or non-identity, between essence and wisdom, so I deny without qualification that such a distinction is possible there, and I deny it everywhere in creatures.

Ockham continues:

It is not required on account of the diversity [between the Son's natural production and the Holy Spirit's free production] to posit a distinction of this kind, a formal distinction, between the elicitive sources, because . . . what is the same, totally indistinct in every way (re et ratione), can be a natural source with respect to one and a free source with respect to another, and the same source can relate in different ways to the one and to the other. And so all such otherness (a/ietas) or diversity can be explained just as well through one elicitive source as through many..

In the first we have the basis of sola fide, by faith only. Thus although Ockham fully accepts the belief, but he asserts that it is by Faith only, and that the basis for this is the Bible."

I concluded:

"Thus Master Wycliff, Ockham saw this as a mystery, an item of Faith, the source from the Bible, and thus the pre-eminence of the word of God."

Wycliff seemed satisfied and went his way.

Bible

After a month of talking with Wycliff he agreed that the ultimate source of what we as Christians believe is from what the Bible states as the word of God. I further made Ockham's argument that Faith is a source of belief. That a pure Scholastic approach, as was that of Aquinas, failed to reach a supportable conclusion. That the Word of God as in the Bible and Faith in that Word was a singular path. He then said:

"If the understanding of what we must believe is ultimately the Bible, and if we expect people to follow what God says then why not have the Bible available to all, have it in English! Why not have the Word of God so that all may have access. That it not be controlled by a few."

I suggested to him that having a Bible in English would be valuable but it had many possible problems. First, so few people could read. Thus for the masses of people it would be a futile task. Second, few could afford to purchase such a book. Third, the translation would be subject to many interpretations, after all, we still have trouble in simple Latin translations. Who would be the "authority" for such a translation, who would attest to its correctness.

After discussing the issues of a new English Bible I tried to engage him in understanding languages. We all studied Grammar and Logic, we all did Rhetoric, yet as students it was in Latin. Now I said to Wycliff:

"Master Wycliff, let me raise an example. Take the followers of Mohammed. We shall not make any assumptions regarding the validity of his preachings but let us look at two facts. First, Mohammed says what he has is the "word of God". We of course would reject that. But it was Saint Francis who personally went to the Calif in Alexandria to argue the point, and did so under potential threat to his life. However they had a good conversation and Francis actually opened some doors. Yet the second point, is that to keep God's word correct, the Muslims insist that the work of God, the Koran, be kept in the same form as when it was allegedly given to Mohammed. They do not accept a Latin, French, English version, just the Arabic version reflecting just what was said. Why no change, simply because when one translates one can change. What I say in Latin may not be exactly the same if I translate it into Arabic. We know that the writing of Galen for example, in Greek says one thing, in Arabic something different and in Latin, depending if from the original Greek or from the translated Arabic, something even more astray. Thus my concern Master Wycliff, is that even our Latin Bible is itself a translation, not God's word. We state that the writers such as Matthew or Mark wrote as God saw fit for them to write. But they wrote in Aramaic or Greek and what we use is in Latin and is from Jerome's Vulgate. Do we then say that Jerome is also the word of God?"

Wycliff responded:

"Friar, I can see your point, but alas, we listen to Latin words, those of Saint Jerome, and at Mass, you too are a priest, we tell our flock what is said in the local language. Now why not let the people read for themselves. Let the people hear for themselves. Then as you say, if they have Faith, true Faith, the word of God shall clear their eyes and they all can see what God has created and God demands."

I replied:

"A worthy goal except for several issues. First, as I said, the translation. Why do you believe that you can alone do a perfect translation from Latin into English, and of course, which version of English? I go about England and in some small villages the English they speak is as strange to me as the Russians I had met in Prague. Then, again, also almost all of our flocks cannot read. Are we to then insist that all be taught to read, can that even be achieved? Furthermore, to be effective, your proposal assumes that one can produce many Bibles for those who do read and to have ready access to them, a complex and costly task. Perhaps one way to achieve that is to have everyone learn to write as well. Then give them all paper and ink, and ask them to spend time in such an exercise as copying their own Bibles!"

To this reply Wycliff did not respond. I could see his frustration, but also his intensity. This argument drove him even further to pursue his dream of an English Bible. It did however leave with me an idea; some form of universal education. Could we not, for example, use our Churches to educate, to get a modicum of expertise in reading. Moreover, and perhaps this would be the best, then we all would have the same written language, even if the same word was pronounced differently from place to place!

Papal Authority

My final discussion with Wycliff was on Papal Authority. He questioned me concerning Ockham and the role of the Pope. That issue I deferred on. It was a topic which of all I understood the most and agreed with Ockham. But it was one which I truly would not want to deal with Wyclif. I wondered what he was doing with all of these ideas. My fear is that he was competent enough to generate a great deal of interest. The issue of an English Bible was most compelling but the translation would take the utmost care. It was not clear to me that Wycliff was a person to accomplish this task.

1362 JEAN FROISSART IN PARIS (MAY)

From time to time Froissart would come over and ask me details on the battles. He had completed most of Le Bel and he desired to continue but in a slightly different manner. Whereas le Bel was an advocate of Chivalry and the great deeds, Froissart took my advice and related facts. He had begun his own Chronicles, almost a diary of events, and as le Bel he wanted to deal with those who were present. le Bel had died so the burden of continuing this process was on Froissart. He was no in London and expected to remain.

I met with him after reviewing some of his early work and remarked:

"Jean, your initial work is good but my fear is that it is too much like le Bel. Be yourself. Add some humanity. I always said to le Bel that he makes his people all like Arthurian knights, we have real people here. I know you do not want to insult anyone, but search for the balance, indeed balance is essential."

Froissart was but twenty seven years old, and lacked the old ways of le Bel. He wrote in a more current manner and a less staccato style. I actually enjoyed reading Froissart. I told him his description was quite accurate, even though he was a bit over ten years of age when it occurred. I discussed with him the French archers, the Genoese, who could have assisted the French but they lay back saying they were tired from their march! The Genoese archers had cross bows, some argue more powerful than long bows, but more cumbersome. A long bow can send one arrow after another and a good long bow archer can pull a bow with great strength. In addition the English army was becoming a professional army, not what the French had which was remnants of the old armies of Lords.

I told Froissart that such observations would be useful but he insisted on just reporting. We discussed the issue of his readership. I said:

"Jean, I gather your readership is the Court, but I also gather that many others have interest. With the increase in those who can read your audience can become quite wide. Have you thought what impact it may have?"

It was clear by the look upon his face that he did not. He then replied:

"Your observation is interesting. On the one hand we praise the King, on the other hand we record facts, and on the third hand if such a phrase I may use, we present a compelling argument for action. I understand that more people are reading, despite the complexity of getting copies. Yet with better and cheaper paper, and many people working as copiers, we have volumes flowing everywhere. Let me use these ideas as I continue my writing. It has great merit."

I thought Froissart had great merit and we would continue to meet and discuss his evolving work over the years. His work was an ideal reference to what transpired.

CHAPTER 14 (1364-1385) THE BLACK PRINCE AND CHAUCER

From late 1360 onwards I attempted to remain in London. Travel was becoming burdensome. Having taken the same trail many times, I now lost any sense of newness and was no longer attracted at seeing what was beyond the next mountain. I now knew, all too well, just more of a journey, more of the mountain. I also eschewed any interest in the King and his battles and thankfully, Edward was also ageing, and somewhat faster than I was ageing. Kings, as I have noticed, have the burden of intrigue and assault on their egos. A somewhat humble Friar can hide behind his tunic, his prayers, and his only stress is the Church hierarchy that attempts from time to time to control his actions. Not that the actions have any nefarious intent, it is just the ego of the Church leaders to show they have power.

I was now called the "homo unbrarum" or "man of the shadows". It was that my name was never mentioned, never recorded, but that somehow I was always there. Strange but I never saw it that way. But as I gathered, a person without a title, but close to Kings and Princes, is watched carefully. Those who seek to have themselves glorified can I gather be managed by others. Those whose handles are unseen and unknown are seen as threats. Now after decades of wandering various castles I had gathered such a reputation. Yet at the same time I would spend hours in our infirmary caring for the sick poor patients, many of whom could not even tell you who the King was and furthermore they could care less. I often wondered if Edward and his peers understood this fact. There were some 150 categorized as Lords and Royals, some 2,000 Knights with and without lands, and some 50,000 religious. The remainder of the somewhat 3,500,000 individuals in London, an Ockhamist term, were with me in the shadows, but without a voice.

In fact young Thomas had become Lord Thomas, with a small estate from which he would receive an income. He remained close to the Prince but had not remained war like. He had studied law and although qualified as a lawyer, he did not practice. It would have been beneath him.

Yet, as I looked back, things were changing. There were more people in London with trades or skills. They were aligning to gain more power. Land in my opinion had value but as new means and methods to add value by expertise and alignments grew, the value would be shifting from land to making things. Then from making things to providing the funds and resources to achieve that. The poor farm worker was gaining expertise, not in Knightly skills, not in the art of Chivalry, but in the field of commerce. I saw that in my patients, and their families. Yet I also saw a resentment of those who took from this class and never paid back.

Some of the most significant changes I saw since the Great Plague were worth noting. First amongst them was the growth of literacy amongst the commoners. Local parish schools were being created so that not just the Royals and their kin could read but also the merchant and his friends. Books of all sort were being written, poetry, tales and commentaries. The Wycliffe bible would possibly find a home amongst these people. The writings were in the local dialects, no longer Court French, not Latin. Dante and his Italian became local writers and their English. As Dante defined what Italian was, I suspect we shall have an equivalent who shall define what English is. Then, of course, words have meanings, and with a new language we will undoubtedly

have new meanings. Second was the change in dress. Now both men and women were wearing finery akin in many ways to what I had seen earlier in Florence. Colored clothes, fancy jewels, hair styles, women were becoming more expressive on their selves. Third, was expression of dislike of Government. For eons the peasants just accepted their plight, now with fewer peasants, since they were struck by the plague more heavily than the landowners, they had power not by numbers but by scarcity. If not treated better I feared that they could revolt at some time. For what good is a King if you have no food. Moreover if they ever get to understand the idea of individualism of Ockham, that all are equal, then Royalty has not only no purpose, but would be morally repugnant.

1361 LONDON AND CHAUCER

After the Treaty was completed and John II returned, I managed to settle in Greyfriars. I was pleased to be back in London, somewhat dry, clean, and not banging my bones around with the warriors. Hopefully, medicine would ease my discomfort. War does present a face of medicine that one does not see in a city. At one extreme we had the hacked up bodies needing repair, or the final sacraments, to what I felt was worse, the disease resulting from bad food, contaminated water, and massive filth in all the camps. I was always amazed by the horrible living conditions. The animals were cleaner than most of the men. Finally I always was distraught over the brutality and inhuman treatment of the poor people working farms whose lands were rampaged, food taken, and often slaughtered. They were not combatants, they were innocents.

Back in London I spent more time with young Chaucer as well as Froissart. Chaucer was trying, as all young men do, to see what path he was to take in life. Unlike my time when the religious life was in many ways the only alternative, for him, there was the Court and also its related elements. For Chaucer he looked towards Law, not the Law of the academics, Canon and Justinian, but English Law, the law of reason and cases. Law was a booming field. People were asserting their "rights", rights to property, contracts, and as people all too often do, the disagree and England offered courts and courts required lawyers. One suspects that at some time soon there will be more lawyers than religious.

What I especially found so different was the dramatic change in attire, men now wearing more fanciful clothing, shoes, and the like. Added to that is the preponderance of English, no longer French, and Latin was becoming a relic. My fellow Friars, many more than half my age, were living a much looser life, eating and drinking well, and many even womanizing about, assuming that the older Friars were unaware. Fortunately none sought me out as a Confessor, for I would have found that a bit difficult. But they did seek me out for curing their maladies obtained by such actions.

I enjoyed my meetings with young Chaucer, and from time to time would tell the King of his great talents and from time to time the King would see he was advanced. I guess it always helps to have a friend at Court. I saw young Chaucer as a writer, whereas he was trying his hand at law. The problem of course if that writing was not a profitable profession.

1361 LIONEL AND IRELAND

Prince Lionel had been assigned to manage the Irish lands. He came to me and sought to understand his challenge. Unlike many of the other Royals he was willing to meet people outside the domains of the Royal Castles. He came to Greyfriars and we went to the small garden inside the gates. The Prince was very affable. He was massively tall, more than six or eight inches taller than me, was of thin but strong build with long arms and fingers. His arms outside of his armor made him appear almost bird like. But he was loquacious and more so than most Royals.

His reason for the visit was that the King had made him responsible for the organization in Ireland. Ireland had apparently had been in chaos, but as I knew, the was nothing new there. Lionel and I sat in the garden and we discussed Ireland. He began in a very open manner:

"Brendan, we have problems in Ireland and the King has asked that I secure it. First you know we have sent English settlers there. Yet they have become almost more Irish than the Irish. They have given up English as a tongue, wear clothing the same as the Irish warriors, ride bareback without the English saddle, and frankly incite and participate in wars with the Irish outside of the lands which we control. We need that to stop and make Ireland more safe. You are Irish, what can I do, and can you help me through this process."

I replied:

"My Lord, I have not been in Ireland in some fifty years. My Irish is most likely unintelligible, and I am coming with the English Royal. What benefit can I be?"

He replied:

"You are a priest, you are Irish by birth, and you have age. I am young, I am a Royal, and I am a warrior. We complement. You can see things that I cannot. You can hear things that I cannot, and I am not talking of the language. You have been through these types of situations. Also the King and my brother Prince Edward suggested it."

