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Visions of Damietta: St. Francis, Robert Grosseteste, and the Crusades, 1219–1253

A peculiar and under-explored event in Robert Grosseteste's (d. 1253) life is that of his supposed dream-vision in 1249, reported posthumously and in only one source, the *Lanercost chronicle*.¹ The vision foreshadows the loss of Damietta in Egypt the following year, during the Seventh Crusade (1249–54) under the leadership of Louis IX. The parallels to St. Francis's vision at Damietta in 1219 during the Fifth Crusade (1215–21) are immediately noticeable yet the vision has remained largely dismissed as an afterthought in the scholarship of Grosseteste. Considering that Grosseteste wrote, in 1236, what has been described by Michael Lower as "surely the best defence of the cross petition a crusader ever had," in addition to his association with the Franciscans and his relationship with Richard, earl of Cornwall, brother of Henry III and nephew of celebrated crusader Richard I and a (if not *the*) principal leader of the Baron's Crusade, it is surprising that there is no fuller account of his support for the movement; rather there are piecemeal references to certain acts of interference such as that noted by Lower.² This paper seeks to establish Grosseteste's position on the crusades, in light of a thoroughly Franciscan influence, beginning with Damietta.

¹ *Chronicon de Lanercost. M.CC.I–M.CCC.XLVI. E Codice Cottonaiano Nunc Primum Typis Mandatum*, ed. Joseph Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839), 187–888; *The Chronicle of Lanercost, 1272–1346*, ed. and trans. Herbert Maxwell (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1913), 159–60.

² Michael Lower, *The Barons Crusade: A Call to Arms and its Consequences* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 145. All references to Grosseteste's *Letters* refer to the edited collection by Henry Luard, *Roberti Grosseteste quondam episcopi Lincolniensis epistolae*, Rolls Series 26 (London: Longman, 1861), unless otherwise stated. They have been translated by F. A. C. Mantello and Joseph Goering, *The Letters of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). All translations are from this edition, unless otherwise stated. When necessary, I have included reference to the Latin edition by Henry

Robert Grosseteste and the Franciscans

Much has been written about the relationship between Robert Grosseteste and the early Franciscan movement in England.³ As Giles Gasper writes in a recent study of Grosseteste and the Franciscan school at Oxford, “Robert Grosseteste is well-known for his support for the Franciscan order, and his warm relations with many brothers of the English province.”⁴ James McEvoy concludes in his examination of Grosseteste’s affinity with the nascent movement that “there can be no doubt that Grosseteste was well acquainted with the personality and ideals of St. Francis, the circumstance of the Franciscans’ foundation, and the nature of their vocation.”⁵ Grosseteste’s *Letters* are full of admiration for the Franciscans and

Luard, *Roberti Grosseteste quondam episcopi Lincolnensis epistolae* (London: Longman, 1861). The defense of Richard Siward is found in Grosseteste’s Letter to Henry III in July 1236, see Grosseteste, Letter 29, ed. Luard, 114–15; trans. in Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 140–242 (*Letter 29*). More of this will be made below.

³ Most recently, see Giles Gasper, “How to Teach the Franciscans: Robert Grosseteste and the Oxford Community of Franciscans, c. 1229–35,” in *Early Thirteenth-Century English Franciscan Thought*, ed. Lydia Schumacher (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 57–76. Michael Robson has written enormously on the topic, most recently “Robert Grosseteste and the Franciscan School at Oxford (ca. 1229–1253),” *Antonianum* 95, no. 2 (2020): 345–82. For more of Robson’s work on the subject, see “Saint Anselm, Robert Grosseteste and the Franciscan Tradition” in *Robert Grosseteste: New Perspectives on his Thought and Scholarship*, ed. James McEvoy (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996), 233–56; “Robert Grosseteste and the Greyfriars in the Diocese of Lincoln,” in *Robert Grosseteste and the Beginnings of a British Theological Tradition. Papers delivered at the Grosseteste Colloquium held at Greyfriars, Oxford on 3rd July 2002*, ed. Maura O’Carroll, Bibliotheca Seraphico-Cappuccina 69 (Rome: Istituto Storico Dei Cappuccini, 2003), 289–316; “Robert Grosseteste: his memory among the Greyfriars, his cult in Lincoln cathedral and the petition for his canonisation,” *Miscellanea Francescana* 41 (2004): 306–23. See also the excellent study by Servus Gieben, “Robert Grosseteste and the Evolution of the Franciscan Order” in *New Perspectives*, 215–32.

⁴ Gasper, “Franciscans,” 57.

⁵ James McEvoy, *The Philosophy, of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982), 46.

involvement in their affairs, so much so that a clear and uncompromisingly affectionate relationship can be traced during the bishop's lifetime. Indeed, Grosseteste, in *Letter 41*, ca. 13 March, 1236, declares to Elias of Cortona, third minister of the Franciscan Order, that "there are no assistants I know of ... so effective as your friars."⁶ The Friars themselves reciprocated their love for Grosseteste; the same letter states, "your sons, the Friars Minor in England, out of kindness in a special way embrace me tightly with arms of love." A letter from 1238 (*Letter 58*) to Pope Gregory IX asks for help in preserving the reputation of the Brothers, who "illuminate our whole land with the brilliant light of their preaching and teaching" with the warning that "the glory of such an important religious order will vanish and the masses will be scandalized in them."⁷

The Dominican Brother Hubert perhaps best expresses the affection between the religious orders and Grosseteste, writing the celebratory *Life of Grosseteste* shortly after the bishop's death in 1253.⁸ According to Brother Hubert, Grosseteste was the "father and guardian" of both orders, whose presence "pleased him, as did their / Arrival, their multitude, and frequent conversation," and that just "as a mother to her new-born, he fostered, loved / Protected, fed, and valued them."⁹ Gasper continues, "English Franciscan historiography leaves no doubt as to the high esteem in which the order held Grosseteste from the mid-13th century onwards,

⁶ *Letter 41* (ed. 160–61), at 161. Grosseteste to Elias of Cortona, ca. 13 March 1236, in Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 160–61, at 161 (*Letter 41*).

⁷ *Letter 58*, 204–06. Grosseteste to Pope Gregory IX, 1238, in Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 204–06 (*Letter 58*).

⁸ *Frater Hubertus de vita Beati Roberti quondam Lincolnensis Episcopi* is edited by Samuel Harrison Thomson, "Verses on the Life of Grosseteste," *Medievalia et humanistica*, n.s., 1 (1970): 241–51.

⁹ Translation taken from Gasper, "Franciscans," 58.

honored in particular for his teaching and learning.”¹⁰ Chosen personally by Agnellus of Pisa to teach the first Franciscans at Oxford, his influence cannot be underestimated. Indeed, there were Franciscan (and Dominican) contributions to the ultimately unsuccessful attempt to canonize the bishop; a ten-lined letter from Nicholas, guardian of the Greyfriars at Lincoln, penned on 26 June, 1289, extolls the exemplary actions of the bishop.¹¹

The relationship between Grosseteste and this first generation of Franciscans was one of mutual respect and love. What is harder to trace is Grosseteste’s appreciation of St. Francis himself. When Servus Gieben asks himself the question, “what did he [Grosseteste] actually know about St Francis?” he makes a crucial observation.¹² Gieben highlights that, perhaps surprisingly, there is very little direct reference to St. Francis in Grosseteste’s works, no quotation or allusion to the writings or life of St. Francis; the only potential hint he finds is from a collection of *Dicta* whose provenance is yet to be confirmed but which Gieben thinks “seem to fit the bishop quite well.”¹³ This one reference is to St. Francis’s stigmata and features a “tender and delicate” (*tener et delicatus*) St. Francis on horseback; Gieben finds it similar to the description of St. Francis in *The Legend of the Three Companions*, a work dated between 1241 and 1247.¹⁴ Because of the lack of any direct reference to St. Francis in the whole of Grosseteste’s corpus, Gieben remarks that one may find “other hints” if one examines his work with “considerable attention.”¹⁵ It is these “other hints” that this paper

¹⁰ Gasper, “Franciscans,” 73.

¹¹ Robson, “Canonisation;” the letter is transcribed as an appendix on 322.

¹² Gieben, “Evolution,” 217.

¹³ Gieben, “Evolution,” 218, see esp. n. 10.

¹⁴ Gieben, “Evolution,” 218. *The Legend of the Three Companions* is in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, and William J. Short, 4 vols. (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1999–2020), 2:61–117. Hereafter shortened to *FAED*.

¹⁵ Gieben, “Evolution,” 218.

seeks to explore, in light of an examination of Grosseteste's own attitude towards the crusading movement from the 1230s.

St. Francis's view of the crusades has been the topic of much scholarship, yet that of Grosseteste has barely received study at all. This is perhaps surprising given Grosseteste's position as bishop of what was, at the time, the largest diocese in Europe. It is perhaps even more surprising that so little interest is shown in his attitude considering that it is so readily found: His *Letters* alone are full of crusade-related commentary. A brief glance at the index of the two modern biographies of Grosseteste, James McEvoy's *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* and Richard Southern's *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe*, reveals a lack of interest in Grosseteste's attitude towards the crusades, which appear in neither index.¹⁶ In terms of Grossetestian scholarship, the crusades are discussed briefly in relation to aspects of Grosseteste's specific accusations of corruption and abuse aimed at the papacy and the crown, such as in his famous speech at Lyons in May, 1250.¹⁷

St. Francis at Damietta: Vision and Dialogue

¹⁶ Richard Southern, *Robert Grosseteste, The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); James McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982).

¹⁷ In this speech there is a reference to a papal tithe granted to Henry III, denounced by Grosseteste. See Joseph Goering, "Robert Grosseteste at the Papal Curia," in *A Distinct Voice: Medieval Studies in Honour of Leonard E. Boyle, O.P.*, ed. Jacqueline Brown and William P. Stoneman (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1997), 253–76, at 264. As Goering suggests, this inclusion of the tithe in his complaints to the Curia was "something of an afterthought" (264). News of the tithe, granted April 11, 1250 would have reached Grosseteste whilst he was the curia, perhaps a reason for its inclusion. See also Servus Gieben, "Robert Grosseteste at the Papal Curia, Lyons 1250: Edition of the Documents," *Collectanea Franciscana* 41 (1971): 340–93.

