

10-1967

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Citation

Schmandt, Raymond H. "The Election and Assassination of Albert Louvain, Bishop of Liège, 1191-92." *Speculum* 42.4 (1967): 639-60. Print.

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THE ELECTION AND ASSASSINATION OF ALBERT OF LOUVAIN, BISHOP OF LIÈGE, 1191–92

BY RAYMOND H. SCHMANDT

IN their broad outlines, the relations between Emperor Henry VI and the bishops of his realm differed only in degree from what they had been under Barbarossa. Henry relied heavily on the ecclesiastical princes, and they responded to his needs. Under Henry VI bishops are seen performing the customary *servitia* of supplying food and shelter during the emperor's visits to their cities; attending court; accompanying their lord throughout Germany and Italy; filling high offices of state; executing diplomatic missions; and joining in the emperor's crusade and military campaigns. Occasionally Henry encountered episcopal opposition and defiance, but normally the churchmen cooperated with him in his political endeavors. This was not an accident. Rather, such close collaboration resulted from Henry VI's policy of careful control over elections to the episcopal sees, so that men upon whom he could rely and whom he could trust secured these important offices and their resources.¹

Forty-two episcopal elections occurred in German dioceses during the reign of Henry VI.² Information is not extant for assessing the degree of his influence over all forty-two of these elections, and the fact that he spent nearly half of his reign in Italy reduced the opportunities for direct intervention. Also, ten elections occurred in Sees such as Kammin, Brandenburg, Gurk, and Olmütz where the Empire had no significant interests to safeguard or which lay under the proprietary jurisdiction of another prince or bishop. Subtracting these ten, we have thirty-two elections where Henry VI might be expected to have been concerned;

Note: In its original form this paper was read at the Third Biennial Conference on Medieval Studies at Western Michigan University, 18 March 1966.

¹ For the literature on Henry VI, see Dahlmann-Waitz, *Quellenkunde zur deutschen Geschichte*, 10th edition now in press (Stuttgart, 1966-). The only significant work in English is Chapter XIV, "The Emperor Henry VI," by Austin Lane Poole, in volume v of *The Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 1926), 454-480. The following were especially useful for the present essay: Theodor Toeche, *Kaiser Heinrich VI.* (Leipzig, 1867; reprint Darmstadt, 1965), in the series "Jahrbücher der deutschen Geschichte," which is the only full-length biography of its subject; Hermann Bloch, *Forschungen zur Politik Kaiser Heinrichs VI. in den Jahren 1191-1194* (Berlin, 1892); Conrad Trautmann, *Heinrich VI. und der Lütticher Bischofsmord* (diss. Jena, 1912); and Joseph Heinrich, "Kaiser Heinrich VI. und die Besetzung der deutschen Bistümer von seiner Kaiserkrönung bis zur Eroberung Siziliens (April 1191 bis Ende 1194)," *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte*, 51 (1956), 189-227.

² This calculation is based on two judgments: the number of episcopal sees that can properly be called "German," and the length of Henry VI's reign. Regarding the latter, I calculate from 11 May 1189, the date of Barbarossa's departure from Regensburg on crusade, since Henry assumed effective control of the government at that time, to 28 September 1197, the date of Henry's death. By "German" bishoprics I mean, as a working definition, those forty-six sees that were ethnically or politically normally German at this time. This group consists of the six metropolitan sees of Mainz, Cologne, Trier, Bremen, Salzburg, and Magdeburg, with all their suffragans, plus Basel, although ecclesiastically under the Burgundian archbishop at Besançon, and Cambrai, which lay within the archdiocese of Reims but whose incumbent held the rank of *Reichsfürst*.

his intervention, direct or indirect, can actually be demonstrated in twelve, or thirty-seven per cent.³

Geographically, Lower Lorraine attracted much attention because of the six elections there between 1191 and 1194: three at Liège, two at Cologne, and one at Cambrai. In all elections in Lower Lorraine, the pattern that emerges when the details are examined is that of an unremitting struggle between coalitions of the local nobility, each regarding the episcopal Sees as lucrative prizes in their dynastic politics, with the emperor intervening more or less decisively on behalf of whichever faction seemed best for the empire.

At the beginning of the final decade of the twelfth century, the chief figures in this region were Archbishop Philip of Cologne (1167–1191), Count Philip of Flanders (1168–1191), Duke Henry I of Brabant (1190–1235), and Count Baldwin V of Hainaut (1171–1195). Count Philip, however, departed with the Third Crusade and died under the walls of Acre, while the Archbishop accompanied Henry VI into Italy and succumbed to malaria. But Henry of Brabant and Baldwin of Hainaut remained very much alive and were constantly at odds with one another.⁴ Enjoying the full confidence of Emperor Henry, Baldwin's star was in the ascendant. Then on 5 August 1191, Rudolf of Zähringen, bishop of Liège, died near Freiburg-im-Breisgau while en route home from the Holy Land. Smarting under a pair of recent set-backs, Duke Henry of Brabant saw an opportunity to recoup his prestige in the imminent election at Liège.⁵

For the story of the Liège election of 1191, two excellent sources are extant. On the one hand we have the *Vita Alberti episcopi Leodiensis*, the biography of Bishop Albert by an anonymous author whom the editor of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* text identified as Abbot Werrich of Lobbes, a close companion of the bishop. This identification has since been challenged, and opinion now attributes the *Vita* to an anonymous monk of Lobbes who probably wrote at Werrich's behest from material supplied by the abbot.⁶ The date of composition is 1194 or early 1195. While fundamentally a panegyric for the murdered prelate, the *Vita* is generally accurate, quite detailed, and vividly written.

³ For the limited time span under consideration in his article, Joseph Heinrich's study, cited above, is very useful.

⁴ For the political background, cf. Henri Pirenne, *Histoire de Belgique*, Vol. II, 3rd ed. (Bruxelles, 1922); George Smets, *Henri I Duc de Brabant 1190–1235* (Bruxelles, 1908); L. König, "Die Politik des Grafen Baldwin V. von Hennegau," *Bulletin de la Commission Royale d'Histoire de Belgique*, LXXV (1905), 195–428. The most recent treatment: Jacques Falmagne, *Baudouin V, Comte de Hainaut 1150–1195* (Montreal, 1966), contributes little that is new and in fact contains miscellaneous errors on small points pertinent to this paper.

⁵ At the diet at Schwäbisch-Hall on 24 September 1190, Duke Henry, whose father had died on 10 August, failed to block Henry VI's bestowal of the rank of *Reichsfürst* on Count Baldwin of Hainaut, along with the title of Margrave of Namur, whose Count, Henry the Blind, had relinquished control to Baldwin in 1186. At the same time the diet rendered a verdict restricting the jurisdiction of the duke of Brabant, who still used the title duke of Lorraine, and who tried to extend his dominion on this ancient basis.

⁶ *Vita Alberti episcopi Leodiensis*, ed. I. Heller, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, xxv (Berlin, 1880), 139–168. For a thorough critique see C. Darimont, "Etude critique sur la *Vita Alberti*," *Bulletin de la Société d'Art et d'Histoire du diocèse de Liège*, xxxii (1931).

The second major source, the *Chronicon Hanoniense* of Gislebert of Mons, chancellor of Count Baldwin V of Hainaut, is also an eye-witness account of many of the events it describes. Gislebert's narrative, composed within a very few years after 1196, is an historiographical gem because of the insight it provides into the workings of the feudal government of Hainaut. The author wrote carefully and honestly but of course from the viewpoint of his employer the count. Since Baldwin V became one of Albert's opponents, Gislebert's chronicle gives the story from the opposite side to that of the *Vita*. Thus the two chief sources act as a check on each other.⁷ Lesser contemporary accounts supplement these two with incidental but significant comments.

The bishopric of Liège, with its cathedral church of St Lambert, comprised seven collegiate churches and thirty parish churches, four abbeys, and numerous monasteries. The chapter numbered fifty-nine clerics from all the important families of the region. Among the bishop's vassals were the dukes of Brabant and Limburg, the counts, now margraves, of Namur, the count of Hainaut, and the count of Loos.⁸ It was no wonder, then, that when 8 September 1191 arrived, the date set for the episcopal election, the streets of Liège were so crowded with princes and their retainers that, as reported by a witness to the scene, "the inhabitants of the city believed that they were undergoing a siege. . . ." The *Vita* gives the following account of the election:

Albert the archdeacon of Liège, brother of Duke Henry of Lotharingia (Brabant), was elected successor to Bishop Rudolf of Liège. Although all the other archdeacons, clergy, and people of the city and the princes of the land consented to his election, Count Baldwin of Hainaut alone opposed it. . . . When the rest elected Albert the duke's brother, he chose Albert, brother of the count of Rethel, his relative, archdeacon and chief provost of the church of Liège. . . . Therefore this Albert with a few canons who were intimates of his and with Count Baldwin, opposed the already-elected Albert of Liège.¹⁰

This account stresses Count Baldwin's role as organizer of the opposition to the Archdeacon Albert of Louvain, as the brother of the Duke of Brabant was called. Despite the sentiments of the great majority of the electors, the author of the *Vita* insists, the count somehow contrived to induce a handful of canons to vote for the Provost Albert of Rethel. Elsewhere the anonymous biographer credits

⁷ The best edition of Gislebert is by Leon Vanderkindere (Bruxelles, 1904), prepared for the Commission Royale d'Histoire de Belgique, which is the edition used in this paper. An older edition is that by G. H. Pertz in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores*, XXI (Berlin, 1869), 490–601.

