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GERSON AS A PREACHER IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN MENDICANTS AND SECULAR PRIESTS

Nancy McLoughlin

Jean Gerson enjoyed a long and successful career as a preacher whose audiences included the French court, the University of Paris, the Council of Constance, the people of Paris and Bruges, religious orders and those who sought his spiritual advice.¹ Prominent members of French society praised his eloquence, while the complexity and historical importance of his surviving sermons, confessional manuals and spiritual treatises have encouraged modern scholars to explore Gerson's motivations and goals as a preacher.² Although modern evaluations of Gerson's identity as a preacher remain conflicted, especially with respect to his violent polemic against certain visionary women, many modern scholars have identified Jean Gerson as a particularly compassionate and effective preacher whose sermons were motivated by a genuine concern for the spiritual and temporal welfare of simple Christians and the unity and order of the Church.³

¹ For an outline of Gerson's career and audiences see: Louis B. Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: Principles of Church Reform* (Leiden, 1973), D. Catherine Brown, *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson* (Cambridge, Eng., 1987), G. H. M. Posthumus Meyjes, *Jean Gerson Apostle of Unity: His Church Politics and Ecclesiology* (Leiden, 1999), Daniel Hobbins, "The Schoolman as Public Intellectual. Jean Gerson and the Late Medieval Tract," *American Historical Review* 108 (2003), 1308–1337, and Brian Patrick McGuire, "Introduction," in Jean Gerson: Early Works *Jean Gerson: Early Works*, ed. and trans. Brian Patrick McGuire. The Classics of Western Spirituality (Mahwah, New Jersey, 1998), 1–73.

² For the opinion of Gerson's contemporaries regarding his skill as a preacher, see Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, 5 and 23.

³ For the suggestion that Gerson was a particularly compassionate, effective and sincere preacher, see Louis Mourin, *Jean Gerson: Prédicateur Français* (Brugge, Belgium, 1952); Brown, *Pastor and Laity*; Yelena Mazour-Matusevich, "Late Medieval 'Counseling': Jean Gerson (1363–1419) as a Family Pastor," *Journal of Family History* 29 (2004), 153–167. For the disputed nature of Gerson's pastoral care of women see: Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, 209–226; Jo Ann McNamara, "The Rhetoric of Orthodoxy: Clerical Authority and Female Innovation in the Struggle with Heresy," in *Maps of Flesh and Light: The Religious Experience of Medieval Women Mystics*, ed. Ulrike Wiethaus (Syracuse, 1993), 24–27; Nancy Caciola, "Mystics, Demoniacs, and the Physiology of Spirit Possession in Medieval Europe," *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History* 42 (2000), 273–296; Mary Agnes Edsall, "Like wise master builders: Jean Gerson's Ecclesiology, 'Lectio Divina,' and Christine de Pizan's 'Livre de la Cité de Dames'"

Gerson's sermons and theological treatises, however, also aggressively denounced certain groups, including women, and the four major mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Carmelites). Particularly notable are Gerson's attacks against women visionaries and the mendicant orders. He characterized visionary women as mentally deranged (*EW*, 344–45), narcissistic and overcome by pride (9.181–82), driven to prolonged conversations with their confessors by lust (9.184) and incapable of learning (9.184). His characterizations of the mendicants were perhaps even more pernicious. He counted them among the four great plagues of the Church, identifying the other three plagues as the Roman persecution of Christians, the rise of heresy and the coming of the Antichrist (7.2.979). These attacks had immediate political consequences.⁴ They also demand attention because their targets enjoyed considerable support from the ecclesiastical and political authorities, as well as the laity, in Gerson's time and remain respected by many individuals today.⁵ In previous treatments of Gerson, modern historians have either interpreted these attacks as proof that Gerson's more compassionate arguments were politically motivated rather than sincere or as proof that those whom Gerson attacked were as misguided and dangerous as he claimed.⁶

Medievalia et Humanistica 21 (2000), 33–57; Dyan Elliott, "Seeing Double: John Gerson, the Discernment of Spirits, and Joan of Arc," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002); 26–54; Nancy Caciola, *Discerning Spirits: Divine and Demonic Possession in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2003), 304; Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 2004), 270; and Wendy Love Anderson's article in this volume.

⁴ Following Gerson's sermon, *Quomodo stabit regnum*, the Franciscans and Augustinians were expelled from the University of Paris. See R. N. Swanson, "The 'Mendicant Problem' in the Later Middle Ages," in *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy, and the Religious Life: Essays in Honour of Gordon Leff*, ed. Peter Biller and Barrie Dobson, *Studies in Church History* 11 (Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester, NY, 1999), 231–232. Dyan Elliott has recently argued that Gerson's arguments against women visionaries played an important role in the condemnation of Joan of Arc and the depictions of false visionaries that appeared in John Nider's *Formicarium* in 1431, despite the fact that Gerson himself supported Joan. See Elliott, *Proving Women*, 294–303. Nancy Caciola has similarly credited Gerson with influencing Nider's book, which played an influential role in the development of European notions of diabolical witchcraft. See Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 317–318.

⁵ For the limited effect of Gerson's critiques of visionary women, see Caciola, *Discerning Spirits*, 309. For the influence of the mendicants in medieval France as measured by the spread of mendicant convents, see Richard W. Emery, *The Friars in Medieval France: A Catalogue of French Mendicant Convents, 1200–1550* (New York and London, 1962).

⁶ For example, Jacques Le Goff suggests that Gerson attempted to turn the university into a caste. See "How Did the Medieval University Conceive of Itself," in

This article argues that Gerson's attacks against the mendicant orders demonstrate both the contested nature of Gerson's authority as a university preacher and his sincere belief that the unhindered exercise of this authority was necessary for the political and spiritual health of France and the greater Church.

Gerson understood and experienced his own authority as a preacher and theologian as representative of the authority of the University of Paris as a whole and thus appointed himself an ardent defender of the university and its interests. He lived in a time, however, during which the university's authority and independence were constantly threatened by popes, kings, princes and internal disputes. His own dependence on the university as the basis of his authority and his participation in the University of Paris' historical struggle to establish and protect its intellectual authority and legal privileges convinced him that the independence of the university, the preservation of Catholic truth and the pursuit of the common good were intimately connected. As a result of this belief, Gerson, who on many occasions identified himself as a compassionate defender of the weak, attacked those who threatened the university with the strongest possible polemic.

Evidence of Gerson's compassionate concern for the spiritual health of the laity is abundant. Gerson scholars have noted that his vernacular sermons are exceptionally rich "in dogmatic and ethical teaching."⁷ For example, in his sermon *Quomodo stabit regnum* (How will His kingdom stand), Gerson expressed concern for Christians who feared that they would be condemned for their support of the wrong pope in the papal schism. He comforted these people with the assurance that they would not be held responsible for their potentially mistaken obedience as long as the identity of the true pope was unclear (7.2.982). In other contexts, he urged priests to beware of giving any of their parishioners a penance that would easily be recognized by others and lead to social strife. He also warned parents against sleeping in the same bed as their infants because of the danger of accidental infanticide.⁸

Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages (Chicago, 1980), 133–134. For the suggestion that Gerson's attacks against women and mendicants were justified, see notes 12–15 below.

⁷ Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, 24, Yelena Mazour-Matusevich, "Late Medieval 'Counseling': Jean Gerson (1363–1419) as a Family Pastor," *Journal of Family History* 29 (2004), 153–167, and Wendy Love Anderson's article in this volume.

⁸ Mazour-Matusevich, "Late Medieval 'Counseling'," 161 and 157–158, citing

In his political sermons, he defended the poor and helpless against the greed and violence of the more powerful by urging the French crown and nobility to avoid oppressing their subjects (7.2.1156) while also urging the warring French princes of the blood to seek peaceful solutions to their internal conflicts (7.2.1142–43), France's conflicts with England (7.2.443–448) and the papal schism (5.535–536). He suggested that they do this for the sake of their own souls (7.2.436, 7.2.532 and 7.2.1162–1163) and also for the sake of promoting the spiritual and physical well-being of their subjects without whom the princes would have no lordship (7.2.440 and 7.2.1155). In 1392, he also appealed to the compassion of Pope Clement VII (1378–1394), by suggesting that if he truly loved the Church, he would voluntarily step down from his office in favor of the rival claimant, Pope Boniface IX (1389–1404) for the sake of restoring unity to the Church. He implied that such an action would identify Benedict as the true pope, just as in 1 Kings 3:25–27, when the true mother of a disputed baby identified herself to Solomon by her willingness to surrender the baby to her rival rather than see it cut in half and divided between them (3.8).

The attention to the practical concerns of lowly parish priests and their parishioners, as well as the general concern for peace, justice and church unity expressed in these examples suggests a sincere concern for the poor, the spiritual health of the laity and the Church in general.⁹ This evaluation is consistent with Gerson's own description of the "good shepherd" in his sermon, *Bonus pastor* (The Good Pastor), delivered at the synod of Reims in May, 1408. The good shepherd or pastor, Gerson explained, provides "a strong guard of the flock of the Lord lest having been wickedly dispersed, lest having wandered through the wilderness of negligence, the devouring wolf

EW, 375 and Claude Gauvard and Gilbert Ouy, "Gerson et l'infanticide: défense des femmes et critique de la pénitence publique," in "*Riens ne m'est seur que la chose incertaine*": *Études sur l'art d'écrire au Moyen Âge offertes à Eric Hicks par ses élèves, collègues, amis et amis*, ed. Jean-Claude Mühlethaler and Denis Billotte, et al. (Geneva, 2001), 52.

⁹ For a discussion of Gerson's sincerity, see Mazour-Matusevich, "Late Medieval 'Counseling'," 155 and 163. Gerson addresses the preacher's responsibility to speak the truth to the powerful even at the risk of persecution for the sake of the common good in his sermon *Vivat rex* (7.2.1152–54). For discussions of Gerson's willingness to discuss unpopular positions at court see, Meyjes, *Jean Gerson Apostle of Unity*, 21–26 and John B. Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism* (Manchester, Eng., 1960), 30–31.

from the lower regions seize it, demolish it, and lose it.”¹⁰ Additionally, modern scholars have found proof of Gerson’s sincere concern for justice, peace and church unity in the courage that he displayed when he preached unpopular positions at court, such as when as a young bachelor of theology he preached the sermon *Adorabunt eum* (They will adore Him). This sermon openly challenged the French king’s plans to end the papal schism by force and thus defied previous attempts by the French court to silence the university on the matter of the papal schism.¹¹

The evidence for Gerson’s compassion and sincerity is so considerable that some Gerson scholars have assumed that the rhetorical violence Gerson directed against some groups must have been justified; these scholars have attempted to reconcile the vigorous denunciations and compassionate pleas for peace and mercy that characterize Gerson’s sermons by suggesting that the groups and individuals that Gerson attacked presented a genuine threat to the existing political and spiritual order.¹² For example, Catherine Brown has suggested that Gerson’s attacks against ascetic contemplative women whom he deemed to be mentally deranged and overly ambitious may be explained by the possibility that “Gerson had encountered a number of visionaries, that a majority of them were women, and that most of them were deluded and therefore a source of possible harm to the Church.”¹³ Similarly, she has argued that although “Gerson’s severity towards the mendicants” may have roots in the strong anti-mendicant tradition of the University of Paris, “a number of unseemly wrangles must have taken place between the Mendicants and the parish priests.”¹⁴ Such explanations represent the extent to which Gerson scholars have accepted Gerson’s perception of his own situation as a true representation of his historical reality. The result of accepting

¹⁰ Gerson refers to the synod itself in this quote, but this pastoral imagery remains consistent throughout the sermon. 5.123: “fit denique ad fortem custodiam dominici gregis ne male dispersum, ne vagabundum per deserta negligentiae rapiat, dissipet, perdat ipsum lupus ille vorax infernalis . . .”

¹¹ Meyjes, *Jean Gerson Apostle of Unity*, 21–26 and John B. Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism* (Manchester, Eng., 1960), 30–31.

¹² Louis B. Pascoe, *Jean Gerson: Principles of Church Reform*, esp. 110–174, and Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, 73–77. Christoph Burger, *Aedificatio, Fructus, Utilitas: Johannes Gerson als professor der Theologie und Kanzler der Universität Paris* (Tübingen, 1986), 158–64.

¹³ Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, 222.

¹⁴ Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, 77–78.

