

## = De Iniusta Vexacione Willelmi Episcopi Primi =

De Iniusta Vexacione Willelmi Episcopi Primi or Of the Unjust Persecution of the Bishop William I ( sometimes translated as The Unjust Harassment of the First Bishop William ) is a late 11th @-@ century historical work detailing the trial of William de St @-@ Calais , a medieval Norman Bishop of Durham from 1081 to 1096 . It is the first surviving detailed account of an English trial before the king , and as such is an important source for historians .

The work consists of three sections , an introduction , a central section that details the trial itself , and a conclusion . The introduction and conclusion summarise St @-@ Calais ' career before and after the trial . Although the authenticity of the main account has been challenged in the past , most historians consider it a contemporary record of the trial . Six manuscripts containing the work survive , and it was first printed in 1655 , with other editions , including translations , appearing after that .

## = Background =

The trial De Iniusta details took place at Salisbury in November 1088 , and concerned St @-@ Calais ' equivocal actions in the revolt against King William II 's rule that had taken place earlier in the year . The work is one of the primary sources for the early part of King William II 's reign , and was probably compiled from notes taken by the bishop 's subordinates and then worked into a tractate that was designed to present the bishop 's case in the best light . It was probably composed during the 1090s when St @-@ Calais was engaged in an effort to regain the favour of King William after his return from the sentence of exile he received at the trial .

This work is the earliest surviving detailed contemporary report of an English state @-@ trial . As such , it is an important source for how the English kings ' curia regis , or king 's court , functioned when it dealt with legal cases .

## = Trial =

De Iniusta states that St @-@ Calais was brought before the king and royal court for trial on 2 November 1088 , at Salisbury , the king having confiscated the bishop 's lands before the trial . At the trial St @-@ Calais held that as a bishop he could not be tried in a secular court , and he refused to answer the accusations . Lanfranc , Archbishop of Canterbury , presented the king 's case , declaring that the confiscated lands had been held as fiefs , and thus St @-@ Calais could be tried as a vassal , not as a bishop . St @-@ Calais objected , and continued to refuse to answer the allegations . After numerous conferences and discussions , the court held that St @-@ Calais could be tried as a vassal in a feudal court . St @-@ Calais then appealed to Rome , but his request was rejected by the king and the judges . Those judging the case held that because St @-@ Calais never answered the formal accusation , and because he appealed to Rome , his fief , or the lands he held as a bishop , was forfeit .

During the course of the trial , Lanfranc is said to have stated that the court was " trying you not in your capacity as bishop , but in regard to your fief ; and in this way we judged the bishop of Bayeux in regard to his fief before the present king 's father , and that king did not summon him to that plea as bishop but as brother and earl . " Unlike the later case of Thomas Becket , St @-@ Calais received little sympathy from his fellow bishops . Most of the bishops and barons that judged the case seem to have felt that the appeal to Rome was made to avoid having to answer an accusation that St @-@ Calais knew was true . The final judgement was only reached after the king lost his temper and exclaimed : " Believe me , bishop , you 're not going back to Durham , and your men aren 't going to stay at Durham , and you 're not going to go free , until you release the castle . "

## = Contents and authenticity =

De Iniusta is actually a composite work . The account of the trial itself , often termed the Libellus , is the central part of the work , and is probably the original account . To the Libellus was added an

introduction which summarises St @-@ Calais ' career prior to the trial . A conclusion which relates the bishop 's life after the trial is appended to the end of the work . The introduction and conclusion are often referred to as the Vita , or Life .

The historian H. S. Offler in 1951 felt that the Libellus was not a contemporary account of the trial , and instead dated from the second quarter of the 12th century and was produced at Durham . More recent scholars , including W. M. Aird , Frank Barlow , and Emma Mason have concluded that the work is indeed a contemporary record of the trial . Barlow bases his belief in the authenticity on the level of detail and the fact that the account lacks all knowledge of events outside the court , and explains that Offler 's concerns can be explained by the late date for all the manuscripts , which allowed scribal errors to creep in .

One of the reasons the account 's authenticity has been questioned is the fact that it claims St @-@ Calais was knowledgeable in canon law . Offler doubted that canon law had penetrated to England to any great degree in 1088 . The historian Mark Philpott , however , argues that St @-@ Calais was knowledgeable in canon law , since he owned a copy of one of the basis of canon law , the False Decretals . The bishop 's manuscript of the Decretals still survives .

Historians are agreed that the introduction and conclusion were added by a different author than that of the Libellus . Who that was , however , is open to debate . The historian C. W. David felt that it was based on the work of the chronicler Symeon of Durham , which thus made a credible date for the creation sometime between 1109 and 1129 . David also felt that the Vita was used by a later work of Symeon 's , the Historia Regum . Offler , however , felt that although Symeon knew of the Libellus , there was no evidence that he used the Vita , which would leave the author of the Vita unclear .

= = Manuscripts and printed editions = =

In manuscripts , the De Iniusta normally appears alongside Symeon of Durham 's Historiae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis . There are at least six manuscripts of the De Iniusta , with the earliest being Bodleian MS Fairfax 6 , probably dating from about 1375 . The others are Bodleian MS Laud misc . 700 folios 66 ? 74v , Hales MS 114 folios 63 ? 75v ( although this is missing the introduction and part of the conclusion ) , Cotton MS Claudius D IV folios 48 ? 54 ( likewise missing the introduction and parts of the conclusion ) , Harleian MS 4843 folios 224 ? 231 , and Durham Bishop Cosins Library MS V ii 6 folio 88 ? 98 .

The first printed edition of the De Iniusta appeared in the first volume of William Dugdale 's Monasticon Anglicanum published between 1655 . It has also been published as part of the collected works of Symeon of Durham , edited by Thomas Arnold in two volumes of the Rolls Series published in 1882 ? 1885 . A translation of the work appeared in Joseph Stevenson 's The Church Historians of England , published between 1853 and 1858 ; specifically in volume iii , part ii . A more recent translation appeared in the English Historical Documents series , volume ii .