⁸ Cf. Edouard de Moreau, *Histoire de l'Église en Belgique*, vols. II and III (Bruxelles, 1940–1945), *passim*, and E. de Marneffe, *Tableau chronologique des Dignitaires de Saint-Lambert*, cited in Smets, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁹ *Lamberti Parvi Annales S. Jacobi Leodiensi*, MGH SS., XVI, 650: "tanta frequentia populorum . . . ut cives urbis crederent se esse obsessos . . ."

¹⁰ *Vita Alberti*, p. 139: "Radulpho Leodiensi episcopo successor eligitur Albertus Leodiensis archidiaconus, frater Henrici Lotharingie ducis. Cuius electioni cum ceteri omnes archidiaconi, clerus et populus civitatis et principes terre consentirent, solus Balduino comes Hayonensis contradicit . . . ceteris Albertum, fratrem ducis, eligentibus, ipse Albertum eligebat, fratrem comitis Reiteste, cognatum suum, ecclesie Leodiensis archidiaconum et majorum prepositum. . . . Hic ergo Albertus cum parvis canonicis familiaribus suis et comite Balduino se aversum opponit electo Leodiensi Alberto. . . ."

Albert of Louvain with forty votes against four or five for Albert of Rethel, and in another place with fifty-five.¹¹

Gislebert of Mons probably attended the election with his count. His facts agree with the *Vita*, but he frankly describes the election as a power struggle between the lords of Brabant and Hainaut. Since Albert of Louvain's chances of election rested primarily on his relative's influence, the count of Hainaut, according to Gislebert, was justified in trying to protect his interests by electioneering for his own candidate. Usually very precise in his information, Gislebert kept a discreet silence about the number of votes won by each of the two canons.¹²

Of the minor sources, all but one treat Albert of Louvain as the legitimate bishop-elect. For example, the Anchin continuator of Sigibert of Gembloux writes that the archdeacon was elected by "the more just, wiser, and larger faction."¹³ The Liègois chronicler, Lambert the Little, matter-of-factly describes the political struggle, observing that Count Baldwin deliberately fomented discord to throw the election into the imperial court and thus frustrate the duke.¹⁴ Only the Cologne chronicle entertains any doubts, and its reason was the pressure exercised on the canons by the duke of Brabant.¹⁵

The younger of the two candidates, Archdeacon Albert, was the twenty-five year old brother of Duke Henry I of Brabant, and nephew of both Duke Henry III of Limburg and Count Albert III of Dagsburg. As a child he had been dedicated to the service of the church, and his career can be traced in the charters of the cathedral of St Lambert through the positions of student, canon, provost, and archdeacon, and up to the ecclesiastical rank of sub-deacon, his order in 1191. The documents reveal him as rather rash and a bit headstrong, with some reservations about his clerical vocation. When news of the fall of Jerusalem in 1187 reached Liège, Albert resigned his offices, took the cross, and had himself knighted, only to be restored to ecclesiastical life the next year by Cardinal Henry of Albano, the pope's preacher of the crusade. From then until 1191 Albert became

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 142–143.

¹² *Chronicon Hanoniense*, pp. 257–258: "Congregato autem capitulo Leodiensi, pars quedam Albertum, ducis Lovaniensis fratrem, ordine subdyaconum, ipsius ecclesie archidyaconum, in viribus ducis Lovaniensis elegit; pars vero quedam dominum Albertum, comitis Retensis fratrem, comitis Hanoniensis consobrinum, ipsius ecclesie majorem prepositum et archidyaconum, ordine dyaconum, elegit. . . . Ducis autem Lovaniensis frater Albertus, in fratris sui ducis Lovaniensis, et avunculi sui ducis de Lemborch et ejus filiorum, et patris sui comitis Alberti de Danborch, spem suam posuerat. Comes autem Hanoniensis nolens illum supra se posse dominari, cum cujus proximam rancorem semper habebat, pro consobriano suo Alberto de Retest, viro maturiore sed pusillanimi, laborabat. . . ." *Ibid.*, p. 269: "Alberto autem de Retest cum sua licet minore parte resistente. . . ."

¹³ *Sigiberti Gemblacensis Continuatio Aquicinctina*, *MGH SS.*, vi, 429: "justior pars, sanior et multiplicior. . . ." Most of the lesser accounts ignore or supply virtually no data about Albert of Rethel, who very quickly dropped out of sight. Other chronicles devoting attention to this dispute will be cited *infra*.

¹⁴ *Annales S. Jacobi Leodiensi*, 650: "Siquidem dux Lovaniensis Henricus collectis fautoribus, fratrem preponere volebat. Comes vero Haiensis omnino contradicens, ut appellationem ad regalem audientiam faceret, Albertum prepositum compulit."

¹⁵ *Chronica Regia Coloniensis, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*, ed. George Waitz (Hanover, 1880), p. 153: "suffragio cognatorum contra morem ecclesiasticum armata manu intronatur." Cf. also p. 155.

increasingly active in the chapter's affairs. No one seems to have shown concern about the fact that he had not yet attained the canonical age of thirty when his colleagues selected him for the episcopate.¹⁶

The second candidate, the Provost Albert of Rethel, brother of the reigning Count Manasses III of Rethel, is contemptuously described in the *Vita Alberti* as "a stupid and uneducated fellow, who had little to recommend him except his family."¹⁷ Even the less biased Gislebert of Mons found little to say on behalf of his lord's choice beyond the non-committal remark that he was "an older man." Yet as chief provost and deacon, Albert of Rethel held a position of responsibility, having administered the diocese during Bishop Rudolf's crusade. Nevertheless, his family was his major asset: he was the uncle of Constance, the wife of Emperor Henry VI. Gislebert says that "the emperor and empress had often asked the count of Hainaut about this Albert, and they urged him to have him elected in some manner or other if the bishopric of Liège ever became vacant."¹⁸ Both Alberts were little more than tools of their kinsmen, to whom the number of votes each received in the election represented only a measure of their own political strength.

Since Liège was a suffragan of the archdiocese of Cologne, that See naturally became a matter of concern to the Liège disputants. Archbishop Philip's cordial relations with Henry VI were well known, and the duke of Brabant, with no influence at the imperial court, at once gave thought to securing the archbishop's backing for his brother in order to counter the provost's connections. On the very evening of the Liège election, however, news arrived of the archbishop's death. Without delay the dukes of Brabant and Limburg set out for Cologne. It was now a question of dominating a second election to assure the success of their initial intervention.

At Cologne on 10 September a provost of the church of St Cassius in Bonn, who was also a canon of Liège, Lothar of Hochstaden by name, won the chapter's approval in a hasty election. The Hochstaden family, holding a fief on the left side of the lower Rhine in the present *Kreis* Grevenbroich, stood high in the emperor's confidence; at this very moment Lothar's brother Dietrich was demonstrating his devotion to the Hohenstaufen cause in the Italian campaign. Hence the duke of

¹⁶ Cf. S. Bormans and E. Schoolmeesters (eds.), *Cartulaire de l'Église Saint-Lambert de Liège*, 1 (Bruxelles, 1893), pp. 97 ff.; *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 199. The authors of two short modern biographies describe Albert's early life: Édouard de Moreau, *Albert de Louvain Prince Evêque de Liège*, "Collection Saints de nos Provinces" (Bruxelles, 1946), pp. 23-30 (but Moreau's chronology is incorrect by one full year), and B. de Marmol, *St Albert de Louvain*, "Collection Les Saints" (Paris, 1922), pp. 10-14. There also exists a Flemish biography which I have not seen: J. M. Meerbergen, *Sint Albertus van Leuven* (Anvers, 1935).

¹⁷ *Vita Alberti*, p. 139: "hominem stolidum et illiteratum, cui parum gratie preter genus erat." P. 141: "hominem vanum, rudem et indoctum. . ."

¹⁸ *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 258: "pro quo etiam Alberto imperator et imperatrix comitem Hanoniensem sepius rogaverant et monuerant, ut si quandoque episcopatus Leodiensis vacaret, illum quocumque modo faceret elegi." Albert of Rethel was born ca 1150, youngest son of Count Gonthier of Rethel and Beatrice of Namur. Albert's sister Beatrice married King Roger II of Sicily, and their child was Constance, future wife of Henry VI. Through his mother's sister Alix, Albert was also a cousin of Baldwin V of Hainaut.

Brabant could only regard Lothar's election with dismay. By threats of some sort which the sources do not explain, he persuaded Lothar to decline the election.¹⁹ The canons then chose Bruno, an elderly cleric who belonged to the very important local family of the counts of Berg.²⁰ Evidently a compromise or at best a delaying tactic, this result at least did not hurt the position of the Brabantine faction, both the duke and the bishop-elect of Liège.