Gerson's normative statements at face value, as Daniel Hobbins has recently argued, is a portrayal of Gerson as a vessel of abstract ideas rather than a human "historical witness."¹⁵ Hobbins has also observed that almost all of Gerson's writings fit into the genre of the political tract.¹⁶

The argument that Gerson reserved his polemics for genuine threats to the spiritual and political order remains convincing, however, because it is easily supported by Gerson's writings. Gerson repeatedly suggested that the only solution to the problems faced by the Church and the kingdom of France in his day was for each individual to understand and fulfill his allotted role in the established spiritual and political hierarchies (7.2.1149). He also attributed injustice and war to the confusion of order caused when certain individuals mistakenly attempted to exceed their hierarchical status (7.2.1149–51) and argued that such a disregard for the proper order of things resulted from a lack of vigilance against the seven vices, which he identified as the agents of the enemy of mankind (7.2.436 and 439–440. Also, 7.2.1150–1151). For this reason, he defined the role of the preacher as one of gently convincing the members of his audience to put their personal realms in order, and in the case of nobles and prelates, to see to the proper order of the political and spiritual realms (7.2.1137, 1144–47, 1151–52, 1155). Additionally, when Gerson attacked particular groups or individuals in his sermons he explicitly claimed to do so for the purpose of defending the weak against the strong or because those whom he attacked threatened either the order of the Church or the glory and strength of the French crown.¹⁷

For example, Gerson's sermon, *Diligite justiciam* (Love justice), delivered between April and May, 1408, defined the different jurisdictions of divine, natural, ecclesiastical and civil law for the purpose of advocating the punishment of the provost of Paris (7.2.598–615).¹⁸ Gerson

¹⁵ Daniel Hobbins, "Beyond the Schools, New Writings and the Social Imagination of Jean Gerson" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2002), 13–20.

¹⁶ Daniel Hobbins, "The Schoolman as Public Intellectual," (note 1 above), 1326. Zenon Kaluza also notes the polemical nature of much of Gerson's work in *Les querelles doctrinales à Paris: nominalistes et réalistes aux confins du XIV^e et du XV^e siècles* (Bergamo, 1988), 36 and 65.

¹⁷ For example, see the discussion of his treatment of the mendicants beginning note 90 below.

¹⁸ For historical context and dates, see Mourin, *Jean Gerson prédicateur français*, (note 3 above), 181–187.

claimed that the provost had violated his jurisdiction by executing two members of the University of Paris who, as clerics, fell under ecclesiastical and not civil law (7.2.612). After arguing that the preservation of church order and church privileges was necessary for the preservation of temporal and spiritual order, Gerson suggested that the sort of envy-driven ambition that the provost had demonstrated by over-stepping his jurisdiction was the cause of the violence, falsity, general disorder and strife between church and state that existed during his lifetime (7.2.610).

A closer examination of *Diligite justiciam* suggests, however, that although Gerson explicitly included defending the weak and preserving the established order among the responsibilities of a good preacher, his understanding of the identity of the weak and the proper ordering of existing spiritual and political hierarchies reflected his own particular historical positioning. Gerson portrayed the university's complaint against the provost as a plea for the establishment of an impartial understanding of political and ecclesiastical order. However, his interpretation of the situation was by no means universal. The students whom the provost had executed had been accused of murder.¹⁹ Although *Diligite justiciam* suggested that the two were only guilty of robbery and therefore did not deserve to die (7.2.612), the sermon did not attempt to establish their innocence. What mattered to Gerson was that the ecclesiastical privileges of these university members had been violated. In this respect, Gerson, who defended the ecclesiastical rights of these supposed criminals and called for the punishment of the royal official in charge of law enforcement, may have appeared in the eyes of many Parisians to be a much greater threat to the order of church and state than the provost.²⁰

¹⁹ Pearl Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges in the Middle Ages: The Rights, Privileges, and Immunities of Scholars and Universities at Bologna, Paris, and Oxford* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), 184–186, citing, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1889–1897), ed. Heinrich Denifle and Emile Chatelain IV: 146–147, no. 1840. Also *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denis contenant le règne de Charles VI, de 1380 à 1422*, ed. and trans. M. L. Bellaguet, 6 vols. (Paris, 1839–52), 3:724.

²⁰ John W. Baldwin discusses the problem of clerical violence in relation to ecclesiastical privilege in, *Masters Princes and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and His Circle*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1970), 137–149. For more on tension between the citizens of Paris and the University of Paris see Gordon Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: An Institutional and Intellectual History* (New York, 1968), 8–11 and 28–31.

The pro-university nature of Gerson's arguments in *Diligite justiciam* illustrates that although many of Gerson's politically aggressive sermons claimed to support a divinely established political and ecclesiastical order, Gerson's understanding of hierarchy, and subsequently his understanding of the preacher as a defender of order within the Church, was neither objective nor innate. Rather, it derived from the University of Paris' historical struggle to establish and protect its intellectual authority and legal privileges. Gerson's studies of the university's past as well as his own experience as a student and chancellor of Paris taught him that his own authority as a university theologian was inextricably connected to the successful defense of university privileges.²¹

University privileges were a source of intellectual authority for members of the university because of the means by which they were obtained and defended. Medieval scholars had always been particularly vulnerable to physical attack, seizure of goods and imprisonment because their studies required them to leave their homes and families and travel through potentially hostile territories.²² Both Emperor Frederick I and Pope Alexander III recognized the vulnerability of scholars living away from their homes. Frederick I granted them special privileges in the imperial decree, *Authentica Habita* in 1155 and Alexander III placed the responsibility for disciplining errant students in the hands of their masters in response to a conflict between students in Reims and the local clergy that took place between 1170 and 1172.²³ In addition to improving the ability of scholars to carry on their studies in relative safety, these decrees represented papal

²¹ Drawing on comparisons between thirteenth-and-fourteenth-century university documents and Gerson's arguments for theological reform, Monika Asztalos has suggested that "Gerson had studied the bulls, condemnations, statutes and other documents" pertaining to the university's history and "found support in them for a return to a more traditional theology." See, Monika Asztalos, "The Faculty of Theology," in *A History of the University in Europe: Universities in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. ed. Hilde De Ridder-Symoens (Cambridge, Eng., 1992), 1:437.

²² Pearl Kibre provides a general history of scholarly privileges in, *Scholarly Privileges*, 3-17.

²³ For Alexander's action, see Ferruolo, *The Origins of the University: The Schools of Paris and Their Critics, 1100-1215* (Stanford, California: 1985), 290-291. The classic university scholar Hastings Rashdall suggests that Alexander was acting in accordance with custom since Emperor Frederick I had also granted the students of Bologna the privilege to be tried by their own masters before being tried by another ecclesiastical authority. See Rashdall, *The Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden (Oxford, 1936), vol. 1, 290.

and imperial approval of scholarly activities and thus bolstered the claims to intellectual, spiritual and political authority made by their recipients. The very existence of these decrees implied that their imperial and papal authors believed that the scholars were worth protecting. The effects of such decrees, however, were fleeting. For example, during the wars between the emperor and the Lombard League (1159–1162), Frederick I Barbarossa ignored the privileges that he himself had granted to scholars in *Authentica Habita*.²⁴ In Paris, the scholars overcame this problem through mutual association and collective action.

Some time during the second half of the twelfth-century, the secular clergy who were scholars in Paris founded a guild of teaching masters—a voluntary association based on loyalty and mutual support. This guild, which eventually became known as the University of Paris, marked its membership through a formal inception ceremony, demanded obedience to its statutes, set clothing requirements, determined curriculum standards and required attendance at the funerals of its members.²⁵ The structure and concerns of this association resembled the other medieval trade guilds that also were created in the late twelfth century.²⁶ The names the scholars used to designate their new society—such as *consortium*, meaning fellowship, participation, or society and *universitas*, meaning the whole body or community—also suggest that the early university was a scholars' guild.²⁷

Although the scholar's motivation for forming their guild and the exact timing of the formation of the university have been disputed, the guild grew to be markedly effective at defending its own privileges.²⁸ For example, the masters teaching in Paris called for a cessation of lectures—in other words a strike—and threatened to leave Paris in

²⁴ See Paolo Nardi, "Relations with Authority," in *Universities in the Middle Ages*, 78–79.

²⁵ For the complexity of determining an exact date for the foundation of the University of Paris, see Gaines Post, "Parisian Masters as a Corporation," *Speculum* 9 (1934), 421–422. For the inception ceremony as the foundation of the university, see Rashdall, *Universities of Europe*, 1:285–286.

²⁶ See Rashdall, *Universities of Europe*, 1:288, and 299–300; and Paul Trio, "A Medieval Students Confraternity at Ypres: The Notre Dame Confraternity of Paris Students," *History of Universities* 5 (1985), 15–54.

²⁷ Gaines Post, "Parisian Masters as a Corporation," 423–426.

²⁸ For a summary of the historiography on the rise of the University of Paris and European universities in general, see Walter Rüegg, "Themes," in *Universities in the Middle Ages* (note 21 above), 4–20.

1200 in order to convince King Philip Augustus of France to punish the provost and several citizens of Paris who had been involved in a tavern brawl in which several students were killed. This action convinced the king to punish those who had attacked the university with life imprisonment and to destroy the houses and vineyards of the guilty parties who had fled Paris to avoid punishment. Additionally, at the insistence of the masters, he required the citizens and provost of Paris to observe the clerical privileges which protected all clergy members, including members of the university, from bodily harm and from secular justice.²⁹ Eventually, the privileges of the University of Paris included exemptions from taxes and seizures, the vigorous punishment of all those who violated the scholars' clerical immunity from popular or juridical violence, the right to be tried and held in ecclesiastical rather than secular courts and limited immunity from local ecclesiastical officials such as the bishop and chancellor of Paris.³⁰

Indeed, university members depended upon the preservation of university privileges for their political and even physical safety. Although the circumstances surrounding *Diligite justiciam* suggest that scholars just as often provoked the violence they experienced as they were its innocent victims, the university deemed it necessary to its own survival that scholars from distant regions would know that they would be safe in their travels and during their tenure in Paris. Additionally, because university members comprised a large, exceptionally privileged population of outsiders within the city and diocese of Paris, strife between the university, the town and local ecclesiastical officials was common.³¹ University members persistently defended their privileges and protested when any of their privileges, but especially those exempting them from violence at the hands of secular officials, were violated.³² If their complaints did not result in

²⁹ Rashdall, *Universities of Europe*, 1:294–298; Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, (note 19 above), 85–87; Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, (note 23 above), 285–286; and Ferruolo, “*Parisius-Paradisus: The City, Its Schools and the Origins of the University of Paris*,” in *The University and the City: From Medieval Origins to the Present*, ed. Thomas Bender (Oxford and New York, 1988), 31. For a discussion of the clerical privileges of non-university clergy in France during the thirteenth century, see Gerard J. Campell, S.J., “Clerical Immunities in France During the Reign of Philip III,” *Speculum* 39 (1964): 404–424.

³⁰ Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities* (note 20 above), 27–32.

³¹ Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, 28–32.

³² Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges* (note 19 above), 86. Also, Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, 24.

satisfactory justice, university masters called for a cessation of university lectures, disputations and preaching until the authorities granted their wishes. In addition to the cessation called in 1200, the university called for a cessation of lectures in response to violations of its clerical immunity and violent attacks against its members in 1229, 1253, 1267, 1281, 1304, 1351, 1364, 1392 and 1407. Numerous other instances of violence against university members were settled by appeals to the King of France and to the Parlement of Paris. Although most of these appeals were settled in the university's favor, the persistence of physical and legal attacks against the university by citizens of Paris as well as by royal and episcopal officials demonstrates university members retained their legal privileges only because they fought for them.³³

Gerson's sermon *Estote misericordes* (Be merciful) demonstrates that like his thirteenth-century predecessors, Gerson also felt pressed to defend members of the university against potentially violent Parisian citizens and guards, lay lords and members of the French court. This sermon denounced the duke of Savoisy and his retainers for attacking a university procession and behaving violently inside a church. *Estote misericordes* described in detail how the duke of Savoisy's men attacked the innocent children included in the university's procession and the women who desperately attempted to protect their children from attackers who had barged into the Church of Saint Catherine during the celebration of the mass that followed the procession (7.1.330–331).³⁴ Expressing his awareness of the connection between the preservation of the university's privileges and its continued existence, Gerson also warned that if an attack against the university and the Church, perpetrated in broad daylight, was allowed to go unpunished that neither members of the bourgeoisie nor nobles would send their children to Paris to study and that the ensuing loss of learning and "true clergy" (*vraye clergie*) would eventually lead to the collapse of chivalry (7.1.333). As a result of Gerson's arguments, the Parlement of Paris determined that the duke should pay the university compensation and that his house in Paris should be destroyed as punishment.³⁵

³³ Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, 132–178.

