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# Stephen Langton, the Chanter Circle, and the Semiotics of Violence in a Crusading Culture

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STEPHEN LANGTON, THE CHANTER CIRCLE, AND THE SEMIOTICS OF VIOLENCE  
IN A CRUSADING CULTURE

by  
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An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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For Marilyn E. Turner

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## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The social circle of Peter the Chanter (d. 1197) has occupied the peripheries of crusade, ecclesiastic, and sermon studies since the foundational work of John Baldwin's *Masters, Princes, and Merchants* nearly fifty years ago.<sup>2</sup> To date, however, the circle and their coordination with one another in pursuit of a unified end have remained secondary to studies focusing more exclusively on their personal lives and accomplishments. This study begins a dedicated pursuit of study of the Chanter's circle as a social unit, by examining the content and historical context of the group's sermonic rhetoric, and applying a semiotic analysis of their works in an effort to establish a sociological framework for both crusade studies and violence as a whole.

The bulk of this work focuses on the sermons, decrees, and correspondence of the Chanter's core *in-group*: Archbishop Stephen Langton (c. 1150-1228), Pope Innocent III (Lotario dei Conti di Segni, c. 1160-1216), Cardinal Robert de Courçon (c.1160-1219), and Cardinal Jacques de Vitry (c. 1170-1240). It illuminates the lives and works of the Chanter's circle within the context of a crusading culture, examines how their own pastoral pedagogies shaped and were shaped by the violence which permeated such a culture, and offers a semiotic analysis of their own works in an effort to determine to what extent the Chanter's circle changed not only the institutions of the Church, but the very narrative of the Roman orthodoxy.

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier, and much shorter, version of this paper has been published as Andrew X. Fleming, "Knowledge is Power: The Political Influence of the Chanter Social Circle at the University of Paris (1200-1215)," *Anthos* 7, No. 1 (2015). Due to limitations of space, time, and the ever-growing body of work that is the historian's charge, the previous version focused solely on the political dealings of the Chanter's circle at the University of Paris. While some passages herein remain unchanged, the aim and scope of this paper is fundamentally different.

<sup>2</sup> John W. Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants: The Social Views of Peter the Chanter and his Circle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). This work remains central to the study of the Chanter's circle. It, alongside the more recent works of Jessalynn Bird, John C. Moore, and James M. Powell, continue to form the basis of serious study into either the Chanter's circle or their world.

## CRUSADER CULTURE, PREACHING, AND VIOLENCE IN THE CHANTER CIRCLE

Peter the Chanter's influence, and that of his disciples, proved crucial in developing the University of Paris out of the small cathedral school it had once been, and in shaping the political geography of western Europe.<sup>3</sup> His teachings promulgated that the holy scriptures were the sole foundation of the theological discipline. Theology itself was, to his mind, the "science of all sciences." It was meant to inform all other philosophical disciplines, and not to be impinged upon by them.<sup>4</sup> His former students, including Pope Innocent III, Stephen Langton, Jacques de Vitry, and Robert de Courçon, took these lessons to heart, and applied themselves to propagating their message.

The pontifical institutionalization of crusading, and with it crusade sermons, began to reach its zenith at the onset of the thirteenth century. Under Innocent III the papacy extended fractional indulgences for those who attended crusade sermons, removed the right of the chancery to grant indulgences, and increasingly excluded secular rulers from making authoritative decisions in organizing religious wars.<sup>5</sup> In what is often understood as a reformist movement, the circle of Peter the Chanter was driven to create a centralized body of crusading culture by a desire to promote religious life in the laity through accessible moral theology as it was proclaimed in academic circles and then disseminated to the general populace via sermons. The crusade sermon became the signature of the movement.<sup>6</sup> In this regard it is of particular

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<sup>3</sup> Mary M. McLaughlin, *Intellectual Freedom and its Limitation in the University of Paris in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), 178.

<sup>4</sup> McLaughlin, *Intellectual Freedom*, 185.

<sup>5</sup> James A. Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 154 and 163. For a well established, if brief, treatment of Innocent's disenfranchisement of the secular powers of France and England, see Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades: A Short History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 119-120.

<sup>6</sup> Cristoph T. Maier, *Crusade Propaganda and Ideology: Model Sermons for the Preaching of the Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5.

importance to clarify further the role that the Chanter's circle played in promoting and interacting with violence both allegorical and literal.

The Third Lateran Council (1179 CE), though it predates the main focus of this study, is nonetheless essential to building an informed understanding of both the political climate the time and how that climate was affected by Catholic definitions of heresy, particularly because of the council's call for the anathematization of all those who were deemed to be heretics, and the promise of remission of sins offered to those who killed heretics at the request of papal authority.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, despite this papal justification for holy wars on heretics, at the time of the Third Lateran the so-called "punishment" of heresy often took the form of attempted reconciliation with the church.<sup>8</sup> Despite this fact, it was the Cathars, future targets of the Albigensian Crusades, who garnered the first universal anathematization, ultimately leading to their papally-mandated demise.

Violent imagery was rampant in the sermons of the Chanter's circle, partly due to the increasingly institutionalized call for the suppression of heresy and the belief that violence could earn holy reward through crusade indulgences and the ubiquitous potential for martyrdom.<sup>9</sup> In many ways the taking of the cross for a crusader was symbolic of the need to do penance, and to suffer violence as Christ did.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps this thought process is best described in a sermon addressed to crusaders and those who were to become crusaders by Jacques de Vitry:

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<sup>7</sup> "Lateran III," in *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, ed. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 169-170.