I laughed. The replied:

"Well. his majesty always keeps me on the road. I am approach seventy, and yet I am sent out again and again! Of course my Lord, I will accompany you. This should be interesting. I wonder how long it will take to regain my Irish tongue. As my father would always say, and no offense my Lord, "the only good thing the English gave us was a language!", and that was fifty years ago. Now they are going back to Irish. Again!"

We spent time discussing the overall goals and strategies we would use. I told him:

"My Lord, part of the problem is the ownership of large pieces of land by those here in England and they then send English managers over to attempt to make the lands profitable. The English then become integrated with the locals, inter-marry, and the basic idea of absent owners has such a fatal flaw. The local English become local Irish, and their interests become local and their enemies become local. It is an endless cycle. As you also recall, Bruce tried to send Scot forces down through Ulster, and that started another war. Then there are the western regions, those on

the ocean side, which are unreachable, unproductive, and lands where battles are generated and move east. You can collect your local managers, your Lords who own the lands and even the people, but the system is inherently unstable. There is some trade, which England can understand, but the land is not productive. Except for subsistence. It is not Suffolk or other such English lands."

Lionel replied:

"Well I have to try. As you are well aware, my wife Elizabeth de Burgh is the 4th Countess of Ulster, and thus my duty is not only to my father the King but now I am also the owner of her family lands. I must find a way to achieve peace."

We set out to Bristol and then we sail across the Irish Sea, always a challenge, but it was what I had spent my early years upon. The English, although mostly island people, were just starting to use the sea. I cherished it. It could be deadly, it could be peaceful, but if you respected it and understood it, it was a fast way to get about.

Lionel went to Ireland with 200 mounted men and 700 mounted archers. This was a large and expensive force in his attempt to present a strong face to the Irish. It also annoyed many in Parliament as an expense without a return. Many would be just as happy if we forgot Ireland. It was not a threat and it was not a source of income. It was just a costly holding of the King. A relic from the past, where Henry II tried to place the useless Prince John in some territory, and let the Irish handle him. John clearly learned nothing. Our trip went from Bristol to Waterford, and after a brief stay up to Dublin. It was my suggestion for Dublin because I felt it would be a bit safer since Lionel had brought his wife along. Elizabeth was a quite haughty and frankly I could see her being a liability and not an asset. Her father had been assassinated and it was via that when she inherited Title and lands. She kept that memory close and thus a dislike of Irish.

We landed in Dublin and took up at the castle, and the troops and archers were billeted elsewhere. We spent weeks speaking with many people and after about a month my Irish was slowly coming back, although the words were different and local idioms were present which I had been unfamiliar with. But like many things from childhood, it returned. I listened and did not speak. With Lionel I used French, and this Elizabeth was not very proficient in, since she had been at Court but a short time.

Clearly the Irish were impressed with the troops. Armor, archers, horses. Lionel was not impressed with Dublin nor was Elizabeth. Relative to London it was at most a small village. The local Irish were more advanced than most and in fact there was a large mix of those not Irish. I set out to see if any family members still existed, for the Plague had truly flattened Dublin as with most of Ireland. I could not even find a grave, and the local parish church records still existed but the death records for the plague years were near empty due most likely to the death of all who could write.

I spoke to the local priest who was intrigued by my return, although he was of English descent and not Irish. He was even more intrigued by my Franciscan habit and my attachment to the Prince. I spoke with others to try to gather information, being careful to reveal as little as

possible. What I did see is that Ireland had suffered greatly in the plague, with bodies just left rotting where they fell, and they saw the English as marauders trying to get the proverbial blood from a stone. This would not be news to Lionel.

I spent a few weeks with Lionel as he met with the leaders, sitting in my usual manner in the back of the room, and as expected raising questions as to who I was. One leader, a Kavanaugh by name, came to me and said in Irish:

"Friar, you look more Irish than any of us. Why is a man like you here amongst these brutal overseers?"

I just smiled and blessed him. But that was telling. Lionel would never get peace here. I stayed a few more weeks helping Lionel as best I could. I never found any family members. I said a Mass for them in the Cathedral in Dublin. It was a Wednesday at dawn, and the only one present was an old woman, in rags, and praying endlessly. I have often wondered who she was.

Lionel and I agreed that I would return to London. He would remain and try to solve these issues. I said I would return is needed.

1362 CHAUCER AND WYCLIFF

I returned to London and there I met Chaucer. He was all excited by his new thought leader, Wycliff. For some strange reason young Chaucer was smitten with Wycliff and his ideas. Perhaps it was his non-conformist ideas, his quasi literary ways. Wycliff was one of those people who seemed to attract others. His followers were called Lollards, for reasons I really did not understand. Perhaps it was Chaucer's relationship with Gaunt. Perhaps Chaucer was amongst the many seeking some new religious experience.

I advised Chaucer about Gaunt. But Chaucer was quite young still and his relationship with Gaunt made Wycliff more attractive. I felt he would regret this.

1364 JOHN II DIES, CHARLES V ASCENDS

On 1 July 1363, King John of France was informed that Louis had escaped. Troubled by the dishonor of this action, and the arrears in his ransom, John did something that shocked and dismayed his people: he announced that he would voluntarily return to captivity in England. His council tried to dissuade him, but he persisted, citing reasons of "good faith and honour." He sailed for England that winter and left the impoverished citizens of France again without a king. John was greeted in London in 1364 with parades and feasts. A few months after his arrival, however, he fell ill with an unknown malady. He died at the Savoy Palace in April 1364. His body was returned to France, where he was interred in the royal chambers at Saint Denis Basilica.

John appeared to me to like the glory of being in England and disliked France and being its King. John enjoyed the dinners, feasts, adulation of the English. He was somehow well liked by the English commoners and he managed to ingratiate himself to the crowds. He was like a house

guest who arrives and never leaves. Like an uncle who comes and feasts at your table but somehow never contributes to the meals. It was a festival wherever he had gone but the King and his Lords grew weary and hoped he would return. Fortunately death took him.

1366 IRELAND AND THE STATUTES OF KILKENNY

In 1366 Lionel asked that I accompany him to Kilkenny and the meeting of the Irish Parliament. They had agreed to a treaty called the Statutes of Kilkenny which he had hoped would smooth the integration of Ireland into the overall Kingdom. The King had given him this task since Lionel had the better disposition of all his sons. John of Gaunt or Edward the Prince would have sent massive armies afoot. Lionel was a more diplomatic person.

The Preamble stated the key points:

Whereas at the conquest of the land of Ireland, and for a long time after, the English of the said land used the English language, mode of riding and apparel, and were governed and ruled, both they and their subjects called Betaghés, according to the English law, in which time God and holy Church, and their franchises according to their condition were maintained and themselves lived in due subjection; but now many English of the said land, forsaking the English language, manners, mode of riding, laws and usages, live and govern themselves according to the manners, fashion, and language of the Irish enemies; and also have made divers marriages and alliances between themselves and the Irish enemies aforesaid; whereby the said land, and the liege people thereof, the English language, the allegiance due to our lord the king, and the English laws there, are put in subjection and decayed, and the Irish enemies exalted and raised up, contrary to reason; our lord the king considering the mischiefs aforesaid, in the consequence of the grievous complaints of the commons of his said land, called to his parliament held at Kilkenny, the Thursday next after the day of Cinders Ash Wednesday in the fortieth year of his reign, before his well-beloved son, Lionel Duke of Clarence, his lieutenant in his parts of Ireland, to the honour of God and His glorious Mother, and of holy Church, and for the good government of the said land, and quiet of the people, and for the better observation of the laws, and punishment of evils doers there, are ordained and established by our said lord the king and his said lieutenant, and our lord the king's counsel there, which the assent of the archbishops, bishops, abbots and priors (as to what appertains to them to assent to), the earls, barons, and others the commons of the said land, at the said parliament there being and assembled, the ordinances and articles under written, to be held and kept perpetually upon the pains contained therein⁶.

Simply stated, it demanded that all use English and follow English customs. In return there would be self-rule in Church and State and hopefully less battling amongst the Irish themselves and the English. This Statute fundamentally put the English interests before those of the Irish. It made those English in Ireland remain English and not in any way adopt the customs of the Irish. It gave the Irish little as an occupied land.

I had tried on multiple occasions to tell Lionel that the Irish felt they were a captive people. Added to that was the fact that the Irish had the habit of going to war with each other, and that

⁶ <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T300001-001/>

peace would require more than a piece of paper. Ireland was no Scotland. Instead of taking over England as the Scots were wont to do the Irish just wanted to be left alone, something that Henry II and his rather un-loved son John I started.

1368 TRIP TO ITALY CHAUCER, BOCCACCIO, PETRARCH, FROISSART; PRINCE LIONEL AT MILAN

In early 1368 I met Prince Lionel with Chaucer. The Prince had lost his wife, a loss I felt was none too bad, God rest her soul. The Prince was to marry an Italian Lady in Milan and Lionel asked if I could attend with him since I knew Italian and had many contacts still there. Chaucer was interested also because it would give him the opportunity to meet many of the Italian notables which would be useful in his dealings for the King. Off we went across land, a journey which I now had done many times, long and tiresome, but with the Prince it was comfortable a bit. I had the chance to spend time speaking with Chaucer. We spoke of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and many others. I told him that people wanted to see real people in their literary works. No longer was there a need for stories of King Arthur, but stories of Bakers and Butchers. He laughed, and said at first that I was insane, no one would read such.

The wedding went as scheduled, and families made agreements. At my age I spent time resting and not drinking and enjoying Milan. Also I was quite aware of the political intrigue in this wedding. The bride's father was not fully pleased. Frankly I never understood why Lionel went here in the first place.

We had been heading back to London by going south towards Nice and then north to Paris. I had tried to gain passage by ship from Genoa but none had the appetite for a sea voyage. I knew that we would be facing a difficult return, that even in early October the snows could start in the mountain passes and that the rains would come as we tried to go north again. We reached Alba, about four days journey from Milan to the south west. It was a small town in the piedmont and along the Tanaro River, a small river coming from the mountains. The Prince was seeming quite uncomfortable, with major pains in his stomach and chest. He was young but I had seen several cases like this before.

The Prince was tall, very tall. Whereas I am well over six feet he was almost seven feet. None of his siblings were the same. He had long arms, long fingers. He had built up his muscles but was not like Prince Edward or his brother Prince John, both of normal height and well-muscled when healthy. I had also examined the Prince before and saw a troubling sign, namely there was a depression in his chest, something we called pectus excavatum, a sunken chest. He had also built up great muscles but there still was this crushed central chest, around the central bone. My concern was always that this may put pressure on the heart as well as the connections of blood flow to the heart.

Those around us were concerned the Prince may have been poisoned by his new bride's father. I found that difficult but with Italians and their knowledge and use of poisons anything could be possible. Yet I was more concerned about the presentation. His personal physician rejected my concerns and recommended a purgative. I was concerned that this may exacerbate the adequate blood flow, possibly lead to death. Yet I did not want to battle with his entourage, all of whom

now felt he had been poisoned. Galeazzo Visconti, Lord of Pavia, the bride's father, was a powerful noble with many

The Prince went and rested while we encamped. It was late on the night of October 7, 1368 that the Prince called out. He was in great chest pain. I could see that this was his heart, yet the Court physician suggested a bleeding. Thankfully the Prince died before he would be uselessly put under the knife. This led to massive confusion amongst all who had come along. I took Chaucer aside and said to him:

"Geoffrey, my assessment was that the Prince had a long standing disease, and that his heart just gave out. I do not believe that he was poisoned. But amongst this group there is little to do than to be quiet and pray that we do not go to war. I suspect we must now return with the Prince to London. This may be difficult, since we may need someone to prepare the body for transport."

Chaucer then said:

"You have seen this disease before. It could not be treated? Then why did the Royal Physician not treat him as such?"

"Geoffrey" I replied, "First I have had the good fortune to have seen many patients and studied in many places. I also look for signs in the patient, and do not rely upon Galen and the others. Many physicians, and you will learn this, often have no real knowledge, just sayings from books. In my experience, I have seen about six to eight cases like the Prince. They have all died young. The previous patients were a very tall men, with chest indentations, long fingers, and then death at a young age, usually from what appears to be massive failure of the heart. The real cause is not known. In fact many years ago Mondino in Bologna had a young man who had died of this disorder. When examining his chest and heart, it appeared as if he had burst inside, blood had exploded into his chest. The heart was enlarged, and throughout his body was massive amounts of blood. That we conjectured was related to his disorder. Yet there is no record in the Medical letters of this."

"So you are telling me that these physicians, not you Brendan, but these fakes are just that, fakes! They make great sums for advice which has no basis, just words in books!"

I put my arm around his shoulder, he was quite upset since he and the Prince had been close for many years. I continued:

"Geoffrey, it will do none of us any good to start a fight with these people. I have seen dreadful things occur at moments like this when people strike out at such an event. This may not be comforting to you, but it is my opinion that this end would have come sooner or later, it was inevitable, and it was unpreventable. We do not know what the cause is and we have no basis to treat it. If indeed it is a ripping apart of the blood vessels and the heart then it is a silent death, and without pain, yet at such a young age."

He wept for a while and I just sat there, in front of the fire, as he regained his composure. He then continued:

"Brendan, thank you for your support. I guess we just must move forward. This will be a difficult challenge for the King."