St. Francis' intention of joining the Fifth Crusade and embarking on his trip to Damietta is the subject of much scholarly debate.¹⁸ The general consensus is that his motivation for joining the crusading army was to preach, to spread the word of God, and to convert Muslims peacefully; posthumously, St. Francis is regarded as thoroughly anti-violence.¹⁹ He first attempted a trip to Syria in 1212–13, a trip which failed due to inclement weather; a second

¹⁸ Scholarship is divided on St. Francis' intention to go to Egypt. John V. Tolan, *Saint Francis and the Sultan: The Curious History of a Christian-Muslim Encounter* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) discusses the historiography in depth, from contemporary accounts to the twentieth century. There are those who suggest that he was supportive of the mission, including forced conversion and desire for martyrdom; see Adam L. Hoose, "Francis of Assisi's Way of Peace? His Conversion and Mission to Egypt," *Catholic Historical Review* 96, no. 3 (2010): 446–69; Christopher T. Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Benjamin Kedar, *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches toward the Muslims* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Kajetan Esser, "Das Missionarische Anliegen des Heiligen Franziskus," *Wissenschaft und Weisheit* 35 (1972): 12–18; Kasper Elm, "Franz von Assisi, Brüsselpredigt oder Heidenmission?" *Espansione del Francesesimo tra occidente e oriente nel secolo XIII: Atti del VI Convegno Internazionale, 12–14 ottobre 1978* (Assisi, 1979): 71–103. A more common take on the matter is that Francis probably disapproved of the movement and the violence but saw it as an opportunity to preach. For this position, see Steven J. McMichael, "Francis and the Encounter with the Sultan (1219)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Francis of Assisi*, ed. M. Robson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2011), 127–42; James Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213–1221* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); Powell, "St. Francis of Assisi's Way of Peace," *Medieval Encounters* 13 (2007): 271–80; Michael Cusato, "Healing the Violence of the Contemporary World: A Franciscan Paradigm for Dialogue with Islam," in *Daring to Embrace the Other: Franciscans and Muslims in Dialogue*, *Spirit and Life* 12 (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2008), 1–37, at 11–14; Cornelio Del Zotto, "Il Dialogo universale di Francesco d'Assisi pratica di pacificazione," *Anontianum* 65 (1990): 495–532.

¹⁹ Cusato, "Healing," 8–37; Powell, *Anatomy*, 158.

effort was made to preach to the Moors in Spain in 1213, but illness prohibited this attempt.²⁰ When a Fifth Crusade was launched in 1215, Francis finally got his chance to preach to the Muslims, departing Italy at the end of June 1219 and arriving at the crusader camp outside Damietta in late August.²¹ The first story of interest is Francis's vision of the failed siege of Damietta by Christian troops, a prophecy that is first found in Thomas of Celano's *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* [*vita secunda*], completed in 1247.²² According to Celano, Francis forewarned of a massacre awaiting the Christians if they were to attack. He tried to warn the army leaders of this fate and was ignored, and six thousand Christian men were killed, according to Celano.²³ The second act of importance is of Francis's subsequent "respectful dialogue" with al-Kamil, leader of the Ayyubid forces, in September of 1219.²⁴ According to Jacques de Vitry's account from 1220 "for several days he [Francis] preached the Word of God to the Saracens" and prayed privately with al-Kamil.²⁵

Whatever the ultimate intention of the dialogue, the outcome produced negligible results for the crusading army, and Francis returned from the Holy Land in September of 1220.²⁶ The misfortune that did indeed befall the Christian army at Damietta in August 1219 has been

²⁰ Cusato, "Healing," 11–15, and 27.

²¹ Cusato, "Healing," 20; Powell, *Anatomy*, 158.

²² Tolan, *Curious History*, 69–71. Thomas of Celano in his *vita secunda* (completed by 1247) suggests St. Francis was looking for martyrdom when he writes "when the Christian army was besieging Damietta, the holy man of God was there with his companions, since they had crossed the sea in their fervor for martyrdom," *FAED* 2, 265. See *FAED* 1, 171 for dating of the *vita prima* and *vita secunda*. The *vita prima* does not contain an account of his vision, only his dialogue with al-Kamil.

²³ Celano, *Vita secunda* in *FAED* 2, 265–6.

²⁴ Cusato, "Healing," 28–33, quote at 30.

²⁵ Jacques de Vitry, *Letter VI (1216)* in *FAED* 1, 581. Jacques was at Damietta during the siege.

²⁶ Cusato, "Healing," 15.

described by James Powell as “a disaster that fully justified the prediction of Francis.”²⁷ Negotiations between the two armies began but the favourable terms offered by al-Kamil were rejected, and a stalemate ensued. In November of the same year the Christian army captured Damietta but held it only temporarily; by August 1221 it was back in Egyptian hands. A strikingly similar failure would occur during the Seventh Crusade, as foreseen by Grosseteste at Huntingdon.

Grosseteste’s Vision

Just as Francis’s vision had prophesied a Christian massacre at Damietta in August of 1219, so did Grosseteste foresee a repeat loss thirty years later. The witness to Grosseteste’s dream-vision during Lent of 1249 was a Franciscan from Doncaster who attended ordinations carried out by Grosseteste at Huntingdon.²⁸ The vision appears in only one source, the *Lanercost chronicle*, composed by two Franciscan Friars: Richard of Durham, writing between 1280–97 and covering the period 1201–97, and a second unknown writer, covering 1298–1346.²⁹ The vision is described as having occurred in 1249, but the anonymous friar from Doncaster is retelling it, as Richard of Durham notes, in 1296. Nonetheless, the friar recounts how the bishop fell asleep at an ordination ceremony only to have a vision of Damietta. Waking, Grosseteste exclaimed:

Eh God! What great evils has this extortion from the Church of God entailed upon the Christians fighting with the Saracens for the rights of God. For in my sleep I beheld

²⁷ Powell, *Anatomy*, 159. For an excellent account of the failure of the crusade after the capture of Damietta see Powell, *Anatomy*, 175–93, and Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, 205–7.

²⁸ *Lanercost Chronicle* (ed. Stevenson, 187–8, trans. Maxwell, 159–60); see also Stevenson, 187–88.

²⁹ A.G. Little, “The Authorship of the Lanercost Chronicle,” *The English Historical Review* 31, no. 122 (1916): 269–79, at 272–74.

the overthrow of the Christian host at Damietta and the plunder of treasure unjustly collected.³⁰

The chronicler notes that this prophecy was confirmed a few months later, referring the reader to his account of 1249 and the crushing rout of Louis IX at El Mansura in 1250.³¹

St. Francis's vision was not recorded contemporaneously; it first appears in Celano's *vita secunda* (1247), only two years prior to the friar from Doncaster's visit.³² Whether Grosseteste's vision of Damietta actually occurred is debatable, however, it highlights an attempt, albeit posthumously, to parallel Grosseteste with St. Francis. It also shows Grosseteste's distrust of crusading armies due to their predilection towards pillaging and destruction and the lack of control exhibited by army commanders over their ill-behaved charges. As with the Fifth Crusade, Jerusalem was offered for the return of Damietta during the Seventh, and, as with the Fifth Crusade, the offer was refused, this time by Louis IX.³³ Louis would try to renegotiate in April 1250 after a savage reversal in fortune, but his offer was declined by the newly-empowered Egyptian army, and control of Damietta was handed back on May 6, 1250.³⁴ As Runciman writes, "the disaster of the Egyptian campaign had not

³⁰ *Lanercost Chronicle* (ed. Stevenson, 188, trans. Maxwell, 160). The Latin reads: "'Ey, Deus!' inquit, 'quanta mala intulit extorsio ab ecclesia Dei, Christianis inter Sarracenos pro Dei jure dimicantibus. Nam in hoc sopore perspexi apud Damietam Christianae aciei dejectionem, et thesaurorum injuste compilatorum depilationem'" (Stevenson, 188).

³¹ *Lanercost Chronicle*, trans. Maxwell, 160. See also Runciman, *History*, 3:264–70; Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, 216–23.

³² Celano's account in the *Vita prima*: *FAED* 1, 231; Jacques de Vitry's account, *FAED* 1, 605–7; Henri d'Avranches retelling in the *Versified life of Saint Francis*: *FAED* 1, 486.

³³ Runciman, *History*, 3:262–9.

³⁴ Runciman, *History*, 3:269–73.

only destroyed a French army, but it had robbed Outremer of almost all its troops.”³⁵ When Grosseteste was having his prophetic dream in Huntingdon, then, the fortunes of the crusader army, and crusading in general, were declining rapidly.

Whilst the *Lanercost chronicle* is the only work to contain this account, Grosseteste was kept well-informed of the crusades not least through his close relationship with the Franciscan Adam Marsh. Letters (*Letters 17* and *23*) from Marsh to Grosseteste indicate that Marsh kept him abreast of the situation in Egypt, writing in 1251:

I am sending you transcripts of the letter of the lord king of France and the lord cardinal-bishop of Tusculum, drafted with evident care, about the destruction of the Christian army in Egypt and the state of the Promised Land.³⁶

It is possible that Grosseteste also had a first-hand account of the (first) fall of Damietta. In her study of the *familia* of Grosseteste, Kathleen Major records that John of Easton appears as a frequent witness to letters of institution composed between 1237 and 1240; Major suggests he may well have died 1242–43.³⁷ Although a fairly common name, a John of

³⁵ Runciman, *History*, 3:274.