During these weeks both parties despatched envoys to the emperor to present their respective accounts of the Liège election. Gislebert of Mons, representing Albert of Rethel, journeyed to Italy as Count Baldwin's envoy, in company with Walcher, a candidate in yet another disputed election that had just occurred at Cambrai. Walcher was also a protégé of Baldwin of Hainaut.²¹ Gislebert records meeting the emperor at Rieti towards the end of September, and he found an encouraging reception. Henry VI declared himself favorable to both of Count Baldwin's clerics, but asserted that he could not act without the cooperation of the princes of the realm. He instructed the envoys and candidates to come to court during the winter when he would confirm his promised support. The Brabantine envoys on behalf of Albert of Louvain received similar advice later.²²

At Hagenau at Christmas 1191, Emperor Henry decided the Cambrai dispute.

¹⁹ *Catalogus archiepiscoporum Coloniensium, Continuatio II auctore Caesario Heisterbacensi, MGH SS*, xxiv, 345: "Nam cum Lotharius Bonnensis prepositus canonice fuisset electus, prodito consilio, sic propinquorum Brunonsis, virorum potentum, minis est territus, ut electioni in se facte in capitulo renunciaret." *Levoldi de Northof Catalogus Archiepiscoporum Coloniensis, MGH SS*, xxiv, 361: "Hic electione facta in Lotharium Bunnensem prepositum minis nobilium cassata, quia idem Lotharius electioni de se facte propter metum renunciavit. . . ." Only the *Vita Alberti*, pp. 140–142, reveals who it was who frightened Lothar. Cf. also *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, pp. 153–155.

²⁰ *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, pp. 153–155; Caesar of Heisterbach's *Catalogus*, as above, describes Bruno's reign in these words: "vero cum propter senectutem et tam corporis quam sensus imbecillitatem ad tante ecclesie regimen minus sufficeret, vix uno anno . . . episcopatum resignavit. . . ." He resigned in 1193 and lived in the monastery of Altenberg until 1200. Bruno III was a nephew of Archbishop Bruno II (1131–1137), brother of Frederick II (1156–1158), and an uncle of Adolf of Altena (1193–1205; 1212–1216) and Engelbert (1216–1225). Cf. Richard Knipping, *Die Regesten der Erzbischöfe von Köln im Mittelalter*, II (Bonn, 1901), 286. As these data indicate, the affairs of the counts of Berg were closely associated with the see of Cologne, whose archbishop was their chief feudal lord. The county stretched along the east bank of the Rhine opposite Cologne, from about the Ruhr to the Sieg Rivers; since 1160 a cadet branch of the dynasty held the Westphalian parts of the dynasty's lands, called the County of Altena, later Mark.

²¹ Walcher, a canon of Cambrai, had accompanied Bishop Roger to the Holy Land and returned home with the news of his death. Stopping off at the imperial court in Italy early in the summer of 1191, Walcher received letters from Henry VI commending his election to his chapter, the citizens of Cambrai, and Count Baldwin of Hainaut. The emperor specifically commissioned the latter to procure Walcher's election. The canons, however, to forestall interference, met on a day other than the appointed one and, some time in mid-September, conducted the election; some voted for Walcher, others for Archdeacon John, nephew of the previous bishop. Gislebert of Mons, p. 256, concedes John's qualifications: "majoris meriti videretur quam dominus Walcerus, et sanio rem partem capituli haberet. . . ." No other source even mentions the fact that John had a rival: cf. *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium continuata, Ex Gestis abbreviatis, MGH SS*, xiv, 249; *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trifontium, a Monacho Novi-monasterii Hoiensis Interpolata, MGH SS*, xxiii, 869; *Ex Chronico universalis Anonymi Laudunensis, MGH SS*, xxvi, 452. Falmagne, *op. cit.*, pp. 228–229, is badly confused about this Cambrai election.

²² *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 261.

Despite the fact that he had twice explicitly assured Walcher of the appointment, the emperor now pronounced in favor of Walcher's rival, John d'Antoing, who had come to court with a gift of 3,000 marks of silver to enliven the emperor's holiday.²³ Henry VI's apparent caprice augured difficulty for Albert of Rethel when the emperor took up the Liège case at the diet at Worms on 13 January 1192. Furthermore, the recent acquisition of the County of Flanders by Baldwin of Hainaut-Namur might logically induce the emperor to strengthen the rival Brabantine faction as a counterweight.

Since Gislebert attended the diet, his account is certainly trustworthy. As he tells the story, the emperor referred the Liège dispute to a committee consisting of all the ecclesiastical princes present: ten bishops and three abbots. After a brief consultation, this committee reported that since the see of Liège was genuinely in dispute, "it had fallen into the emperor's hands, to be disposed of at his discretion."²⁴ Abruptly, the emperor announced that he was awarding Liège to Lothar of Hochstaden, the provost of Bonn who had failed to secure Cologne only four months earlier. Albert of Louvain, whose champion, the duke of Brabant, did not dare to attend the diet, protested strenuously and declared his intention of appealing to Rome. Albert of Rethel indignantly rejected the emperor's offer of a financial settlement. Most of the Liège electors in attendance, however, accepted the verdict in the face of threats from the emperor.²⁵

Except for some remarks about Lothar's wealth and ambition for ecclesiastical preferment on the part of the author of the *Vita Alberti*,²⁶ this source attributes no active share in this intrigue to the provost of Bonn himself. He may well have been motivated by a desire for revenge for his loss of Cologne. Yet the obvious difference between that situation and the present one consisted in the presence at Worms of his forceful brother and his brother's friend, the emperor, which stiffened his own unstable character sufficiently that he accepted a See more difficult to control by reason of its distance from the center of imperial power than the one that he had earlier declined. The *Vita*, ignoring completely the judgment

²³ Gislebert, *ibid.*, p. 267, describes the emperor's technique as follows: "dominus imperator . . . requisivit ut ambo super episcopatu Cameracensi sue voluntati et arbitrio prorsus se submitterent. Quod quidem Johannes satis certus pro data pecunie summa facere non recusavit; Walcerus etiam, cui dominus imperator episcopatum promiserat, ejus promissis satis credens, animo letanti concessit. Dominus vero imperator episcopatum Cameracensem Johanni contulit, homini qui satis et honestus et religiosus videbatur."

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 269. Present were Archbishops Conrad of Mainz and John of Trier, Archbishop-elect Bruno of Cologne (who was invested at this time), Bishops Hermann II of Münster, Bertram of Metz, Peter of Toul, Conrad II of Strassburg, Otto of Speier, Otto II of Bamberg, Liutpold of Basel, Bishop-elect Henry of Würzburg, and the abbots of Fulda, Lorsch, and Prüm. "Sententiam autem Monasteriensis episcopus protulit. . . quod episcopatus Leodiensis in manus domini imperatoris devenisset, dandus ad voluntatem suam. . ."

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 267-269.

²⁶ *Vita Alberti*, pp. 141-142: "vir magnus eatenus atque dives, preditus ecclesiasticis multis dignitatibus et ambiens in summis ecclesie dignitates, et honores primos animo cupido suspirabat. Sciensque ex huius temporis experimentis manifestis ad hoc amplius valere suffragia auri et argenti, in auro et argento spem posureat suam multam." As an elector at Liège Lothar had originally voted for Albert of Louvain. *Sigiberti Gemblacensis Continuatio Aquicinctina*, 429, holds Baldwin of Hainaut responsible for the appointment of Lothar.

of the ecclesiastical princes at the diet, singles out Lothar's brother, Count Dietrich, as the foremost advocate of Lothar's advancement. In fact, the sources leave the impression that Dietrich was simply using Lothar as an instrument of his own ambition.

As the witness lists of the imperial charters demonstrate, Count Dietrich regularly resided at court during these months. His intimacy with the emperor cannot be denied. By what reasoning did he enlist Henry VI's support for his scheme to promote Lothar? The author of the *Vita*, whose knowledge could hardly have been certain, describes the count's argument with the emperor as the urgent necessity of a reliable dynasty in so strategic a location as Liège, where imperial interests were threatened by the king of France as well as by the local aristocracy.²⁷ From Gislebert of Mons, however, we learn that Lothar, presumably guided by his politically more sophisticated brother, paid Henry "a very large sum of money"—a simoniacal transaction which the emperor disguised as the sale of the office of imperial chancellor to Lothar—two days before the diet opened.²⁸

Constitutionally, two aspects of the diet of Worms are significant: the emperor's consultation with the ecclesiastical princes, and their opinion about the emperor's right to award the bishopric to whomever he chose. The churchmen's judgment conforms identically to a statement that Henry VI made to Gislebert at the Rieti conference.²⁹ Whether or not the imperial court still regarded the Concordat of Worms as binding, this devolution theory, which Barbarossa had enunciated but had never himself applied, represented an interpretation of that clause of the Concordat of 1122 that allowed the emperor to decide disputed elections.³⁰ The *Vita Alberti* not only agrees with the *Hainaut Chronicle* about the emperor's statement, it even quotes Henry VI as indicating the source of his information about this right:

The emperor replied angrily . . . that he had learned from his father, the Emperor Frederick of blessed memory, that in all the churches of his kingdom which are at his disposal, if there are found to be factions in the conduct of an election, and if all factions are at odds in the election, the right of free election is suspended completely, and all right and all power rest with him to offer his favor to whomever he wishes and to choose and invest that person whom he shall judge worthy.³¹

²⁷ *Vita Alberti*, pp. 142–143.

