

**Thought for the week**

By Jonny Moore  
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SOMETHING strange happened at the University of Kent last week. In fact, something strange has been happening at universities up and down the country.

Students have been talking about Jesus.

And I don't just mean the ones who are studying theology, or the 'religious' ones – they've all been at it.

Last week, hundreds of UKC students – some from Christian backgrounds, many from other faiths or with no faith at all – got together to hear talks and discuss questions like, 'Isn't Christianity just a load of boring old rules?' and, 'Isn't the Bible just a nice bedtime story?' and, 'What does God have to say about suffering?'

Around the country thousands of other students have been doing the same.

Even more strange is that students have not just been talking about Jesus – many have also made the life-changing decision to follow him: to accept Jesus' offer of the forgiveness of their sins (and let's be honest, we all need that); to hand over control of their lives to Jesus (and which of us could say we really do the best job of running our own lives ourselves?); and to trust Jesus with their deaths, that he can get them through it to enjoy eternal life (and who else can offer us that with any confidence?).

Of course, there's nothing to stop the rest of us who aren't students from doing the same thing – what Jesus demands and offers is the same for everyone.

# Archbishop paid for opposition with life

**Way we were**

**Richard West**  
Founder of the Chaucer Education Project  
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EIGHT hundred and fifty years ago, on January 30, 1164, the Constitutions of Clarendon were enacted by King Henry II. The constitutions were a set of legislative procedures which Archbishop Thomas Becket was asked to sign to establish the King's rights.

The alternative for Becket would be to face political repercussions if he did not do so.

The circumstances occurring after the ultimatum was made to the Archbishop and of his refusal to sign the Constitutions of Clarendon, began to initiate the events which eventually led to Archbishop Thomas Becket's murder in Canterbury Cathedral on December 29, 1170 and subsequently of the penance by King Henry II at the cathedral to the bishops and monks of Canterbury on July 12, 1174.

Thomas Becket was born in Cheapside, London, probably in



**SCENE OF CONFLICT:** Thomas Becket was murdered at Canterbury Cathedral on the orders of the king

1120, on December 21, the feast day of St Thomas the Apostle. Thomas was the son of Gilbert and Matilda Becket. Gilbert Becket was a wealthy Norman from Rouen who dealt in city rents and properties.

When he was ten, Thomas was sent as a student to Merton Priory in England and later attended a grammar school in London. Sometime after he began his schooling, his father suffered financially, through it seems the great fire of 1133 starting in his house and burning down so much of the city that his properties were seriously diminished and he reduced himself to comparative poverty.

About the year 1140, Gilbert Becket first secured a place for his son in the business of a relative, Osbert Huitdeniers (whose surname in English is Eightpence) as sheriff's clerk, giving him his first taste of royal administration.

Later, Thomas acquired a position in the household of Theobald of Bec, who by then was Archbishop of Canterbury.

Archbishop Theobald entrusted Thomas Becket with several important missions to Rome and also sent him to Bologna and Auxerre to study canon law.

In 1154, Archbishop Theobald

**MARKING THE GREAT WAR**

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named Thomas Becket as Archdeacon of Canterbury. Other ecclesiastical offices held by Thomas Becket included a number of benefices, prebends at Lincoln Cathedral and St Paul's Cathedral, and the office of Provost of Beverley.

His efficiency in those posts led to Archbishop Theobald recommending Thomas Becket to King Henry II for the vacant post of Lord Chancellor, to which Thomas was appointed in January 1155.

King Henry II appointed Thomas Becket to the post of Archbishop of Canterbury in 1162, several months after the death of Archbishop Theobald.

Thomas Becket's election to the post of Archbishop was confirmed on May 23, 1162 by a royal council of bishops and noblemen.

King Henry might have hoped that Thomas would continue to put the royal government first, rather than that of the church, but instead, Archbishop Becket began leading a life of abstinence and dedication to his role of leading the church.

Thomas Becket was ordained a priest on June 2, 1162 at Canterbury. On the following day, he was consecrated Archbishop by Henry of Blois, the Bishop of Winchester and the other suffragan bishops of Canterbury.

A rift grew between King Henry II



**THE SAINT:** A stained Glass Window of Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral

and Thomas Becket, as the Archbishop resigned his chancellorship soon after taking up his new office. This led to conflict with the king.

Attempts by the King to influence the other bishops against Thomas began in Westminster in October 1163, when the King sought approval of his traditional rights.

In due course, this led to the Constitutions of Clarendon, the set of legislative procedures, enacted by the King at Clarendon Palace, which Archbishop Thomas Becket refused to sign.

As Chancellor, Thomas Becket enforced the king's traditional sources of revenue extracted from all landowners, including churches and bishoprics. King Henry even sent his son Henry to live in Thomas's household, it being the custom then for noble children to be fostered out to other noble houses.

The younger Henry was reported to have said Thomas Becket showed him more fatherly love in a day than his father did for his entire life.

An emotional attachment to Thomas Becket as a foster father may have been one of the reasons the younger Henry subsequently turned against his father.



**KILLING:** The earliest known portrayal of Thomas Becket's murder in Canterbury Cathedral



**RULE OF LAW:** The Great Seal of King Henry II

## Professor to give city talk

FRIENDS of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (FCAT) will host a talk by Professor David Birmingham looking at the city's history.

Professor Birmingham will take a look back at the ancient roots of Canterbury. Before the Normans arrived to build their great cathedral, Canterbury had

been culturally and economically integrated into the wider European world for some 10,000 years. Old stone axes were fashioned downstream at Fordwich, new stone tumuli were built upstream by farmers at Chilham, and a polished jade tool was imported from the Alpine Dolomites.

The talk will take place at the Lecture Room Ng 03, Newton Building, North Holmes Road Campus, Canterbury Christ Church University on March 12 at 7pm. FCAT requests a donation of £2 (members), £3 (non-members) and £1 (students) to cover costs and to help support the Trust.



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**Information Events**

- Tuesday 18 March, 7pm-8.30pm**  
Thanington Resource Centre, Thanington Road, Canterbury CT1 3XE
- Wednesday 23 April, 7pm-8.30pm**  
Angel Centre, Angel Lane, Tonbridge TN9 1SF
- Saturday 17 May, 10:30am**  
Lenham Community Centre, Groom Way, Lenham ME17 2QT

**Presentations begin at start time**  
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