I agreed and then said:

"And of his new wife. Violante Visconti is but thirteen, and her dowry may now also be forfeit. She must return to Milan, now a widow. There is the issue of whether she is with child, and how that is handled. One never knows. Why do you not speak with Froissart, and try to assure the young woman of her safety. There are rumors of poisoning by her father, something I cannot even imagine, and then there is "food poisoning", which we can use for an excuse but there is no basis for that, since we all ate the same food, and not a one got ill. My diagnosis I believe explains all based upon the presentation and the record of similar ones in the past. I just rely on what I see, not what I read."

Geoffrey agreed to meet with Froissart, since he would deal with the Queen.

1373 TO FLORENCE WITH CHAUCER

I was asked again to travel, this time to Florence. At this point I am approaching eighty. I can still ride, walk, and am overall stable, but the wear of such a long journey can be great. Chaucer and others would be there and this would be a diplomatic and business related trip. The King asked that I go and assist with my contacts and my learning in Italian. Also having been degreed at Bologna that had given me Italian status, that of a Knight, albeit still a Friar. I suspect that almost all my old friends are deceased, by natural causes or Italian intrigues.

We were to go first to Genoa to contract for mercenaries to assist in the anticipated war with France and second to gain shipping agreements for trade. Then to Florence for loans and the purchase of ships, I believe the number was six. I recall asking Edward privately why we would want Italian ships, most likely designed for the Mediterranean while his use would be in the Atlantic or at best the Channel. He seemed not to grasp the difference. My real point was that England should master the craft itself rather than rely on others. My other concern before leaving was the Genoese mercenaries. We fought their archers, crossbows, at Poitiers, and the Italians being Italians may have long and potentially violent memories. Again Edward had no concern. I felt age was creeping up on him quickly. His only thought was France.

We were accompanied by two men whom Edward had asked to be part of the negotiations, one James Provan and one Jean de Mari. de Mari was Genoese and Provan was from Carignano and was empowered as the purchasing agent. Chaucer was to represent the Crown directly and assure the integrity of the negotiations and I was there as one Englishman familiar with both regions. Provan and de Mari both assumed I was nothing more than a physician and priest, albeit a grey haired tonsured one. Chaucer was the only one who knew differently. Thus as usual, the King had his spies and I was it.

Since it was winter and since England was at a continual state of war with France, we decided to go via the Rhine. I had done this years earlier and knew it well but the Rhine in winter is

treacherous. Yet that is what we did. We sailed from Colchester across to Rotterdam and then commenced down the Rhine. Winter weather would be on us and the crossing of the Channel was rough but the men who sailed the boat were more than competent. They did not ask me for prayers even once, which I found comforting.

At Rotterdam we set out down the Rhine. The Rhine in winter is no enjoyable trip. We managed to sail part of the way, again against the current and then followed the river by road and horseback. The snow and ice was always a problem and the most stressful was riding in the sleet and ice that seemed to be endless. Chaucer and the others had never experienced this difficulty. I could see they were getting exhausted, and this was the easy part of the journey. We had a very long journey and there would be many threats along the way.

The trip along the Rhine ended in Basel and then on Lausanne by road. Here we had guides across the northern end of the Alps. Winter on this road was unbearable. I did not know why Edward demanded we make this trip. We could manage at most 10 to 15 miles a day, the sunlight was short, and in the mountain roads the sun was blocked early in the afternoon and travel with no light was deadly. The guides were critical since we could travel at best between places to rest at night. Thus Chaucer and I spent evenings talking and I took the opportunity to teach him Italian. It was more difficult than I had expected since he knew French and English but lacking an education had little Latin which would have been a God send.

To help him I had a copy of Dante as well as Boccaccio, and these provided a great entry to the language and its melodic flavor. English sounded like the bellowing of some wild animal compared to Italian, especially that in Florence. Thus night after night I read Dante's *Inferno*, and Chaucer first responded just to an unintelligible Italian and slowly to the words. I did the same with Boccaccio. Slow but steady. Chaucer was a quick learner, and by the time we reached Lausanne he had about 500 words and good phrases. A start.

From Lausanne we went down to Geneva, then on to Ancy where we rested along the lake. There was a large monastery on the east bank but we stayed in the town. Then down along Lake Talloir through Savoy, then across the Alps passes. This was very trying. I had done this before but now we have a large group but excellent Savoy guides.

Finally we reached Aosta, and again the old Arch from the first Roman Emperor Tiberius. Here we rested at the castles and fortresses, namely Castello Fénis and Castello di Verrès. I had the opportunity to gained for Chaucer and our companions the best that was available and the residents were very obliging. In fact they told me in my poor Italian that we must be "crazy" to have tried this journey but that I was a "miracle maker" like Francis. From Aosta we went to Turin and then south to Turin where we again rested. Each night I spent more and more time with Chaucer on Italian, and he read more and more of Dante and Boccaccio.

Learning More Italian

Once in Italy as a land mass, he could now hear the language. I told Chaucer to be cautious since dialects abound and what he heard here would not be what he would hear elsewhere. Like English, London does not sound like Bristol, nor even Canterbury, and not close to York. He

tried his hand with some of the locals, one phrase at a time. He had no idea what they said to him unless they too used a simple phrase. But he started to get the knack. He would not be a Dante in Italy, but at least he could order a meal and find a proper place to relieve himself.

I also had some Petrarch which I let Chaucer read. The Latin was unappealing, and he wondered why there was this return to a language whose time had ended. I explained my connection to all three and he was amazed. We then read some Dante. I would read Italian, allow him to attempt to translate, and then I would do my best Bolognese. It was not pure Dante but it started to give him the idea.

Chaucer would speak the Italian, learning the meter, the tone, the accent. Half the time had had no idea, but he sang it out. It was not refined like French, not blunt like English, not even the fluid nature of Latin. It was Italian, it sang out, filling the air as did the sun. It was filled with allegories, filled with links to the past and inclusions of the present. He saw a way of expression which was not just another romantic poem like so many he had seen in France or England. Dante had power in what he wrote.

He read to me:

*As far as one can get from Beelzebub,
in the remotest corner of this cavern,
there is a place one cannot find by sight,
but by the sound of a narrow stream that trickles
through a channel it has cut into the rock
in its meanderings, making a gentle slope.
Into that hidden passage my guide and I
entered, to find again the world of light,
and, without thinking of a moment's rest,
we climbed up, he first and I behind him,
far enough to see, through a round opening,
a few of those fair things the heavens bear.
Then we came forth, to see again the stars.*

Chaucer said:

"I had to see what happened. He escapes Hell. Then to Purgatory and then Paradise. It is not easy to understand but it is riveting. I know not the characters he alludes to, but many I do recall. Hell, its circles, the collection of souls lost for eternity, some just sitting there, others in a continual state of suffering, traitors, those who betray. I was glad to see we got out of Hell!"

I smiled and replied:

"Geoffrey, your Italian is slowly improving. To truly understand Dante, however, you must be Italian. I recall over the years reading him. The more I learned as to his allusions the more of what he said rang true. Yes the reading in Italian is like listening to a wonderful song. It is not de

Machaut, it is more earthy, more to us as a human rather than stretching to God and redemption. Leaving Hell you will want never to return! Better read it now when you can alter your ways."

Each day as we travelled, I spoke and he read, and then we spoke, what Italian I had remembered using a combination of Dante and Boccaccio. At least Chaucer would have some cultural exposure. Each night I would read a story from Boccaccio. Ten people, each a story for ten days and with thus ten stories a day. A hundred stories to choose from.

I started with the Fifth day and the eighth story. The one about the young man who tries to convince a beautiful yet high born lady to be his bride. He sees the vision in a woods about a Knight chasing and killing a young woman and ripping her heart out and feeding it to the wolves. This is the Knights punishment after death for killing himself. He must repeat it every week. The young man then brings the people from his village to see this "event", including his young lady and her family, they not knowing what to expect. Upon seeing this weekly slaughter reenacted, all the women decide to behave better and his intended agrees to be his faithful wife. A brutal tale, yet with an ending which presents a sense of moral achievement.

To this tale Chaucer was at first repulsed, then thought some, and then said:

"Brendan, this tale can echo in one's mind and soul. At first one is repulsed by the horror, not knowing the facts. Then having found what is truly happening one can accommodate the scene. Then having others see it and comprehend, well that can actually change people. It is like the Bible, the tales of Matthew, of Jesus telling small stories. Boccaccio tells stories of his own land, but there are messages which can apply to all. Is this not correct?"

I replied:

"Excellent Geoffrey. Here Boccaccio tells a tale which would resonate in Florence and the other Italian cities. Perhaps not so well shall we say in London or Canterbury. But, and this is important, I find in Boccaccio the telling of tales of his own people, his own class, the resonance is one within his own world. It would be interesting to see how this would play out if one looked at all people, men and women, all classes. Dante reflects on the famous and infamous, Boccaccio on the elite and middle class. But that is such a small portion of society. What of the miller, a shipman, a small farmer. even say a strong willed wife and widow. Not just Princes and wealth business folk, but the common folk. What has Dante or Boccaccio told us of them? We get to know the powerful and the prominent, we do not get to know all who make up society. Just a thought Geoffrey."

Chaucer replied:

"Let me think of this Brendan, you present and interesting challenge."

From that time on, I could see his ruminating as we rode. Riding for ten hours a day in that slow but ever steady pace of a good horse, gave him an opportunity to perhaps assemble some thoughts on this idea. We would speak from time to time about it. Each night, another Boccaccio

tale and some Dante. Chaucer was getting better in his Italian, at least what I thought would be his Italian.

From time to time we would speak of Petrarch as well. One night we had dinner and the discussion amongst us, including our Italian travelers was Petrarch and his stature. Chaucer asked:

"If Boccaccio and Dante wrote their most famous in Italian, then why has Petrarch written in Latin. Does that not limit those who could read and enjoy? Less educated people are shall we say fluent in Latin, is that not so?"

I replied:

"Geoffrey, he is a man who sees past glories and wants to hold them."

De Mari also spoke and said:

"That is even more so. He wants the Pope back in Rome, he wants the cities to rejoin into a single entity such as Italy, he sees the current state of battles between cities as destructive. He is a Poet Laureate, a man crowned with the wreath of old. He gives us Italians, not Florentines, a sense of a nation. The past can become the present again. We can return to our old glories."

I could see I had ignited an interesting expose. They continued well into the night with this discussion.

Arriving at Genoa

We made certain we avoided Milanese areas. Galeazzo Visconti, the father of Prince Lionel's bride and often alleged poisoner of Lionel had his armies in endless warfare. He was a well-known leader of bands who massacred all in their path. His actions well exceeded any of the chevauchees of the Prince, Edward. Finally across the southern Piedmont to Genoa, coming down from the hills to the port below. As before the waters of the Mediterranean were turquoise blue and the air warm and welcoming. I was somewhat exhausted and vowed to return by ship, which terrified Chaucer and my companions. Yet I always felt more comfortable and I would not have the problem going through potential French territory that my comrades would have.

Coming down the hills one could feel the soft breeze off the sea. The port became a massive collection of activity, ships at dock, waiting to dock, ones sailing out. It was like an ant hill of activity. The colors also were somewhat striking. The buildings were all stone, yet grey in color, not the orange we would see say in Florence. The people were dresses in clothes that reflected the commercial nature of the city. The city was integrated into the hill sides and the meeting with the sea. There was no long and large sandy area but the port was being carved out of the rocky environment, and this made is secure.

Money, Contracts, Shipping and Bailments

We met with the shippers, a local guild in Genoa which were the ones selected by Edward's men accompanying us. I gathered by this time the purpose of my presence was made obvious, I was not there for Mass and Confessions and by this time they all knew that my Italian was reasonably decent. We met with the shippers at their building near the docks in the Genoa harbor. I enjoyed the warmth and sun and it reminded me of Montpelier a bit. Genoa is a true shipping port and the Genoese vied with the Venetians in owning trade in this part of the world. The guild constructs also assured that we had a large enough based of international trade. In England we had only internal guilds, associations, and here they focused on the outside world. I gather it had been this way for many centuries.

First came money. How would payment be made. We had English silver and they had gold. There would be two issues. One being the rate of conversion of how many ounces of pure silver to a certain amount of gold. The second would be the purity of the gold. We had to agree to exchange rates. That seemed to be somewhat easy since the two men who accompanied us had done this before.

The second issue was contracts. For Chaucer this was a new world. He had Royal authority but his experience was in Royal Courts and English law. Here we had an amalgam of Roman, Muslim, and Genoese laws. Contracts come in all forms and the remedy for breach was always the sticking point. Here Chaucer was most concerned. Our Italian companions could be relied upon just so far. One must always assume that they have strong personal interests and these interests mean they get their money first. We discussed general terms and they asked we break and meet again the next day.

I thus had the opportunity to educate Chaucer on what to expect in terms of the contracts. Chaucer and I went separately to dinner and talk. I said:

"Geoffrey, as they negotiate you should be aware that there are many types of contracts. Let me give some examples. We have a commenda, a societas, and a collegiantia. The Genoese are the most sophisticated in these entities. Each has a special purpose and liabilities. Agency is also a major issue. An agent is a representative of one of the parties but not the party themselves. You Geoffrey are an agent but also you are English. Our two associates are pure agents, not even English. The commenda is a short term agreement where one party provides the money and the other does the work. Liability is limited and thus trust is also limited. You see, Geoffrey, trust becomes a key element. Trust is a complicated element of all of these relationships, you may have remedies but they may not be actionable. Trade of the type the Genoese do is reliant upon a large modicum of trust. That is why they are sizing you and you alone up. That is also why Edward sent me along, I give a patina of trust as a religious, especially a Franciscan. As such I must also do whatever is essential to retain that trust. You see?"