²⁸ *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 270. Toeche, *op. cit.*, p. 635, listing the chancellors of Henry VI, indicates that the appointment of Lothar never took effect. Cf. also *Sigiberti Gemblacensis Continuatio Aquicinctina*, 429.

²⁹ *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 256: "imperator asserit quod in discordia partium sibi licet episcopatus et abbatias cui voluerit conferre. . . ."

³⁰ Barbarossa's formulation of this claim is found in *MGH Constitutiones*, I, 327: "Licet enim, vobis discordantibus, de iure imperii quamlibet personam idoneam vobis subrogare possemus. . . ." Frederick I enunciated this theory on the occasion of a disputed election to the see of Cambrai in 1167.

³¹ *Vita Alberti*, p. 143: "Respondit turbidus imperator . . . hoc a patre suo accepisse, dive memorie imperatore Frederico, ut in omnibus ecclesiis regni sui, que ad eius donum spectant, si partes sunt invente in electione celebranda, omnibus partibus in electione dissidentibus, electionis vocem et meritum prorsus expirare, et penes se esse ius omne et omnem potestatem, ut ipse cui voluerit extendat manum suam, et a se ipso eligendum et investendum quem dignum ipse censuerit." *Ibid.*, p. 168: "(Albertus) occubuit pro ecclesie Dei libertate, quam volebat Henricus imperator sibi subiugare in hoc

Having compelled most of the Liège canons present at Worms to acknowledge Lothar as bishop-elect, Henry VI allowed Albert of Louvain and the few electors who still adhered to him to depart unharmed. Lothar set out for Liège where, on Ash Wednesday, 19 February 1192, in obedience to the emperor's commands and with no sign of reluctance on his own part, Count Baldwin of Hainaut did homage and swore fealty to Lothar for the fiefs he held of the See of Liège. Sullenly, some of the clergy, ministerials, and burghers of the city likewise swore fidelity to Lothar, who thereafter conducted himself as bishop-elect.

Meanwhile Albert of Louvain made his way with some difficulty³² to Rome, where he arrived on 5 April 1192. Pope Celestine welcomed him, heard his story, and submitted his case to the Curia. Although some of the cardinals advised caution, the majority urged that Albert be upheld. The Pope endorsed this decision and affirmed that Liège belonged rightly to Albert. The *Vita*, focusing on its subject, makes no effort to put the Curia's opinion into the framework of prevailing bad relations between Papacy and Empire. It does, however, unwittingly reveal uncanonical aspects of the Curia's procedure: the evident haste and the failure to investigate beyond the biased testimony of only one of the parties to the dispute. Hence it seems obvious that extrinsic factors influenced the hearings. At least in part, Albert owed his victory to Rome's desire to strike another blow at Henry VI.³³

Having judged in Albert's favor, Pope Celestine himself ordained the bishop-elect a deacon on 30 May and, if the *Vita* is correct, honored him with the rank of cardinal.³⁴ Then Celestine dispatched letters northward to enforce his decision. One went to the archbishop of Cologne, commanding Bruno as metropolitan to consecrate Albert, but the Pope granted him permission to delegate this responsibility to the archbishop of Reims if Bruno feared to perform the ceremony him-

casu, ut, si dissentirent a ceteris tres aut duo de electione facienda in ecclesiis cathedralibus regnisui. . . . aut regalibus abbatiis, statim ipse manum apponeret et quem vellet regalibus investiret. . . ."

³² *Ibid.*, p. 143: "imperator concluserat ei omnia itinera, quibus Romam potest iri terra marique. . . ." The emperor's prohibition of travel to Rome during 1192 applied universally, not just to Albert of Louvain. This is known from the account of Abbot Theodorik of St Michael's in Hildesheim, his *Narratio de canonizatione sancti Bernwardi, Acta Sanctorum*, October xi, 1028: "per totam etiam Italianam imperatoris edictum pendere, ut quicumque reperti fuissent, qui cujuslibet causae obtentu, Romanam adire praesumerent ecclesiam, contumeliis affecti, rebusque nudati, aut vinculis arctari deberent, aut ad propria redire compelli."

³³ For papal-imperial relations at this time see Johannes Haller, "Heinrich VI. und die römische Kirche," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, xxxv (1914), 575 ff.; and Piero Zerbi, *Papato, Impero e "Respublica Christiana" dal 1187 al 1198* (Milan, 1955), pp. 83 ff. Pope Celestine's anti-German measures included the privilege of immunity to the Welfs on 5 August 1191, the excommunication of the Ghibelline monks of Monte Cassino, the attempt to mediate the Italian-Norman war, and in June 1192 a concordat with Tancred of Lecce and papal investiture of this rival of the emperor with the Norman kingdom. Henry VI reinforced his army, arrested a papal legate in Germany, and, as noted, forbade contact with Rome.

³⁴ *Vita Alberti*, p. 146. A similar instance of the bestowal of the cardinalate on a young cleric, which lends credence to the *Vita's* report about Albert, occurred three years later when Simon, an eighteen year old bishop-elect of Liège, received this honor: *Aegidii Aureavallensis, Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium, MGH SS.*, xxv, 114; *Gesta abbatum Trudonensium, MGH SS.*, x, 391.

self. The second letter informed Archbishop William of Reims of these arrangements, giving him explicit permission to consecrate a bishop from outside his normal jurisdiction.³⁵ Celestine addressed a third letter to the clergy and people of Liège, bidding them recognize Albert and absolving them from the oaths they had taken to Lothar. In addition, the Pope arranged for a loan of 240 marks to Albert, secured by the guarantee of two Italian cardinals. Thus fortified, Albert departed. By 31 July he had reached the abbey of Lobbes in Brabant territory, directly across the Sambre River from the lands of the bishopric of Liège. After a stay of only a few hours, he travelled on by way of the monastery of Nivelles to one of the fortresses of his uncle, the duke of Limburg.³⁶

Learning of Albert's movements, Emperor Henry resolved to take stronger measures. By letter he commanded the duke of Brabant to expel his brother from his territories. Bruno of Cologne, although personally acknowledging Albert as bishop, acquiesced in the emperor's demands and informed Albert that illness prevented his consecrating him. However, the archbishop also refused to consecrate Henry's candidate. The infuriated emperor retaliated by ordering the Rhine closed to Cologne merchants from the feast of St Lambert to the feast of St Nicholas, 17 September to 6 December.³⁷

Proceeding to Liège where he arrived *ca* 20 September, the emperor compelled all citizens who still had not done so to acknowledge Lothar; those who refused saw their homes demolished by the emperor's soldiers, the same destruction that was meted out to the property of those canons who were in voluntary exile with Albert. In response to the emperor's peremptory summons, Duke Henry of Brabant appeared, abjured his brother's cause, did homage and swore fealty to Lothar for his Liègois fiefs. A few days later, at Maastricht, the emperor effected a superficial reconciliation between Brabant and Hainaut, both of whom were now more concerned about the distribution of the lands of the late count of

³⁵ William of Champagne, archbishop of Reims (1176–1202), formerly bishop of Chartres (1165–1176) and Sens (1168–1176), papal legate, and first known example of a cardinal of the Roman Church who resided permanently outside of Rome. Cf. Klaus Ganzer, *Die Entwicklung des auswärtigen Kardinalats im hohen Mittelalter vom 11. bis 13. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1963), *passim*. Another significant aspect of William's career is discussed by John R. Williams, "William of the White Hands and Men of Letters" in *Anniversary Essays in Mediaeval History* by students of Charles Homer Haskins (Boston and New York, 1929), pp. 365–387.

³⁶ The narrative here follows the *Vita*, pp. 144–146. Cf. also *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, p. 155. For Celestine's letters, Ph. Jaffé, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, 2nd ed. by W. Wattenbach, *et al.*, Vol. II (Leipzig, 1888), Nos. 16887–8–9. The loan is referred to in No. 16995.

³⁷ *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, p. 155. The chronicler does not explain the enigmatic reprisal of the emperor against Cologne, whose archbishop had apparently obeyed Henry VI's command. Fuller data are supplied by the *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium-Fontium a Monacho Novi Monasterii Hoiensis Interpolata*, ed. P. Scheffer-Boichorst, *MGH SS.*, xxiii, 868: "Bruno, qui erat consanguineus Alberti Leoviensis, a quo tanquam a metropolitano confirmationem suam idem Albertus contra votum imperatoris optinuit." Knipping, *Die Regesten*, II, 288, interprets "confirmationem" as "consecrationem," which is obviously incorrect, as he realized. It should be translated as "recognition," which then gives the following explanation of events at Cologne: Bruno yielded to the emperor in not consecrating Albert, but he refused to consecrate Lothar also, since he recognized Albert as bishop-elect. This angered the emperor, who retaliated as the Cologne chronicle indicates.