³⁶ Marsh, *Letter 23*, to Grosseteste, 1251, in *The Letters of Adam Marsh*, ed. and trans. C.H. Lawrence, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 1:54–55 (*Letter 23*). All letters from Marsh to Grosseteste discussed in this paper are from this edition. Marsh repeatedly asks for Grosseteste to return these transcripts and other letters keeping him informed of the events in Egypt. See Marsh, *Letter 17* to Grosseteste, 1251/52, in Lawrence, *Letters*, 1:42–45 (*Letter 17*) and Marsh, *Letter 22*, to Grosseteste, November/December 1251, 1:50–53. (*Letter 22*). I will make more of Grosseteste’s relationship with Adam Marsh below.

³⁷ Kathleen Major, “The Familia of Robert Grosseteste,” in *Robert Grosseteste: Scholar and Bishop: Essays in Commemoration of the Seventh Century of his Death*, ed. D.A. Callus (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 216–41 at 228.

Easton, from Lincolnshire, did join the Fifth Crusade in 1218; he witnessed a charter of John de Lacy (who would become earl of Lincoln in 1232) signed *apud Damietam* in 1218.³⁸

Whether this is the same John of Easton that appears in Grosseteste's *familia* in the 1240s remains to be seen; however, the dating and connection to Lincolnshire through John de Lacy perhaps lends it some weight. If so, Grosseteste may have heard personal testimony of the siege (and perhaps, of Francis himself). It is also possible that Grosseteste's knowledge of the 1219 siege of Damietta could have come from John de Lacy's widow, Margaret, Countess of Lincoln, with whom Grosseteste had a formal relationship: Her husband, father, and grandfather likely fought in 1219.³⁹

³⁸ Major, "Familia," 228; Powell, *Anatomy*, 81, and 232. Johanne de Estona appears as a witness in *The chartulary of St. John of Pontefract from the original document in the possession of Godfrey Wentworth, of Woolley Park*, ed. Richard Holmes, 6 vols (The Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series, 25, 1899), 1:37 (§21). See also Beatrice Siedschlag, *English Participation in the Crusades 1150–1220* (PhD diss, Bryn Mawr College, 1937, priv. print, 1939), 140. Powell, *Anatomy*, 232 lists Easton's return as "unknown" suggesting that he did return at some point, but there is a lack of evidence as to when. John de Lacy was earl of Lincoln from 1232 to his death in 1240.

³⁹ Indeed it is to Margaret de Quincy, widow of John de Lacy (d. 1240), and Countess of Lincoln *suo jure* whom Grosseteste dedicates his Rules on Estate Management to help instruct her with the administrative upkeep of her estate; see Dorothea Oschinsky, *Walter of Henley and Other Treatises on Estate Management and Accounting* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971), 191–99. Not only did Margaret's husband fight in Damietta, but it is suggested that her father, Roger de Quincy (d. 1264) travelled with his father Saer de Quincy to Damietta in 1219, see Richard D. Oram, "Quincy, Roger de, earl of Winchester," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi-org.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/22966>>. Roger's father (Margaret's paternal grandfather) Saer de Quincy died of illness in November 1219 and was buried in Acre; see Oram, "Quincy, Saer de, earl of Winchester," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<https://doi-org.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/22967>> [accessed 31st March 2021]., accessed March 21, 2021, <https://doi-org.ezproxy3.lib.le.ac.uk/10.1093/ref:odnb/22967>.

It is thus possible, though tentative, that Grosseteste had a first-hand account of Damietta in 1219 from members of his own household, in addition to his first-hand account of a similar failure in 1249–50, 30 years later, during the Seventh Crusade, from Adam Marsh. In the absence of any textual evidence indicating this, only cautious suggestions can be made based on the company he kept, his interest in political and religious affairs, and his roles later in life.

The *Château d'Amour*: a Besieged Damietta?

Written likely sometime between ca.1230 and 1235, the Anglo-Norman verse poem the *Château d'Amour* has received much attention for its portrayal of creation, loss, and restoration.⁴⁰ As an extended allegory, the poem also contains the Four Daughters of Mercy, Justice, Peace, and Truth, discusses the need for Christ's Incarnation, and ends with the final judgement. Evelyn Mackie has suggested that the *Château* could have been composed for the Franciscan community at Oxford, describing as it does the essential Christian teachings in a vernacular, memorable way.⁴¹ An important element of the poem is the discussion of a besieged castle, which is clearly identified as the Virgin Mary. There are many allusions to its fortifications and barricades, protected as it is by a deep moat, and its strong defensive

⁴⁰ Evelyn Mackie, "Robert Grosseteste's Anglo-Norman Treatise on the Loss and Restoration of Creation, Commonly Known as Le Château D'Amour: An English Prose Translation," in *Robert Grosseteste and the Beginnings of a British Theological Tradition. Papers Delivered at the Grosseteste Colloquium Held at Greyfriars, Oxford on 3rd July 2002*, ed. Maura O'Carroll, who establishes a date of 1230–35 (154–56). *Bibliotheca Seraphico-Capuccina* 69.2 (Rome: Istituto Storico De Cappuccini, 2003); *Le Château d'Amour de Robert Grosseteste, Évêque de Lincoln*, ed. James Murray (Paris: Librairie Champion, 1918), 151–79. References here are to the Mackie prose translation, with occasional textual references to Murray's edition.

⁴¹ Mackie, *Château*, 154–56. See also Gasper, "Franciscans," 68–70.

position.⁴² We are told that no siege-engine could harm it, that it is surrounded by battlements, four turrets, three baileys, and seven barbicans (protected by guards with bolts and arrows). It is a castle of love, so indescribably beautiful that Jesus himself took shelter there. After this lengthy description of the castle and the allegorized architectural and fortification elements, we learn that humanity itself is besieged outside of it, desperate to enter but prohibited by three evils: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Humanity knocks on the gates, begging to be let in. A parliament (*assise*) is called, fronted by the devil, and the poem contains a reference to the world as being comprised of two opposing armies.⁴³

While there are no direct references to Damietta in the poem, if this was indeed intended for Franciscans and composed during the mid-1230s, as Mackie suggests, it was during the period of time when Grosseteste was most supportive of the crusades. There are several and specific references to defensive measures, as well as the fact that the castle is besieged. The importance of the castle, and its connection to Mary, is also emphasized; Damietta was strategically important and also had a connection to both Mary and Jesus for thirteenth-century writers. Damietta's importance for Jacques de Vitry rested on the notion that Christ and Mary had lived there, and the author of the *Gesta obsidionis Damiatæ* proposes that both Mary and Moses were born there, with Jeremiah born nearby.⁴⁴ The *Château*, written after the first loss of Damietta but prior to the second, reflects the locational importance of Damietta as a site for both victory and defeat, a geographical *topos* that would become similarly established in the minds of thirteenth-century writers.⁴⁵ Megan Cassidy-Welch has

⁴² Grosseteste, *Château*, 166–69. See also Murray, lines 566–806; trans. Mackie, 166–69.

⁴³ Grosseteste, *Château*, 169. See also Murray, lines 809–24; trans. Mackie, 169.

⁴⁴ Megan Cassidy-Welch, “‘O Damietta’: War Memory and Crusade in Thirteenth-Century Egypt,” in *Journal of Medieval History* 40, no. 3 (2014): 346–60, at 354.

⁴⁵ Cassidy-Welch, “‘O Damietta,’” 347.

suggested that thirteenth-century writers who wrote on Damietta, such as Jacques de Vitry, attempted to “place the crusade in the longer eschatological memory of Christian history.”⁴⁶ Writers like de Vitry, in doing so, were keen to draw connections between Egypt, and Damietta more particularly, and Biblical history, perhaps in an attempt to market these sites as potential pilgrimage sites. De Vitry saw Damietta as the key to Christianizing the East.⁴⁷

The locational aspect of medieval memory, the use of architectural mnemonic, particularly involving castles, was also conventional by the thirteenth century.⁴⁸ Christiania Whitehead has suggested that interest in Jerusalem, and the Temple, increased following the city’s capture in 1099 and loss in 1187.⁴⁹ If Grosseteste was using allegories of battle and defensive fortification to help Franciscans preach Christian salvation, what better location than Damietta itself? Discussing the role Damietta played in the collective memory of crusaders of the thirteenth-century, Cassidy-Welch observes that not only is memory spatial, but it is also spiritual.⁵⁰ Damietta was an ideally suited heuristic location to choose for the *Château*.

Though there is nothing directly linking the *Château* to Damietta, there are several relevancies that suggest a potential connection in the mind of Grosseteste. The timing of its composition was when Grosseteste was at his most supportive of the crusading movement: *Letter 49* to Otto of Tonengo, written in 1237, is an explicit declaration of intent by

⁴⁶ Cassidy-Welch, ““O Damietta,”” 350.

⁴⁷ Cassidy-Welch, ““O Damietta,”” 354.

⁴⁸ Christiania Whitehead, *Castles of the Mind* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), 87–116; and Abigail Wheatley, *The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2004).

⁴⁹ Whitehead, *Castles*, 18–19.

⁵⁰ Cassidy-Welch, ““O Damietta,”” 358.

Grosseteste to preach to Muslims, were he not so frail.⁵¹ The intended audience of the poem, if Franciscan, would readily have identified with an extended allegory of a strategically significant, besieged fortification, surrounded by water. The connection to Mary, which finds a peak during the early thirteenth-century eyewitness accounts of the city, is also striking. That humanity approaches, knocks on the gate, and enters into a conversation with the Devil may well be a reference to St. Francis's dialogue with al-Kamil. Though there is no similar dialogue between Grosseteste and Muslims, no reference to Francis and al-Kamil, Grosseteste does directly acknowledge the usefulness of open interfaith dialogue in one work in particular.

A Dialogue?