³⁴ The incident and Gerson's sermon are discussed by McGuire in his "Introduction" to *Early Works*, 16–17.

³⁵ Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, (note 1 above), 35 and 270, n. 185. Also, *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denis*, 3:191–192.

Although Gerson's argument was successful, it is important to note that Gerson consciously made this appeal to the Parlement as a theologian and a preacher rather than as a plaintiff representing the university's legal case against the duke of Savoisy (7.1.328). This sermon appealed to the Parlement's mercy rather than to the university's rights. Gerson did not choose this tactic because he lacked a legal case. Savoisy had clearly violated the university members' clerical immunity from violence. Rather, he chose to preach on the subject of mercy rather than to demand the enforcement of ecclesiastical privileges because he felt more certain that he would be able to move the Parlement towards pity and compassion than that the university's privileges, established by long precedent, would be upheld (7.1.327–29). Gerson's apparent tentativeness may have derived from the fact that when he delivered *Estote misericordes* on 19 July 1404, the university was temporarily deprived of its most powerful protector, the king of France.³⁶

During the course of the university's history French kings had consistently defended and increased the university's privileges because the university's reputation and political support could be used to bolster their own authority.³⁷ Prior to the founding of the university, scholars who had studied in Paris had praised the French kings for their patronage of learning.³⁸ Philip Augustus had also proved himself a defender of the university in 1200 as had Blanche of Castile acting in the name of Louis IX in 1229.³⁹ The bond between the university and the French monarchy, however, increased during the struggle between Philip the Fair and Pope Boniface VIII in 1303, after which Philip exempted university members from taxes that were imposed on other members of the clergy. The university also won the support of Charles V (1364–1380) during the Parisian uprising led by Etienne Marcel in 1358 while Charles was prince regent, for which he allowed the university to call itself the 'eldest daughter of the king.'⁴⁰

³⁶ For date see Mourin, *Jean Gerson Prédicateur Français*, (note 3 above), 165–168. Citing *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis* IV: 129, no. 1805.

³⁷ Sophia Menache, "La naissance d'une nouvelle source d'autorité: l'université de Paris," *Revue historique* cclxxvii (1982), 307–308.

³⁸ Ferruolo, *Origins of the University* (note 23 above), 12–18.

³⁹ Ferruolo, "Parisius-Paradisus," (note 29 above), 33–35.

⁴⁰ Bernstein, *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair: University and Chancellor of Paris at the Beginning of the Great Schism* (Leiden, 1978), 28.

In addition to showing their appreciation of the university's support in specific circumstances, French kings valued the university's international reputation as a guardian of orthodoxy.⁴¹ The University of Paris was best known for its theologians whose status was sometimes compared to that of martyrs and virgins.⁴² University theologians and popes considered the work of theologians so important that they permitted theologians to hold plural church benefices *in absentia*.⁴³ Theologians discerned true from false doctrine through public disputations and reasoned comparisons of authorities.⁴⁴ Popes, bishops and kings relied on these conclusions in their governance of church and state.⁴⁵ Less-educated preachers also benefited from the work of university theologians in the form of published sermon collections and confessional manuals.⁴⁶ Finally, the university theologian was supposed to be the consummate preacher whose sermons would confound heresy and move the faithful towards an ordered Christian life and the attainment of salvation.⁴⁷ This role was often compared to that of the architect who designs a building, while the role of the simple preacher was compared to that of the workman who placed the stones at the architect's directions. In this respect, theologians were considered by some to be at least as important as prelates in the task of directing the spiritual growth of the Church.⁴⁸

Gerson accepted and advocated this understanding of the university theologian's role as an authoritative preacher and teacher for

⁴¹ Menache, "La naissance d'une nouvelle source d'autorité," (note 37 above), 307–308.

⁴² Ian P. Wei, "The Self-Image of the Masters of Theology at the University of Paris in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 46.3 (1995), 402–403.

⁴³ Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, (note 20 above), 67–69; Baldwin, *Masters Princes and Merchants*, (note 20 above), 119–120; R. N. Swanson, "Universities, Graduates and Benefices in Later Medieval England," *Past and Present* 106 (1985), 30 and 37–39; Jacques Verger, "Teachers," in *A History of the University in Europe*, (note 21 above), 151; and Ian P. Wei, "Self-Image," 409–410 and 413–421. Pierre d'Ailly was allowed to add benefices "to that of the chancellorship until the revenues of that office were augmented to a total of one hundred pounds of Tours." See Bernstein, *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*, (note 40 above), 80.

⁴⁴ Wei, "The Self-Image of Masters of Theology," (note 42 above), 400–402.

⁴⁵ Ian P. Wei, "The Masters of Theology at the University of Paris in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries: An Authority Beyond the Schools," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 71 (1993), 37–63.

⁴⁶ Baldwin, *Masters Princes and Merchants*, (note 20 above), 52–59, and Wei, "The Self-Image of Masters of Theology," 406–408.

⁴⁷ Wei, "The Self-Image of Masters of Theology," (note 42 above), 405.

⁴⁸ Wei, "The Self-Image of the Masters of Theology," 409–416 and 431.

less-expert prelates and simple Christians. He explained this relationship in *Diligite Justiciam* when he suggested that “[t]he spiritual order, which we name ecclesiastic or evangelical, governs itself principally by the Gospel and by those who know it, whom we call theologians.”⁴⁹ Moreover, he elaborated on the role of the theologian as preacher and director of the Church in his 1408 sermon *Bonus pastor*. Here Gerson exhorted bishops to feed their flocks with learned preaching for the sake of confounding heretics (5.126 and 127). He also advocated the establishment of a theology school in every metropolitan church (5.130). Finally, he argued on several occasions that the theologians of the University of Paris had kept France free from heresy and thus had assisted the French king in preserving his title as most Christian king (5.239 and 10.10).

Arguments like Gerson’s were particularly effective because of the widespread belief that the translation of power from Greece to Rome and then to Charlemagne had been accompanied by a translation of learning and that wherever studies flourished, so would imperial power.⁵⁰ King Charles V of France encouraged recourse to this tradition as part of his efforts to restore the international reputation of the University of Paris and the French crown to their thirteenth-century stature following the French defeats in the Sicilian Vespers and Hundred Years War, the attempts of Popes Urban V (1362–1370) and Gregory XI (1370–1378) to return the papal see to Italy and the challenge to French scholasticism presented by the Italian Renaissance.⁵¹

Early in his reign, Charles VI (1380–1422) had also defended and increased the university’s privileges, particularly its members’ exemption from taxes and clerical immunity. He pursued these policies in

⁴⁹ 7.608: “La police spirituelle, que nous nommons ecclesiastique ou evangelique, se gouverne principalement par l’evangile et par ceulx qui le scevent, que nous appellons theologiens.”

⁵⁰ Ferruolo, *Origins of the University*, (note 23 above), 13. Ferruolo suggests that this tradition was the most important factor in the decisions of Philip II and later French kings to support the interests of the university over and against those of the citizens of Paris. See Ferruolo, “Parisius-Paradisus,” 32–33.

⁵¹ For a discussion of the relationship between the fluctuating status of the French crown and the status of the University of Paris in accordance with the tradition of the *translatio studii* as well as challenges to the University of Paris’ claim to pre-eminence by the humanists and by English scholars and the reaction of Charles V, see Gilbert Ouy, “Humanism and Nationalism in France at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century,” in *The Birth of Identities: Denmark and Europe in the Middle Ages*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Copenhagen, 1996), 108–11.

support of the university even when faced with opposition from the royal council and the Parlement of Paris.⁵² His frequent bouts of insanity, however, allowed the dukes of Burgundy and Orleans to battle for control of Paris.⁵³ The university found it difficult to remain neutral in this struggle. In fact, the university had been leading the people of Paris in a procession and mass to pray for the health of the king on 14 July 1404, when it was attacked by supporters of the duke of Orleans, who was ruling Paris at the time.⁵⁴ Since the university's attacker enjoyed the support of the duke of Orleans and Charles VI was incapacitated, Gerson emphasized that the university, as the "daughter of the king by royal adoption," now deprived of her father's protection "like an orphan," sought justice from the king's court with respect to violence, which Gerson implied, she surely would not have suffered if the king could have been there to protect her.⁵⁵ He also reminded his audience of the university's sacred and ancient origins by recounting the *translatio studii* from Adam to Abraham to Greece to Rome to Charlemagne's foundation of the University of Paris to the university's adoption as the daughter of the king.⁵⁶ In other words, Gerson drew on the full rhetorical tradition available for the purpose of seeking Savoisy's punishment.

Gerson's sermon also demonstrates his awareness of the political value of his role as preacher. He quickly resorted to persuasion to achieve political goals that he could not achieve by legalistic or authoritative means. This decision emphasizes the fragile and contested nature of the university's privileges, which in turn explains why the university so vigorously defended these privileges even when such a defense may have seemed contrary to justice as in the case for which Gerson wrote *Diligite justiciam*. The persistent requirement that university members resort to collective action for the purpose of renegotiating seemingly established university privileges with each major shift in the ecclesio-political power struggle played a formative role in the identity formation of all participants. Each time the university

⁵² Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, (note 19 above), 170.

⁵³ Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism*, (note 9 above), 6.

⁵⁴ Mourin, *Jean Gerson prédicateur français*, (note 36 above), 166–168.

⁵⁵ 7.1.327: *fille du roy, par royale adoption*, l'Université de Paris, . . . La fille du roy ne peut de present avoir accez a sa royalle personne; *elle est comme orpheline* et sueffre violence incredible et crueuse.

⁵⁶ 7.1.329.

acted to protect itself from the perceived aggression of a powerful outsider it re-affirmed a boundary between the university and the rest of society. This type of boundary maintenance, considered by recent anthropological work on identity to be the fundamental component of group identity formation, would have enforced feelings of inter-dependence among university members.⁵⁷ In particular, it would have enforced an understanding among university members that the survival, authority and independence of the university depended on the masters' monopoly of teaching in the city, which they enforced by boycotting the lectures, disputations and students of all non-members.⁵⁸ It is unlikely that Gerson, who as chancellor was often asked to preach before court on behalf of the university, could have escaped the impression that he was a member of an embattled institution that he must defend at all costs.

More importantly, perhaps, Gerson would have recognized that his own intellectual authority was integrally connected to the university's attempts to protect its legal and ecclesiastical privileges. Struggles over the university's legal privileges played an important role in the development and defense of the university's intellectual and spiritual authority. In addition to defending the university's ecclesiastical rights, both *Diligite justiciam* and *Estote misericordes* emphasized the university's value to the Church and to the kingdom of France. These two arguments were interdependent. Only as long as the University of Paris was perceived as "the daughter of the king, the light of learning,

⁵⁷ In addition to addressing the financial and physical needs of scholars, Steven Ferruolo suggests that the university provided the scholars with a sense of protection and identity, suggesting that they would have thought of themselves as members of a school that was located in a city rather than as members of the city itself. See Ferruolo, "Parisius-Paradisus," (note 29 above), 24. For anthropological theories regarding boundary maintenance and group identity, see Fredrik Barth, "Introduction," in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Boston, 1969), 9–38; Clifford Geertz, "The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 255–310, esp. 306–310; Richard Trexler, ed. *Persons in Groups: Social Behavior as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*. Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 36 (Binghamton, New York, 1985); Andrew Abbott, "Things of Boundaries," *Social Research* 62 (1995), 857–882; Fredrik Barth, "Boundaries and Connections," in Anthony P. Cohen (ed.), *Signifying Identities: Anthropological Perspectives on Boundaries and Contested Values* (London and New York, 2000), 17–36, esp. 22–23; and Ronald Grigor Suny, "Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations," *The Journal of Modern History* 73 (2001), 862–896.