Flanders than about the See of Liège. Confident that he had now overcome all local resistance to his creature Lothar, the emperor turned back towards Germany.³⁸

During August or early September, the duke of Limburg escorted his nephew Albert to Reims. Here, on Ember Saturday, 19 September, Archbishop William ordained him to the priesthood and on the next day consecrated him bishop. At once the duke of Limburg and other Liège vassals present did him homage. Spurning the duke's offer to try to install him at Liège by force, Bishop Albert remained in Reims with Abbot Werrich of Lobbes and a small household of clergy and servants, quietly awaiting developments.³⁹

Albert's biography contains a detailed account, in twenty folio pages, of his sojourn in Reims during the next two months, with heavy emphasis on the flowering of his spiritual life under the stress of misfortune and exile. Lack of funds was his most serious material problem. Immediately after 20 September Archbishop William had thoughtlessly departed on a pilgrimage to Compostella without making adequate provision for his impecunious guest. Eventually Albert had to mortgage most of his property.

Sometime during October there arrived in Reims three German knights with a few servants. Declaring that they too had been forced to flee their native land by the emperor's wrath, they introduced themselves to the bishop, won his confidence, and passed many hours in his company. The *Vita* speaks darkly of numerous portents of imminent disaster, evidently small incidents which in retrospect became ominous signs whose significance was not originally comprehended. Then on the afternoon of 24 November the German knights persuaded Albert to accompany them on a ride outside the city walls. After some difficulty with the money lender who was holding his horse in pawn, the bishop set out on his fateful excursion.

Accompanied by a man of arms in his service named Oliver and a canon named Siger, Albert joined the Germans as they rode into the open country. Four German sergeants rode in advance with Oliver and Siger; Albert and the three knights followed. After a short time, Siger turned and suggested to Albert that they return home since dusk was approaching. With that, at a signal from the knights, the sergeants drew their weapons, struck Oliver on the arm and head, and killed his mount. Siger, unarmed, was ignored. Meanwhile the three knights fell upon Albert with their swords. The first blow crashed into his skull and he slipped to the ground without a word. Having lacerated his body to make sure of his death, the knights seized the bishop's horse and galloped off towards the east. All efforts at pursuit proved futile.

One of the three assassins is known by name: Otto of Barenste, or Barkstein, also called Otto of Laviano from his Italian fief. In the entourage of Markward of Anweiler in southern Italy after Henry VI's death, this Otto was captured by

³⁸ *Vita Alberti*, pp. 148-151; *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, p. 155; *Lamberti Parvi Annales*, p. 650; *Chronicon Hanoniense*, pp. 278-279.

³⁹ This and subsequent paragraphs follow the *Vita Alberti*, pp. 150-167.

papal forces at the battle of Cannae on 22 October 1201 and died soon afterwards. Through these circumstances his name entered the correspondence of Pope Innocent III and also the *Gesta Innocentii*. In each of the three instances where he is mentioned in these places, Otto is pointedly identified as the man “*qui sancte memorie Albertum, Leodiensem episcopum, interfecit. . .*”⁴⁰ Since Albert was killed instantly by the first blow, this description may be literally correct. Nothing certain is known of Otto’s companions in crime, that is, of those who actually committed the murder. Contemporaries and modern historians agree in seeing the assassination as much more than a simple homicide, rather as a premeditated, carefully conceived and executed plot; hence at most Otto of Barkstein could only have been a hired killer. The question in 1192 and today remains: Who was ultimately responsible?

Despite its detailed account of the murder and of the events preceding it, the *Vita Alberti* falls short of giving complete satisfaction regarding the perpetrators of the deed. This is to be expected. The *Vita* reflects the personal experiences of a member of the bishop’s household; the plotting of the crime, obviously a matter of great secrecy, lay quite beyond Abbot Werrich’s horizons. Consequently, the *Vita’s* comments on the subject clearly rest on speculation, deduction, and gossip. Thus, in one place the *Vita* describes a mysterious conference in Utrecht in September where sinister plots were laid by Emperor Henry, a royal ministerial named Hugo of Worms who “violently hated Duke Henry of Lorraine, his brother, and all their family,” Dietrich of Hochstaden, and his brother Lothar. Almost as an afterthought, the author mentions that this was a rumour that he had heard.⁴¹ In another passage he records a dubious meeting in Maubeuge, some fifty miles from Reims, between Dietrich of Hochstaden and the assassins, five days before the murder.⁴²

A similar indiscriminate, imprecise approach to the question of responsibility is found in the *Hainaut Chronicle*. Gislebert of Mons wrote: “His death is said to have happened at the instigation of the emperor, of Lothar the bishop-elect of Liège, and of his brother the Count of Hochstaden,” and in another passage: “The duke of Brabant and the duke of Limburg attributed Albert’s death to [the emperor].”⁴³ These cautious opinions, written while most of the individuals mentioned were still alive, savour of prudence rather than knowledge, and of course the chronicler would be inclined to protect the reputation of Baldwin of Hainaut, who had played no small part in the original events.

Thus, the two major sources together name four suspects: Hugo of Worms,

⁴⁰ *Regestum Innocentii III papae super negotio Romani imperii*, ed. Friedrich Kempf, “Miscellanea Historiae Pontificiae” (Rome, 1947), letter 56, p. 153; letter 80, p. 219. *Gesta Innocentii III, Migne, P. L.*, 214, c. xxxiv, col. lxii.

⁴¹ *Vita Alberti*, p. 151: “ut postea vulgavit fama vulgi.” There is no evidence in the imperial registers of a visit by Henry to Utrecht at this time.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴³ *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 280: “cujus mors ex instinctu domini imperatoris et domini Lotharii Leodiensis electi et fratris ejus comitis de Hostada processisse dicebatur.” Pp. 281–282: “Cui eciam domino imperatori dux Lovaniensis et dux de Lemborch, avunculus ejus, mortem fratris sui Alberti imputabant. . .” Cf. also p. 287.

Dietrich of Hochstaden, Lothar of Hochstaden, and Emperor Henry VI. What can be said about the guilt or innocence of each?

Hugo of Worms, a ministerial, perhaps a crusader with Barbarossa, held a fief in Lower Lorraine between the Maas and the Rhine. There exists no valid reason for doubting the testimony of the *Vita Alberti* about his hatred for the duke of Brabant, but neither is any information available to corroborate it.⁴⁴ Hugo's movements between 1190 and 1193 elude the investigator. He comes to light again in 1194 marching into Italy with the emperor, and the next year Henry named him count of Siena. Thereafter he is often in evidence and soon received the office of imperial podestà of Ferrara, which he held until 1217.⁴⁵ Although the *Vita* holds him more than the others responsible for the murder, no other source even mentions him in this connection, not even the letters of Innocent III who was well informed about the German administrators in Italy. The contrast is sharp against Innocent's constant reiteration of Otto of Barkstein's guilt. Seemingly Hugo of Worms had some sort of personal motive to murder Albert, but did it make sense to assassinate a person as harmless and as destitute as was the bishop during November of 1192? It did if such a deed would bring a reward from someone with offices or fiefs to dispense. Thus, while it is possible to see Hugo of Worms as one of the conspirators or even one of the assassins, the role of originator of the scheme does not fit him.

Count Dietrich of Hochstaden suffered more immediate and more serious retribution than any of the four suspects. The spontaneous local reaction to the assassination was an uprising of the princes of Lower Lorraine led by the dukes of Brabant and Limburg. Proclaiming their intention to avenge their kinsman's death, they formed a coalition that eventually included the archbishops of Cologne and Mainz and, beyond the Rhine, a variety of princes with personal grudges against the emperor. This confederation was thus directed against both Count Dietrich and Emperor Henry, but its only military action was the devastation of the county of Hochstaden and the capture of all but one of the count's castles.⁴⁶

Thus, it seems clear that his Lotharingian contemporaries considered Dietrich seriously implicated in Albert's murder. Yet can we be sure that they were not merely using this as a pretext for a typical medieval vendetta against an upstart rival? Personally brave if not reckless, a man of strong feeling and a clever schemer with wide ambitions, Dietrich's closeness to Henry VI might well have given him the necessary sense of security to encourage a crime whose results he knew would

⁴⁴ Gislebert of Mons mentions Hugo only once, under the year 1188: *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 231; also notes 3 and 4 by the editor.

⁴⁵ Trautmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 63 ff, has traced the shadowy career of Hugo through the various collections of charters for the period.