In the *Château d'Amour*, when the gates open for humanity to enter, there is a conversation in which the devil takes a leading role.⁵² After this dialogue, humanity declares itself a "defeated champion" who has "lost utterly" and is in dire need of grace.⁵³ However, it is not the only reference to a dialogue between "two armies" in Grosseteste's corpus; there is also a translation of John of Damascus's (d. ca. 753) *Dialogue of the Christian and the Saracen* (hereafter *Dialogue*).⁵⁴ Though Grosseteste likely turned to the bulk of John of

⁵¹ Grosseteste, *Letter 49* to Otto of Tonengo, after July 1237, ed. Luard, 144–6 at 144–5; trans. Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 172–4, at 173, (*Letter 49* hereafter).

⁵² Grosseteste, *Château*, ed. Murray, 1; trans. Mackie, 169. Mackie refers to *assise* as "parliament." See also Murray, line 809.

⁵³ Grosseteste, *Château*, trans. Mackie, 169.

⁵⁴ Meridel Holland, "Robert Grosseteste's Translation of John of Damascus's *The Dialogue of the Christian and the Saracen*. An Edition and English Translation," in *Robert Grosseteste and His Intellectual Milieu: New Editions and Studies*, ed. John Flood, James Ginther and Joseph Goering (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2013), 248–93.

Damascus's corpus in the late 1230s, Meridel Holland, the editor and translator of Grosseteste's translation, contends that he left the *Dialogue* until after 1242. The theology covered in the *Dialogue* is similar to that of the *Château*, though it is a far shorter text: Creation, the devil, Adam, free will, and hypostasis are all discussed, with a final section on John the Baptist, who was ever-popular with the friars as he had been to Francis himself.⁵⁵ Whether translated alongside the rest of the Damascene corpus in the late 1230s, or as an additional endeavor in the early 1240s, what is clear is that Grosseteste acknowledged the very idea of an interfaith dialogue, per St. Francis. The *Dialogue* is a brief foray into important Christological topics, particularly concerning Christ's hypostatic union, and the Incarnation, areas of interest to both Grosseteste and St. Francis.⁵⁶ What Francis actually said to al-Kamil is unknown; however, his words are possible, if not likely, to have been similar exhortations of the principles of Christian theology.

Shields of Faith

When St. Francis set out to negotiate with al-Kamil in 1219, we are told by Jacques de Vitry, he "boldly set out for the camp of the Sultan of Egypt, fortified only with the shield of faith" (*fidei clipeo*).⁵⁷ Thomas Celano's *The Life of Saint Francis [vita prima]*, written in 1229, also describes St. Francis's *scutum fidei*, though not in relation to Damietta but rather

⁵⁵ Michael Robson notes that John the Baptist was "one of *il poverello's* favourite saints," and was included in a number of sermons by Grosseteste addressed to the friars. "Robert Grosseteste's Two Sermons to the Friars Minor in commendation of Evangelical Poverty," in *Intellectual Milieu*, 102–27 at 115.

⁵⁶ McMichael, "Encounter," 131–32.

⁵⁷ Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Occidentalis*, *FAED* 1, 584. Jacques de Vitry was actually in Damietta at the same time as St. Francis and he composed his *Historia Occidentalis* between 1221 and 1225. See *FAED* 1, 580–81. See also Tolan, *Curious History*, 19.

to his childhood.⁵⁸ As with Grosseteste's familiarity with the Franciscans in his orbit, it is possible that he had access to, or was familiar with, Celano's *vita prima*; Michal Robson has suggested there are "echoes" in a sermon delivered by Grosseteste to the Franciscan students at the Oxford *studium* 1229/30–34.⁵⁹

As with my suggestion above that Grosseteste may have had Damietta in mind in his description of the *Château* pre-1235, there is cause to suggest that Damietta may also have inspired certain *Dicta* depicting three different shields, including a *scutum fidei*, dating to the early 1230s. Durham MS A. III.12 is a composite manuscript of several different parts, and the section in which the *scuta* appear was comprised no later than February 1232.⁶⁰ As Southern remarks, similarities between the sermons recorded here alongside the *scuta* must have been "certainly written by someone who had access to Grosseteste's notes."⁶¹ On its own, of course, this is not enough to support a suggestion that this *scutum* was inspired by St. Francis in Damietta. However, the *scutum fidei* is not the only shield to appear in Durham MS. A.III.12; there are two others, and it is the third shield that is perhaps indicative of a

⁵⁸ *FAED* 1, 191.

⁵⁹ Robson, "Two Sermons," 117, "there are echoes of Thomas of Celano's *First Life of St Francis* in his [Grosseteste's] observation that the friars' habit betokened their abandonment of material goods and secular ambition."

⁶⁰ Durham, Cathedral Library MS. A.III.12 fols. 14v–14r. The manuscript is online at <https://iiiif.durham.ac.uk/index.html?manifest=t1m9593tv186&canvas=t1t1r66j2302> [accessed 2 June 2020]. Richard Hunt, "The Library of Robert Grosseteste," in *Robert Grosseteste: Scholar and Bishop*, ed. D. A. Callus (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955), 121–45 at 139, notes the manuscript is dated to 1231–32, but that it was *not* written in Grosseteste's own hand. This thus contradicts Samuel Harrison Thomson's early description of the work in *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste* (1940, repr., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 35, which suggests Grosseteste's own hand can be assumed.

⁶¹ Southern, *Growth*, 73.

Franciscan inspiration.⁶² This third shield is a *scutum amoris*, and it is this that may have been inspired by a knowledge of St. Francis's pre-departure "farewell" speech delivered to the General Chapter in 1219, comprising the first four verses of Chapter XXII of *The Earlier Rule (Regula non bullata)*.⁶³ In this speech, St. Francis refers to Matthew 5:44:

All my brothers: let us pay attention to what the Lord says: *Love your enemies* and *do good to those who hate you* for our Lord Jesus Christ, whose footprints we must follow, called His betrayer a friend and willingly offered Himself to His executioners.⁶⁴

The *scutum amoris* of Durham, MS. A.III.12 similarly references these *inimici* and *amici*, appearing as they do as the right and left bosses of the *scutum* respectively (the top and bottom are *Deus* and *bona temporalia*). Though Grosseteste is not the scribe of these shields, he is the author of the *Dicta* in which they are detailed, namely *Dicta 95* and *96*, the latter placing great emphasis on love and friendship in a thoroughly Franciscan way.⁶⁵ Similar

⁶² These two additional shields appear in Durham, MS A.III.12, fol. 15r. One is a *scutum amoris*, the other, *scutum boni voluntis*.

⁶³ See Cusato, "Healing," 15 n. 12, which discusses the testimonial in more detail. See also *FAED* 1, 79. There is some debate as to the intention of this testimonial.

⁶⁴ *Regula non bullata*, ch. 22, *FAED* 1, 79: "attendamus omnes fratres quod dicit Dominus: Diligite inimicos vestros et benefacite his qui oderunt vos, quia Dominus noster Jesus Christus, cuius sequi vestigia debemus, traditorem suum vocavit amicum et crucifixoribus suis sponte se obtulit. Amici igitur nostri sunt omnes illi qui nobis iniuste inferunt tribulationes et angustias, verecundias et iniurias, dolores et tormenta, martyrium et mortem; quos multum diligere debemus, quia ex hoc quod nobis inferunt, habemus vitam aeternam." See also Cusato, "Healing," 36.

⁶⁵ Grosseteste's *Dicta* are associated with his career prior to that of Bishop. The *Dicta* are taken from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 798, fols. 1r–121r, as they appear on "The Electronic Grosseteste" www.grosseteste.com. See *Dictum 95*, fol. 74r and *Dictum 96*, fols. 74r–74v.

shield descriptions, with mnemonic comparison to the image of a crucified Jesus, can be found in *Dictum 112*.⁶⁶ The dating of the composition of these particular *Dicta* is unclear, but that they are shields is manifest, as it was to the scribe of the Durham MS.

It seems that Grosseteste's interest in the crusades aligned with his interest in the nascent Franciscan movement and perhaps in St. Francis himself at Damietta. This next section of the paper will chronologically survey Grosseteste's clear surge of interest in the crusades from around this period to his total abandonment of them by the time of his death in 1253. It will primarily focus on his *Letters*, as they convey not only an administrative interest, but also one of pastoral duty, as well as, perhaps most illuminatingly, close personal friendship with individual crusaders.

Grosseteste and Spiritual Warfare, to 1235

In *Letter 6*, written to Richard Marshal, earl of Pembroke, in 1231–32, Grosseteste expands on the popular spiritual armor of Ephesians 6:11–17.⁶⁷ In this deferential letter to so astounding a knight—Mathew Paris would describe him as the “flower of knighthood in our times—Grosseteste implores the earl to embrace certain spiritual armor; he compares eleven individual elements of a knight-on-horseback to eleven holy or Christian qualities.⁶⁸ The

⁶⁶ Grosseteste, *Dictum 112*, fol. 92ra: “ipsa enim figura crucis figura scuti est si a duobus cornibus ligni transversalis [transversatis MS] ad pedem trahuntur due linee recte.” One of the shields described in *Dictum 112* (three are described) is identical to that of *Dictum 50*, which are in themselves different to those in Durham, MS A.III.12, fol. 14v.

⁶⁷ Grosseteste, *Letter 6* to Richard Marshal, August 1231–November 1232, ed. Luard, 38–41; trans. Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 70–73, (*Letter 6* hereafter).