He replied:

"Yes, this is much more complicated than I thought. What are the other agreements?"

"Ah yes, let me discuss a societas. Here both parties put up money and take part in the transfer or transport. Both parties could be principals or agents and both provide capital and labor. That I

suspect is what we propose. The colona related to travel on the same vessel. Now a rogadia contract is for one for one merchant to transport and trade the goods of another. This is critical to understand. You see in the debate over poverty back with John XXII, he argued that possession was ownership. But he was wrong. That may have been reflective of Roman Law but both English and now Genoese and Venetian laws allow for third party transport. Namely a shipper may transport the goods of another and not have to own them. This dramatically expands independent shipping and thus commerce."

Chaucer looked at me and asked:

"Brendan, how did you learn all this? Through your theological battles with Avignon?"

I laughed and replied:

"Yes, when I was with Ockham I often chided him on reality and the fact that not everything was theological. We all too often see the world as we wish it to be not as it is and what it is always is changing as people find new opportunities. Hopefully for the better."

Chaucer continued:

"Thus as I gather we must determine who is an agent or a principal, yes? Then the duties of each, then the payments or investments. Then the liabilities, and then the remedies? Is there more?"

I replied:

"Contracts of this type are like paintings. You start with the idea, then the forms and then the colors, and then the shading, and it goes on until both sides feel they have covered the ground. But remember, the Genoese have done this for centuries. They know quite well all the ins and outs of international trade. England is just learning. We trade at most between towns and villages. But we have wool, wine, craftsmen and expertise. The Genoese have no basis of trust with us, yet. Their sole motivation is greed. That has a benefit, but greed and bite us if we are even suspected of ill will. Do you understand?"

We spoke late into the evening and each time Chaucer saw a new edge that needed to be smoothed. He learned quickly, and I hope correctly. The next day we spent starting the body of the contracts. Chaucer had learned and he slowly but competently participated. I could see his career as a commercial diplomat developing.

Third, the next day, we discussed the shipping and who chose what and what shippers we could rely upon. My concern was English ships. We had few. The trip to Florence would supposedly ameliorate that issue. But why Florence, I wondered. Money yes, ships? They had a river but were in the middle of Italy. But Edward had assigned the men to pursue that issue.

Finally we discussed the terms of shipping. Who would ship what and what was the liability of the shipper. Namely if both Genoa and England had goods or the equivalent upon a ship of the third party. what was the liability of the third party if the ship was lost, if taken in a war, if sunk

due to negligence. This opened the discussion to bailments. I said to Chaucer:

" The bailee has a duty during the possession and a duty to redeliver. During possession the duties depend on who is benefiting and as a result there may be varying levels of care required. If there is a mutual benefit, say the bailor get the property delivered and the bailee gets paid for the transport, then the level of care is ordinary diligence; if the bailor is the sole beneficiary, say the transporter is doing a favor, then gross negligence is the standard; if it benefits the bailee only, this requires extraordinary care; and if it is involuntary bailment, say the packet just ends up on my network and nobody pays me and I agree to just hand it off, there is a standard of slight care, namely I can't just throw it away."

He replied:

"Then we do have some remedy but it is limited. How else can we limit our potential losses?"

My reply somewhat surprised him:

"First, we can put a surcharge or fee on each item. The surcharge can reflect what the potential losses could be. That has two disadvantages. First we are not in the business of estimating losses. Second it may make the overall process of negotiations more costly and less effective. A second approach is we look for a group, like a guild if you will, who will agree to insure each ship. The cost of that becomes a cost of transport."

The last few days there I took Chaucer down to the docks to talk with the men there. He was amazed of the transport in and out. Material would be unloaded, sorted, then many reloaded for transport across the Mediterranean. Movement of goods, cloth, pottery, olive oil, silver, spices. He saw things that he had never seen before. The smell was a mix of the cargo and the water, fish, and spices. The colors also were new to him. The color of the water, the color of many of the cloth. The frantic movements back and forth and the noise, the yelling in many languages.

He then asked me:

"What protects this port from invasion?"

I replied:

"Excellent point. Two things I believe. First the Genoese have a massive military fleet, a navy, just out there watching and ready at a moment's notice to repel any invasion. As you recall, any attack from the north would be difficult because of the mountains, the sea is the concern. Second, and this is my opinion, it is the trade itself. Too many of the erstwhile enemies rely upon the money generated by the trade. If they attacked many others would suffer and thus there is a deadly embrace, an arm of solace and peace based upon fear, fear of what would be lost. That Geoffrey is what I see as the strongest type of protection. Except of course not against some king who just does not care. Fortunately none has yet arisen."

On to Florence

It would be another seven to ten days to Florence after we rested and Chaucer did his business in Genoa. From Genoa we would follow the coast road to Lucca somewhat inland and then to Florence. I had not done that route and was more comfortable going to Pisa or even Livorno and then across. The guides said it would be much longer and there was no reason to visit Pisa and we had a schedule. I would try to return via a ship from Livorno. If I could.

Each time we ate, I cautioned Chaucer and the others to be careful, the Italians have a habit of poisoning people, and oftentimes for reasons that are not evident. There may be someone who wants this assembly not to reach Florence, or not to negotiate an agreement in Genoa, for one never knows. I keep thinking of the rumors around the death of Prince Lionel. Chaucer remembered quite well. Thus although the food looked very appealing we ate sparingly. We must have lost considerable weight during this time. I managed to wander through the markets and as a Friar obtained at reasonable cost local foods which were not tainted and we shared these in our rooms at night. We tried not to insult our guests but used the excuse that we had gotten food poisoning along the journey. That seemed to work. Florence would undoubtedly be a greater challenge.

Bankers and Loans

We examined the gold and I spoke quietly to Chaucer:

"Geoffrey, gold can be degraded by mixing with base metals, even silver. Perhaps we should best test the gold to determine what the base metal content is."

He turned and spoke softly:

"Brendan, how do we do that? We cannot just accept it as is?"

I smiled and said:

"First, Geoffrey, these are Italians, even more so Florentines. Second, I came prepared to do a test. The standard test so do not be afraid. You must suggest it carefully, not embarrassing them, for they most likely would expect it of any others. Then I will do the test, who would question a Friar and a Doctor from Bologna. We have them boxed in."

He replied, "Fine."

He then asked that we test the gold in front of all and that the "Friar" has come prepared to do the test. They turned white. I spoke to calm their fears in my best Italian:

"Friends, let us make this fast and painless. Permit me to choose a few coins, at random, and then I will do a simple assay. I have here my touchstone, like the many you have here in Florence. I have my two acids, aqua fortis (nitric acid) and muriatic acid (hydrochloric acid), and in this box I have my scale. My weights are standard. Let me proceed."

They all stood nervously about. No one had even brought a Friar, no less the full complement of assay equipment to a bank. I took one coin after another and rubbed each on the touchstone. Then I applied the aqua fortis to see if there were an reaction. No reaction, pure gold, reaction, then there were base metal contaminants. My first test showed some contaminants. I then prepare an aqua regia using a mix of one part aqua fortis and three parts muriatic acid. It dissolved the remaining. Thus I had gold but with some base.

They all looked shocked. Then I said:

"Gentlemen, let me do the test on weights and volumes. You know, the Archimedes test?"

I then took a glass vial with measurement marks on the side. I had about 100 units of water. Then I measured a coin on my scale and it was 2 grams. I measured the diameter of the coin and its thickness, giving me the volume of the coin. I then calculated the weight to volume ratio of this coin. I placed it in the water and measured the rise in water to be three units. That gave me the volume of water displaced which I could compare with my calculation. I also knew the volume of water in the cylinder and its volume, whose ratio I calculated. I now had the overall ratio I wanted, the ratio of densities of gold to water. I then compared it to my reference ratio for pure gold. It was slightly low but very close. Thus the base content was there but it was not negligible. I turned and said:

"Gentlemen, there is some base content but by my calculations it is what we can consider negligible. Thank you for your patience."

I could see Chaucer smile and then Andrea Giacalone, the head banker, came to me and said:

"Friar, I think we had heard of you. You are what they call, uomo umbra, si?"

I replied:

"Per caso"

He then replied:

"Grati, then we have been examined by the best. I am honored, greatly honored. I can tell my family who was here. I shall mention only uomo umbra."

We all laughed and I had never seen Chaucer in such a state of near panic. He had trusted me and since I had seen this trick many years ago in Florence and Bologna, in Florence now I just played it back on them. Chaucer was now satisfied.

After the meeting and securing the gold Chaucer spoke with me quietly while I was at Santa Croce. He said:

"Brendan, where did you learn all of this and the calculations, where did that come from. They accepted it totally, as if you did what they would have done?"

I replied:

"Geoffrey, remember I have been here before. I lived in Italy and although a while back, I studied here and spent time in Florence. Franciscans have a great presence here and as such I have many contacts. But Geoffrey, the key is demonstrating not just the calculations but the process. One must measure, and have standards. Commerce will rely upon that and that alone. Trust just goes so far. One must test and check. I fear that the problem we face is no standard in what we measure. Gold is gold, but a bale of wool may vary from one city to another, that will be your challenge."

We spoke of these types of issues at length. I could see Chaucer would be a quick learner and this may do him well in his world of politics and commerce.

Dante and Florence

Chaucer came to me with the Inferno which he had been reading again and again. First the Italian, as a demonstration of what he had learned. He recited:

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita⁷
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,
ché la diritta via era smarrita.
Ahi quanto a dir qual era è cosa dura
esta selva selvaggia e aspra e forte
che nel pensier rinova la paura!
Tant' è amara che poco è più morte;
ma per trattar del ben ch'i' vi trovai,
dirò de l'altre cose ch'i' v'ho scorte.
Io non so ben ridir com' i' v'intraï,
tant' era pien di sonno a quel punto
che la verace via abbandonai.*

The to demonstrate his advancement he stated it in English:

*Midway in the journey of our life
I came to myself in a dark wood,
for the straightway was lost.
Ah, how hard it is to tell
the nature of that wood, savage, dense and harsh --
the very thought of it renews my fear!
It is so bitter death is hardly more so.
But to set forth the good I found*

⁷ <http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/pdp/>

*I will recount the other things I saw.
How I came there I cannot really tell,
I was so full of sleep
when I forsook the one true way.*

Then he spoke.

"The Italian is like a song. My English is a poor imitation I gather but I spent more time thinking of these few lines. It grasped my, it literally shook me. Life, choices, age, the darkness of the unknown, the idea of a "true way", the "verace via". Verace via rings, true way is a weak replacement, but it does ring to us English. We know the woods, the darkness, the ability to lose one's way.

Petrarch vs Boccaccio

In 1373 Boccaccio was in Florence and while I had time I would visit him. I brought Chaucer with me since now he had some familiarity with Dante as well as Boccaccio. His Italian was passable and he had an excellent ear for the language. Giovanni Boccaccio was ill and at the time was being cared for at Santo Spirito, the Augustinian convent in Florence⁸.

In contrast, the Carthusians in Florence, I had been told, were trying to get him to destroy all his works calling them worldly and sinful and he had some solace here. I had met with the head of

⁸ <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Giovanni-Boccaccio-s-1313-1375-disease-and-demise-Galassi-Toscano/f4a04981baeae495b7b7314c58ded559f902c01e>

1. Dandelion; To some, the dandelion is just a weed. But recent research has found that one of the plant's compounds enhances kidney activity and increases urination frequency.
2. Hawthorn; This relative of the rose family is a powerful diuretic. It can reduce fluid buildup, which means it can also improve symptoms of congestive heart failure. The plant's nutrients have also shown to increase urinary excretion and flow. Hawthorn berries can also act as diuretics and may help treat kidney problems.
3. Horsetail; A 2014 study found that horsetail extract had the same effects as prescription diuretics, with fewer side effects. Horsetail may be a good alternative to prescriptions, especially if you've had problems with side effects.
4. Juniper; The juniper plant has been used as a diuretic since medieval times. Few modern-day studies have proven its benefits, but the evergreen has shown to have a significant effect on urine volume in animals. Like many natural diuretics, juniper doesn't seem to lower potassium levels like some drugs do.
5. Green and Black Tea; Every time you enjoy a hot cup of tea, you may be flushing excess fluid from your system. Both black and green teas have shown potential as natural diuretics.
6. Parsley; While parsley is mainly used as a garnish, it may be more useful to those who are having trouble with diuretic drugs. One study found that it may help with urinary volume.
7. Hibiscus; This beautiful flower has more than its looks. The "roselle," a species of hibiscus, had significant diuretic effects in one recent study. An earlier study also noted that hibiscus helped increase kidney filtration.

Giovanni Boccaccio's fatal disease(s) and cause of death have long remained a mystery. Now, for the first time, a thorough multidisciplinary reassessment has finally been carried out. By combining philological and clinical approaches, it is at last possible to suggest a solid retrospective diagnosis based upon a study of his correspondence, poetry and iconography, as well as references to his physical decay in coeval and later sources. It would appear that he suffered over the last three years of his life from hepatic and cardiac failure, conditions that resulted in edema and potentially even hepatic carcinoma. Focusing on an unusually well-documented case from the Middle Ages, this analysis of exceptionally high informative value reconstructs the symptoms of his medical conditions and finally permits us to clarify and explain the historical features, presentations and evolutionary history of the case at hand.

the Franciscan convent and he had recalled me from years past and he advised me to tread lightly with the Carthusians. I would see Boccaccio as a physician and not as a Friar. Bringing Chaucer would be an excuse to introduce Boccaccio, to me an old acquaintance, to him. It was a bit of a feint but worth the try.