⁴⁶ The following sources describe the princes' uprising, and all of them treat it as a result of the murder, at least for the Rhenish and Lorraine participants: *Vita Alberti*, p. 168; *Chronicon Hanoniense*, pp. 281 ff.; *Annales Reinhardtsbrunnenses*, MGH SS., xxx, pars i, 552; *Sigiberti Gemblacensis Continuatio Aquicinctina*, 430; *Chronica Magistri Rogeri de Houedene*, ed. W. Stubbs, *R. S.*, 4 vols. (London, 1868–1871), III, 214; William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, ed. R. Howlett, *R. S.*, in *Chronicles of the Reign of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, 4 vols. (London, 1884–1889), I, 397–398.

not displease the emperor. Also, it had been his personal efforts that had secured Liège for his brother during the diet at Worms. Having thus invested heavily already in the issue, he had much to lose, money and prestige, should Albert succeed against Lothar. Dietrich therefore had an obvious motive, plus the character to conceive and organize the crime. Nevertheless, the evidence remains circumstantial only.⁴⁷ Even the *Vita's* remarks about Dietrich's conduct, his supposed lurking on the borders of France during November and his hasty departure as soon as news of the murder reached him, seem to rest on rumor rather than first-hand information.⁴⁸

As the intruder at Liège, Lothar of Hochstaden could not escape suspicion. Many of his subjects held him responsible, or at least seriously compromised. Both the *Vita* and the *Hainaut Chronicle*, as has been noted, express these accusations.⁴⁹ Gislebert of Mons reports that Lothar repeatedly denied under oath the accusations of public opinion against him, but without overcoming the distrust of the people of Liège.⁵⁰ Thoroughly frightened, he fled and eventually took refuge with the imperial court. Even Henry VI, however, could not protect him against Pope Celestine, who excommunicated him and suspended him from all his numerous prebends. Lothar hastened to Rome to defend himself and secure absolution, but only one of his offices was restored to him. Two years later, during a second journey to Rome in search of a full amnesty, he died there.⁵¹

Yet the fact that Pope Celestine imposed such severe sanctions on Lothar after Albert's murder does not necessarily establish a cause and effect relationship.⁵² For one thing, the chronology is quite obscure; no papal document is extant, and the chroniclers do not use exact dates to inform us when the Pope heard the news and when he pronounced sentence. Furthermore, Lothar's position ever since the Curia had heard the election case in mid-1192 was, in the Curia's opinion, that of an illegal, simoniacal intruder, in contempt of the papal court. He deserved punishment for these earlier offenses, whose gravity, and consequently the penalty, would be vastly increased in the eyes of his judges when the full effect of

⁴⁷ Cf. Trautmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72, for the references to Dietrich in the charters. It is impossible to trace his later years, and the circumstances of his death are unknown.

⁴⁸ *Vita Alberti*, p. 167.

⁴⁹ Cf. notes 41 and 43; also Gislebert of Mons, p. 281, quoting Henry of Brabant's description of Lothar as "inimicum suum mortalem" on 28 December 1192.

⁵⁰ *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 280.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 283 and 289; *Sigiberti Gemblacensis Continuatio Aquicinctina*, p. 429; *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, p. 156; *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trum-fontium*, p. 869; *Catalogus archiepiscoporum Coloniensium, Continuatio II*, p. 345. The date of Lothar's death is variously recorded, but 1194 seems correct, contrary to Heinrich, *op. cit.*, p. 215, who accepts 1193, especially since Toeche, *op. cit.*, p. 244, note 3, mentions a charter dated 19 April 1194, with Lothar among the witnesses.

⁵² A careful reading of the two sources supports this reasoning, for they report that Lothar was excommunicated because of Albert's murder but not that the Pope held Lothar responsible: *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 283: "Ex clamore autem super morte Alberti episcopi ad dominum papam Celestinum delato, dominus Lotharius excommunicatus fuit. . ."; *Sigiberti Gemblacensis Continuatio Aquicinctina*, p. 430: "Lotharius Leodiensis intrusus, causa interfectionis Autberti . . . privatur." Moreover, one may properly ask how well these chroniclers could have been informed about the Pope's motives under any circumstances.

Lothar's original crimes became evident. Hence, in default of a more explicit expression of Pope Celestine's thinking, we are not justified in interpreting his actions as indicating his belief that Lothar had added the crime of murder to his original felony. Furthermore, Lothar's character must be considered. Spineless and avaricious, he excites sympathy, not suspicion. He was a victim of circumstances, of his own greed and of his brother's ambition. Moreover, as a churchman he probably deserves credit for a conscience that would have restrained him from consenting to so heinous a crime.

There remains, finally, the question of Emperor Henry VI. To what extent was he to blame for the tragedy at Reims? He created the situation that produced the assassination. He encountered opposition that elicited one demonstration of his forceful, determined character. Did he finally resort to murder to solve a problem too baffling for rational methods?

Nine chronicles explicitly accuse Henry VI of having procured Albert's death, yet in every case there exist legitimate reasons to question their assertions. The *Gesta abbatum Trudonensium*, generally well informed about Liège affairs since St Trond lay a mere fifty miles away, declares simply that the bishop was killed "by order of the emperor," yet the fact that this section of the chronicle dates from the later fourteenth century greatly diminishes its reliability.⁵³ Roger of Hoveden, a contemporary, records in his *Chronica* various German events associated with the captivity of King Richard his sovereign during 1192–94, circumstances that undoubtedly encouraged Roger to report without too close a scrutiny any gossip that might denigrate the emperor.⁵⁴ The Frenchmen Rigord and William the Breton accused the emperor in their *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, but there is no way of knowing how they collected their information.⁵⁵ An hysterical burgher from Reims may have spread this and other unfounded rumors in the inns of Paris, whence it reached the court. The *Chronicle* of Aubrey of Trois Fontaines in Champagne asserts that the emperor himself dispatched the murderers to Reims, but the lateness of this statement, at least a generation after the event, and the author's well-known habit of recounting gossip and apocryphal tales jeopardize his credibility.⁵⁶ The contemporary *Chronicon universale Laudunensis*, from Laon, not far from Reims, lists the bishop's death under the wrong year, 1195, and confuses Albert with Simon, a candidate for Liège in the contested election that followed Albert's death; consequently its accusation of Henry VI does not deserve to be taken seriously.⁵⁷

⁵³ *Gesta abbatum Trudonensium, Continuatio III, MGH SS.*, x, 391: "iussu imperatoris occiditur. . . ."

⁵⁴ *Chronica*, III, 214: "necem episcopi . . . quam imperator machinatus erat." Immediately following, Roger records the oaths of innocence on Henry's behalf (cf. below, note 67), but without comment.

⁵⁵ *Gesta Philippi Augusti Rigordi et Guillelmi Armorici*, ed. F. Delaborde (Paris, 1882–1885), I, 112: "missi sunt ab imperatore quidam milites. . ."; p. 193: "missis apparitoribus ab Henrico imperatore. . . ."

⁵⁶ *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium-Fontium . . . Interpolata*, p. 869: "transmisit proditores, qui eum interfecerunt. . . ."

⁵⁷ *Ex Chronico universali Anonymi Laudunensis, MGH SS.*, xxvi, 452: "ad quem interficiendum missi sunt a perfido rege viri dolosi, qui fixerunt, se regis memorati iram incurrisse. . . ."

The pertinent passages from the continuator of Magnus of Reichersberg date from reasonably close to 1192, but his Austrian homeland lay far from Reims so that the news must have passed through several hands before it reached him, with the possibility of falsification at each step. Besides, this work bristles with an anti-Hohenstaufen bias that demands great caution on the part of the reader.⁵⁸ Similar reservations may be entertained about the two Low German vernacular chronicles, the *Sächsische Weltchronik* and the *Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, which stem from the mid-thirteenth century or later in their present form.⁵⁹ An Italian source, the later thirteenth-century *Gesta imperatorum et pontificum* by Thomas of Tuscany, contains a marginal notation in the manuscript, reproduced by its editor, accusing Henry VI in no uncertain terms, but this work arouses suspicion by its Guelf flavor and especially by its inability to identify the victim more precisely than “*quidam Leodiensis episcopus*.”⁶⁰

In short, it seems that the farther away the chronicler stood in time or place from Reims-Liège in 1192, the stronger his inclination to assert unequivocally the emperor's guilt. A scribe's preservation of an adequate record of overt facts such as the assassination does not, obviously, guarantee his accuracy when he attempts to establish cause and effect relationships involving the actions of individuals beyond his own horizons. Gossip there obviously was about Henry VI, and indiscriminating chroniclers could not or did not desire to distinguish fact from rumor.

A second group of sources consists of those that do not accuse Henry VI outright but rather qualify their statements by such phrases as “it is believed” or “as they say,” thereby indicating that, while public opinion at least imputed the crime to the emperor, they themselves lacked the evidence to sustain a categorical affirmation. In this category are found, as already noted, the *Vita Alberti* and Gislebert's *Chronicon Hanoniense*, far and away the most significant contemporary accounts.⁶¹ Others of this type are the annals of Cologne, Stade, and Reinhardbrunn, and the *Historia* of William of Newburgh.⁶² The *Chronicon Montis*

⁵⁸ *Chronica Magni Presbiteri Reicherspergensis, Continuatio, MGH SS.*, xvii, 523: “Hisdem temporibus venerunt littere a Celestino papa ad Hainricum Romanum imperatorem. . . . Offensus quippe sepe fuerat dominus papa, in illo videlicet enormi facto, id est pro Leodiensi episcopo occiso, et pro rege Anglie in peregrinatione capto, necnon pro dote Sancti Petri in Apulia violenter ablata.”

⁵⁹ *Sächsische Weltchronik, MGH SS qui vernacula lingua usi sunt*, II, 335: “De keiser Heinrici let slan den biscop van Ludeke. . . .” *Die Magdeburger Schöppenchronik*, ed. Karl Janicke, “Die Chroniken der deutschen Städte, Die Chroniken der niedersächsischen Städte,” *Magdeburg*, I, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1869; reprint 1962), 122: “des jares leit de keiser den bishop van Ludeke heimliken dot slan und wolde des unschuldich sin.”

⁶⁰ *Thomae Tusci Gesta imperatorum et pontificum, MGH SS.*, xxii, 508: “Tempore huius Henrici quidam Leodiensis episcopus canonicè electus contra imperatoris assensum, qui timens furorem eius ad Guilielmum Remensem archiepiscopum fugit. Sed iuxta Remis in dolo a legatis Henrici interfectus est.”