⁶⁸ Grosseteste, *Letter 6*. The knight rides a horse of heavenly desire with a bridle of discretion, a saddle of circumspection, stirrups of humility (right) and repentance (left), spurs of heaven (left) and hell (right). He wears a breastplate of justice, a shield of faith, a helmet of salvation and wields the sword of the word of God.

allegorization of the *arma Christi* was contemporaneously popular amongst not only Franciscans but also Dominicans. The focus on the suffering of the Passion and the resurrection was an influential motif: As Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown write, “this view of the *arma* as the cause of Christ’s suffering was encouraged from the thirteenth century by the spiritual writings of the Franciscans.”⁶⁹ This rise in interest of the *arma Christi* and the instruments of the Passion ushered in imagery of the Christ-knight, complete with spiritual weapons and associated battle allegories, which remained popular.⁷⁰

The *Versified Life of Saint Francis*, composed by Henri d’Avranches between 1230–35, details St. Francis’s armor as containing roughly the same number of pieces as Grosseteste’s knight detailed in *Letter 6*, though Christian qualities and armor do differ.⁷¹ Four years after Grosseteste’s letter, in 1236, perhaps the most famous description of spiritual armor appears: The Dominican William Peraldus’s knight in his *Summa de vitiis*.⁷² Peraldus’s knight has

For Paris’ description, see *Matthaei Parisiensis, monachi Sancti Albani Chronica majora*, ed. Henry Luard, 7 vols. (London: Longman, 1872–88), 3:289, where he describes the earl, on his deathbed, as the “militiae flos temporum modernorum.” The *Chronica majora* is translated as *Matthew Paris’s English History from the year 1235 to 1273*, ed. and trans. J. A. Giles, 3 vols. (London: H. G. Bohn, 1852–54), (*Chronica majora* hereafter).

⁶⁹ Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown, “Introduction: *Arma Christi*: The Material Culture of the Passion,” in *The Arma Christi in Medieval and Early Modern Material Culture. With a Critical Edition of ‘O Vernicle,’* ed. Lisa H. Cooper and Andrea Denny-Brown (London: Routledge, 2014), 1–20 at 6.

⁷⁰ Michael Evans, “An Illustrated Fragment of Peraldus’s *Summa of Vice*: Harleian MS 3244,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982): 14–68 at 3 discusses the close relationship between the *arma Christi* and the rise in use of spiritual armor and the Christ-knight.

⁷¹ *FAED* 1, 440–41 for the description of St. Francis who has reins of modesty, greaves of action and contemplation, a helmet of hope and patience, spear of judgement and discretion and so on. *FAED* 1, 423 for the dating of the *Versified Life*.

⁷² This is discussed extensively in Evans, “Fragment,” 14–23.

slightly more pieces of spiritual armor than Grosseteste's — sixteen — and his is carrying a recognizable *scutum fidei* or shield of faith.⁷³ As Michael Evans has pointed out in his magisterial survey of the *arma Christi* and the spiritual armor of Ephesians 6:11-17 in medieval literature, the thirteenth century saw a boom in depictions of armour and their qualities; the ca. 1225 prose *Lancelot du lac* has the Lady of the Lake instructing Lancelot “in the meaning of his arms, each of which is emblematic of one of the knight's duties to the Church.”⁷⁴ By ca. 1275, the Franciscan Ramon Lull had symbolically itemized twenty pieces of knightly equipment in his *Libre qui es de l'orde de cavalleria*, surpassing the equipment of both Grosseteste's and Peraldus's knights.⁷⁵

Reference to spiritual armor is not enough to show evidence of support for the crusades, and Richard Marshal was no crusader. However, Grosseteste's defense of Adam Rufus at the turn of the 1230s does suggest an impassioned encouragement of missionary work and preaching to the Saracens, as detailed in *Letter 2*.⁷⁶ He describes Rufus as “so glowing a jewel” set against the “darkness of unbelief.”⁷⁷ Grosseteste tells the Franciscans at Oxford that Rufus had planned to venture to the Holy Land even before he entered the Order, a plan

⁷³ Peraldus's armor is increased by the fact that each horseshoe represents a different quality. See Evans, “Fragment,” 21. The image can be accessed online, in London, British Library, Harley MS 3244, fols. 27r–33v and fols. 87r–121r. Image on f. 28r, accessible at: http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_3244_f027r?

⁷⁴ Evans, “Fragment,” 19.

⁷⁵ Evans, “Fragment,” 19.

⁷⁶ Grosseteste, *Letter 2* to Agnellus of Pisa, 1229–1232, ed. Luard, 17–21; trans. Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 49–53.

⁷⁷ Grosseteste, *Letter 2*, ed. Luard, 21: “Tam rutilanti gemma non magis possit ordo vester decorari et honorari, quam si contra infidelitatis tenebras opponatur.”

that was neither impulsive nor undertaken without “careful consideration and deliberation,” which is perhaps a comment on the impulsiveness of some crusaders in their zeal to fight Muslim armies.⁷⁸ Clearly, he supported Rufus in his mission.⁷⁹ Rufus joined the Franciscans shortly after their 1224 arrival, likely in 1230 or 1231, and Grosseteste is keen to acknowledge his “holy and praiseworthy plan” because “the light of his knowledge is so bright that with good reason it is being placed most of all where it may dissipate the thickest shadows of unbelief.”⁸⁰ There is no hesitancy from Grosseteste in the letter; rather, he appears to be attempting to counter the hesitance of some of Rufus’s fellow Brothers at Oxford. It is in the mid-to-late 1230s, and early 1240s, that Grosseteste’s defense of crusaders reaches its peak.

1235–45: The Height of Grosseteste’s Support for the Crusades

Though the inclusion of the *scutum fidei* is not proof of a connection between Grosseteste and the burgeoning Franciscan movement in England in the late 1230s, the frequent and consistent references to battle and military analogies in his letters during this period do suggest that Grosseteste was aware of, and affected by, the crusading movement. The theme of spiritual warfare discussed in *Letter 6* to Richard Marshal is replicated time and again in Grosseteste’s later letters, composed during his time as bishop.⁸¹ In Grosseteste’s *Letter 2*, ca.

⁷⁸ Grosseteste, *Letter 2*, ed. Luard, 21: “Nec credatur incircumspecte et sine deliberatione subitaneo motu propositum tale assumpsisse.”

⁷⁹ Adam Rufus went to Rome but died before being able to fulfil this mission. See Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 50, n. 4.

⁸⁰ Grosseteste, *Letter 2*, 51–52.

⁸¹ In *Letter 20*, written in 1235 to Adam Marsh, the javelins of the devil are discussed in reference to Eph 6:16. Hugh of Pattishall is urged in *Letter 25*, ca. 1235–36, to serve as “God’s soldier” (*militat Deo*) in administering his pastoral duties more diligently. In a letter to John of Foxton in 1236, *Letter 33*, Grosseteste

1229–32, discussed above, he defends the decision of his friend Adam Rufus to leave England to preach to Muslims. This defense of crusading, or at least his understanding of crusading as the promotion of faith and charity, reappears most fervently in a letter written in 1237 to Otto of Tonengo (*Letter 49*). The background to this letter begins in 1229 and the end of the Sixth Crusade, when Frederick II had, largely successfully, negotiated Jerusalem and other Holy places with al-Kamil, and had secured a ten-year truce.⁸² By 1237, this ten-year truce was coming to an end (it would expire in 1239). In *Letter 49*, Grosseteste expresses a desire to go to the Holy Land in order to preach, writing:

consoles Foxton using battle analogies, referring to armies and battle lines and enemies. In *Letter 51*, written to Thomas of Wales in 1238, the *scutum fidei* is again raised. In *Letters 107* and *109* (both composed 1243–44) the warring activities of Judas Maccabeus are revered; in *Letter 107* the archdeacons of Lincoln are encouraged to “fight courageously the battles of the lord” (*fortiter pugnando contra legum divinarum adversarios*) in imitation of Judas Maccabeus to better maintain their parishes. In *Letter 111*, written in 1243, Pope Innocent IV is described as being a shield (*clipeum*) of the Church. *Letter 127* to the Papal Curia at Lyons in 1245 embellishes these battle metaphors to an extended allegory of papal authority and military commandment. He describes bishops as “commanders of God’s encampments” (*duces castrorum Dei*) and entrusts them to keep control of their subordinates, referring to “spiritual warfare” (*bellum... spirituale*) and gives several analogies of the loss of troops. The earlier battle analogies and nods to spiritual warfare continue into the first decade of his episcopacy; they get longer and more detailed as time goes on. What becomes apparent in these later letters, however, is more than simply a preference for using battle analogies, or references to the *arma Christi*, but a more vested interest in the crusades themselves. He even goes so far as to suggest that he might take the sign of the cross himself, and it is in this period he pens Richard Siward’s defense, discussed below.

⁸² Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1954; repr. London: Penguin, 2002), 3:186–7. The strategic implications of Frederick’s success may have been less successful, see Runciman, *History*, 3:186–94.

I would, though physically feeble and frail, embark cheerfully and agreeably on a journey to the most remote lands of the Saracens to implant and promote the faith and charity of Christ, even to the shedding of my blood.⁸³

Grosseteste here accepts the mission of the crusades to promote faith and charity even if it results in his own injury or death. This letter reflects the same zeal for the crusading mission as exhibited in his letter consoling the Franciscans bereft by Adam Rufus's departure, written almost a decade earlier. For Grosseteste, the crusading movement is ideologically sound if it is to spread the gospel. This defense of the movement is reflected in his administrative and pastoral responsibilities governing those in his charge, best reflected by his relationship with Richard Siward.

Grosseteste and Richard Siward

With his appointment as bishop in 1235, Grosseteste became involved in the affairs of one knight of his diocese in particular, Richard Siward. By 1234, Siward was “something of a national hero” due to his cat-and-mouse-like relationship with Henry III and Henry's brother, Richard of Cornwall.⁸⁴ David Crouch, in a masterly account of Siward's riotous life aptly entitled *The Last Adventure of Richard Siward*, describes him as a “young Yorkshire thug” with a “brawling, homicidal streak.”⁸⁵ Christopher Tyerman describes Siward's life in

⁸³ Grosseteste, *Letter 49*, ed. Luard, 144–45; trans. Mantello and Goering, 172–4, at, 173: “In ultimas Saracenorum regiones pro fide Christi et caritate inserendis et promovendis, usque ad sanguinis effusionem, licet corpore infirmus sim et debilis, hilari et jocundo animo iter arriperem.”