⁵⁸ Bernstein, "Magisterium and License: Corporate Autonomy Against Papal Authority in the Medieval University of Paris," *Viator* 9 (1978), 296–297, 303–304, and 306–307.

the mother of studies,” as described in *Diligite justiciam* and as “the fountain of learning, light of our faith, beauty, ornament and honesty of France,” as described in *Estote misericordes*, would such cessations have any effect.⁵⁹ Gerson demonstrated his understanding of this relationship in *Diligite justiciam*, when he suggested that because the university had suspended its sermons and lectures, the entire kingdom of France would suffer an increase in sins and a decrease in good things for the living and the dead (7.2.613). In addition to these spiritual losses, Gerson suggested that the honor of the king and queen would be wounded when those outside of France learned that Paris was deprived of the spiritual services of the university. He then argued that the only reason why the university was willing to threaten the spiritual health of France in this manner was because it had not been able to achieve justice in its defense of its rights (7.2.613).

The fact that the university’s strike began in early November, 1407 and Gerson was still pleading with the crown for justice in April, 1408, however, suggests that the crown did not fear the loss of university sermons and lectures as much as the university might have hoped.⁶⁰ In fact, the longer the Parisians proved their ability to survive without the services of the university, the less likely it became that the university would achieve its goal of punishing the provost. Although the dispute was settled in the university’s favor soon after Gerson delivered his sermon, this resolution reflected a change in the political order of Paris, rather than the Parisians’ capitulation to the university’s bargaining practices. The provost had been a supporter of the duke of Orleans, who had been assassinated at the duke of Burgundy’s orders on 23 November 1407. When the provost uncovered the duke of Burgundy’s role in the assassination, the duke was forced to flee Paris on 26 November 1407, until he could return with 800 knights on 28 February 1408. The University of Paris organized a procession to protest the military nature of the duke’s return but the duke and the university were at least partially reconciled after the duke appointed one of his own supporters as provost and had the bodies of the executed scholars ceremonially returned to the

⁵⁹ 7.599: “la fille du Roy, la lumiere de science, la mere des estudes. Also, 7.326–327: la fontaine de science, la lumiere de nostre foy, la beauté, le parement l’honnesteté de France, voir de tout le mond, l’Université de Paris.”

⁶⁰ For dates see Mourin, *Jean Gerson prédicateur français*, (note 3 above), 181–184, and Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, (note 19 above), 184–185.

university.⁶¹ Gerson demonstrated that he recognized the delicacy of this situation when he suggested in his sermon that the provost's guilt was greater than the duke's because he had knowingly overstepped his legal jurisdiction and set a bad precedent for future judges, whereas the duke had merely committed a private crime (7.2.611–613).⁶²

The political nature of this solution followed a well established pattern of university and royal action that emphasized the interdependence between the university's authority and the preservation of university privileges. This interdependence ultimately became an important resource for the university's assertion of its authority within France and the greater Church. When Gerson emphasized the university's greatness in order to protect its privileges, he was drawing on a longstanding tradition that was firmly established when Pope Gregory IX confirmed of the university's privileges in *Parens scientiarum*, which identified the university as the breast-plate of the faith (*lorica fidei*).⁶³ This bull, issued in April, 1231, marked the successful end of the University of Paris' first cessation of lectures.⁶⁴ As with the case discussed above, the crown did not respond to the university's action immediately. The university had called its strike in March, 1229.⁶⁵ The eventual successful solution to the strike, however, confirmed the university's assertion of its own importance within the Church and the kingdom of France. Although these negotiations regarding the university's authority within the Church and the kingdom of France did not produce "real" or fixed authority, whenever they were settled in the university's favor, they provided rhetorically useful precedents for members of the university who were seeking to protect their privileges and to act authoritatively in the Church and society.

⁶¹ Mourin, *Jean Gerson: prédicateur français*, 181–185.

⁶² For an account of the events related to the murder of the scholars see Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, (note 19 above), 184–186. Louis Mourin, also addresses these events and relates Gerson's sermon to the murder of the duke of Orleans in November, 1407, in *Jean Gerson: prédicateur français*, 181–186. Although he treated the duke of Burgundy gently in this instance, Gerson would eventually spend enormous amounts of energy persecuting the theologian who defended the duke of Burgundy's act as tyrannicide. For a discussion of Gerson's persecution of Jean Petit, a university theologian who justified the duke of Burgundy's actions as tyrannicide, even after Petit's death, see Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism*, (note 9 above), 74 and 95; Meyjes, *Apostle of Unity*, (note 1 above), 140, 182–183, and 202–203, McGuire, *Early Works*, 17–19.

⁶³ Denifle, *Chartularium I*: 137, no. 79.

⁶⁴ Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, (note 20 above), 32.

⁶⁵ Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, 31.

For this reason Gerson consistently emphasized the university's glory as the fountain of knowledge, daughter of the king and inheritor of ancient learning in his political and reform-oriented sermons as well as his sermons defending university privileges.⁶⁶ A striking example of this strategy may be found in Gerson's 1392 sermon in honor of Saint Louis, which most likely protested the crown's refusal to consult the university regarding potential solutions to the papal schism of 1378.⁶⁷ Gerson's sermon implied that Louis IX had avoided the tyranny of the flesh and had governed his subjects justly (5.232–233, 239) in part because Louis respected and sought the advice of learned men and also cherished the University of Paris and endowed her with privileges that remained up to Gerson's time. "It is this," Gerson explained referring to the university, "by which the kings of France reign well, through which they are established in the truth and through which they were made most Christian of Christians."⁶⁸

Other Gerson scholars have attributed Gerson's tendency to praise the University of Paris and to promote its authority within the Church and the kingdom of France to the role that the university played in Gerson's life as his intellectual home from the age of fourteen until his death in 1429.⁶⁹ Gerson's assertions of the university's status, however, represented much more than expressions of self-interest, traditionalism or loyalty to the university as an institution.⁷⁰ They were politically necessary for the defense of the university's privileges and the authority of the university and its chancellor within the Church. The university enjoyed special privileges because of its exalted status. Its exalted status, in turn, gave it and its chancellor an authoritative voice throughout Europe.⁷¹ In this respect, negotiations regarding

⁶⁶ See *Pax hominibus*, 7.772; *Rex in sempiternum vive*, 7.1005; *Veniat pax*, 7.1100, *Vivat rex*, 7.1137.

⁶⁷ Meyjes, *Apostle of Unity*, (note 1 above), 26–27.

⁶⁸ 5:239: "Haec est per quam bene Francorum reges regnant, per quam stabiliuntur in veritate et per quam de christianis christianissimi sunt effecti." Douglass Taber also observes that Gerson argued that the kings of France ruled through the fountain of science that was the university. See Taber, "The Theologian and the Schism: A Study of the Political Thought of Jean Gerson (1363–1429)" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1985), 279.

⁶⁹ Pascoe, *Principles of Church Reform*, (note 1 above), 81.

⁷⁰ For the suggestion that Gerson was motivated by an interest in power see Le Goff, "How Did the Medieval University Conceive of Itself," (note 6 above), 133–134. For traditionalism, see Monika Asztalos, "The Faculty of Theology," (note 21 above), 437. For loyalty, see Pascoe, *Principles of Church Reform*, (note 1 above), 81.

⁷¹ Ian Wei discusses the ecclesiastical and royal recognition given to the determinations of university masters regarding important issues such as mendicant privileges

university privileges were crucially important to Gerson, who as university chancellor used the authority of the university as the basis of his own authority when promoting his political, ecclesiastical and spiritual reforms.

Gerson, however, was very careful about how he exercised this authority. As *Estote misericordes* demonstrates, Gerson was also aware that preaching, because it relied on skill and persuasion, afforded a theologian the opportunity to pursue political and spiritual goals that exceeded his institutional and legal authority. Similarly, when Gerson argued against the French king's plans to invade Rome, he presented his arguments as an unworthy cleric's (*clers indigne*) reflections on the examples available from the Bible (5.531 and 5.535). When he urged the crown and princes of the blood to make peace with each other for the sake of the realm, he was very careful to point out that he spoke on the part of the university not in a manner of "authority, expertise, or presumption," but in "all humility and devout exhortation" (7.2.1137). Later in the same sermon, Gerson emphasized again that he did not intend to teach the nobles anything but to move them and enflame them regarding what they know (7.2.1151).

Preaching was not the only means by which theologians could pursue the defense of the university and the cause of church reform. The university had in the past determined authoritatively on important issues such as Philip IV's case against Boniface VIII, as well as several potential solutions to the papal schism.⁷² The French crown and princes of the blood, however, had consistently met the university's collective pronouncements on the schism with fierce and sometimes violent opposition. Although most of Gerson's court sermons did not immediately produce concrete political or ecclesiastical results, they did allow Gerson to speak the university's position publicly without interruption or reprisal.⁷³ These sermons suggest that he considered

and the deposition of Pope Boniface VIII in "An Authority Beyond the Schools," (note 45 above), 36–63.

⁷² For instances when the consensus of the university was sought in delicate ecclesio-political matters including the prosecution of Pope Boniface VIII, see Ian P. Wei, "The Masters of Theology at the University of Paris in the Late Thirteenth and Early Fourteenth Centuries," (note 45 above), 37–63. For the university's involvement in solutions to the papal schism of 1378, see R. N. Swanson, *Universities, Academics and the Great Schism* (Cambridge, Eng., 1979).

⁷³ Bernstein demonstrates how important such discussions could be in his conclusion to his discussion of the Blanchard Affair when he observes that those who argued for the French subtraction of obedience in 1398 used d'Ailly's ideas and

one of the most promising vehicles of reform to be the university theologian, acting both in the capacity of preacher in the name of the University of Paris and its exalted heritage.⁷⁴

This suggestion is consistent with the arguments establishing theologians as guarantors of orthodoxy as well as with Gerson's description of his understanding of his responsibilities as chancellor. A letter Gerson wrote in 1400 for the purpose of explaining his temporary resignation from the chancellor's office indicates that he continued to consider preaching to be an important part of his responsibilities as a theologian after he was named chancellor. The letter suggested that he felt compelled to resign the chancellorship at least in part because, "among these people [of Paris] who do not seek their own salvation, preaching becomes not only wasteful but also destructive and worthy of contempt if it is anything more than a curiosity" (*EW*, 164). Gerson then contrasted the helplessness of his position as chancellor with the good he could do fulfilling his obligations as dean of the cathedral chapter of Bruges by saying, "[i]t should be considered what good can be done at Bruges solely by the example of life, without any words" (*EW*, 164–165).

Gerson's awareness of both the theologian's responsibility to preach and the political and ecclesiastical potential of preaching reform greatly influenced his inter-related plans for the reform of the university and the Church. These plans emerge in a letter he wrote to Pierre d'Ailly in 1400. In this letter, Gerson lamented on the "general disaster of the Church" whose "size and merits have been diminished in a reduction of religious feeling" (*EW*, 168). He then suggested to d'Ailly, "(l)et us now then go in this savage storm or whirlpool, so that we not only desire to aid those who steer the ship of the Church, its prelates, but also take hold of them by force when they are perversely difficult to correct and the number of fools is infinite" (*EW*, 168). Although Gerson stated that he planned to take hold of prelates "by force," as chancellor of Paris, Gerson had no real authority over

that this "dramatizes the success with which he exploited the Blanchard affair to apply to a practical problem a body of thought that had been developing among canonists and theologians for over a century. Every time they were adapted and applied successfully, they gained attractiveness and force." See Bernstein, *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair* (note 40 above), 183.

⁷⁴ The sermons that Gerson delivered to the French court prior to assuming the chancellorship suggest that Gerson considered preaching to be an effective means of promoting church reform. Mourin *Jean Gerson* (note 3 above), 222–223.

the bishops of France. In fact, both the university as an institution and the chancellor of the Paris were legal and ecclesiastical subordinates of the bishop of Paris.⁷⁵

As suggested above, the only influence that Gerson could exercise over the French prelates depended on the university's reputation as a guarantor of orthodoxy and the inheritor of ancient wisdom. This reputation, in turn, depended on the successful deployment of arguments celebrating the university's value and authority during struggles over university privileges. The university's authority could also be enhanced by its ability to arrive at a consensus concerning difficult questions of ecclesiastical or political importance and the acceptance of this consensus by royal or ecclesiastical authorities.⁷⁶ Thus it was only as a gifted preacher and the representative of a respected body of professionals that Gerson could "aid those who steer the ship of the Church, its prelates," and "also take hold of them by force when they are perversely difficult to correct." In this respect, however, he faced another difficulty. In the early fifteenth century, the university and its theologians were not seen by the bishops or anyone else in European society as particularly representative of virtue and holiness.⁷⁷

For this reason, Gerson's reform plans began with a purification of theology as it was practiced in the university. Gerson wanted to put an end to the discussion, study and teaching of useless and pernicious doctrines by posting them publicly, encouraging the theological masters to discourage their students from paying attention to them and, barring cooperation from the faculty of theology, preventing those who held these doctrines from obtaining the *licentiate* (authority to teach) in theology. This reform of theology was necessary because,

⁷⁵ The university persistently pressed for independence from the bishop of Paris' juridical and doctrinal authority. See Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges* (note 19 above), 153 and 164–165. However, Pope Alexander IV ordered the bishop of Paris to excommunicate the university during its thirteenth-century conflict with the mendicants. See Kibre, 110. The Bishop of Paris also successfully prohibited certain ideas from being discussed and taught at Paris in 1277 and the University of Paris worked with the bishop of Paris to condemn John of Monzon, see J. M. M. H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris: 1200–1400*, (Philadelphia, 1998), especially chapters 1, 2, and 5. Also see Douglass Taber Jr., "Pierre d'Ailly and the Teaching Authority of the Theologian," *Church History* 59 (1990), 163–174.