⁶¹ Cf. notes 40–42.

⁶² *Chronica Regia Coloniensis*, p. 155: “ferebatur”; *Annales Stadenses, MGH SS.*, xvi, 352: “ut dicitur”; *Chronica Reinhardbrunnensis, MGH SS.*, xxx, i, 552: “ut inquit”; William of Newburgh, *Historia Rerum Anglicarum*, I, 397: “ut creditur.” This last account includes a report of a miscarried plan to murder simultaneously with Albert his brother Duke Henry, obviously an unfounded rumor. The story should be viewed in connection with Gislebert's remark that the duke aspired to depose the emperor and assume the imperial throne himself: *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 282.

Sereni, Lauterberg near Halle, affords an interesting example of this attitude of caution:

There was a strong opinion that, to say the least, (Albert's) murder was not displeasing to the emperor, who feared that the duke [of Brabant] might be encouraged to try something against the Empire with his help. This opinion was confirmed by the fact that not only did the emperor fail to avenge his death, he did not even show any displeasure toward the perpetrators of this terrible crime.⁶³

A third category is those chroniclers who simply report the murder without expressing any verdict at all about responsibility. Significantly, this group includes four contemporary writers from Lower Lorraine: Lambert the Little of the monastery of St James in Liège who lived and wrote down to 1194; Reiner his immediate continuator; Baldwin of Ninove; and the continuator of Sigibert of Gembloux at Anchin.⁶⁴ Their silence can only be interpreted as evidence of uncertainty about an issue that was far from clear. Here too is found the detailed *Deeds of the Bishops of Liège* by Giles of Orval, although his failure to offer an independent assessment is certainly due to the fact that he originally incorporated the whole *Vita Alberti* into his narrative. The manuscript of Giles used by his editor for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* does contain a reference to "that crime by which he (Henry VI) brought about the death of Bishop Albert of Liège," but this comment, as the editor noted, is an addition by a later, unknown hand.⁶⁵ Also among the silent sources are the registers of Pope Celestine III; it is unthinkable that the Pope would have ignored the emperor so completely had there been any substantial evidence of his complicity.⁶⁶

Henry VI himself denied any part in the crime. At a great meeting with his princes at Coblenz in June 1193, the emperor came to terms, through the mediation of King Richard of England, with the rebellious Rhenish magnates. He purged himself by causing various bishops and lay lords to take oaths on his behalf that he had "neither ordered nor wished the death of the bishop of Liège, and when he heard of it he was extremely sorry."⁶⁷ The chronicler's attribution

⁶³ *MGH SS.*, xxiii, 163: "eratque vehemens opinio, interfectionem eius imperatori, ne durius aliquid dicatur, non displicuisse, qui timebat, ne dux eius confisus auxilio novi aliquid contra imperium moliretur. Tali autem opinioni eciam hoc fidem faciebat, quod imperator mortem eius non solum ultus non est, verum eciam interfectores eius a gracia sua post perpetracionem tanti sceleris non removit."

⁶⁴ *Lamberti Parvi Annales*, p. 650; *Reineri Annales*, *MGH SS.*, xvi, 651; *Baldwini Ninovensium Chronicon*, *MGH SS.*, xxv, 537; *Sigiberti Gemblacensis Continuatio Aquicinctina*, p. 430: "Qui fuerunt interfectores episcopi, et a quo missi, ignoratur. . . ."

⁶⁵ *Aegidii Aureaevalensis Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium*, *MGH SS.*, xxv, 114: "pro remedio illius peccati, quo procuraverat mortem episcopi Alberti Lovaniensis."

⁶⁶ While Celestine III's reaction is not known from any of his own documents, some indication is supplied by three chronicles: *Chronicon Magni Presbiteri Reicherspergensis*, *Continuatio*, cf. above note 58; *Sigiberti Gemblacensis Continuatio Aquicinctina*, p. 429; and the *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 282. These sources speak of the Pope's displeasure with the emperor because of the arrest of King Richard, Albert's murder, and the activity of the German troops in Italy. By lumping all of these together, they make it impossible to determine how the Pope reacted to any of these three provocations individually, at least at this time. Surely the *Vita Alberti* would have recorded any papal condemnation of the emperor because of the murder, had any been promulgated.

⁶⁷ Roger of Hoveden, *Chronica*, iii, 214: "Quod imperator jurare fecit episcopus quamplures, et comites et barones, in animam suam, quod ille nec praecepit nec voluit ut praedictus episcopus de

of the title of bishop to Albert in this passage is no proof that Henry used it; indeed, all indications are that the emperor at no time acknowledged the legitimacy of Albert's election. No choice, however, remained to the emperor at this point but to discard Lothar, who had already renounced all claims to Liège. Furthermore, Henry conceded to the dukes of Brabant and Limburg a free hand, in consultation with the chapter, in filling the vacant seat, and he agreed to remove from his court those who had been involved in the murder.

Among the charters of St Lambert's cathedral in Liège is a grant of an estate by Henry VI for the endowment of two prebends whose occupants should daily celebrate mass, one for the welfare of the empire and the other for the repose of the souls of the emperor's parents and predecessors.⁶⁸ This endowment has been interpreted as an act of reparation and hence a tacit admission of guilt. Yet only the circumstances of the grant, not the wording of the charter, permit this construction, and it might just as properly be seen as a mere conciliatory gesture, part of the emperor's efforts during mid-1193 to allay the general unrest in Lower Lorraine.

Had Henry VI been brought to trial, the prosecuting attorney would certainly have built an argument on the fact that the assassins were known at the imperial court,⁶⁹ that they took refuge there after their crime,⁷⁰ and that at least one, Otto of Barkstein, and possibly others received appointments from the emperor as if in compensation for their efforts on his behalf. The evidence on all but the last point is irrefutable. These facts were reiterated, along with the matter of the rewards to the criminals, by Pope Innocent III in 1200–01:

He (Henry VI) displayed great friendship for the killers of Bishop Albert of Liège of blessed memory, whom he himself had forced into exile, after the bishop's murder; he let himself be seen in their company; and a short time later he granted them benefices of no little importance.⁷¹

Such is the mediaeval evidence for Henry VI's role in the bishop's murder. Modern historians have interpreted it diversely. Theodor Toeche, author of the

Leges occideretur; et quando hoc scivit, vehementer inde doluit." Less specific are the *Vita Alberti*, p. 168; *Chronicon Hanoniense*, p. 287; *Sigiberti*, p. 430.

⁶⁸ Bormans and Schoolmeesters (eds.), *Cartulaire*, I, 118, dated by the editors May 1196, but probably better assigned to 1193: "unus pro statu imperii . . . alter pro animarum parentum nostrorum et predecessorum specialiter et pro fidelibus defunctis," a formula vague enough to admit various interpretations. Giles of Orval refers to this charter, *Gesta episcoporum Leodiensium*, p. 113, but with an incorrect interpretation, as indicated.

⁶⁹ *Annales Marbacenses, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*, ed. H. Bloch (Hanover, 1908), p. 64: "a quibusdam fidelibus imperatoris"; *Annales Mellicenses Continuatio Cremifanensis, MGH SS.*, ix, 548: "a familiaribus imperatoris"; and other sources as indicated *infra*.

⁷⁰ *Balduini Ninovensius*, p. 537: "ad imperatorem aufugerunt"; Rigord, *Gesta Philippi*, p. 113: "ad imperatorem reversi sunt." The *Vita Alberti*, p. 168, and Roger of Hoveden, *Chronica*, iii, 214, record Henry's promise to remove the assassins from his court. The author of the *Vita* could scarcely contain his indignation at the emperor's granting them sanctuary: Cf. p. 167: "Omnes aulam cesaris execrantur, in qua sibi asilum optinere glorianur homicidi scelerati."

⁷¹ Innocent III, *Regestrum super negotio imperii*, p. 86: "Ipse occisores bonae memoriae A(lberti) Leodiensis episcopi, quem ipse coegerat exsulare, post interfectionem ipsius in multa familiaritate recepit, et publice participavit eisdem, et beneficia postmodum majora concessit."

only full-length biography of Henry VI, concluded long ago that the emperor's guilt was "as good as certain."⁷² Toeche based his judgment on the sources, which he accepted uncritically, but, in the final analysis, he reasoned that the character and personality of the young emperor, as well as his responses to similar frustrating situations, confirmed what Toeche thought the written records established.

Albert Hauck took violent issue with Toeche. Seizing on an erroneous statement in one of the chronicles to the effect that the assassins were vassals of the bishop, Hauck saw the murder as nothing more than a local squabble in which Henry VI had no reason to become involved. Innocent III's criticism Hauck dismissed as typical Italian prejudice against German monarchs; besides, he insisted, Innocent so frequently played fast and loose with the truth that he could never be trusted anyway.⁷³ What Hauck overlooked was the setting of Innocent III's statement, the famous *Deliberatio super facto imperii*, a public manifesto in which the pontiff could not risk an untruth or even a dubious fact lest he weaken his major arguments in the minds of his contemporaries, many of whom knew as well as he the events of 1192.