⁸⁴ For a history of Richard Siward that is almost comically chaotic, see David Crouch, “The Last Adventure of Richard Siward,” in *Morgannwg: Transactions of the Glamorgan Local History Society* 35 (1991): 7–30 at 16. <http://hdl.handle.net/10107/1173761> [accessed November 28th, 2020]

⁸⁵ Crouch, “Adventure,” 7–8.

similarly colourful terms, engaged as he was in “a sort of high-class banditry” and “guerilla warfare.”⁸⁶ Despite this, Crouch writes, Siward had, by his death, reached “national, even international celebrity,” constantly falling in and out of favour with Henry III, thanks in part to his relationship with Richard Marshal, earl of Pembroke, his marriage to Philippa Basset, and his capricious relationship with Richard of Cornwall, the king’s brother.⁸⁷

The relationship between Cornwall and Siward was one of antagonism; Siward had raided Cornwall’s Buckinghamshire estates twice in 1233–34; Henry’s removal from Siward of various lordships and castles in 1235 granted to him only two years previously was likely an attempt to appease his brother.⁸⁸ According to Matthew Paris, Henry is reported to have said that he was banishing Siward from the kingdom because he would “rather incur his [Siward’s] anger than that of his brother.”⁸⁹ 1236 was a turbulent year for Siward; he carried one of the royal sceptres at the coronation of Queen Eleanor, took the mark of the cross in the same June ceremony as Cornwall, and was arrested in July and released a fortnight later.⁹⁰ Crouch implies that he only took up the cross to avoid an expulsion from England; Tyerman suggests it was an act of insurance against political persecution.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades, 1095–1588* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 226.

⁸⁷ Crouch, “Adventure,” 7–9, 24.

⁸⁸ Crouch, “Adventure,” 16–19.

⁸⁹ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 3:363; trans. Giles, 1:30: “eodem quoque tempore rex, eo quod non potuit Ricardum comitem fratrem suum cum Ricardo Suard in pacem reformare, eundem R[icardum] a regno suo quasi profugum relegavit, dicens se malle incurere suam quam fratris sui indignationem.” Translation taken from Giles, 1:30.

⁹⁰ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 3: 368–9; trans. Giles, 1:34. See also Crouch, “Adventure,” 18–19.

⁹¹ Crouch, “Adventure,” 19; Tyerman, *England*, 227.

Grosseteste's role in the adventures of Richard Siward began when he, with his "own, albeit unworthy hand" marked Siward, "a knight and parishioner of my [Grosseteste's] diocese," with the sign of the cross.⁹² According to Matthew Paris, Siward took the cross in June 1236; Grosseteste's letter was written in July of the same year, which suggests that it was this ceremony that Grosseteste presided over.⁹³ If this is the case, then Grosseteste may also have marked the sign of the cross on Richard of Cornwall, brother of Henry III and nephew of the celebrated crusader Richard I, as well as on Gilbert Marshal, Richard Marshal's brother and earl of Pembroke following his brother's death in rebellion against Henry III in 1234, on John le Scot, and on William Longespée II and others.⁹⁴ Grosseteste may also have overseen a similar ceremony in Northampton on November 12, 1239, a sort of re-do of the 1236 ceremony, again featuring Siward, Cornwall, and Gilbert Marshal—this would likely have been Cornwall's marking of the cross before leaving England for the Holy

⁹² Grosseteste, *Letter 29*, ed. Luard, 114–15; trans. Mantello and Goering, 141: "Richardum Syward militem parochianum meum, ministerio mei licet indigni cruce signatum."

⁹³ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 3:368–9; trans. Giles, 1:34.

⁹⁴ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 3:368–9; trans. Giles, 1:34. Paris confuses John le Scot with his uncle Ranulf Blundevil, who was earl of Chester and Lincoln and who died in 1232. See *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 3:369, n. 1 and 2; Noël Dunholm-Young, *Richard of Cornwall* (New York: Salloch, 1947), 32, contends this marking of the cross occurred at Winchester cathedral, based on the location of Parliament, as recorded in the *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 3:368–9.

Land in June of 1240.⁹⁵ Almost immediately after Grosseteste's conferment of the sign of the cross on Siward, Siward was arrested, on July 4, 1236, and he was released a fortnight later.⁹⁶

Crouch writes that "it seems very likely that the king had Siward taken into custody for no reason other than to get some relief from the complaints of Siward's enemies at court," and Richard of Cornwall's machinations in this can only be assumed.⁹⁷ However, Siward had (alongside Henry's brother and under the auspices of Grosseteste) taken the cross only a month prior, and Grosseteste was not the only one pressing Henry for his release.⁹⁸ Grosseteste's letter to Henry III in July of 1236 (*Letter 29*) is a staunch defense of crusader rights. He rebukes the king, warning him that "prelates who neglect to show justice to crusaders and their families should be severely punished."⁹⁹ He then reminds Henry of the sacrifice of crusader knights in general, that they:

⁹⁵ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 3:620; trans. Giles, 1:239. Tyerman suggests the 1236 ceremony was "an attempt to consolidate the alliance of the Marshals and Richard of Cornwall and to reconcile dissidents with elements at court. It was an exercise in expedient and symbolic compromise, which persisted at least until the oath of Northampton" in *England and the Crusades*, 103. For Cornwall's departure, see Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, 216.

⁹⁶ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 3:368–69; trans. Giles, 1:34; Crouch, "Adventure," 18–19.

⁹⁷ Crouch, "Adventure," 19.

⁹⁸ Crouch, "Adventure," 19.

⁹⁹ Grosseteste, *Letter 29*, ed. Luard, 114; trans. Mantello and Goering, 141: *quoque qui in exhibenda justitia cruce signatis et eorum familiis negligentes extiterint, graviter puniendos esse decernat.*"

By the very act of taking up of the cross, dedicate and consecrate themselves to defend the Christian faith and to fight against unbelief, even to the shedding of blood and to death itself.¹⁰⁰

The same rules that applied to church land and the burial of the dead applied to the crusaders themselves, Grosseteste argued. Because Siward had neither “profaned his consecration” (*prophanaverit sanctificationem*) nor had the opportunity to actually depart for the Holy Land, Henry III was implored to release him so that he could have the opportunity to carry out this role.¹⁰¹ It is here, in this letter to Henry on behalf of his parishioner Richard Siward, where Grosseteste describes crusaders with such esteem as men who have:

Been marked with the cross and thereby dedicated and consecrated for so important a ministry, for in this life nothing greater or more holy than this can be found.¹⁰²

Henry relented, and, two weeks after his arrest, Siward was freed.¹⁰³ Whether Grosseteste viewed Siward as a thug, a friend, or merely a parishioner for whom he was responsible, he was clearly passionate about his conferring upon the knight the sign of the cross and in securing Siward’s ability to carry out his oath, and he clearly held the crusading mission in the highest regard. Additionally, Siward’s relationship with the Marshals, with whom he

¹⁰⁰ Grosseteste, *Letter 29*, ed. Luard, 114–15; trans. Mantello and Goering, 141: “Attendentes, si placet, quod cruce signati per ipsam crucis assumptionem se devovent et sanctificant in defensionem fidei Christianae et infidelitatis oppugnationem usque ad sanguinis effusionem et mortem.”

¹⁰¹ Grosseteste, *Letter 29*, ed. Luard, 114–15; trans. Mantello and Goering, 142.

¹⁰² Grosseteste, *Letter 29* ed. Luard, 114–15; trans. Mantello and Goering, 141: “Quomodo licebit eidem potestati hominem crucis signatione devotum et sanctificatum in tantum ministerium, quo in vita ista non potest majus aut sanctius inveniri.”

¹⁰³ Crouch, “Adventure,” 19.

spent his youth, may have helped garner favour with the bishop; Grosseteste's letter (*Letter 6*) of adoration of and to Richard Marshal, discussed above, betrays a close relationship.¹⁰⁴ Given that Richard Marshal died from wounds incurred in battle in 1234, Grosseteste's *Letter 49* feels very personal.

Combined with his own exhortation of enthusiasm marred by ill health, *Letters 49* and *29* reflect a longstanding support of the mission, at least in theory, if not in practice, during the 1230s. In *Letter 49* Grosseteste clearly identifies the mission of the crusades as one of conversion and of preaching (*inserendis et promovendis*). It is described as a cheerful *journey (iter)* a *potential* consequence of which is injury or death. In *Letter 29*, Grosseteste's tone is more aggressive; crusaders are explicitly engaged in a *fight (oppugnationem)* against the infidels with the *inevitable* consequence of bloodshed and death. As with questions surrounding Francis's intentions, these letters call into question Grosseteste's own views on martyrdom. Christopher MacEvitt has suggested that "although the rule did not encourage martyrdom directly, it encouraged a disregard for the fate of the body...which we might consider the psychosocial building blocks of the martyr's perspective."¹⁰⁵ Though here is a glimpse into Grosseteste's views on martyrdom, through the lens of his support for the crusades, by the mid-1240s, his deliberations turn from the ideological to the political, bureaucratic, and administrative.

During these years, Grosseteste's relationship with Siward's sometime-antagonist Richard, earl of Cornwall, was, it seems, close. For all Grosseteste's famed criticism of

¹⁰⁴ Crouch, "Adventure," 8. By 1216 Siward was a knight in William Marshal II's household, who would become earl of Pembroke in 1219 following his father's death. William's brother Richard would inherit the title in 1231.

¹⁰⁵ Christopher MacEvitt, "Martyrdom and the Muslim World Through Franciscan Eyes," *The Catholic Historical Review* 97, no. 1 (2001): 1–23, at 8.

nepotism, he was disposed to offer Cornwall's young nephew, Roger of Meuland, subdeacon, as rector of North Luffenham, Rutland, as well as to the church of Frodingham, Lincolnshire, in June 1238.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, papal registers from 1238 and 1239 show Grosseteste as executor of Cornwall's will should he die on crusade.¹⁰⁷ This relationship, however, would be pushed to its limits during the later years of Grosseteste's episcopacy, when he became embroiled in the collection of vow redemptions relating to Cornwall's crusade.