⁷⁶ Wei, "An Authority Beyond the Schools," (note 45 above), 39–61.

⁷⁷ For a general discussion of critiques of scholasticism and university theologians, see William J. Courtenay, "Spirituality and Late Scholasticism," in *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages and Reformation*, ed. Jill Raitt (New York, 1988), 116 and Dennis D. Martin, "The *Via Moderna*, Humanism, and the Hermeneutics of Late Medieval Monastic Life," *Journal of the History of Ideas* LI (1990), 179–197.

according to Gerson, in addition to opening “numberless paths to error,” the pursuit of useless teaching caused theologians to be ridiculed by other faculties of the University of Paris as “dreamers” who “are said to know nothing about solid truth and morals and the Bible.” Also, only once they had turned to more useful pursuits could theologians write primers on Christian faith for the laity, appoint inquisitors to observe what people said regarding the faith in social situations and recover the ability “to determine matters of the faith” without consulting other university faculties (*EW*, 172–175).⁷⁸

This reformed theology faculty, Gerson hoped, would be the source of wisdom and reform for the entire Church. As he explained in the two-part lecture he delivered in 1402, *Contra curiositatem studentium* (Against the curiosity of scholars), the university existed to promote “the avoidance of the confusion of doctrine.” For this reason, he argued “that just as there is one faith and one head in spiritual matters, thus there should be a singular and excellent incorruptible fountain of the study of theology, from which other schools of theology are derived just as streams.”⁷⁹ In the same lecture, he suggested that the faculty of theology should regulate what kind of books could be read and who could preach (3.249).

Again, Gerson’s plans for reform seemed to exceed his authority as chancellor. The university, which had evolved from the cathedral school of Notre Dame and the Left Bank schools of the Church of Sainte-Geneviève and the abbey of Saint Victor, had many leaders and lacked a fixed hierarchy.⁸⁰ The chancellor of Paris technically held the ecclesiastical authority to license masters, but the chancellor’s relationship with the university was often adversarial.⁸¹ Gerson’s

⁷⁸ Here Gerson was most likely protesting the 1398 vote by the French clergy to subtract obedience from Benedict XIII, since he had previously protested that the faculty of theology should have had more than “a quarter voice” in the university’s vote on the matter (6.23).

⁷⁹ 3.248–249: “ut sicut est una fides, et unum caput in spiritualibus, sic sit unicus et praecipuus studii theologiae fons incorruptus, a quo caetera theologiae Studia velut rivuli deriventur.”

⁸⁰ For university lack of a fixed hierarchy see Leff, *Paris and Oxford Universities*, (note 20 above), 15–17, Ferruolo, *Origins of the University* (note 23 above).

⁸¹ For the university’s struggle with the chancellor, see Baldwin, *Masters Princes and Merchants*, 74–75 (note 20 above), and Bernstein, “Magisterium and License,” (note 58 above) 292–296, Bernstein, *Pierre D’Ailly and the Blanchard Affair* (note 40 above), 1–27, Christoph Burger, *Aedificatio, fructus, utilitas*, (note 12 above), 28–30, and Osmund Lewry, “Corporate Life in the University of Paris, 1249–1418, and the Ending of Schism,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 40.4 (1989), 520–521.

suggestion that he would refuse the teaching license to those who espoused pernicious doctrines also violated the one ecclesiastical liberty that the university had consistently defended in its relationship with the chancellor, the ability to force the chancellor to license candidates whom the university masters had approved.⁸² Additionally, the chancellor's ability to refuse teaching licenses had been recently challenged in the university's case against the chancellor John Blanchard. Blanchard was accused of demanding money and oaths of loyalty in exchange for the license.⁸³ As part of the university's case against Blanchard, Gerson's mentor, Pierre d'Ailly, had argued that the primary duty of the theologian was to preach and therefore the theological license and the authority to grant the license were both forms of spiritual authority and thus could not be exchanged for money or oaths.⁸⁴ Furthermore, d'Ailly had asserted that the chancellor was not the university's ecclesiastical superior.⁸⁵

These arguments explicitly linked the university's long tradition of defending its political and ecclesiastical autonomy with the arguments supporting the exalted status of theologians for the purpose of limiting the chancellor's power. Since these were the very authorizing traditions available for the promotion of reform, Gerson had to tread carefully. Gerson himself admitted that the chancellor's authority remained limited and disputed when he reported in the letter explaining his temporary resignation from the chancellorship that he fled Paris in 1398 in part because he had acquired several powerful enemies during his first years as chancellor (*EW*, 161–168). He had learned that his authority as chancellor depended on the university's support as well as its reputation when the university supported the French crown's decision to withdraw its obedience from Pope Benedict XIII despite Gerson's arguments against this policy.⁸⁶ It is not surprising, therefore that when Gerson presented his plans for theological reform in *Contra curiositatem studentium*, he introduced his plans with

⁸² Baldwin, *Masters Princes and Merchants*, (note 20 above), 75.

⁸³ For the struggle between the University of Paris and John Blanchard, see Bernstein, *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*, (note 40 above), 60–81.

⁸⁴ Pierre d'Ailly, *Radix Omnium Malorum Est Cupiditas*, ed. Alan Bernstein, in *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*, 207.

⁸⁵ Pierre d'Ailly, "Super Omnia Vincit Veritas," ed. Alan Bernstein, in Bernstein, *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*, 282.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of the events surrounding subtraction and Gerson's opposition to it, see, Meyjes, *Apostle of Unity*, (note 1 above), 59–69.

the theme, "Repent and Believe in the Gospel," and examined in great detail the spiritual peril that scholars who refused to follow this command faced. Only then did he elaborate on his more precise plans for the reform of the university and the Church (3.224–249, esp. 224–230). In other words, he preached his reform rather than demanding it.

Gerson also sought to build consensus for his reform by reaching out to his colleagues at the powerful College of Navarre. During Gerson's tenure as a student and chancellor, members of the College of Navarre monopolized all of the theology chairs at the university that were not held by members of monastic or mendicant orders.⁸⁷ Members of the college also had important connections to the royal and papal courts. Their support in any political endeavor would be invaluable.⁸⁸ Gerson wrote several letters from Bruges to the College of Navarre reflecting on his plans for university and church reform. These letters suggest that he was overtly trying to cement his relationship with the college where he had lived and studied for his entire career as a student. He did so in order to cultivate support for his reforms. For example, in a letter dated 29 April 1400, Gerson reasoned with his colleagues at the college of Navarre that:

if according to the old man in Terence, the closest bond for friends comes from nearness, then there should be much friendship for me in this venerable college where you dwell. I was not only close to it but quite familiar with it from early adolescence, for I was always resident there and was formed in my ways from my social contacts there (*EW*, 176–177).

After reaching out to his colleagues in fellowship, the letter admonished the members of the college to encourage theology students to avoid the arrogant practice of trying to invent new knowledge and to limit their study to what either edifies the soul or prepares the theologian for preaching (*EW*, 178–184). A subsequent letter to the college meditated on the problem of unity within the university. In this letter, Gerson lamented "rivalries among opposing opinions and the excessively obstinate statements" that "interrupt very much the study of truth and overstrain the whole body of the University, upsetting it, driving away modesty and making it more prone to upheaval than

⁸⁷ Natalie Gorochov, *Le Collège de Navarre de sa fondation (1305) au début du XV^e siècle (1418)*. (Paris, 1997), 488.

⁸⁸ For the careers of the members of the college, see Gorochov, *Le Collège de Navarre*, 531–543.

its calling requires" (*EW*, 185). Gerson then specified the more long-standing conflicts that plagued the university such as, "some affected partialities and a stubborn insistence on winning, as well as prejudice or outright contempt of persons and of nations." His letter suggests that he considered all of this internal strife to be an obstacle to his reform of the university (*EW*, 185 and 422, n. 132). It also suggests that Gerson was attempting to marshal support within the college for his theological reform of the university and the Church.

This same letter also foreshadowed Gerson's future struggles with the mendicant orders and suggests a connection between Gerson's theological reform and his persecution of these orders. The university relied on collective action to defend its ecclesiastical and legal rights and intellectual authority. Additionally, Gerson relied on the unified support of the university as the basis of his authority as chancellor. He needed this support in order to pursue his theological reforms within the university and also to lend authority to the arguments he made on behalf of the university in his treatises and sermons. Unity, therefore, was of paramount importance. The university's indeterminate organization made it vulnerable to persistent internal strife. For this reason, university members carefully cultivated an ethos of compromise and cooperation. This ethos allowed the university to remain unified despite the protracted and intense disputes regarding intellectual schools, disciplinary boundaries and cultural differences that Gerson's letter addressed.⁸⁹ This unity, however, was always threatened by the presence of the mendicant orders within the university.

An examination of his involvement in the long-standing competition for control over the University of Paris and the Church between the secular clergy (parish priests and diocesan bishops who did not belong to religious orders and who lived off the tithe) and the mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and Carmelites) will demonstrate the extent to which Gerson's understanding of the university's potential as an agent for reform and its vulnerability to external and internal attacks determined his own behavior and identity as a preacher.⁹⁰ Struggle between the secular clergy (who had

⁸⁹ Osmund Lewry, "Corporate Life in the University of Paris, (note 81 above), 511-523.

⁹⁰ For the importance of secular-mendicant conflict in the development of the authority of the University of Paris and its theologians, see: Ian Wei, "An Authority Beyond the Schools," (note 45 above), 38-39; Richard W. Southern, "The Changing

founded the university) and the mendicant clergy began almost as soon as the first two mendicant orders, the Franciscans and the Dominicans, were officially recognized in the beginning of the thirteenth century. Strong papal support for the friars initially granted them complete independence from episcopal oversight and ensured them a warm welcome among the secular clergy. Soon afterwards, however, the secular clergy perceived that these orders were competing with them for the charity and loyalty of the laity and began to see the mendicants as a financial and ecclesiastical threat.⁹¹ More significantly, perhaps, members of these orders enjoyed the patronage of kings, aristocrats and wealthy merchants.⁹² Drawing on their vows of corporate poverty, their powerful friends and papal privileges, the mendicants vocally criticized the lack of education, dissolute lifestyle and financial abuses that were prevalent among the secular clergy on the parochial and diocesan level.⁹³

Mendicant critiques of the secular clergy gave rise to an ongoing and competitive tension between the secular and mendicant clergy that was exacerbated by the mendicants' refusal to recognize the University of Paris' authority to govern all educational activities in the city. Shortly after their founding, the Dominicans and Franciscans began teaching in Paris without the university's permission and refused to participate in university-wide strikes that were undertaken in 1229 and 1252 for the purpose of enforcing the legal privileges of students and masters.⁹⁴ The mendicants also refused to swear an oath of obedience to the university, further undermining the university's unity and political bargaining power.⁹⁵ Between 1252 and 1256, when the university attempted to exercise its corporate rights by taking several actions designed to exclude the mendicants from the university, it was rebuffed by Popes Alexander IV and French King Louis IX.⁹⁶ During Gerson's tenure at the university, the mendicants continued to insist

Roles of Universities in Medieval Europe," *Historical Research* LX, no. 142 (1987), 133–146, esp. 135–139; and Bernstein, *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*, (note 40 above), 1–27, esp. 21–22.

⁹¹ C. H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London and New York, 1994), 152–153.