When we arrived Boccaccio was in the rear, in a room next to the garden area, the sun was clear and as most days in the Spring in Florence just beautiful. Boccaccio sat in his bed. He was morbidly obese, I was shocked, and one could see the swelling in his ankles, the puffiness in the face, and even the hands were swelled. I did not want to be too much of a physician but he remembered me and smiled as we entered.

Boccaccio tried to rise, but he was in great discomfort. He said:

"Friar Brendan, I recall, yes, it has been a while since the wedding in Milan. I am glad to see you again. Perhaps this time you can use your medical expertise, or just pray for me. As you see old age has caught up with me. You on the other hand age well, it must be your continual adventures. Come, sit here, the sun is wonderful today, is it not. And I recall this young man, you too were in Milan yes. Pardon me but my age has also gotten to my memory. I am Boccaccio, and what is your name?"

Chaucer replied:

"Geoffrey, Geoffrey Chaucer Sir, I am from London, and travelled with Friar Brendan. I am so glad to see you again, so very glad. Why Friar Brendan had been reading your works to me, and that is how I have been learning Italian. I truly loved your tales, real people, real tales, and I hope to finish them all. Yes Sir, truly wonderful."

Youth, I thought to myself but it suddenly brightened Boccaccio up, greatly. We then spent a few hours talking, and I saw him recover much of that old spirit I had seen decades ago. We sat in the sun, drank some excellent red wine, hopefully avoiding Florentine poisoners, and Chaucer and Boccaccio just spoke back and forth. I could see Chaucer improving his Italian by the minute, it was like the sun rising, it got brighter and brighter.

Boccaccio then asked Chaucer:

"Geoffrey, may I call you Geoffrey, yes, let me tell you. You have here, Friar Brendan, Dottore Brendan, my old friend Brendano, a man who was with Dante at his end. Yes. He is the angel who takes one to their eternal reward. Until he arrived, I felt damned, but he is God's angel, when he comes you know your time is near but that you will be saved. Am I not right Brendano, were you not there with Dante, did you not comfort him in his last hours?"

I had no idea how to respond to this. Chaucer had not known and now that he did he suddenly seemed to view me with some sense of awe. Dante! I replied softly:

"Giovanni, I am no angel of death nor am I our Lords emissary to those passing. I can hopefully give comfort as a physician and peace as a priest. But that is all. You are also not on death's door."

He replied:

"Brendano, look at me, they say I am to die, that I have no cure. What do you say? Is that not so?"

I replied:

"May I examine you a bit and then give you my answer?"

He replied in the affirmative. I then spent a good hour with him. Chaucer stood by and watched, never having seen a real physician at work. At the end I said:

"Giovani, I regret to say that you have limited time. I have listened to your heart, and it sounds weak, and in fact the heart is having great difficulty. That may also explain the fluid in your limbs, your shortness of breath. I would suggest losing weight but alas that would not reverse what I believe has happened. As you may recall the great Mondino at Bologna, we saw many problems like this. You are retaining water, your system cannot pass it and no bleeding will help. I have some herbs which may help pass some of the water, but honestly, I would say you may have a couple of more years at best. The good news is that I am not here to take you now. The bad news is that like all of us it is inevitable."

Boccaccio replied looking at Chaucer:

"Geoffrey, this man tells the truth. No fancy medical terms, just the simple truth. So many physicians will give you some quote from Galen, so set of fancy terms. Listen to him, no fancy terms, just that I will die sooner than later. Now for your other side, Brendan, will you kindly hear my Confession? Excuse us Geoffrey, go see our wonderful garden."

I then heard his Confession. He said he had been pressed to destroy all his worldly writings whereas Petrarch had asked they be sent to him. He asked what is best. I told him that one should not destroy them, let them remain for posterity in the hands of those who will care for them. I would help him here. Santo Spirito was an Augustinian convent. As such it also was set apart from Florence and its battles. Thus perhaps he could leave his works to rest here. I spoke with the head Augustinian and he agreed to protect them and a document was drawn up. Thus Boccaccio and his works lived on.

Returning to our Franciscan convent Chaucer turned and said:

"Brendan, who do you not know?"

I replied:

"Age young Geoffrey, just age."

After a few weeks of treatment with the herbs and diet, Boccaccio seemed to be getting better and desired to return to his home in Certaldo⁹, some thirty miles south west of Florence. For me it would be a half day ride at most, in fact with a good horse I could still do it is about two hours, with a very tired horse. The roads were good and we had a carriage for Boccaccio. He seemed to tolerate the trip well and it gave me the opportunity to drive home my point on diet and keeping his kidney clear. He had to eat less pasta, less sweets, and more vegetables, somewhat cooked. Italians seemed to like food, and some of the food was just overbearing. We approached Certaldo, and it was a small town and Boccaccio lived in a reasonable size building along a quiet lane. The brick here was less red and almost a brown silver quality. The town lacked the many towers of Florence and it was a farming areas and quite restful.

The house was up on a slight rise from the town and behind it were many trees and in front another large grove of what appeared to be olive trees. He had a housekeeper who assisted him with his luggage and we were escorted to the garden area in the rear. Tuscan Spring was upon us, warm, sunny, a very pleasant place and I remembered Bologna and my student days. I asked Boccaccio how he felt and apparently he was improving. The swelling was down but he also had many trips to urinate, which was also good. I tested his urine frequently and the sweetness of the initial sample was decreasing. He also seemed to be losing some weight and having an appearance of some greater strength. This was not a cure, too much damage had occurred but it would help.

I was to stay while Chaucer and the others did their negotiations. The weather was wonderful and each day I had the chance to try to get Boccaccio on his feet again. I had him taking a parsley tea, and also from the hills I had gotten some euphorbia, and some rafnia. Each I could make in a tea, and making Boccaccio drink. He began to complain it made him clear his water too frequently but his swelling went down. I also had him take some salix, ground and strengthened, as well as some digitalis plant for his heart. His color came back. It was a challenge to keep him from the massive amounts of bread and pasta. The only solution was to tell his cook that she would be sent to Hell if she did not stop this type of food.

At the end of the week we had a carriage come up to the house, and I heard them come to the door. Boccaccio and I were in the rear in his garden. There was a great commotion and the house keeper came in and said in a stumbling voice:

"Guests, Master Boccaccio, guests, great guests!"

I wondered who it could be. Then in came Petrarch followed by young Chaucer. Petrarch had aged, as we all have, and he was well dressed, in colors typical I gathered of his town, and stumbling behind was Geoffrey. Petrarch loudly called out:

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<https://www.google.com/maps/@43.5490087,11.0443981,3a,90y,88.38h,91.38t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1s2kDOYH8u sgAxILSgd9IREQ!2e0!7i13312!8i6656>

"Giovanni, my dear Giovanni, how are you doing? I came to Florence and they told me you had returned here, how is your health."

He embraced Boccaccio, and then turned and bowed to me and said in a rather elegant manner:

"Magister, vale!"

He embraced me. He continued looking at Boccaccio:

"Giovanni, this humble Friar has been the Saint behind us all. Had I told you he helped me in Montpelier, he brought me to Bologna, and he told me that poetry and not Law was my calling. God has sent Brendan to prod us to do our best, as I have been a Magister to you my friend. Now I gather he is healing you as well. You look much better, much more healthy. It is God's physician, yes God sent you a good physician."

Young Chaucer stood there aghast. I had never related the tale and I gather he was learning more every minute. Petrarch was voluble and controlled the conversation. I tried to limit my involvement, and young Chaucer was like an empty vessel absorbing it all.

Petrarch turned to Boccaccio and said:

"Giovanni, the Doge in Florence has asked that I invite you to lecture this Fall on Dante. Brendan, he will be up to it, will he not?"

I replied:

"Francesco, he should be if he keeps to his diet and takes his medicines. And, if Angelina does not kill him with her pasta! Right Angelina!"

I could see her peeking through the doorway looking at this collection of great men. She shook her head in abject terror, crossed herself, and then ran to get some fruit and olives. Not a piece of bread or slip of pasta ever again appeared in the Boccaccio residence.

Young Chaucer sat speechless as the two older men spoke. He had read what they had written but the chance to hear them, and listen to them talk to each other, it was priceless.

I asked Chaucer:

"Has the set of agreement been completed?"

He replied:

"Yes, and we are just finishing up the details and then we must return. You are still going back by sea?"

"Yes," I replied, "I will follow you all to Genoa and then from there go by sea to London. If there are things you need sent back then I can take them. Are you sure you do not want to come back with me?"

He replied looking terrified:

"No, I must go by land."

I smiled and replied:

"Geoffrey, you have just finished a great agreement between England and the Genoese. It is a trade agreement by ship, we live on an island, surrounded by water. And you are terrified by the sea! Well, I will trust in God."

We then decided to return to Florence the following day by horse. Travelling in this part of Italy was delightful. There were roads, they were dry, the weather was warm, and one could travel in some form of comfort.

Tales: Pathos, Romance, Comedy, and Fables

On the return trip and through the evening Chaucer continued to speak of the meetings with Petrarch and Boccaccio. He asked what types of tales they wove. I explained to him:

"Geoffrey, they have what I would consider four types of tales. A pathos tale, one where the poor individual is doomed to some fate. Like some of Boccaccio. A Romance, an obvious one where shall we say a young man and young woman fall in love and all turns out fine. Then a comedy, say a farce, where one laughs. Finally a fable. Aesop had many fables, but a fable takes some often absurd tale and relates a lesson of life. I recall three fables. The Scorpion and the Frog, the Rooster and the Fox, and the Crow and the Fox. My favorite is the Scorpion and the Frog."

He said:

"Tell me that one"

I began:

"There once was a scorpion. His sting was deadly and all animals about him knew of his deadly sting. In fact God made him so his stinger stood out boldly in the air, warning all not to come near. Then one day, there was a heavy storm, rain came for hours, the river was flooding. The scorpion had crossed the river by rocks, leaving his family on the other side and they were now in peril. He must get back and help save his children or they would all drown. So the scorpion goes to the river edge and sees a frog and says: "Mister Frog, my family needs me to help them get out of the flood and they are across the river. Can you carry me across?" The Frog was not stupid and replied: "Mister Scorpion, you will bite me and we will die!" The Scorpion replied: "No, if I do we all die, me, you, and all my children, why would I ever do that, take pity on me!" The frog did take pity yet halfway across the river, the scorpion on the back of the frog, the

scorpion bites the frog. As the two start to sink when frog asks: "Why", the scorpion replies: "I can't help it, I am a Scorpion" They both sink below the waters."

Chaucer replied:

"This tale reminds me of Court politics!"

I smiled and said:

"It happens all too often in life. Some people just cannot help being evil."

1373 Return Trip via Bordeaux, Brest, Bristol and to Windsor

My return was different than Chaucer. He was terrified of a sea crossing but now that we had all the agreements and the Genoese shipping contracts I decided I could complete two tasks at once. That is get materials back to England and get myself back. I really did not desire another trip by horse and wagon over the Alps and especially near the Milanese or French. My tunic would protect me just so far. Thus when we set back I managed to leave them at Genoa and again met my captain, one Giuseppe Marzella, a seasoned ship captain who would be transporting the goods, mostly finished cloth and fine glass and other such display items. I bade Chaucer farewell and God's speed and suggested that I would be in London before him.

Giuseppe welcomed me aboard and after a day we set sail eastward. Spring was now upon us and we were sailing against the wind at times but Giuseppe was an excellent sailor, tacking back and forth and yet making good time. We stayed by the shore and one of our first stops was at Montpellier. I had not been here in ages and it had developed over time. We spent a few days here and I had the opportunity to see the University. As a graduate I was welcomed and had the opportunity to speak with some of the Medical students. I listened, gave some insights but kept it at the level of my religious position. There was the questioning of dissections and Mondino, Galen and reality. The students were like sheep, following Galen and never questioning. I gathered Medicine would take decades if not centuries to deal with what is true and what is not.

Information

On looking back and this and many other trips, what became clear was that knowing what was where, the weather, weights, measures, currency value and the like, namely just plain information was a valuable commodity. For example a simple map showing where things are and land marks, channels, north and south, would be invaluable. I had thought of starting such a process but age and time precludes. Hopefully some of the people to whom is relayed this may take the charge. England can have a great advantage if it does so, as a sea power.

Maps would be a powerful information tool. Using the compass, that tool I have seen many times now would allow a good map to be used even in bad weather and away from the coasts for safer sailing. There is the Carta Pisana, a map of the Mediterranean that shows winds and ports. It shows the coasts. If we could have the same all along the coasts. I know now the routes along Portugal, Spain, Gascony, Brittany, and then across the Channel. Why we do not have maps

along with compass readings, I do not know. I will try to get Edward to do something here. Trade, international trade is critical.

On my return trip I spent time mapping out the Mediterranean as well as the Atlantic. In the Mediterranean I use the compass and the Carta Pisana I had a copy of. I could determine the point north, the direction of the compass, and I had the various directions specified on the Carta. I reproduced the map as we went along the coast. If the compass point perpendicular to the coast, I knew the coast went east and west. If it were parallel I knew I was going north and south. I also knew distance, because I Measured time and measure my speed. Bradwardine would be proud. The old lessons stuck. Speed time gave me distance. Thus I knew direction and distance as I mapped out the coast. I calculated using the Arabic numbers placing them in a table and then the table to a map.