1245–1253: Political Considerations

In 1247, Grosseteste wrote to the archdeacons of Lincoln (*Letter 132*).¹⁰⁸ This letter, written in response to one received from Innocent IV concerning Richard of Cornwall, reminds the archdeacons of important facts concerning the property of crusaders who die,

¹⁰⁶ *Robert Grosseteste as Bishop of Lincoln: The Episcopal Rolls, 1235–1253*, ed. and trans. Philippa M. Hoskin (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, for the Lincoln Record Society, 2015), §770 (p. 144); §1237 (p. 243); §1322 (p. 260); D. A. Carpenter, "Roger de Meuland" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/37908> [accessed March 21, 2021]. John of Easton, discussed above, is a witness to the Frodingham appointment §1322 (p. 260). Perhaps Meuland's appointment and later ineptitude contributed to Grosseteste's growing disdain for nepotism; as Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry later in life he received a "blistering letter of criticism" from Archbishop John Peckham in 1281, see Carpenter, "Roger de Meuland." Grosseteste's criticisms of inept churchmen (and churchmen who couldn't converse in the vernacular) can be found in Mantello and Goering, *Letter 72* (pp. 229–30), *Letter 131* (p. 453). See *Letter 128* (pp. 441–46) for Grosseteste's refusal to infer the Pope's nephew.

¹⁰⁷ *Calendar of entries in the Papal registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, ed. W. H. Bliss (London: H.M.S.O, 1893), 1:184–5. The executors were Grosseteste and the archbishops of Canterbury and York. This seems to repeat a similar entry that appears in May 1238. *Papal registers*, 1:170–1.

¹⁰⁸ Grosseteste, *Letter 132* to the archdeacons of Lincoln, August 1, 1247, trans. Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 454–58 (*Letter 132*). This letter does not appear in Luard's edition of Grosseteste's *Letters*, instead it can be found in *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 6:134–38.

subsidies to the Holy Land, plenary indulgences, and other information about the administration of funds collected for the Holy Land.¹⁰⁹ Christopher Maier uses this letter as evidence that Grosseteste was a “faithful servant of the pope in matters of the crusade,” giving the archdeacons detailed instructions on the collections of vow redemptions for both Richard of Cornwall’s crusade of 1240–41 as well as the one Louis IX was imminently to lead (the Seventh Crusade).¹¹⁰

However, the letter is void of any zeal for the crusading mission and is, instead, entirely administrative. Indeed, it shows the signs of someone who is wary of the reputation of crusading missions; he instructs the archdeacons to collect redemption payments “without causing scandal” (*sine scandalo*).¹¹¹ Maier writes that Grosseteste was “an ardent supporter of both the crusade and the mendicant orders,” but considering the enthusiasm for crusading that is evident in his earlier letters, its omission in *Letter 132* is telling.¹¹² The length of Grosseteste’s letter is reflective of the changing approach to vow redemptions. Christopher Tyerman notes that “administratively, the new system was cumbersome,” as the money was collected by papal agents—in this case, Grosseteste and Walter Cantilupe, bishop of Worcester—but stored under Diocesan authority.¹¹³ From the 1230s onwards, focus had shifted from the recruitment of men to the raising of money—money which was needed in a

¹⁰⁹ See Grosseteste, *Letter 132*, trans. Mantello and Goering, 455, n. 7.

¹¹⁰ Christopher Maier, *Preaching the Crusades: Mendicant Friars and the Cross in the Thirteenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 146–48.

¹¹¹ Grosseteste, *Letter 132*, trans. Mantello and Goering, 454–58, at 457. See also Maier, *Preaching*, 146–47. This letter is not in the Luard collection of Letters but rather is found in *Chronia majora*, ed. Luard, 6:134–38 (no. 71) at 137.47.

¹¹² Maier, *Preaching*, 147–48.

¹¹³ Tyerman, *England*, 106.

more centralized manner and in larger quantities, to be placed into the hands of military commanders.¹¹⁴ The purpose for this shift was to aid in logistics but a consequence was that collections took longer: The collection of redemptions for the earl of Cornwall's crusade lasted for twenty years, hence Grosseteste's letter in 1247, several years after Cornwall had returned.¹¹⁵ Tyerman describes Cantilupe as a "veteran of crusade preaching and fundraising in the late 1240s" who had taken the cross by 1249.¹¹⁶ Cantilupe and Grosseteste were evidently close.¹¹⁷

The disillusionment Grosseteste felt towards Franciscan involvement in the crusades by this point is readily seen in an event recorded by Matthew Paris. From 1235, Gregory IX employed more and more Franciscans and Dominicans to preach the crusades, and in 1247 two Franciscans arrived in Lincoln to raise funds.¹¹⁸ Grosseteste disdainfully chastised them and their mission as shameful and worthless (*inexaudibilis et inhonesta*) and sent them on their way to St. Albans.¹¹⁹ Matthew seems to foreshadow Grosseteste's criticisms at Lyons a few years later. In Matthew's account, he describes a bishop who was previously so enamoured by the Franciscans that he could even have considered taking the habit, yet the behavior of the two preachers in 1247 was so far removed from the ideals of St. Francis himself, he seems to justify Grosseteste's decision not to do so. While Grosseteste may have

¹¹⁴ Tyerman, *England*, 105–6.

¹¹⁵ Tyerman, *England*, 106.

¹¹⁶ Tyerman, *England*, 145 (quote), and 109.

¹¹⁷ Grosseteste, *Letter 113*, to the bishops of Winchester and Worcester, December 1244 or January 1245, trans. Mantello and Goering, *Letters*, 350 (*Letter 113*), is illustrative of their close friendship.

¹¹⁸ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 5:599–600.

¹¹⁹ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 5:600. The two are described as "monstruosam in habitu et gestu."

maintained his enthusiasm for those who left for the Holy Land, disillusionment with the bureaucratic process had clearly begun to seep in.

The collection of vow redemptions resulted in apparent friction between Grosseteste and Richard of Cornwall. In 1249–50, Adam Marsh begs Grosseteste to “settle by peaceful negotiation the dispute that has arisen between your bailiffs and those of the lord earl of Cornwall,” suggesting to Grosseteste that he write to the earl “prayerful and reasonable letters...until you are able to meet personally” after the coming Easter.¹²⁰ The dispute, it seems, was resolved quickly; in the spring of 1250, Grosseteste crossed over to France with the earl and a large retinue, although they did not return together; Richard returned in April, Grosseteste in September.¹²¹ In November 1251, Grosseteste led Mass at the dedication of the church of Hailes, founded by Richard of Cornwall after a particularly dangerous return from Gascony.¹²² Matthew Paris describes an elaborate dedication ceremony featuring Henry III and the Queen, “almost all” (*fere omnes*) the nobles and prelates of England, and over three

¹²⁰ Marsh, *Letter 21*, to Grosseteste, 1249–50, ed. and trans. Lawrence, *Letters*, 1:48–51 (*Letter 21*), quote at 50–1: “Ut quietaretur tractatu pacifico dissensio orta inter balliuos uestros et balliuos domini comitis Cornubie...Opportunum michi uidetur quod sine more dispendio scribatis domino comiti Cornubie deprecatorias, efficaces, rationabiles, supplices (litteras), ut ipsi placeat suspendere questionum discussiones inter uos et eundem pendentium, quousque certis die et loco ad hoc ipsum personaliter conuenire ualeatis, competenti tempore post instans Pascha.”

¹²¹ Dunholm-Young, *Richard of Cornwall*, 73–4 describes the “unusual magnificence” of this retinue leaving England. *Chronica maiora*, ed. Luard, 5:96–97; trans. Giles, 2:326. Grosseteste appeared before the Papal Curia on May 13th, 1250. See Southern, *Growth*, 276.

¹²² Marsh, *Letter 22*, to Grosseteste, November/December 1251, ed. and trans. Lawrence, *Letters*, 1:51–3 at 53 (*Letter 22*); *Chronica maiora*, ed. Luard, 5:262; trans. Giles, 2:464.

hundred soldiers, in front of whom Grosseteste chanted Mass at the great altar.¹²³ Richard seemingly held the bishop in such high regard that in 1255, two years after his death, he visited the tomb of “*sanctum Robertum*” on an apparent pilgrimage, according to the Burton chronicler.¹²⁴

Though Grosseteste was becoming increasingly disillusioned with the administration of the crusades and of the actions of crusaders both home and abroad, it has been suggested that a letter from Adam Marsh in early 1249 indicates the bishop’s enthusiastic support of their mission.¹²⁵ Addressed to Grosseteste, *Letter 25* refers to a scheme concocted, we are told, by Grosseteste himself, a “most advantageous and magnificent plan for the delivery of souls.”¹²⁶ Though the details are missing, we are told it was to involve Simon de Montford but that on account of Grosseteste’s “bodily weakness,” (*corporale imbecillitate*), this plan would likely not go ahead; Grosseteste was, after all, around 80 by this time. Considering Grosseteste had rejected an early crusading attempt, in 1239, detailed in *Letter 49* discussed above, because of how “physically feeble and frail” (*corpore infirmus sim et debilis*) he was, his physical health could only have declined even more by Marsh’s letter of 1249. Southern suggests that it was

¹²³ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 5:262; trans. Giles, 2:464. Paris writes “indeed, if I were to describe in full the grandeur of that solemn and festive meeting, I should be said to be exceeding the bounds of truth.”

¹²⁴ *Annales de Burton* in *Annales Monastici*, ed. Henry Luard, 5 vols. (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864–69), 1:183–500 at 344: “advenit itaque sub eodem tempore Ricardus comes Cornubiae, frater regis Henrici, ad eandem civitatem, peregrinationis causa ad sanctum Robertum; in cuius praesentia dignata est divina clementia diversa miracula operari.” See also Eric Kemp, “The Attempted Canonization of Robert Grosseteste,” in *Robert Grosseteste: Scholar and Bishop*, ed. D. A. Callus, 241–46 at 243.

¹²⁵ Marsh, *Letter 25*, to Grosseteste, ed. and trans. Lawrence, *Letters*, 1:58–63.