⁹² Lawrence, *The Friars*, 166–180.

⁹³ Lawrence, *The Friars*, 122 and 164–165.

⁹⁴ Bernstein, "Magisterium and License," (note 58 above), 301–302.

⁹⁵ Bernstein, "Magisterium and License," 302.

⁹⁶ Hastings Rashdall, *Universities of Europe*, (note 23 above), Vol. 1, 376–389. Also, Kibre, *Scholarly Privileges*, (note 19 above), 103–117.

on their independence from the university and to appeal to the pope and other powerful political figures for help whenever the university attempted to discipline what it perceived as its disobedient mendicant members. In this respect, the mendicants threatened the university's independence, its ability to strike, its internal unity, its projection of its own worth within the Church, its reliance on benefices and its perceived relationship to church hierarchy. Gerson's responses to these conflicts illustrate how he negotiated the promotion of his own authority as chancellor, theologian and preacher in the context of secular-mendicant conflict and help to explain why Gerson's plans for church reform included a sustained attack against the authority and morality of the mendicant orders.

Considering the threat that they posed to the university's unity and Gerson's authority, it is not surprising that Gerson also addressed the mendicants in his previously discussed letter on unity addressed to the College of Navarre. His letter urged his colleagues at the College of Navarre to work towards reconciliation between the university and Dominicans. The Dominicans had been expelled from the university in 1387 after the Dominican theologian, Juan de Monzon had refused to retract certain erroneous views that he had uttered during his first debates as a licensed theologian at Paris.⁹⁷ In particular, Gerson and his colleagues were concerned by Monzon's assertion that those who believed in the Immaculate Conception of Mary were heretics, the fact that he called the bishop of Paris and members of the theology faculty Manichees and heretics and finally, his argument that he did not have to submit to the correction of the university or the bishop of Paris in this matter because only the

⁹⁷ For a summary of the events surrounding the Monzon case, see William A. Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, 2 vols. (New York, 1973), 2:171–176. For a comparison of the university's proceedings against Monzon with other like proceedings, see Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris*, (note 75 above), 9–39 and 107–112. For the larger context of the controversy over the Immaculate Conception see Wenceslaus Sebastian, O.F.M., “The Controversy over the Immaculate Conception from after Scotus to the End of the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception: History and Significance*, ed. Edward Dennis O'Connor, C.S.C. (Notre Dame, Ind., 1958), 213–228. For a detailed account of events, see Taber, “The Theologian and the Schism,” 6–56. Documents from the trial are included in the Denifle, *Chartularium III*, nos. 1157–1583; and in Charles Du Plessis d'Argentré, *Collectio judiciorum de novis erroribus qui ab initio duodecimi saeculi . . . usque ad annum 1632 in ecclesia proscripti sunt et notati* (Brussels, 1963), vol. 1, part 2, 69–74 and 87–88.

pope had the authority to issue universally binding declarations regarding matters touching on the faith.⁹⁸

University members and sympathizers interpreted Monzon's initial statements, his refusal to retract and the support that the Dominican order provided for Monzon's appeal as a direct attack against the university's corporate identity and doctrinal authority.⁹⁹ Once the papal court condemned Monzon, university members used this victory against the Dominicans to assert their understanding of the university's corporate independence and doctrinal authority within the Church. In this respect the Monzon affair was similar to the university's struggles to protect its clerical immunity in the cases addressed by *Estotes misericordes* and *Diligite justiciam*. In all three instances the university was forced to defend its understanding of its own independence against a powerful challenger. Once these efforts were successful, however, the university used its victories as proof that its own understanding of its independence and authority was indeed correct.

Both d'Ailly and Gerson portrayed Monzon as an irrational, overly proud and disorderly individual whose refusal to cooperate with established ecclesiastical authorities only proved that the university was a legitimate agent of order and truth within the Church. D'Ailly observed that during a public university assembly, Monzon had impatiently interrupted the dean of theology for the purpose of asserting that it was not proper for the university to silence him and that he would support his conclusions to his death.¹⁰⁰ He also argued that Monzon's appeal was frivolous and in violation of the faculty of theology's doctrinal authority and obligation to apply its study of scripture

⁹⁸ For the university's concern with Monzon's assertion that those who believed in the Immaculate Conception were heretics, see Gerson, *Contre Jean de Monzon*, 10.17. For the university's complaint that Monzon called the bishop of Paris and members of the faculty of theology heretics and Manichees, see d'Ailly's report to the papal curia, Denifle, *Chartularium* III: 504, no. 1564. For the argument that the university and bishop did indeed have the authority to issue judgments regarding matters of the faith that were at least temporarily binding within a given jurisdiction, see Pierre d'Ailly, *Tractatus ex parte universitatis studii Parisiensi pro causa fidei, contra quemdam fratrem Johannem de Montesono Ordinis Praedicatorum*, in *Collectio judiciorum*, vol. 1, part 2, 75–129, esp. 75–80. D'Ailly's treatise is discussed in Taber, "Pierre d'Ailly and the Teaching Authority of the Theologian," (note 68 above), 163–174 and in comparison to like arguments by Servais of Mt. St. Elias, Godfrey of Fontaines, and William Ockham in Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy* (note 75 above), 90–112.

⁹⁹ See d'Ailly, Denifle, *Chartularium* III: 502–505, no. 1564, Gerson, *Contre Jean de Monzon*, and *Chronique du religieux de Saint-Denis* I: 490–495.

¹⁰⁰ Denifle, *Chartularium* III: 502, no. 1564.

for the purpose of preaching and eliminating heresy.¹⁰¹ Gerson characterized Monzon's first public sermon as "so confused and crazy a sermon, that you would hardly believe that it was of the human mind."¹⁰² In contrast to Monzon, Gerson portrayed the University of Paris as "a spring full of life which imparting itself in four faculties just as so many rivers, it gives back the entire surface of the earth well-watered in waves of teachings."¹⁰³ While they were making these pronouncements, university members enlisted the French king's help in forcing prominent Dominicans to retract their support of Monzon's propositions under pain of imprisonment, stirred public opinion 'against the Dominicans to the extent that they were unable to perform their pastoral duties without being harassed and expelled the Dominicans from the university.¹⁰⁴

In his letter to the College of Navarre regarding the unity of the University of Paris, however, Gerson suggested that the exclusion of the Dominicans had "placed a mark of not small shame on the glory of the University" (*EW*, 187). According to Gerson's letter, this shame resulted from the fact that following the exclusion of the Dominicans, "worthy persons" had remarked "that often sermons are lacking at the University, even Sunday sermons to the clergy" (*EW*, 187–188). Following this observation, Gerson pleaded with his more hard-hearted university colleagues that "the good mother University, which once was angered at its sons," should "finally remember mercy" and imitate "the example of Christ the good shepherd" by seeking out its lost sheep and returning them to the flock "by a certain gentle force" (*EW*, 188).

Once the French restored their obedience to Pope Benedict XIII, the French king urged the university to readmit the Dominicans,

¹⁰¹ D'Ailly, Denifle, *Chartularium* III: 504, no. 1564: suam frivolum appellationem . . . and *Tractatus ex parte universitatis studii Parisiensi pro causa fidei*, 77: Et haec probatur, quia ad eos pertinet, ea quae sunt fidei, per modum doctrinae determinare & doctrinaliter definire, ad quos pertinet sacram Scripturam docere & ex ea haereticas assertiones & in fide erroneas reprobare ac veritates Catholicas approbare. . . . Constat autem quod officium Praedicatoris est maxime praecipuum Theologiae. See Taber, "Pierre d'Ailly and the Teaching Authority of the Theologian," (note 68 above), 167–174.

¹⁰² 10.12: "tam confusus et inanus sermo ut humanae mentis illum esse vix crederis."

¹⁰³ 10.10: "e fonte vivo qui in quatuor facultates ceu totidem flumina sese imperiens, superficiem omnem terrae undis doctrinarum reddit irriguam."

¹⁰⁴ Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order* (note 97 above), 2:175.

which it did on 21 August 1403. The French had withdrawn their obedience from Benedict in 1398 and had held him under house arrest.¹⁰⁵ While we cannot determine the exact extent to which Gerson's and the university's decision to reconcile with the Dominicans was determined by changes in the ecclesio-political environment, the fact that political concerns were involved at all demonstrates again the shifting and transitory nature of the university's authority and independence. The university was only able to persecute the Dominicans following the condemnation of Juan de Monzon because it had royal support.¹⁰⁶ It was forced to re-integrate the Dominicans once it no longer enjoyed royal support regarding the Dominicans' exclusion. In this respect, the exclusion of Dominicans was not unlike other episodes of secular-mendicant conflict at the University of Paris. Like all violations of university privileges and authority, its occurrence threatened the university's status and authority and the university's successful defense against the violation temporarily reaffirmed them.

Although Gerson and his colleagues were constantly forced to renegotiate the terms of the university's identity and authority, they also consistently attempted to direct these negotiations in accordance with the university's long-standing goals. In the case of the re-integration of the Dominicans, the university, like Gerson, emphasized that the true motivating factor for the reconciliation was the desire for unity within the university.¹⁰⁷ More importantly perhaps, the university made it clear that this unity would not be sought at the expense of its own authority, by invoking a phrase also used by Gerson. Reminding those present that Christ "did not come to send peace onto the earth, but a sword," the reconciliation document demanded that the university's condemnation of Monzon's ideas be respected "and that no one of the friars, or any other, should dogmatize, dispatch, or preach the opposite."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ For the withdrawal of obedience see Morrall, *Gerson and the Great Schism* (note 9 above), 11. Obedience was restored on 28 May 1403, see Meyjes, *Apostle of Unity* (note 1 above), 95. For a record of the university's reconciliation with the Dominicans, see Denifle, *Chartularium IV*: 56, no. 1781.

¹⁰⁶ Hinnebusch, *The History of the Dominican Order*, (note 97 above), 2:175.

¹⁰⁷ Denifle, *Chartularium IV*: 56, no. 1781.

¹⁰⁸ For Gerson's use of this phrase see *Quomodo stabit regnum*, 7.2.980. Denifle, *Chartularium IV*: 56, no. 1781: "Non veni pacem mittere in terram, sed gladium."

The university's conditions for the re-admittance of the Dominicans suggest that Gerson was not the only member of the university that recognized the need for vigilance regarding the unity, authority and independence of the university in all negotiations with members of the ecclesio-political order. The historical threat to university unity symbolized by the mendicants encouraged university members to respond to the Monzon case as they did to all such threats. They emphasized the autonomy, privileges and internal unity of the university and denounced their challenger as a dangerous source of disorder who must be resisted at all costs. This strategy for defending the university's authority against mendicant challengers encouraged Gerson to attack the mendicants as he sought to establish the university as an authoritative agent of church reform.

Although Gerson worked to reconcile the Dominicans and the university in 1403, the plans for pastoral reform that he outlined in his 1408 sermon, *Bonus pastor*, aggressively sought to restrict mendicant privileges. The sermon opened with Gerson praising the bishop of Reims for being willing to call a synod for the purpose of reform. He then reminded the bishop that he must feed his sheep and that to do so, he must be willing to give his soul for his flock. After elucidating the tri-part divisions of the soul and the corresponding responsibilities of the bishop, he reprimanded the assembled bishops for allowing the preaching needs of their diocese to be met by substitutes (*substitutos*), such as mendicants or poor theologians (*Mendicantium vel pauperum theologorum*) (5.126). He observed that while these bishops pursued worldly power and gain, "the wicked seeds of error are prepared or the useless and sterile weeds of worthless stories are sown over other seeds."¹⁰⁹ Although Gerson did not directly blame the mendicants for the spread of these wicked seeds and worthless stories, his argument definitely implied that it was the substitutes chosen by the bishops, namely mendicants and poor theologians, who were at fault. In exhorting bishops to visit their dioceses, he argued that the word of God is disgraced when "the people see only the mendicants and contemptible paupers preach the word of God among them and

(Matt 10.34). . . . quod condempnatio prenomina quatuordecim propositionum inviolata ab eis servaretur, nullusque fratrum aut alius dogmatizaret, aut legeret, aut predicaret oppositum . . ."

¹⁰⁹ 5.127: "dum miscentur errorum mala semina vel inutilia steriliaque narrationum frivolarum zizania superseminantur."

the prelates are not present."¹¹⁰ He also urged theologians to preach, suggesting that their failure to preach encouraged prelates to delegate their own responsibilities to substitutes (5:132).