Heinrich Bloch⁷⁴ and Conrad Trautmann⁷⁵ argued for Henry's acquittal, as had Hauck. The former admitted that the most damaging evidence was the emperor's friendly treatment of the assassins, but, Bloch insisted, why should he not have treated them well? They had acted in his interest, as the *Chronicon Montis Sereni* expressed it so well. As loyal even if misguided *fideles*, they had a claim on his gratitude. That he honored their claim does not make him responsible for their actions. Trautmann agreed with Bloch in exonerating the emperor because he felt convinced of the guilt of Hugo of Worms, with Count Dietrich of Hochstaden as an accessory. Johannes Haller shared this belief in Henry VI's innocence.⁷⁶ Although mainly concerned with papal-imperial relations, Haller incidentally remarked on this issue that the emperor had no reason to punish the murderers since they had committed their crime outside the boundaries of the empire, on French soil — surely a weak argument when one recalls that Henry VI arrested King Richard of England on the charge, among others, of having murdered Conrad of Montferrat in the Holy Land! Haller also interpreted the report of the emperor's treatment of the property of Albert's supporters as evidence that Henry had outlawed the bishop, so that it was not even a crime to kill him. Rather less forcefully, A. L. Poole concluded that the accusation of Henry's complicity was "in all probability groundless."⁷⁷

⁷² *Op. cit.*, p. 551.

⁷³ *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, 8th ed. (Berlin, 1954), Vol. iv, 693, and note 6. The mistaken source is *Sigiberti Continuatio*, p. 430: "Pridie enim quam ista agere deliberarent, hominum ei fecerunt, ne eos haberet suspectos." Toeche also accepted this statement. The silence of the *Vita* effectively discredits this remark.

⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 23: "Aus den Quellen lässt sich danach eine Schuld Heinrichs VI., den Tod Alberts gewollt und geplant zu haben, nicht begründen."

⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 69–70. Trautmann argues, contrary to Toeche, that Henry VI was too shrewd a politician to rely on brute force, and that the sources do not support the charge of complicity.

⁷⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 580, note 3.

⁷⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 466.

On the other hand, two clerical biographers of St Albert, the Benedictine Dom B. del Moral⁷⁸ and the Jesuit Edouard de Moreau,⁷⁹ entertained no doubt about the emperor's responsibility. Yet Moreau contradicts himself in his more scholarly *Histoire de l'Église en Belgique*, where he charges Dietrich of Hochstaden with the crime.⁸⁰ Raymonde Forville and Jean R. de Pina in the important Fliche-Martin *Histoire de l'Église* series condemn the emperor by implication,⁸¹ while a recent scholarly hagiographical sketch accuses him too, but with reservations.⁸² Taking a middle position is P. Zerbi, who concludes that without additional evidence the problem cannot be resolved.⁸³

To the already exhaustive discussion three considerations, I believe, should be added which help to establish the emperor's innocence. Pope Innocent III, it seems, can be brought in as a witness for the defense. Reference has already been made to his criticism of Henry VI in his *Deliberatio*, document twenty-nine in the collection dealing with the disputed German election after Henry VI's death. In this letter Innocent set out to destroy utterly the Hohenstaufen claim to the German and imperial throne. He launched a sweeping attack on the personality, character, and qualifications of individual members of the dynasty, extending his argumentation to the limit as he strove to denigrate his opponents, living and dead. Yet he *did not* accuse Henry VI of complicity in Albert's murder. All that the Pope said was that Henry had treated the murderers too leniently. Had there been reason to hold the former emperor personally responsible, Innocent III would surely not have ignored such splendid ammunition. Hence Innocent's statement actually confirms Henry VI's innocence.

Secondly, the method of composition used by the chroniclers probably influenced their conclusions about the emperor's guilt, at least in the case of those who condemned him outright. By telescoping the two aspects of the story into a single issue, they allowed his responsibility in the first to determine their verdict about the second. In intruding Lothar into Liège, Henry VI clearly violated custom and canon law. This alarmed the chroniclers who recognized the threat to the freedom of elections; hence they almost unanimously criticized, at least by implication, Emperor Henry's conduct during the January diet.⁸⁴ None of

⁷⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 127, note.

⁷⁹ *Albert de Louvain*, p. 83: "La plus lourde responsabilité pese sur l'empereur."

⁸⁰ Vol. III, 92: "Thierry de Hochstade, le principal responsable. . . ."

⁸¹ *Du premier Concile du Latran à l'avènement d'Innocent III (1123–1198)* (Paris, 1953,) Vol. 9, ii, of Augustin Fliche and Victor Martin (eds.), *Histoire de l'Église depuis les Origines jusqu'à nos Jours*, 219: "chacun voulut voir le main de Henri VI," but then note 1 states, incorrectly, that Hauck "est le seul a rejeter cette accusation."

⁸² Albert d'Haenens, "Alberto di Lovanis," *Bibliotheca Sanctorum*, 1 (Istituto Giovanni XXIII nella Pontificia università Lateranense, 1961); 691: "Una parte della responsabilità di questo crimine pese sull'imperatore."

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, p. 100: "problema irrisolubile, sulla scorta dei documenti in nostro possesso. . . ."

⁸⁴ Albert of Rethel is probably typical of the clerical attitude. The *Vita Alberti*, pp. 142–143, says that during the diet at Worms he voluntarily submitted to Archdeacon Albert and so informed the emperor just before the emperor awarded Liège to Lothar. The provost probably realized that more was at stake than his own claim to the see, and by this last minute maneuver strove to protect the chapter's right of free election by eliminating all pretext for Henry VI's intervention.

them except Gislebert knew about the bishops' share in the proceedings. Yet the chroniclers probably wrote up the events of 1192, or put their notes into final form, only after, sometimes well after the murder in November. Seeing the sequence of events as a whole, with the emperor's original violence unmistakably evident, they quite naturally assumed his guilt in the second, a greater crime also, which seemed to flow directly from the first. Some modern scholars have apparently made the same error. If, however, the events of November 1192 are kept distinct from those of January, it becomes possible to examine the former objectively. Then Henry VI's culpability for the murder appears, properly, as considerably less than certain.

Finally, the author of the *Vita* unwittingly supplied the key to the solution of the question of responsibility when, in his second last chapter, he compares Albert of Louvain with Thomas Becket.⁸⁵ He even quotes a certain Englishman named Ralph, a deacon at Reims who had lived with Becket at Sens, as saying that Albert was a greater man than the archbishop — "*Ecce plus quam Thomas hic!*" The analogy need not be taken seriously. The biographer probably hoped to enhance Albert's fame by the comparison, and the deacon may well have been carried away emotionally by the sad events he had experienced. Nevertheless, the analogy serves a purpose if it is transferred from the victims to their sovereigns. Henry II of England's role in St Thomas's death can, I suggest, help to determine Henry VI's share in St. Albert's assassination. The confusion of the sources renders any reconstruction tentative, but the English model lends credibility.

Undoubtedly the plot against Albert originated in the emperor's entourage, but not necessarily with his foreknowledge. His enmity towards Albert was known to his courtiers. These, furthermore, saw his wrath after Albert's recognition in Rome and consecration in Reims. They may even have heard him drop a chance remark, unrecorded, similar to Henry II's outburst against Becket. Probably, during September, Dietrich of Hochstaden, the most likely ringleader, conceived the idea of the murder. He had the best motive and a suitable character. The actual murderers — Otto of Barkstein, perhaps Hugo of Worms — accepted his arguments about the emperor's gratitude and willingness to bestow rewards. Why else did they flee directly to the court after the murder? Henry VI did not share the relative obscurity of the real culprits, so the chroniclers blamed him, not them. His protection of the criminals reflects his political rather than moral viewpoint. Thus, Henry VI's attitude becomes intelligible, even if somewhat reprehensible. Under such circumstances, however, he could hardly escape censure by his clerical contemporaries — whose assessments did vary considerably — and through these his reputation has suffered unjustly down to the present.

At Liège, repercussions of Albert of Louvain's assassination were manifest during the next three episcopal elections, that of Simon of Limburg in 1193, Albert de Cuyk in 1194, and Hugh Pierrepont in 1200. Less concretely, it is

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 167–168.

possible to see further effects in developments already underway in the economic, political, and ethnic areas but to whose fruition the public outrage caused by the crime very likely contributed in some measure: the growth of anti-German sentiment in the Low Countries (already evident in the *Vita Alberti*), the loosening of imperial control with the consequent alienation of this area from the Empire, and the change in attitudes that carried Liège and much of Lower Lorraine from the Ghibelline to the Guelf camp during the next decades.

Within the Empire, the case of Bishop Albert, even though apparently never specifically referred to as a precedent, perhaps convinced future emperors never again to try to dominate episcopal elections in precisely the same way. More immediately, the assassination precipitated the great princely uprising of 1192-93 which drew together the Lower Rhenish and Saxon opponents of the crown in a portentous alliance from which Henry VI escaped only by the fortuitous capture of King Richard. The opposition movement in old Lower Lorraine, of which Albert's resistance constituted a part, combined with the Guelf power, must have confirmed Henry VI in his Mediterranean orientation. Yet what would have happened had he maintained his candidate at Liège and perpetuated his rapprochement with Brabant and Hainaut? One can speculate that the later Hohenstaufens might then have been deflected from their Italian interests and from that course that ran irresistibly to Tagliacozza.

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