When we entered the Ocean I could see that for the most part we went north, thus the coast of Spain and Portugal was north south directed. I abandoned the religious maps with Rome and Jerusalem and just went north and south. North I placed at the top. It was unlike many maps. But I was sailing home. At one point as we followed the coast we turned east, and sailed along the north coast of Spain. It was a long distance, and I was seeing the journey from a totally different perspective. The sailors on board, all Genoese, were amazed as I mapped out the journey. One in particular, I think his name was Antonio Columbo, an older Genoese sailor, one of the mates, spent hours with me watching and learning.

Then we turned north again. We headed up to Bordeaux to replenish. But north was not what I had recalled from prior journeys because I was not paying attention. I stopped as we entered Bordeaux. It was not a long stay. Replenishment and wine loaded to bring to England. Since we were under Royal transport it moved quickly. Then north again to La Rochelle and then north west to Brest in Brittany. I could now see the trip before me. Columbo then looked and said:

"Friar, we followed the coast but if we were to sail from Coruna to Brest across the sea, then we could save weeks! We know the direction, and we know the distance, we could navigate this trip, yes?"

I was shocked that I had not seen this obvious fact. I replied:

"Yes Columbo, it would require a brave captain to do this but yes, the map and compass do not lie, we see it with our own eyes. If you want, you can redo my map on the way back. Then the next time, if you are brave enough you can cross the open waters. It saves time and money."

Columbo was so proud. He now had a secret that could make him rich. I also had a copy of a work by an Italian named Polo, Marco Polo, about his venture to the East. I told Columbo:

"Columbo, perhaps you also may want to read this. It is by an Italian explorer, I had heard of him a few years ago, and he journeyed over land to the East. There were many riches and opportunities. As a thought, I also believe that the earth is round, as many do. If that were so, then perhaps by going west you can get there by ship as well. It is just a curious thought. But you

Columbo are an adventurer and perhaps with maps, a compass, and the fact that we have Polo's work, that someday we could sail west, following the sun to the East."

I took an orange we had gotten and showed him with little sticks for where we were and how one could go east or west and get to the same point. I even thought through how one may do this with the use of the compass, and the stars.

He replied:

"Many thanks Friar, you have given me more than I can you could ever imagine. I will pray for you."

I replied:

"And I for you, Columbo."

Columbo left with a copy of my book, maps and tables, and he also had obtained from Southampton a compass. Columbo had copies of all I did. I often think of Columbo and what may happen in the future.

From Brest we sailed north east to Southampton. From there by carriage to London and Windsor Castle to the King. I believe I had returned much faster than Chaucer.

As I entered Windsor the first person I met with was Sir Roger, the aid to the late Queen Isabella. I had not seen him in years. He had aged a bit but now was in the direct staff of the King. He also, like Chaucer, had been taken in by John of Gaunt. Gaunt seemed to be absorbing everything as the Prince was clearly weakening. Roger smiled and embraced me and said:

"Lord Brendan, it is so good to see you again. You return from Florence, do you not. By sea I am told. Master Chaucer has yet to return, his route is of great length. Come, you need to refresh and clean yourself before seeing the King. Let me take you to your rooms. I am so glad you have done well. Come, come follow me."

As the staff bowed and stepped aside I could see Roger had prospered. That was good since he was a fine and loyal knight. It was interesting being back in England. The clothing, the weather the buildings. It was not Italy. The sun was weaker and the air heavier.

I cleaned and dressed, they even had a new clean tunic for me, and shoes, Edward knew I liked shoes. I even had a warm bath, Edward knew that also, with wonderful French soap! I wonder where that came from? When I finished we went to meet the King. He was with the Prince, and I was shocked to see him again. He had lost more weight, his skin color had weakened. He embraced me, and I could feel the weakness in his arms. I hoped he would not go to battle again. I also met Gaunt, his brother. I never really like him, I did not trust him at all, but Chaucer, Roger and others saw great things in him. I saw nothing but trouble.

The King came and greeted me. I had a gift from Bordeaux for him, a case of the best of wines, each in a bottle, with a label from the vineyards. He was pleased and we sat at dinner and discussed the Genoa deals and the Florentine agreements. All went well. I was a bit tired from the trip but slept well. The next morning as I said Mass in the small Chapel I could see Sir Roger there in attendance, and he came forth for Communion. I truly liked the man. He had integrity.

Later that day I had the chance to discuss the maps with the King. He had some interest, as did the Prince and Gaunt. I explained that mapping the coasts led to discoveries of faster routes, faster routes gave competitive advantages, and mapping should be of interest to the King. I apparently did not persuade him a great deal. The King said to me after the discussion on maps:

"Brendan, let the Italians do the maps, this fellow Columbo sounds like he is interested. We can worry about maps later."

Apparently my only avid convert was the First Mate Columbo. History will tell I guessed.

1373 THE GREAT CHEVAUCHEE

It was late May 1373 at Windsor, after my arrival, when word was the John of Gaunt, Chaucer's new supporter at Court, was to go off on a great charge through France, a chevauchee. Thousands of men and horses, tens of thousands of pounds of coin. So that was the reason for the trip. Also unbeknownst to me, the Genoese mercenaries had sided with the French again, and they had deployed their ships along the French coast. I gather that having been on a Genoese ship we had no problem as we went to Southampton. I saw a few and our captain said not to fear them. Columbo had been silent but I had seen he was concerned. Sea battles were infrequent since the ships could outmaneuver each other.

The more I dealt with Gaunt the less I like or trusted him. I hope young Chaucer would recall my tale of the Scorpion. He was that indeed. I was asked to go to the Savoy House in London to explain to Gaunt my experience with the Genoese and what threat they could present. The Savoy was on the Thames between London and Westminster. It was a beautiful palatial estate yet proximate to the city and docks. Unlike Windsor, set apart from everything the Savoy was in the middle.

By this time Chaucer and the others had returned and Chaucer was again in the service of Gaunt. Our trip I believe had changed him yet he clung to service as his means of identifying himself. I would suspect that I also clung to my vocation part as an identity and also mostly because I truly believed in doing good. The older I have become the happier I am with what I chose, for in truth I could always have departed. Now as to Gaunt, his interest was twofold. First showing his prowess and second to regain his alleged throne as King of Leon and Castile, in northern Spain. I always viewed that claim as a bit spurious, again through a marriage, and at least he wanted to visit the area unlike Navarre who spent his time battling either England or France.

At Savoy there was a war gathering of sorts, all of the leaders who would be accompanying Gaunt on his trek. When I entered, I was escorted to the large room with a long table about which Lords and Earls and Barons and Dukes all prognosticated on the best was to start. Their

objective as best I could gather was to regain the Aquitaine. Apparently Charles V had become somewhat a better King than John. His army was fortified, his alliances strengthened and his cities protected. Furthermore with an alliance with Spanish lords he had attacked and regained La Rochelle, a port I had sailed by on my journey back. Bordeaux was still in English hands but little else. Gaunt sought to remedy this. But first he had to cross the Channel with a massive force and charges from Calais southward to Avignon, engaging and destroying French forces if possible while also devastating the countryside.

Gaunt had assembled an army of about 3,000 men at arms plus an equal number of archers. For such a task he also brought in engineers for bridges, assault devices and the like. The cost was staggering. He had a massive number of people awaiting a crossing to Calais, and added to that was some ten thousand horses! The task of herding these animals and keeping them fit was unknowable. From this Gaunt was to go from Calais to Bordeaux, a journey of significant risk with no interfering army.

When I was ushered in to this cacophony of a meeting, Gaunt, as arrogant as usual, said:

"Friar, tell us of your sail. Tell us of these Genoese. Can we pass them on the Channel or must we destroy them first?"

My first thought was that frankly England and Gaunt in particular had never been on a war ship and if memory is correct he always had massive seasickness. Second, the Genoese fleet protecting France had anticipated an invasion but not the chevauchee. I replied:

"My Lord, the Genoese have excellent naval attack vessels, some with canons, and the canons can destroy enemy craft at more than 100 yards. I have seen and I have even been on some in Genoa on my most recent trip. The Genoese ships are well manned and their speed is at least twice that of any of our English vessels. However, they seem to be focusing on regions outside of Calais, for fear of direct attack from our forces. I would suspect that a fast crossing with little advanced warning would give you a window for success. Other sites would present a higher risk."

"Now as to the Aquitaine. I did manage to resupply at Bordeaux and did not stop at La Rochelle. Its capture and control by the French was well known. I did sail under a Genoese flag and thus had some immunity. I did not see any Spanish or Genoese along the West coast, thus any attack at Bordeaux at that time was unlikely."

"However, my Lords," as I looked at the crowd of young warriors, "Charles has done extensive hardening of all his towns, castles and even monasteries. Thus your mission of a chevauchee, unlike the earlier ones of Prince Edward, may be significantly more challenging, less fruitful, and more costly in time and money."

Gaunt did not like the final comment which would prove to be almost an understatement. He replied:

"Friar, you can leave the fighting to us. We shall achieve all we seek. You may leave."

I departed quickly and on the way out I ran across Chaucer. We spoke briefly and I gathered he was not to go to war again and instead had taken up another appointment under the protection of Gaunt. I wished him well and went back to Greyfriars.

I managed to follow Gaunt and his journey. As I had suspected, he landed with all in Calais, then to Arras, then Reims, to Avallon. Charles and his forces did not engage Gaunt directly but there were many small hit and run encounters. The towns, as I had told Gaunt, were now well protected and that trying to engage then was costly and not at all productive. It was mid-October when he reached Avallon and as usual one must beware the winter weather.

Gaunt decided to cross over the Auvergne and then the highest peaks of the mountains down to Bordeaux which he reached on 24 December 1373. He had lost more than half his men, more than two thirds of his mounts, and his only achievement was surviving this, in my opinion, foolish journey. The costs was massive, the achievements miniscule.

Gaunt returned with a great deal of scrutiny by Parliament. He was no hero but this lack of achievement hardened him to gain what he saw as his. Unlike Prince Edward, with his many victories and rewards, Gaunt was in the eyes of many, a man of poor judgement and little achievement. Yet I observed two things. First, the old way of warfare was changing. Charles via his use of small and unpredictable encounters weakened Gaunt. It cost Charles little. There were to be no big battles. Second, it turned Gaunt into a much greater threat to the throne. The Prince was, in my opinion, dying. The King was old and he too would pass. But Gaunt may have seen this as his road to the crown. Yet there still was the young son of the Prince, young Richard.

1376 DEATH OF PRINCE EDWARD

On the morning of 8 June 1376 I was called to attend the Prince at Westminster. I travelled quickly from Greyfriars and when I entered there was a large gathering in the Prince's chamber. His court physician and his Confessor was there. I stood in the back out of reach for the crowd was large. The Prince was speaking with his father and Gaunt, with others in attendance. The Prince said as best I could her:

"Father, brother, I ask you to honor all my benefices. I also ask you to honor my son Richard as my successor. Richard is a wise young man and will make a good King. I pray you honor than."

The King and Gaunt promised to do so. He rested, closed his eyes. I could see at a distance that he was in some discomfort. His skin was grey and he had lost ever so much weight.

When I entered the assembly and was in view, he had opened his eyes and smiled, to the surprise of many, and motioned me near. The assembly parted way as I moved to him and I bent down and he kissed my cheek. He then said:

"I have been on many a glorious venture with you my friend, I am about to go on my final one. I will await your company, stay not too long, for I look forward to your guidance."

I thought of Dante and his writings. It would be Paradiso for the Prince. I replied with a kiss upon his cheek:

"Go with the Lord my Prince."

And with that he succumbed.

I could see Gaunt from a distance. His mind was turning. He had just promised his dying brother that Richard would succeed his still living father. Yet he, and frankly all of us knew that Richard, then but nine years of age was not fit to be a King in this environment. Gaunt had squandered fortunes, and the King had made him account to Parliament. That was not going well. Gaunt did not compromise and he had become so defensive as a result of his losses that his actions were useless. And now he would possibly have to face a child King. I could see in his mind the machinations on how to deal with this issue.

He was in the midst of meeting with Parliament. It was his problem. The people had called this the "Good Parliament". From late April till early July 1376 the Good Parliament met in London, with only this brief interlude to mourn the passing of the Prince.

Parliament desired to bring control and fiscal responsibility to the realm. The problem was that with the dead Prince and the dying King, Gaunt was effectively in charge. Parliament and Gaunt had no common ground. Gaunt tried to stop Parliament but he needed their revenue raising powers. Parliament rebelled. Parliament imposed a new set of councilors on the King. Specifically Parliament appointed Edmund Mortimer, the earl of March, William Courtenay, bishop of London, and William of Wykeham, bishop of Winchester.

Parliament was dissolved in July, and the following autumn, John of Gaunt continually attempted to undo the work of this Parliament. He barred the admission of the new councilors assigned to the king. He threw Peter de la Mare into prison at Nottingham. He dismissed the new council and recalled Latimer. Alice of Perrers, King Edward's young mistress, was restored to the company of the king. Gaunt also attacked William of Wykeham, the Bishop of Winchester.

Alice Perrers was a young and highly manipulative woman, despised by many. The King had taken up with her before his wife Phillipa had died. I believe Phillipa knew but this was not a part of the Court I was familiar with. Alice even had several children by the King which many found quite repulsive. After Phillipa's death the King publicly displayed Alice often dressed in exorbitantly expensive clothes, such as gold dresses. This when the country was being taxed to support wars that were worthless. Why Gaunt supported this was unknown. Yet my suspicion was that Alice kept the King focused elsewhere so Gaunt could affect what he so desired. Alice was no beauty. She was not elegant like Queen Isabella. Yet she had the manipulative skill that exceeded any I have seen before. I gather she made the aging King feel young and vibrant. Yet she also dragged him down before his subjects. How much of this was Gaunt and his manipulations I did not know.