Although Gerson dispersed these comments about mendicant substitutes and negligent theologians among more lengthy discussions of the difficulty of preaching and a bishop's duties as administrator of his diocese, his later writings suggest that these comments were inter-related and are evidence of the influence that secular-mendicant conflict exercised over Gerson's identity as a preacher, as well as his plans for church reform. Following the conclusion of the council of Reims, Gerson wrote up a visitation manual for bishops so that his suggestions could be carried out. This manual, *On the Visitation of Prelates*, begins with the observation that canonical institutions, such as parishes, fall into disrepair unless they are consistently reviewed and reformed by their pastor, in this case the bishop or his agent (8.47–48). After summarizing the appropriate procedure for visitation and reminding his audience of the existence of treatises for the instruction of simple priests and their parishioners, *On the Visitation of Prelates* lists the various areas to which the visitor should pay particular attention. Among these are the pastoral activities of the mendicant friars. These, Gerson argued, require special attention. He suggested:

Moreover, it is necessary that a special inquiry and visitation be made on behalf of the mendicants, as much in the act of sermons as of confessions, as of other things; and especially that they should avoid the company of women in little rooms, and detracting language in sermons, and old wives tales, and rash declarations, in asserting that anything in general is mortal sin. Moreover, let it be investigated concerning what kind of sins are remitted for penitents; if they administer the sacrament against the prohibition of law, if they preach against the curates and burials and tithes; if they admit those having been excommunicated by the courts to their company in divine service, and in all other respects.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ 5.143: "videt populus solos Mendicantes et pauperes apud eos contemptibiles, praedicare verbum nec adesse praelatos . . ."

¹¹¹ 8.54: "Item deberet fieri specialis inquisitio et visitatione pro Mendicantibus, tam in facto sermonum quam confessionum quam aliorum, et specialiter quod evitent consortia feminarum in camerulis, et detractiones in sermonibus, et fabulas aniles, et assertiones temerarias, definiendo aliquid generaliter esse peccatum mortale. Item inquiratur de qualibus peccatis remittuntur ad poenitentiaros; si ministrant sacramenta contra prohibitionem juris, si praedicant contra curatos, et sepulturas et dicimas; si admittunt excommunicatos a iudicibus ad sua consortia in divino servitio, et ceteros."

With this statement, Gerson, sought to bring the mendicants under episcopal jurisdiction and thus under the control of the university. Additionally, he confirmed that he had indeed been referring to the mendicant orders in *Bonus Pastor* when he criticized unlearned theologians and promoters of old wives tales. Moreover, he had stated this critique in the language of the anti-mendicant tradition developed at the University of Paris in the thirteenth-century. This exegetical tradition compared the mendicants to apocalyptic scriptural texts, especially Paul's Second Letter to Timothy 3:1-7.

This letter warned against the false prophets of the last times who would "have the appearance of piety" but would really be "lecherous, proud, blasphemous" and "traitors" among other things. "Avoid them!" Paul warns, "(f)or among them are those who make their way into houses and lead away captivated foolish women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, who are always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth."¹¹² Reference to this passage provided the seculars with a particularly powerful weapon because it allowed them to denounce the mendicants without naming them, was sufficiently grounded in scripture to raise questions regarding the mendicants' legitimacy and took advantage of the prevailing mood of apocalyptic expectation.¹¹³ It also provided a powerful image of the decline of the Church that became a popular trope in medieval literature and thus could be easily used by secular preachers without much elaboration.¹¹⁴ Finally, because Paul's letter identified the false preachers of the apocalypse as "those who enter houses and deceive silly women," it undercut the mendicants' use of their association with ascetic visionary women as a means of demonstrating the holiness of their orders.¹¹⁵

¹¹² 2 Tim. 3.1-7: "Hoc autem scito quod in novissimis diebus instabunt tempora periculosa et erunt homines se ipsos amantes cupidi elati superbi blasphemi parentibus inoboedientes ingrati scelesti sine affectione sine pace criminatores incontinentes inmites sine benignitate proditores protervi tumidi voluptatum amatores magis quam Dei habentes speciem quidem pietatis virtutem autem eius abnegantes et hos devita ex his enim sunt qui penetrant domos et captivas ducent mulierculas oneratas peccatis quae ducuntur variis deideriis semper discentes et numquam ad scientiam veritatis pervientes."

¹¹³ Penn R. Szittyá, *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature* (Princeton, 1986), 18-27.

¹¹⁴ Szittyá, *The Antifraternal Tradition*, 9-10.

¹¹⁵ For the suggestion that mendicants were involved in the pastoral care of visionary women at least in part because it augmented their order's reputations for holi-

Gerson's critique of the mendicants intensified after January 1409, when the University of Paris, led by Gerson, censured the Franciscan theologian Jean Gorrel for defending the mendicants' preaching privileges in his first public disputation as a licensed teacher of theology. Gorrel had rehearsed critiques of the secular clergy that the mendicants had developed in the early thirteenth century. He had argued that the office of parish priest was invalid because it was not established by Christ, that parish priests refused to be priests because they did not live by a religious rule and that mendicants were more suitable for preaching and hearing confessions because they did live in accordance with a rule. He had also accused priests who collected unnecessary plural benefices of committing sacrilege (10.33). In response, Gerson and his colleagues forced Gorrel to affirm the anti-mendicant ecclesiology the seculars had developed in the thirteenth century before they would allow him to receive the academic *biret* (10.33).¹¹⁶

The ecclesiology that the university forced Gorrel to affirm had been developed in the thirteenth century as a result of secular-mendicant tensions within and without the university. Secular members of the university and secular bishops collaborated to pursue the restriction of the mendicant's pastoral privileges and the defense of the secular clergy's rights.¹¹⁷ This alliance of university members and bishops challenged the spiritual worth of mendicancy, accused the mendicants of imposing inappropriately light penances on those who confessed to them, denounced the papal privileges granted to the mendicants as a gross violation of local jurisdictions and called successive provincial synods to debate mendicant privileges.¹¹⁸ The seculars synthesized these arguments in an elaborate anti-mendicant ecclesiology

ness, see John Coakley, "Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Hagiography," in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski and Tímea Szell (Ithaca and London: 1991), 222–246; Barbara Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 73 (1998), 733–770; Sara Poor, "Mechtild von Magdeburg, Gender, and the 'Unlearned Tongue,'" *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31:2 (2001), 213–230; and Moshe Sluhovskiy, "The Devil in the Convent," *American Historical Review* 107 (2002), 1379–1411. For the suggestion that such critiques had a detrimental effect on mendicant attitudes towards the women in their care, see Michael D. Bailey, "Religious poverty, mendicancy, and reform in the late Middle Ages," *Church History* 72:3, (2003), 457–483.

¹¹⁶ For the role of the reception of the *biret* in signifying membership in the university, see Bernstein, "Magisterium and License," (note 58 above), 295.

¹¹⁷ Alan E. Bernstein, *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*, (note 40 above), 16–20.

¹¹⁸ Lawrence, *The Friars*, (note 91 above), 125–126, 154–161.

that denied the mendicants a legitimate place in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This tradition asserted that Christ had created the office of bishop when he appointed the twelve apostles and the office of parish priest when he appointed the seventy-two apostles. Having been ordained by Christ himself, seculars argued, this order could not be changed, even by popes who were supporters of the mendicants' message of reform. The seculars further emphasized the permanence of this divinely ordained hierarchy by drawing on the sixth-century Byzantine theologian, Pseudo-Dionysius, who argued that the hierarchy of the Church reflected the hierarchy of the heavens and thus was permanent and beyond human authority. Armed with these arguments, the secular clergy argued that mendicants, who were merely papally appointed assistants to parish priests, lacked the authority to either criticize members of the secular clergy or to perform pastoral duties in secular parishes without the permission of the presiding bishop or curate.¹¹⁹

Pope Alexander V, who was a Franciscan, immediately denounced the university's treatment of Gorrel and prohibited the university from further determinations or pronouncements regarding mendicant privileges. Gerson replied with his sermon *Quomodo stabit regnum* (How will His kingdom stand) and the Latin treatise, *Universis christifidelibus* (To all Christians). Both of these works also rehearsed established anti-mendicant rhetoric.

Gerson's sermon, *Quomodo stabit regnum* (How will His kingdom stand), which he delivered on 23 February 1410 on the occasion of a procession of the people of Paris, has played an important role in modern scholars' understanding of Gerson's views regarding the relationship between church hierarchy, the authority of the University of Paris and the pastoral care of the laity.¹²⁰ Although the bulk of the sermon is concerned with the preservation of the established order of the Church, Gerson used this sermon to make explicit the

¹¹⁹ Bernstein, *Pierre D'Ailly and the Blanchard Affair*, 20–21 and Lawrence, *The Friars*, 156–161.

¹²⁰ For reference to this sermon see Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, (note 1 above) 41, 44, 45, 52–53, 57, 74, 75, 77, and 78. Also, Pascoe, *Jean Gerson*, (note 1 above), 20, 23, 25, 26, 32, 35, 40, 41, 89, 146, 147, 150–159, 168, and 174. The location of Notre Dame is suggested in Denifle, *Chartularium IV*, no. 1877, 173. The connection between the sermon and a procession is also confirmed by Hobbins, "Beyond the Schools," (note 15 above), 215, and Gerson, 7.980: "Je respondray par quatre considerations principales et mettrai les causes de ceste procession." Also, 7.983: "Et c'est l'autre cause principale de ceste procession et de ce sermon. . . ."

connections between his own criticism of certain members of the mendicant orders, the divine order of the Church and the need to protect the laity from false truths. For example, he named the mendicants as one of the four plagues of the Church, “the false Christians whom the apostle calls false brothers,” referring to the false preachers of the apocalypse identified in Paul’s Second Letter to Timothy (2 Tim. 3:1–7).¹²¹ He also suggested that the mendicants were to be resisted at all costs from their attempts to exceed their rank in the heavenly hierarchy, arguing:

It is evident that if any man or any estate wishes without reason or necessity to trouble this order, one must resist (him/it), because thus was it done in heaven when Lucifer or the bad angels wished by pride to exceed their rank, their order or hierarchy. Adam was thrown outside earthly paradise. Saint Paul resisted Saint Peter. Gal 2. For this reason all were put outside who called themselves co-bishops.¹²²

Here, Gerson’s juxtaposition of Lucifer, Adam, Saint Peter and the “co-bishops” suggests that he intended to communicate two related points. The first point, symbolized by Lucifer and Adam, suggests that the action of the mendicants threatened the divine order of things and promised to introduce sin and suffering to the world. The second point, symbolized by Peter correcting Paul and the co-bishops, confirms that the threat that Gerson was addressing is that of the papal abuse of power with respect to mendicant privileges.

Following secular ecclesiology, he also emphasized the curates’ superiority over the mendicants by calling attention to the mendicants’ lack of parishes and then suggesting that the parish was the only proper place where confessions, marriages and masses could take place (7.2.991). According to Gerson’s sermon, nothing short of complete religious disorder and a loss of salvation would result if the mendicants were allowed to play priests to the laity without the careful supervision of bishops. Among these dangers Gerson suggested again that mendicants manipulate their pastoral authority for the

¹²¹ 7.2.979: “nous le veons es persecutions de sainte eglise . . . la tierce tres male par les faulx crestiens que l’apostre appelle faulx freres . . .”

¹²² 7.981: “Appert que s’aucun homme ou aucun estat veult sans raison ou necessite troubler ceste ordre, on luy doit resister. Car ainsy fut fait ou ciel quant Lucifer ou les anges mauvais voulurent par orgueil passer leur ranc, leur ordre ou hierarchie. Adam fut gette hors du paradis terrestre. Saint Pol resista a Saint Pierre. Gal 2. Pour ceste cause furent mis hors aucuns qui se nommoient coepiscopi.”

purpose of consorting with women. He asserted, "it is better and more virtuous to hear confessions in the Church than elsewhere in places that are not holy, where those places are secret as in lodgings, and consequently many bad things often follow."¹²³ Mendicants, at least in Gerson's imaginings, conducted their activities in private places rather than inside churches and this privacy attested to their sinister intent. Gerson later elaborated on this accusation against the mendicants in his treatise *Universis christifidelibus* when he suggested that mendicants enter houses to hear the confessions of women (10.37).