¹²⁶ “saluberrimo triumphalis magnificenti proposito liberandis animabus.” Marsh, *Letter 25*, ed. and trans. Lawrence, *Letters*, 1:59.

“some kind of Crusade and preaching mission,” while C. H. Lawrence, the editor of Marsh’s letters, suggests it could have been a plan to rescue Christian captives from either the east or from Muslims in the Holy Land.¹²⁷ Given Grosseteste’s self-admitted frailty and abandonment of any notion of crusading mission in *Letter 49*, an entire decade prior to the *propositum* raised by Marsh in 1249, combined with his disillusionment of the practicalities of crusading detailed above, I am inclined to believe the latter plan had little to do with the crusades themselves.

Of high concern for Grosseteste, throughout his life, was the relationship between the papacy and the crown. In 1245–46, Grosseteste deferred to the pope over Henry III in a financial dispute.¹²⁸ This dispute between Grosseteste and Henry over the king’s involvement in the crusades is epitomized by an account in Matthew Paris’s *Chronica majora*, occurring in October 1252 and concerning a tithe for a crusade to be undertaken by the King, possibly in response to the dramatic failure of Louis IX during the Seventh Crusade.¹²⁹ When Henry III confirmed that he had papal authority to raise a tithe for three years to pay for his crusade to the Holy Land, Grosseteste and other prelates (and Matthew Paris) responded with shock; Matthew has Grosseteste announce that, “for my part, I say without hesitation, I oppose this

¹²⁷ See Marsh, *Letter 25*, ed. and trans. Lawrence, 1:59, n. 8. Southern, *Growth*, 289–90.

¹²⁸ William Lunt, *Financial Relations of the Papacy with England, to 1327* (Cambridge MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1939), 216–19; Maier, *Preaching*, 148.

¹²⁹ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 5:324–46, trans. Giles, 2:518–19. See also Pantin, “Papacy,” 193. Henry’s taking of the Cross took place whilst Grosseteste was travelling to Lyons; Dunholme-Young writes that “on March 6th Henry III took the Cross with great ceremony and quite obviously with no intention of going abroad” in *Richard of Cornwall*, 73.

injurious contribution,” declaring it no better than a “tyrannical extortion of money by the French king.”¹³⁰ Matthew writes that the other bishops present agreed with Grosseteste.¹³¹

Considering Grosseteste’s reaction to the crusading tithes announced in April, 1250, the one which Grosseteste included in his list of abuses to the Papal Curia in Lyons a month later, it is not out of the realm of possibility that his reaction in 1252 was along the lines Matthew describes.¹³² Despite these quarrels with the papacy over abuses and the crown over financial backing for the king’s “extortions,” Grosseteste was neither anti-papal nor anti-authority; Goering describes his actions as “pastoral diplomacy,” suggesting that they were specific accusations of specific abuses, not wide-sweeping condemnations of papal or royal authority.¹³³ His diminishing enthusiasm for the crusades arose from not just having to administer the complicated collection of Cornwall’s vow redemptions and the financial considerations between Church and state, but also from the information received from Adam Marsh on the failure of the Seventh Crusade, as well as the notorious and troublesome actions and abuses of crusaders more generally.

The final piece of evidence that suggests Grosseteste had, by the time of his death, become utterly disaffected with the crusades, particularly with their expense, the associated indulgences, and the potential for corruption, comes from Matthew Paris’s “deathbed” speech.¹³⁴ Grosseteste supposedly laments at one point that:

¹³⁰ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 5:326; trans. Giles, 2:519: “qualem finem sortita est tyrannica regis Francorum extorsio pecunialis....pro me dico voce libera, huic injuriosae contributioni contradico.”

¹³¹ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 5:326–27, trans. Giles, 2:520–21.

¹³² See n.17 above.

¹³³ Goering, “Curia,” 270.

¹³⁴ Grosseteste, *Letter 132*, trans. Mantello and Goering, 454–58. Grosseteste’s “deathbed speech” is reported in the *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 5:400–7; trans. Giles, 3:44–50.

We know that the pope has enjoined on the Preacher and Minorite brethren to attend the dying, to question them carefully, and urgently persuade them to make their wills for the benefit, and to the succour of the Holy Land, and to take on them the cross, so that if they recover from their illness those brethren may cheat them out of their substance; or if they die, so much may be extorted out of their executors.¹³⁵

While Mathew may have been projecting his own anti-crusade, or anti-papal, rhetoric onto the bishop, Richard Southern seems to suggest that Grosseteste *could* have said the speech reported by Matthew Paris, though perhaps not verbatim, viewing it merely as an extension of his dramatic 1250 Lyons speech and 1253 letter rebuking the nepotistic appointment of the pope's nephew.¹³⁶ It is also entirely in keeping with the event reported by Matthew in 1247, in which the bishop rebuked the two Franciscans sent by the pope and sent them on their way to St. Albans instead. Considering the slow decline in support of the crusades that this paper has traced, neither Grosseteste's vision in the *Lanercost chronicle* nor his deathbed speech reported by Matthew Paris would be out of character.

Conclusion

Like Francis, Grosseteste's gradual disillusionment with the crusades is evident. Elements of both Francis' vision of Damietta's fall and his dialogue appear in Grosseteste's corpus. Grosseteste's administrative and pastoral responsibilities, as well as his relationship with

¹³⁵ *Chronica majora*, ed. Luard, 5:405; trans. Giles, 3:48: "Praeterea, novimus Papam fratribus Praedicatoribus et Minoribus praecepisse, ut morituris assistentes, quos inquirent diligenter, persuadeant urgerent ut condant testamenta sua ad commudum et subsidium Terrae Sanctae, et crucem assumant, ut cum convaluerint substantiolas eorum emungant, vel si moriantur ab executoribus tantum [recipiatur] vel extorqueatur."

¹³⁶ Southern, *Growth*, 291–95.

individual crusaders, kept him informed of the devastating realities of crusading, contributing to this loss of enthusiasm and eventual opposition to the movement. For both, the opportunity for peaceful encounter and conversation with Muslim forces had been lost to the onslaught of violence and corruption.

Some details of the accounts by Matthew Paris, or the *Lanercost* author, may be embellishments, posthumously added to the bishop's life in order to highlight more a distaste for the papacy than support for the bishop. In spite of these flourishes, his 1247 Huntingdon vision and his deathbed speech are not so extraordinary as to warrant their dismissal; as this paper has shown, it is possible to show an evolution of his own thought regarding the crusading movement. It may not be a neat, prescribed chronology, and at times it appears contradictory, but the crusades clearly occupied a large aspect of Grosseteste's own duties as bishop. It should be reiterated that any traces of a Franciscan influence on Grosseteste's corpus discussed above are tentative at best. His *Château* makes no overt reference to Damietta, his *scuta* may simply be useful mnemonic devices, and though the content of the *Dialogue* would suggest a composition in the 1230s, during a time of high appreciation for the crusading movement and his other works, it may not have been undertaken until the mid-1240s.

On the one hand, his support for the crusading movement does seem to decline from its peak in the late 1230s to embitterment by the 1250s. We can read, at the turn of the 1230s, his enthusiastic defense of Adam Rufus's journey to the Holy Land (*Letter 2*), and his 1236 description in *Letter 29* is clear — there is “nothing greater or more holy.” He presides over ceremonies of crusaders taking the cross in June 1236 and November 1239. His 1237 letter to Otto of Tonengo explicitly refers to the shedding of blood again, this time his own, if he were to embark on a journey to “promote the faith and charity of Christ” in the East, a journey he would “embark cheerfully and agreeably on” if he were not so frail (*Letter 49*). In this time

too he pens his *Château*, with potential allusions to Damietta, and (possibly) his translation of the *Dialogue*, and his letters are filled with references to the *spiritual warfare* and military analogies. He was close friends with Adam Marsh and Richard Rufus, and had relationships with Richard of Cornwall and Richard of Siward, all of whom took up the cross. By 1247, however, we have descriptions by Matthew Paris of Grosseteste admonishing two Friars who had come to raise funds, and his considerations become more administrative, such as those of vow redemptions in 1247 (*Letter 132*), his speech at Lyons in 1250, and the account of Matthew Paris in October 1252, in the wake of the Seventh Crusade's failure. It thus seems unlikely that the plan referred to in 1249 (*Letter 25* from Adam Marsh) is crusade-related.

In contrast, it is possible that Grosseteste's support for the crusades never waned; rather simply his frustration with the political practicalities increased. The question then arises: what *were* the crusades to Grosseteste? There is little admonishment of the violence associated with the mission; instead, he accepts it as a necessary action in order to spread Christianity and to save souls; the ultimate fulfilment, perhaps, of the *cura animarum*. Grosseteste's concern is not necessarily anti-crusade; his exclamation that the crusaders were fighting for the "rights of God" seems to suggest his support. Rather, Grosseteste's concern is twofold: first, the behavior of the crusaders and, second, the extortions of the Church in the *name* of the crusading ideal. He does not, however, seem particularly opposed to the crusades themselves.

In Brother Hubert's *Life of Robert Grosseteste*, penned upon the death of Grosseteste, the bishop is lauded for his multiple and varied accomplishments.¹³⁷ Considering Grosseteste's enthusiasm for analogies of spiritual warfare, particularly in his early letters, and his staunch defense of the Church against abuse and corruption, two lines in particular are fitting:

¹³⁷ *Frater Hubertus*, ed. Thomson, 246–51. There is a partial translation in McEvoy, *Philosophy*, 41–2.

Accinctus zeli gladio desevit in hostes

*Ecclesie, spernit dampna, minasque necem.*¹³⁸

(Girded with the sword of zeal, he launched himself upon the Church's enemies;

he was heedless of injuries, threats, and death itself.)¹³⁹

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¹³⁸ *Frater Hubertus*, ed. Thomson, 247.

¹³⁹ Translated by McEvoy, *Philosophy*, 41.