Gaunt vowed to remedy this situation, permanently. Gaunt was further aggrieved when the eulogies of Prince Edward lauded his victories and contributions. All the people loved the Prince,

they came to despise Gaunt. My original assessment was becoming a reality and my fear was that it would be more than even I had suspected.

1377 THE BAD PARLIAMENT

From late January to early March 1377 Parliament sat under the influence of Gaunt. He now had control and it set about undoing what the previous year had accomplished. Gaunt wanted money and this was his means to get it. This became the "Bad Parliament". The King was clearly on his deathbed. Gaunt had control.

It approved Gaunt's reversal of the Good Parliament's impeachment of a number of royal courtiers. It also introduced a poll tax, a new form of royal taxation. Modern historians have rejected the earlier view that the parliament was packed with Gaunt's supporters, and instead argued that a few defections to the royal party as well as the absence of other supporters of the Good Parliament were responsible for the complete change of course from the Good Parliament's work. The Bad Parliament, much like an earlier parliament of Edward III's in 1341, was forced to accede to the fact that the king could renege on political promises that were forced upon him. The poll tax was assessed at the rate of 4 pennies for every person over the age of 14. The idea for the tax came from the commons, and was an attempt to move taxation down the social scale. The Bad Parliament also approved the payment of 6,000 pounds of back salary owed to Gaunt.

This Parliament set the stage for years of unrest.

1377 DEATH OF KING EDWARD AND RICHARD II

King Edward III died on June 21, 1377 at Sheen Palace. I was called to the castle at Sheen early in June, before his passing, and the King had asked that I attend. We all knew he was failing, for he had lost the power of his entire left side, his face had drooped, and his speech was fragmented. I had seen this many times in men, as well as women, and thus knew he was not long for this world. Sheen was westward from London along the Thames. My summons was accompanied by a Royal barge which took me up the Thames to the palace. Sheen was not a magnificent palace, as was Westminster, yet the King enjoyed the solace there.

Upon approaching the Palace I could see the gathering of many Court members, looking like vultures ready to pounce. I walked towards the Palace entrance and John of Gaunt was present. He somehow had become the most disliked man in all of England, and although he had a duty to care for the Black Prince and his estate and I suspect the Kings as well, he just came across as an obsequious and distasteful man. I personally had no problems with him, but I suspect that he would become a fomenter of grief.

I greeted Gaunt and he escorted me inside. He then took me aside to tell me that the King had asked for me and he suspected that I should be prepared for the Last Rites. I told him I was and then he said that the young Prince, Richard, may be with us as well, although he was uncertain. Then he said:

"Good Father, we also have a delicate matter. You see the King's "friend", Alice Perrers, was also here. You know how strongly she is scorned. There is a concern that she will try to establish herself in some more formal manner. I plead with you, since the King so highly respects you, to ensure that she not be allowed any more than she has already absconded with. You alone, good Father, have the power, the authority, and the respect of the King. For all England, I pray you can manage this/"

Now I saw the main issue. It was not the death of Edward, nor the rise of a child King Richard, but the woman who had managed to wind herself about an aging King, and who already had acquired lands, jewels, and the abject hatred of all in England. This palace was as if I had descended into Dante's Inferno. There is one level after another of evil doers. I replied to Gaunt:

"Sir, I shall do my best. I understand very well the complexities and what can be at risk. I shall focus on the King's soul and his eternal salvation, while retaining what is truly England's."

Gaunt smiled and looked relieved. He was a man with weakness, never taking a strong position, and in War, never seeming to be able to win at any battle. He was so unlike his brother the Black Prince. One always wonders how family members can come from the same parents and in the same environment yet be so dramatically different.

I went to the King's quarters and he lay there attended by some of his staff. There also was a Bishop, whose name I did not know. Strangely all rose as I entered the room, and even the Bishop bowed at my coming towards the King's bed. I would hope it was just my age they were respecting, for I had no idea what they thought of me. I looked at the King and his face was pale, ashen like, much more gaunt than I had ever seen it, his beard was unkempt and his eyes closed. I walked to his side and touched his forehead. At that point he opened his eyes and looked at me. The eyes were still the eyes of the Edward I knew, bright clear blue. He broke a small smile, a half smile, the stroke had paralyzed most of the half of his body. With his working hand he motioned me closer to speak to me.

"Brendan, I am happy you could come. We have been through many battles together, this will be my last. And I know with you here it will be successful. Will you take my confession now?"

I spoke:

"Your Majesty, of course, we have time to talk as well. Let me ask for privacy and then we can speak."

I turned and as I did I saw Alice parading into the room, dressed as if she were off to a ball of some sort. She spoke up:

"Well, how is the King today, I am here to cheer him up, you can all go!"

The Bishop looked askance and the others were shocked. Gaunt had warned me but this was more than I could have expected. Having been in this situation before, I felt no compunction to respond:

"Alice, I am here at the King's specific request to tend to his medical and spiritual needs and your presence is no longer required. In fact, I ask all of you to allow me the privacy to hear the King's Confession and administer as best I can to him."

I then turned to the Bishop and said:

"Your Excellency, would you please assist me in clearing the room and allow me to administer Last Rites to his Majesty. That would be so appreciated."

The Bishop bowed and replied to me and all in the room:

"Yes my Lord. Now let us give his Lordship the privacy he needs, please move out and I shall close the door behind me as we all depart. Your Lordship, is there anything else?"

I was a bit taken aback, since he placed me in some pecking order of Royalty, but I suspect the good Bishop had done this for Alice more than me. I could see the sneer on her face as she swung around and walked briskly out of the King's Chambers. The Bishop turned to me and smiled and whispered:

"Thank you Friar, you were a God send!"

I bowed and said:

"Excellency..."

Alone I heard the King's Confession and gave him absolution. We then sat and he went over the times at Crecy, Poitiers, recalling the glories of the Black Prince. I tried to feed him as well as give him a bit of wine. He was not in pain as best as I could surmise. But his breathing was getting short. He asked that I remain till the end. I agreed.

Gaunt met me after the King went to sleep. He had heard of the Bishop, Alice, and me. He said:

"Your reputation preceded you, but I gather it was more than I could ever have suspected. She is truly a self-interested wench! Please watch out for her, and if you need any help we can support you. I have your quarters ready and perhaps you could join me for dinner?"

I agreed and went to them to say my afternoon prayers. My Office, which I had become more accustomed to as I had settled into Greyfriars. I actually enjoyed the privacy of my Office, and it gave me some strength. I thought afterwards that here I was some eighty two years of age, more than likely one of the oldest in the Kingdom, having now seen three Kings and soon a fourth, and I knew that soon my call would come. I wondered what had kept me alive so long. Perhaps my strong mother had given me the necessary elements to survive, perhaps it was that I did not live in a castle, nor as the poor in England. It was just the wandering thoughts of old age.

Over the next few days as the King weakened I would spend several hours every day with him. His voice weakened, his breathing became more labored. On 21st June, 1377, Edward was near death, and I spent the early morning with him. I administered the Last Rites for a second time, I had done so two days earlier fearing then he would pass. By noon the King's breathing was so slow, his lips parched and broken, and his skin tight to his face and ashen grey. Then he just stopped breathing. Almost at that moment I saw the King's staff rush out, taking with them pots, vases, and anything of value as now the King was dead. Alice was present, and just after the King had his last breath she took three bejeweled rings from his dead fingers and look viciously at me:

"He told me they were mine!"

I was not to stop here, others I knew would. I blessed the King on his forehead, closed his eyes, and with the Bishop, with whom I had become close, we arranged him on his bed, folding his arms, and laying a crown at the top of his pillow. Gaunt then came in and said:

"The King is dead, now we have a new king. Father Brendan, many thanks for these days. And yes we shall take care of Alice. The Bishop and I will proceed to a Mass and funeral. Is there anything I can get you? Do you want to return to London, do you need a barge to take you?"

I replied:

"No my Lord, in fact, perhaps a horse, I think I would like to spend the time in prayer in the saddle, so much of my life has been that way, and I would like to think and pray."

I turned and bid the Bishop farewell, and Gaunt got me a horse, a nice steed, and together the two of us headed east back to Greyfriars.

Along the way I did pray, as was my way, but I also thought of how this Kingdom had changed, in the seventy years since I had come here. From the death of Edward I to the death of Edward III. I was concerned because Richard II as best I could see at the palace was a child, and a somewhat spoiled child at that. He was facing a great challenge. The French were already preparing to invade England, and there was no leadership. As I rode, the weather was beautiful and the days long. I managed to get to London just as the sun set. It had been a trying week or more to return. I prayed again for Edward's soul.

He was then buried in Westminster Abbey. He had aged and after the death of his son the Prince, his last year was just a slow decay to death. Gaunt did not help with his unceasing misuse of Parliament and then never ending need for funds. The increase in taxation down to the peasant level has just driven a dislike of all Government across the populace.

Yet no sooner was Edward dead then the French under Jean de Vienne attacked the southern coasts along Sussex, totally destroying towns and capturing locals for ransom. Gaunt was unprepared and this was another strike against him and his potential claims. Young Richard had no idea what to do and Parliament had set a barrier between Gaunt and Richard for fear that Gaunt would seize the throne. By this time Gaunt was one of the most despised men in England.

His losses at war, his squandering of money, his grabs at lands and his overall level of arrogance and presumption made him a target for all. It was never clear to me how Chaucer had ingratiated himself with Gaunt. But he had. Again humans will often do what they see as a path to aggrandizement.

As expected, upon the death of King Edward, the throne went to Richard, a ten year old child. I found him to be unlike any I had yet to see. King Charles V as Dauphin was demanding, reckless, arrogant, and lacking in the skills that make a King. Yet he matured. He had skill set to mature. My concern was the Richard thought highly of himself and without any proof of his abilities other than by birth he demanded that all other speak and address him as such. At first it appeared to many a cute affectation of a child. Yet as time went by it became clear that this was no child. This was a King demanding regal address and respect with nothing in return.

I saw in Richard as perhaps the agent of the end to Chivalry. He would not be a man in a wearing armor at a joust. But then again wars were changing. We now had larger countries, some move to a standing army, the use of cannon, the adding of naval warfare, and the loss of the chivalry that allowed survival on the battlefield. Men were slaughtered rather than be held for ransom.

1378 PAPAL SCHISM

The Pope, Gregory XI went finally to Rome and many thought this would eliminate the Avignon Papacy and the French control. He finally arrive but dies shortly thereafter. Thus a new Pope and a conclave was held, this time in Rome. The Cardinals arrived, most being French (eleven French, four Italian and one Spanish) and they were under great pressure by the Romans to elect an Italian. Rome did not have Pope, namely the Bishop of Rome, for almost a century. The Cardinals met, and allegedly according to the French, were pressured to elect one Bartolomeo Prignano as Urban VI. Needless to say this did not sit well with the French. The net result was that the French Cardinals escaped and then declared the election null and void. They then elected another Pope, Clement VII. There were now two Popes and the chaos of the Schism began. Of course the French and their allies sided with Clement and the English with Urban.

This was an early decision on the part of King Richard. At now eleven years of age he was clueless. Thus Gaunt took the role of decision maker. Gaunt had met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, York, and even Westminster. They all sided with Urban. Then surprisingly he called for me. We had gotten to know one another when the King had died. I would not say we were friendly, but that we had shall we say a good professional relationship. Gaunt knew of my times with Edward at Crecy and Poitiers and he had a bit of a checkered past in his military outings. Yet he know that I had a great deal of experience, for better or worse, with the papacy and Avignon.

I came to Savoy where he resided and he sat there and he started, while seated at his large table, by saying as I entered:

"Friar, they say you know something of this Pope stuff. What is your opinion?"

I replied:

"Yes my Lord, I have had some experience, mixed as it may have been."

Gaunt smiled and stood and walked towards me and said softly, as if he were trying to be discreet yet forceful:

"Brendan, it is good to see you again. You seem to be the only one in the Kingdom who has an opinion based upon facts, experience, and lack of personal gain."

I replied:

"My Lord, age eventually does that to those of us fortunate to have acquired it. I gather the papacy and the Popes are multiplying like mice in the attic."

He laughed and replied:

"Well said Brendan, shall we say like rats!. Now I seek your advice. What do we do here. I gather I must suggest, or shall we say, recommend a side. I fear that if I do anything it will turn out wrong. What would you suggest?"

I of course had been close to Ockham but also knew the politics. Thus my reply was somewhat historical rather than canonical.

"My Lord, permit me to provide a few facts. First, it was the great Pope Gregory I, who sent his representatives to England in 599 to establish our Church who himself said he was "the servant of the servants of God" and he was the Bishop of Rome, selected by the people of Rome, and further that he was an equal of all other Bishops in the major cities. Namely he was not a ruler of supreme powers. As such I am a supporter of Gregory. It was not until Gregory VII, who reigned from 1073 to 1085, who claimed primacy as well as rule over both religious and secular domains. Namely for more than a thousand years we had just a religious Bishop of Rome and then with no basis or agreement, we have a self-anointed supreme ruler of the religious and secular worlds."

At that point Gaunt stood up and shouted:

"What? Why has no one told me this before? You mean these claims are all baseless?"

I replied:

"Permit me to continue my Lord. First to your question, yes. I fell the appointment was all made for self-aggrandizement. But then it gets worse."

He was still standing and said:

"Worse? You mean we have been adhering to this imposter for centuries and it gets worse. Why do my Archbishops not tell me this?"