Gerson's deployment of this tradition did not represent the thoughtless repetition of existing polemic. Nor does it confirm, as has been suggested, that Gerson had always hated the mendicants.¹²⁴ Gerson had recognized that the mendicants were a useful and powerful force in the Church when he encouraged the university to reconcile with the Dominicans in 1400 (*EW*, 187–190). He also explicitly referred to his involvement in this reconciliation in *Quomodo stabit regnum* for the sake of proving that he did not hate the mendicants (7.2.983). Although *Bonus pastor* and *On the Visitation of Prelates* suggest that Gerson disapproved of the content of some mendicant preaching, he also remained convinced that the mendicants threatened the order of the Church, his plans for reform and the authority of the university because they remained independent of the episcopal hierarchy and refused to recognize the university's intellectual authority over them. It was this belief that encouraged him to participate in the secular's established tradition of likening them to false prophets and implying that they sought the pastoral office for the purpose of pursuing scandalous relations with women.

For example, in addition to attacking the mendicants, *Quomodo stabit regnum* also presented the University of Paris as the ultimate source of order in the Church and the French kingdom (7.2.980). Gerson argued that the university recognized that the order of the Church was established by God and must mirror the order of the heavens in a fixed and unchanging hierarchy if the rule of Christianity was

¹²³ 7.2.991: "S'ensuit que c'est meilleur et plus honneste oir les confessions a l'eglise que ailleurs es lieux non sacres, ou qui sont sacres, comme es chambres, don't plusieurs maux s'ensuivent souvent."

¹²⁴ McNamara, "The Rhetoric of Orthodoxy," (note 3 above), 24–27.

to persist.¹²⁵ For this reason, he explained, the university had sought to end all divisions in the personal, spiritual and temporal realms by leading the people to God, healing the papal schism and sending delegations to facilitate the reconciliation between the Latin Church of Western Europe and the Greek Church in Byzantium (7.2.981).

The reason that Gerson provided for his attack against the mendicants in *Quomodo stabit regnum* was the papal bull, *Regnans in excelsis* (Reigning in heaven). This bull, which was issued by Pope Alexander V on 12 October 1409, prohibited members of the University of Paris from debating, preaching or writing glosses on the subject of mendicant privileges. In particular they were prohibited from asserting the anti-mendicant positions of the secular theologian, Jean de Pouilly, which had been condemned in 1321, in addition to certain new heretical propositions that had been condemned by certain theologians and canon lawyers at the pope's request.¹²⁶ Moreover, the bull suggested that these condemnations should be publicized far and wide by the university, friars and parish priests in assemblies and in individual churches.¹²⁷

In fact, Gerson specifically protested the pope's attempt to restrict and undermine the university's authority in his Latin oration, *Universis christifidelibus* (To all Christians), which he delivered on 5 March 1410 (10.35).¹²⁸ He suggested that the bull, *Regnans in excelsis*, usurped the authority of theologians by incorporating complicated terms and statements often employed by theologians (10.36). Finally he argued that the bull had been made by subordinates and illiterate and unfit persons (10.38: *id est apud subditos idiotas et simplices*) and opposed its authority to that of the Fourth Lateran Council decree, *Omnis utriusque*

¹²⁵ Also 7.982: "Et en gardant cest ordre doit estre estable le royaume de sainte eglise ca jus car ainsi est ou royaume de cielz lassus. Et car il semble et a semble a plusieurs prelas de sainte eglise, en especial a monseigneur de Paris, il a semble a fille du roi l'Universite, que cest ordonnance hierarchique de prelation commençoit a estre troublee ou empeschee, elle y a voulu et veult obvier et resister."

¹²⁶ R. N. Swanson, "The 'Mendicant Problem' in the Later Middle Ages," (note 4 above), 229. Also, J. M. M. H. Thijssen, *Censure and Heresy*, (note 75 above), 174. Denifle, *Chartularium IV*, no. 1868, 167: "... per eundem Johannem predecessorem cum tanta solemnitate et maturitate damnatos et reprobatos et etiam hujusmodi novos articulos per nos veluti erroeneos et etiam eisdem canonibus contrarios tenere, adstruere vel docere, ... necnon etiam per plerosque in sacra theologia magistros ac quosdam doctores in jure canonico recenseri fecimus diligenter. ..."

¹²⁷ Denifle, *Chartularium IV*: 167, no. 1868.

¹²⁸ For date see Denifle, *Chartularium IV*: 174, no. 1880 and Swanson, "The 'Mendicant Problem' in the Later Middle Ages," (note 4 above), 232.

sexus (10.36: All the faithful of both sexes) as well as the authority of Paris as the meeting place of so many prelates (10.38: *ubi coetus tot praelatorum*) and the residence of so many doctors of secular and church law (10.38: *tot doctorum in utroque jure et aliorum residet*).

These complaints resonate with the position the university forwarded during the Monzon case as well as the long history of secular-mendicant conflict. Moreover, Gerson's strategy of contrasting the disorder that his opponents sought to bring upon the Church with the order that the university's leadership could provide demonstrates that he attacked the mendicants as a means of defending the unique authority of the University of Paris. The potential political and ecclesiastical cost of this defense, however, was great. Gerson, who claimed to promote order within the Church and the spiritual health of the laity, had questioned the behavior of a pope whose election at the Council of Pisa in 1409 represented the culmination of more than thirty years of negotiation to bring the cardinals of the opposing Roman and Avignon obediences together for the purpose of ending the schism.¹²⁹ He also likened the mendicant clergy to devils and raised a scandal about their pastoral practices. In the past, such accusations had encouraged the laity of Paris to harass the mendicants as they attempted to pursue their pastoral duties.¹³⁰

Once Gerson had deployed this anti-mendicant tradition in *Bonus pastor* and had elaborated on it in *Quomodo stabit regnum*, it became a permanent component of his call for church reform. This is evident in Gerson's 1421 sermon *Redde quod debes* (Give what you owe). This sermon insisted on the hierarchical inferiority of members of religious orders when compared to prelates, whom Gerson defined as members of the secular clergy who were popes, cardinals, bishops and parish priests (7.2.984). The central role that hierarchy played in Gerson's understanding of preaching is demonstrated by the fact that he promoted this particular understanding of hierarchy in the context of a more general exhortation to all prelates to feed the Lord's sheep, the laity, with the knowledge of the Ten Commandments, the good example of a blameless life and the sacraments (5.488–491).

¹²⁹ For a discussion of *Quomodo stabit regnum* in the context of the Council of Pisa, see Swanson, "The Mendicant Problem," 229–232.

¹³⁰ For example, as a result of the university's suggestion that the Dominicans were heretics during the course of the Monzon affair, Parisians mocked the Dominicans whenever they tried to leave their convent. See *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denis* I: 492.

After explaining the duties of all prelates, Gerson warned the prelates in his audience against allowing anyone to criticize simple curates (parish priests) or ecclesiastical and lay lords. Such criticism, he observed, caused murmuring and rebellion against the Church and prevented the laity from being “built up in obedience, patience, and love.”¹³¹ Gerson then elaborated on this warning with an attack against specific preachers who preached “against the power of curates so that they may raise up their own power or so that they may snatch away the profits fraudulently and in their conspiracy.” These preachers, he argued, “are not assistants (*coadjutores*) but destroyers (*oppressores*).”¹³²

Like Gerson’s other anti-mendicant sermons, *Redde quod debes* did not defend the interests of the Church as a whole. Rather, it defended the interests of the secular clergy. Seen from the perspective of secular-mendicant conflict, the destroyers that Gerson identified in *Redde quod debes* are none other than the mendicants. Gerson’s argument that mendicant criticism of curates or ecclesiastical leaders derived from a desire to “raise up their own power” or “snatch away the profits fraudulently” echoed established anti-mendicant exegesis. Gerson’s use of this anti-mendicant tradition betrays him as an interested party pursuing concrete political goals under the cover of a defense of ecclesiastical order. His suggestion that the mendicants were engaged in a conspiracy to seize power and wealth within the Church is particularly telling. A defender of the mendicants could have just as easily interpreted the mendicants’ criticism of the secular clergy as an expression of the mendicants’ sincere desire for church reform.¹³³ Moreover, Gerson delivered *Redde quod debes* before an ecclesiastical synod assembled in Lyon in 1421.¹³⁴ Since French provincial councils had historically served as a rallying point for secular attempts to restrict the papally endorsed privileges of the mendicant orders, we can assume that Gerson hoped that this sermon would inspire the prelates in the audience to some action against their mendicant critics.¹³⁵

¹³¹ 5.492: “induceretur populus magis ad rebellionem, murmur et detractionem quam aedificaretur ad obedientiam, patientiam et amorem . . .”

¹³² 5.493: “Unde praedicantes contra postestatem curatorum ut suam extollant vel ut redditus et jura sua fraudulenter praeripiant, non sunt coadjutores sed oppressores.”

¹³³ Lawrence, *The Friars* (note 91 above), 122 and 219–221.

¹³⁴ Brown, *Pastor and Laity*, (note 1 above), 271, n. 17.

¹³⁵ See note 118 above.

These aggressive accusations demonstrate the historical limitations of Gerson's understanding of his own role as preacher and the university's role as a leader in pastoral and church reform. For Gerson, a gifted preacher caught in the middle of the ecclesiastical disorder of the papal schism and the political chaos of Charles VI's reign, the university symbolized a haven of order from which he could promote viable reforms of the Church and the political realm. Traditional understandings of the theologian as both an exemplary preacher and the ultimate authority on Christian doctrine supported Gerson's decision to build his reform program on the prestige of the university and the authority of the university-trained theologian. This decision is reflected in his efforts to redirect the activities the university towards preaching and pastoral reform. In the charged political atmosphere of early-fifteenth-century Europe, where centers of political and ecclesiastical authority shifted rapidly, preaching, which relied on persuasion alone, made good political sense. Moreover, preaching supported by the consensus of the authoritative University of Paris offered some promise of success.

The full potential and limitations of Gerson's vision of the university as preacher-writ-large becomes apparent in his 1405 sermon, *Vivat rex*. This sermon rehearsed the university's glorious heritage and asserted that "the office of the daughter of the king is to seek and teach truth and justice."¹³⁶ He also asserted that it was a special property of the university to always strive for peace (7.2.1145). For this reason she examines all of France and speaks the truth about the injustices and suffering that she has observed to the nobility (7.2.1145–1146). He claimed that the university and its representatives were obliged to do this regardless of the personal risk involved (7.2.1152–1153). The university, Gerson claimed, spoke for the good of all of the people because its student body was representative of people from many places (7.2.1165–1166).

After outlining the university's role in the realm, Gerson proceeded to berate the princes of the blood and the king for the suffering that their internal disputes had inflicted on the French people. He warned the princes that natural law and divine law were opposed to their heedless oppression of their subjects and meditated at length on the fact that they were mere mortal men who would some day die

¹³⁶ 7.2.1145: "L'office de la fille du roy est traictier et enseigner verite et justice . . ."

(7.2.1162–1163). He then outlined plans for reform that were designed to prevent the members of the king's council from working against each other and also to prevent royal officials from oppressing the people through extortion. These plans included instituting fair judges, fair taxes and an end to violence (7.2.1173–1185). He argued that peace and prosperity were necessary for the development of the spiritual life (7.2.1180).

Vivat rex demonstrates Gerson's personal courage, as well as his concern for the good of the people of France. It also suggests that the voice of the university could be incredibly useful to the poor and oppressed when it was used as Gerson used it. In his conclusion to *Vivat rex*, however, Gerson called for the restoration of provincial synods for the purpose of reforming the Church (7.2.1185). These regional church councils had been used by the secular clergy in the thirteenth century for the purpose of restricting mendicant privileges. *Bonus pastor* and *Redde quod debes* suggest that once these councils were re-instated as Gerson had requested, he also used them to attack the mendicants. In *Vivat rex* Gerson characterized the lying flatterer as one who encourages disputes for the purpose of being credited with the peace (7.2.1163). His attacks against the mendicants at church councils dedicated to reform, however, seem to do just that. These attacks suggest that Gerson's understanding of the university preacher as an agent of church reform was limited by the contested nature of the university's authority and the defensive identity that the constant need to defend university privileges fostered. These limitations, in turn, help to explain how a compassionate preacher could aggressively persecute and slander other Christians, such as his mendicant colleagues, in defense of order and the spiritual health of the laity.

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Edited by

Brian Patrick McGuire



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