

CHAPTER 4

THE CHURCH IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY

In this century the papacy became dominant over all of Western Europe, fulfilling the dreams of Gregory VII.

A. The papacy in the thirteenth century

Strongest ever over the nations; able to carry out claims made earlier (e.g., by Gregory VII)

Most powerful under Innocent III; continued during most of century until Celestine V (1294)

But always difficult to enforce papal claims (more than ten major excommunications)

Began to lose power under Boniface VIII, at end of century, while making even broader claims

During this century, papacy became more and more a military force, using compulsion (cf. Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition)

1. Innocent III (1198-1216)

Most powerful pope of all; no king able to resist him; produced 1198 bull, “moon and sun” statement relating the king and the pope (Bettenson, p. 112)

Innocent dictated the personal fortunes and lives of most of the kings and important people in Europe:

Controlled family struggle for German emperorship

Forced French king to take back first wife when he had married another

1215, important year:

Fourth Lateran Council, called and presided over by Innocent III:

- Used term *transubstantiation*
- Approved Dominicans and Franciscans
- Started crusade against Albigenses and Waldenses
- Established Inquisition

Year the *Magna Carta* produced in England

King John in England tried to keep bishoprics open, appropriating the revenue for himself, for a long time delayed to approve Stephen Langton as the new archbishop of Canterbury, although elected in Rome (Langton was the one who first divided the Bible into chapters)

1208, Innocent used new weapon against King John, the interdict (no Roman Catholic services allowed in country), to force him to approve Langton as archbishop of Canterbury; excommunicated John in 1209, declared him deposed in 1212; John officially apologized and recognized the pope's claims in 1213

These actions, added to other lapses, produced more hostility between King John and the English barons (and Langton too), which finally resulted in 1215 in his being forced to sign the *Magna Carta* (see related documents in Bettenson, pp. 161-166)

It is interesting that Innocent III opposed the *Magna Carta* (see Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* 5:172-173)

2. St. Celestine V (1294)

One of the two "saint" popes of the thirteenth century (the other one, Gregory X)

1292, Gaetani family struggling for power; 1294, after interregnum, picked old Benedictine hermit named Peter, fetch him from mountains, took name Celestine V

Celestine 79 years old; amazed, perplexed, incompetent; believed every counsellor; controlled mostly by king of Naples, where he stayed

Became discouraged: “O God, while I rule over other men’s souls, I am losing the salvation of my own.”

Decided to abdicate; this against wishes of counsellors; (probable story) Cardinal Gaetani (to be Boniface VIII) talked to him through a wall by a reed, “Heaven wills that you resign”

Abdicated, on the ground “of his humbleness, the quest of a better life and an easy conscience, on account of his frailty of body and want of knowledge, the badness of men, and a desire to return to the quietness of his former estate”

Gaetani elected, declared Celestine’s resignation permissible

3. Boniface VIII (Gaetani, 1294-1303)

“Came in like a fox, ruled like a lion, died like a dog”

Incarcerated old Celestine V in cell in castle until he died two years later

Got involved with war between England and France, especially when they both wanted all their money to stay in their countries (to finance the war)

Tried to imitate Innocent III:

1296, bull *Clericis Laicos*, forbids taxation of clergy (against English king Edward I; Bettenson, pp. 113-115)

1302, bull *Unam Sanctam*, places himself over all people on earth (against French king Philip IV; Bettenson, pp. 115-116)

End of bull: “Furthermore we declare, state, define and pronounce that it is altogether necessary to salvation for every human creature to be subject to the Roman pontiff.”

Philip IV of France sent agents to seize Boniface, papal palace at Anagni plundered; Boniface imprisoned, but freed by friends; died a few weeks later

B. Albigensian crusade (1208-1229)

Manichaeism about only heresy to last

Cathari (“pure”) centered around town Albi; dualistic, higher morality; some “perfected,” against eggs; opposed to established church

By 1100, widely spread in Europe; mostly in southern France; ca. 1200, Innocent III called on count of Toulouse (Raymond of Toulouse) to root out this heresy by force; Raymond said impossible; Innocent excommunicated Raymond; troops gathered against him; Raymond repented, was whipped

1209-1214, huge killings, ruined the south of France; army leaders from Normandy took Raymond's territory

Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 approved and demanded continuation this vicious crusade (Bettenson, pp. 132-133)

C. Mendicant orders

1. General remarks

One of the two most important developments in history of monasticism
(*mendicari*, "to beg")

Before, monks enter order for the good of their own souls; now, monks try to affect the world

Many new orders being formed at this time, two hundred by time of Innocent III; Innocent forbade any new orders

But Innocent at Fourth Lateran Council approved two more; Innocent had had a dream: Lateran walls falling, two monks holding them up, an Italian and a Spaniard

New monks called "friars" (Fr. "brothers")

2. Dominican order

Dominic de Guzman (1170-1221)

From influential Spanish family; ten to twenty years old, studied in monastery; came to favor public work; felt Albigenses could be converted by preaching more than by crusades and other orders; 1215, requested approval for new order

Approved by Innocent III and Fourth Lateran Council; popes tied this order to themselves: services, confession, etc.—not under bishops but directly responsible to pope

Order's main purpose: (1) teach, (2) combat heresy; placed in charge of inquisition, "hounds of God"; called Order of Preachers (O.P.); wear black robes

3. Franciscan order

Francis Bernardone (d'Assisi) (1182-1226)

From wealthy Italian merchant family; carefree youth; genius; but not happy; read Bible, saw difference between Jesus and ecclesiastics; not interested in education; had vision: marriage to Poverty; very kindly, even to animals (preached to birds, pigs, etc.)