I replied:

"Perhaps my Lord the benefits accruing to them may slightly shade their memories. But permit me to continue. Next we have the removal of the Bishop of Rome to Avignon, a bit of a contradiction if you will. The Pope abandons Rome and sets up a palatial estate in Avignon and then we have an alignment with the French. Needless to say, any Papal opinion may very well be shaded by this relationship. A relationship that reflects French interests, if not outright opposing those of England. Finally we have the Ockham issue, my Lord, the issue of just what power the Pope may have, what authority. One can see the Pope as the Bishop of Rome, the equal amongst equals, but the papacy has subsumed worldly powers as well, powers for which there is no basis in scripture. Namely that Ockham wrote and many have accepted the conclusion that John XXII was clearly guilty of heresy, and despite this he did not repent, but he further claimed his accuser is a heretic himself and excommunicates him. Moreover John XXII takes temporal powers over Kings and nations again for which there is no evidence. In fact scripture shows the opposite. Thus for Ockham, another heresy. The record thus stands for itself since subsequent holders of the office have over ridden John XXII in much but not the temporal power grab, if you will"

Gaunt then looked at me and said:

"So you are telling me that the Bishop of Rome is the only Pope and that if one is so selected then he is Pope and any other is a sham?"

I replied:

"Yes my Lord. That can be a conclusion resulting from scripture. But my Lord, I am not a theologian. Yet I have spent the last fifty years awash in the details of these arguments. If there is a doubt in that conclusion then one should ask it be presented. Clearly the Pope would not have an interest in doing so himself."

He continued:

"And you are telling me that at the very most the Pope has is religious authority and no secular authority? That the King is at most bound by his spiritual authority but not his temporal?"

I continued:

"Yes my Lord. Yes my Lord, but then again one should be careful. You see that this may raise the question of the source of the Kings authority. The danger is that the King, and all Christian Kings, rule by Divine Right. That is supported by the Pope. If however Kings rule by the right of the people, then the nexus between King and Pope as temporal agents is no longer the case."

He walked about and came toward me. He said:

"Sit, Brendan, we should talk some more. You are raising a long list of concerns. I suspect you never spoke of this to the King? My opinion is to support this Urban character. It splits the French off. Can we get others to side with us?"

I replied:

"First my Lord, I did not discuss this with the late King, yet I did with the Prince. He and I had long discussions and had he lived I am certain this conversation would be much easier. As to your request; Yes my Lord. If you permit I can engage with our Archbishops and get them to agree and let us say "suggest" this to you. Does than make sense?"

Gaunt smiled and replied:

"Brendan, I can now see why you have been of so much help to others around here. I strongly expect that we shall be seeing each other a bit more. Stay close to me as this proceeds. Oh by the way, young Chaucer thinks highly of you, and now I see why. Let us talk anon."

As I left Savoy I thought that all of these Royal are so much alike. They can be controlled by their egos, and if you are no threat to them, then one can have great influence.

We did "talk anon" on several occasions. I knew that Chaucer and Gaunt had befriended Wycliff, and that Wycliff had been a supporter of the elimination of Papal temporal authority. My assessment was based upon Ockhamism, not Wycliff and his at times distorted ideas. Yet what I was also seeing was that Ockham was no longer alone. The Augustinians had also determined that the wealth land own bishops about in the land, whose rents were baronial in scale should be relieved of their lands and that the Crown should possess them. There was an unspoken war between the religious who were in orders and those in parishes. What had been an unspoken battle had now spread to Parliament and even more so was in the hands of such an adversary as Gaunt who knew how best to optimize it for his gain. I became much more cautious and as so Wycliff became much more bold.

1380 CHARLES V DIES

On September 16, 1380 Charles V died suddenly in his castle. His twelve year old son, now Charles VI would rule. We now had two child rulers, Richard and Charles. I would not be surprised that the two countries would soon be at war again.

1381 PEASANTS REVOLT

I had ventured to see Chaucer at Aldgate where he resided since he had become the Comptroller of the Customs for the port of London. This he had secured from the close friendship with Gaunt. Chaucer had profited greatly from this position and especially as an ally of Gaunt. However as I had advised him from time to time, Gaunt had many enemies and he should take care. Chaucer had also introduced me to a slightly older friend, one John Gower, a landowner and a poet as well. Gower and Chaucer were members of this growing class, call it "middle" class, not aristocracy, not peasant or worker, not craftsman, but educated and working on the periphery of

the King and his minions. Chaucer held his position due to the friendship with Gaunt, he was educated, and lived well above the conditions of those populating London. Gower was even more well off, having land, land handed down from the family and as such his income came from the use of that land. I was seeing development of several such classes. It was no longer Lord and peasant.

I also was seeing changes in the people. When I first started to see patients the poor peasants were living on grains, some vegetables, and generally a limited diet. Since the end of the plague, land used by small farmers for poor crops, were now used by sheep. I saw sheep everywhere. Sheep made for wool sheep made for meat, sheep made for leathers, and peasants now shared in that wealth. England had become a nation of sheep, with a few humans! Everywhere I went there were sheep. They thrived on the poorest of lands and the demands for wool were multiplying. The development of this new middle class, again the term, was driven by producers, middle men, retail merchants. Everywhere in England one saw shops and shopkeepers. We had not been invaded as had France. Thus we had peace and sheep. Add to that this middle class had to read and do numbers. Reading was demanded because of contracts, bills, laws, and the like. Reading was helped by the proliferation of local parish schools. The rich had tutors, the middle class and some peasants had nuns! But what did they read? Hardly Latin, no interest in French, it was the local tongue, the English that my young friends Chaucer and Gower were trying to do their writing in. Why this stumbling language? Simple because there were many more middle class than royals! Where the King wanted silk, the middle class sought wool, where the King held to French, the middle class wanted English.

I was working at St Bartholomew's Hospital, which is just a short distance from Greyfriars. I had colleagues who were Augustinians and Dominicans and also a few fellow Franciscans. I enjoyed the fact that I could easily walk from the convent to see patients and St Bartholomew's Hospital had been around now for almost two hundred years. I had also been training some of the new physicians using the methods I had learned at Bologna and Montpellier. Hopefully the rote manner of following Galen and others could slowly be overcome by facts. Many facts we still had no basis for but we were allowing our new physicians the opportunity to ask, rather than feedback, just the platitudes of the past.

I felt rested not being involved in travels, intrigue, battles, and the like. But late on 10 June 1381, word came of a massive revolt by the laborers all across England. Having been in London and not across the country I have lost touch with what was out there. Apparently the never ending war, the taxes, the losses at battle, the oppression of the tax collectors, and the like had all added up to a massive revolt by the peasant groups. I must admit that my contact of late has been with the city poor, not with those laboring in the fields. I can see merchants and craftsmen in London, guild men who have developed specialties in technologies, but no access to those who labor in the fields. I would gather that their fate has been neglected.

On the morning of 11 June 1381 I saw Chaucer and asked him what was happening. Gaunt was away from London but the King had apparently moved to the Tower for security. He told me that apparently some local priest, a John Ball, had started a revolt amongst the peasants, and that masses were on their way to London. It was the first time I saw fear in his face. He was without a protector in London and as an official his life was at risk. I told him that he was welcome at

Greyfriars and that I could find a way to protect him. I was guessing that the men on their way would not kill a Friar nor enter a church. To that unfortunately I would be proven wrong. I recalled the Jacques some twenty plus years earlier when I was still a young strong man. Now at my age, although God has granted me good health, there is no way I could stop such a crowd.

On 13 June the mob reached the south side of the Thames and asked to meet Richard. He came across by barge but refused to go ashore. Any results were a failure. Richard returned to the Tower. By mid-day the mob started to cross the bridge from Southwark. The gates somehow were opened and they ran en masse into the city. I was at Greyfriars and from the roof could see some of the mob. Then they came down the Thames and along Fleet Street came to Savoy Palace. They looted and burned it to the ground. I could see the flames from where I was. I had to return to the Hospital and the mobs were wandering all about the west end of the city, looting and killing targets of their anger. I walked from Greyfriars to the Hospital and was accosted by many in the mob, but a combination of age and my tunic let me pass. There were mangled bodies of their wrath along the street, shops smashed into and buildings afire from place to place.

On 14 June they were methodically going west along the Thames destroying whatever they could, and again killing randomly. Richard had agreed to meet them at Mile End east of the city walls. He spoke with a group of the peasants and there seems to be no record of who was there or who was in charge. It was a mob. Richard listened and agreed to terms. The Mile End mob felt assuaged and retreated.

While Richard was away from the Tower, a mob led by Wat Tyler managed to breach the Tower gates and went on a killing spree. They beheaded the Archbishop of Sudbury and Robert Hales, as well as one of my former students, Friar William Appleton, who was Gaunt's physician, and the mob beheaded them all and placed their heads on spikes. Friar William was a brilliant physician and excellent Friar in our convent. He happened to be in the presence of the others and I suspect that alone was reason for the mob to kill him. When I heard this I saw this mob as worse than any Jacques I had experienced. Why kill a poor Friar just because he was with others. Somehow they targeted him because he was with Gaunt. During this disaster I managed to move freely back and forth between Greyfriars and the Hospital. Not once was I detained. From time to time remarks about the "old Friar" were made but since I was not identified with any side I was let free to do my work.

On 15 June Richard again went to meet the mob. This time Tyler was present and he took the role of berating the King. He demanded improved terms from that which was agreed to the prior day. Then a scuffle broke out and allegedly Tyler tried to strike the King. William Walworth, the Mayor of London, struck Tyler and he was killed. They then beheaded the man and placed his head atop a spike. Richard boldly rode to the mob, he spoke with them and they dispersed. Such an act was bravery and courage beyond belief. I was surprised but at that moment Richard had truly become King.

Several Knights came forth with troops to disperse the mob. Slowly in London peace returned. I saw Chaucer on the 16th of June as the mess was slowly being cleaned and asked him what he had done. He said he hid in Aldgate and the mob had actually smashed the doors, and he entered

through it. They never went to his premises above. He seemed terrified. I did not ask him why Gaunt never appeared.

It took several months to suppress all the mobs across the country. The aftermath was harsh but not totally brutal. It was not clear to me if any lessons were learned. But what was clear was that revolutions like this and the Jacques would become more common.

1384 FINAL NOTES

Having seen what I have seen and been where I have been I felt it time to close my record. I have managed for almost ninety years to survive and live well past the many with whom I have interacted. I have seen widows and orphans, Kings and Princes, poets and authors, thieves and Knights. Unlike my young friend Chaucer, I thank God I kept my vows and was not seduced by the association with power. I feel that being in the shadows was a strength, I had nothing to prove, and I could do my best to do my duty as a Christian, respecting others and helping those in need. I am certain that history will treat the many whom I have passed time here on Earth differently from how I have seen them. Isabella the Queen for example is truly an elegant and upstanding person, attached to a husband whose behavior could only be described as debauched. Prince Edward, a Knight of the classic sense, saw his role in life as one who rode with destruction to achieve an elusive goal, King of France. The Dauphin, an arrogant and self-possessed King in waiting, whose action drove the war which rages until this day....

POST NOTE

This note is written by Friar Geoffrey, Prior of Greyfriars. I obtained this diary a few days after the burial of Friar Brendan. He went to sleep one night and passed away in his rest. He was we believe some ninety years of age. He was still going to Saint Barts each and every day, although for fewer hours. We all admired his care of the poor and sick. He had asked me to destroy his diary upon his death so that no person would be harmed by his observation. Upon a brief reading of this I decided that perhaps it is worth keeping as a record of a great man and a difficult time. It could help others who come upon similar situations.

Moreover, I had a letter left for me from King Edward III, written to Greyfriars before his death. It was a Royal Personal Command, one which was not recorded in the Palace Records but which we had agreed to comply with. Simply it stated that:

Upon the death of Friar Brendan both Sir Thomas Maynard and Lord John of Gaunt shall be notified promptly. His funeral may be held in a timely manner at Greyfriars and his burial is to be in the cemetery of Greyfriars. However his burial shall be adjacent to the grave of Queen Isabella to her left hand and facing in the same direction. No headstone shall be erected other than one with a cross and the statement, "Ludus numquam finit". Brendan always had a sly sense of humor.

The day of Friar Brendan's burial was a sunny late Spring day and I had expected just a few people, if any. The yard was filled and people were lined up outside on Newgate. Sir Thomas Maynard and Lord John of Gaunt were present, along with such local people as Geoffrey

Chaucer and John Gower, Sister Eleanor and her entire Convent, and hundreds of common folk who were patients or relatives of patients from Saint Barts. I had no idea how his reputation had spread. They all were happy to see the grave and its markings and not a one made a comment as to its location.

For me it was a surprise since I often saw the late Queen as a bit of an improper person. It was in conversation with the many there that I became aware of how highly she held Brendan and how as such her charity made for better care of all the people in London. For that improper perception I have prayed for forgiveness. There was much of Friar Brendan that we do not know, but each one who attended his final resting had small tales. Finally he has left me these records for which we have had seven copies made and distributed which was also the request of the King.

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The following are primary and secondary references which may be of use in better understanding this work. In addition we have included the dictionaries we have used and the religious sources in English for the Bible and the Koran. We have read and reviewed all of the following to ascertain the coherence of fact, thought, and actions as well as to see if there is general consistency in dates and names. Generally we have found broad consistency. When specific translations have been made from Latin, Hebrew, Greek, or Arabic we are generally have done them our self and hold sole responsibility for the specific words.

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