Started minor order, received approval from Innocent III; wanted order to work, or beg if necessary, preach, take care of sick and poor; order not to have property (see *Rule of St. Francis*, Bettenson, pp. 128-132); Francis became known as "*Il Poverello*—the Impoverished;" introduced use of the rosary

Order outgrew his control, became more worldly under new vicar-general; Francis abdicated leadership in 1223, spent rest of life in quiet retirement--supposedly received signs of cross before he died ("stigmata," punctured hands and feet as signs of cross)

Pope and others changed direction of order; gifts given to pope "to use" for the order (thus pope controlled order); finally in next century pope John XXII gave property to the order

Two factions: Conventuals (wanted property), and Observants (followed Francis); finally divided into two orders

Called Order of Minor Brothers (O.F.M.); wear brown robes

4. Women's orders

Both Dominicans and Franciscans had auxiliary orders for women; e.g., Franciscan group started by Clara, called "Poor Claras"; never were women Jesuits

5. Tertiates

“third level,” for laymen’s groups interested in helping established orders; called “conversi”; they took no vows but helped with monastery chores and attended services

6. Other orders

Many started in twelfth and thirteenth centuries

Augustinians

Started again in thirteenth century; tried to revive rule of Augustine, which had ceased after Muslim conquest of north Africa

Premonstrants

Similar to Augustinians; strongest in England and Germany

Carmelites

First evidence in 1185, in Mt. Carmel; dating from crusades; supposedly “founded by Elijah”

7. Conditions of the friars

Great variation, even within same order (esp. Franciscans); some—wealth, scholars, power; others—poor, despised; moral declension apparent in most orders, causing “reform” orders

Tremendous growth in thirteenth century; e.g., 8,000 Franciscan houses by middle of century

Many ecclesiastics introduced to education through these orders

D. The inquisition

Began with Innocent III after Albigensian crusade; Dominicans put in charge

Legal abuses of inquisition:

- Secret accusations
- Arrest and trial without due process
- No lawyer permitted

- Not permitted to face accuser
- No witnesses
- Punished with or without confession
- Terrible tortures

Church could only torture, not put to death; victims turned over to “secular power” for death (usually burning); thus Roman Catholic apologists later blame the civil authorities

[For “justification” for inquisition, see Aquinas in Bettenson, pp. 133-135]

E. Scholars of the thirteenth century

The thirteenth century saw the high point of scholasticism. The increase in learning, spurred on by the new orders, produced a crop of extremely gifted thinkers and writers, who dedicated their lives to examining the philosophy of Christianity and the fine points of faith (and for some, science). While most of them rejected the idea of inductive reasoning and the role of evidence, they built great systems of thought on tradition and philosophy.

1. Roger Bacon (1214-1294)

(Not Francis Bacon, seventeenth century)

English Franciscan scholar; studied and taught in Oxford and Paris; studied language, science, philosophy; extremely valuable book collection

Considered to be three centuries ahead of his time; rejected scholasticism for the experimental method; most advanced in lenses and mirrors

Believed in study of the Bible in original languages, to help understand nature

Not appreciated, held in suspicion by many; his experiments considered Satanic; at one point arrested and imprisoned by his own order

2. Albertus Magnus (1193-1280)

German Dominican scholar; mastered whole corpus of Aristotle; wrote twenty-one massive volumes on Aristotle, including reconciliation of natural science and philosophy with Christianity

Probably the most learned and well-read man in the thirteenth century; universally recognized

Expressed high praise for Mary and taught her “immaculate conception”

3. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

Italian; student of Albertus Magnus; greatest philosopher and theologian of Middle Ages; Dominican; called the “Angelic Doctor” (for his interest in angels) and the “Dumb Ox” (for his ponderous methods)

Taught that Mary had original sin (denied immaculate conception of Mary)

Taught the idea of “progressive justification”

Taught all over Europe; ultimate exponent of natural theology, based on categories of Aristotle

Wrote *Summa Theologica*; his *Contra Gentiles* was an apologetic work based on natural theology intended to train missionaries to the Turks

Died at age of 48 (Dante said poisoned)

4. Bonaventura (1221-1274)

Italian, John of Fidanza; age four, sick, prayed for by Francis of Assisi, recovered, named “O Good Fortune” (“O Bona Ventura”); became Franciscan; worked way up to be head of Franciscans

Mystical, godly; rejected Aristotelianism; his teacher said, “Adam did not seem to have sinned in Bonaventura”

Famous commentary on the *Sentences*; also rejected immaculate conception of Mary

5. Duns Scotus (1270-1308)

Scottish Franciscan; separated faith from philosophy; used obscure wording, called the “Subtle Doctor”; not analytic and lucid, thus “duns” (“Dunce”)

More critical than constructive; decline in reputation followed his death; strongly defended immaculate conception