<sup>8</sup> Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, 165.

<sup>9</sup> Christopher Tyerman, *Fighting for Christendom: Holy War and the Crusades* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Maier, *Crusade Propaganda*, 24.



Those crusaders who prepare themselves for the service of God, truly confessed and contrite, are considered true martyrs while they are in the service of Christ, freed from venial and also mortal sins, from all the penitence enjoined upon them, absolved from the punishment for their sins in this world and the punishment of purgatory in the next, safe from the tortures of hell, in the glory and honor of being crowned in eternal beatitude.<sup>11</sup>

The vivid imagery of the crowned, triumphant, martyr was a common motif in crusading culture and can be seen also in the late twelfth-century tale of the death of Templar Jakelin de Mailley, who, after singly bringing down an untold number of Turks in combat, was finally killed. At which point he is described as having "joyfully passed to heaven with the martyr's crown," a crown made up of the bodies of his fallen foes.<sup>12</sup>

Such intense encouragement in the pursuit of martyrdom and holy war may seem, initially, as counterintuitive to our own modern conceptions of the life of an academic. But the violence of crusading culture was a central aspect both in the sermon writings, and in the lives, of the Paris masters. Peter the Chanter listed preaching as being among the three key duties of the theologian, and his pupils took this to heart.<sup>13</sup> Under the oversight of Innocent III, himself a member of the circle, the Chanter's students Stephen Langton, Robert de Courçon, and Jacques

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 112-113. Maier notes the extant manuscript copies of this sermon as being located at Troyes, Bibliothèque Municipale, 228, ff. 149rb-151va; Douai, Bibliothèque Municipale, 503, ff. 365r-368v; Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 3284, ff. 125rb-128va; and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 17509, ff. 94-96. "Unde et Crucesignati qui vere contriti et confessi ad Dei servitium accinguntur, dum in Christi servitio moriuntur, vere martires reputantur, liberati a peccatis venialibus simul et mortalibus, ab omni penitentia sibi iniuncta, absoluti a pena peccatorum in hoc seculo, a pena purgatorii in alio, securi a tormentis gehenne, gloria et honore coronandi in eterna beatitudine."

<sup>12</sup> Tyerman, *Fighting for Christendom*, 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> Phyllis Barzillay Roberts, *Stephanus de Lingua-Tonante: Studies in the Sermons of Stephen Langton* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1968), 95. Chanter uses the terminology *lectio, disputatio, et predicatio*, in his *Verbum Abbreviatum*, which he posits are the foundation, walls, and roof of intellectual achievement.

de Vitry thrust crusade preaching into prominence as the hallmark of religio-military recruitment.<sup>14</sup> The circle's presence across France was marked by near-constant calls for crusade and even campaigning. Jessalynn Bird's works covering the first quarter of the thirteenth century have tremendously improved our understanding of the sermons and travels of Jacques de Vitry during the years of the Albigensian and Fifth Crusades. We know that Langton and Courçon not only preached together against usury sometime between 1213 and 1218, but that Courçon also campaigned against the heretics of Languedoc around the same period with Langton's brother Walter (and perhaps Langton himself) as part of Simon de Montfort's military entourage.<sup>15</sup> Courçon himself lead the call to allow churchmen to enter the fray of holy war against the reservations of some of his colleagues. On this matter Bird writes:

Although, as a general principle, churchmen were barred from shedding blood, the extent of the prohibition remained contested... Referring explicitly to Innocent III's anti-heretical crusading bull of 1208, Robert noted that the pope commissioned legates precisely to recruit men to slay infidels and heretics in the defense of the Church and the faith.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Christopher Tyerman, *England and the Crusades 1095-1588* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 152.

<sup>15</sup> Roberts, *Studies in the Sermons*, 18. The question of when such campaigning took place is still ambiguous. Roberts points out that over this period Langton was preaching in Italy, France, and Flanders. Meanwhile Courçon was holding councils across France and preaching against the Cathars in Albi. However, an account of Matthew of Paris cites Langton, Courçon, and Vitry preaching together sometime after 1215. Roberts suggests that Paris was merely wrong in his dating of the sermons, that Vitry was most likely not there, and that this attestation is owed to the appearance of sermons by all three authors in the *Liber Additamentorum* at St. Albans. The original story by Paris is, however, probably correct, as the preaching of Langton and Courçon together most likely would have occurred during Courçon's travels with Simon de Montfort and Langton's brother, sometime before Simon's death at Toulouse in 1218. Furthermore, it is probable that Jacques de Vitry would have been nearby, as it was soon after that both he and Courçon set sail together for the siege of Damietta. As such, it is probable that Langton and Courçon's preaching occurred closer to 1218, rather than 1213 as Roberts suggests. For a brief telling of Robert de Courçon and Walter Langton's travels, see Tyerman, *England*, 90.

<sup>16</sup> Jessalynn Bird, "Paris Masters and the Justification of the Albigensian Crusade," *Crusades* 6 (2007): 148.

The engagement of the Chanter's circle with crusading violence does not end there, of course. The Parisian masters were widely employed as papal legates, who not only controlled the message and medium of crusade sermons, but also acted as go-betweens for Innocent III and the secular rulers of France, England, and Germany.<sup>17</sup> Their presence in implementing and managing the affairs of the Church across western Europe in preparation for the Fourth Lateran Council (1215 CE) was so inescapable that Jacques Le Goff has suggested their use as global legates may have helped to promote the idea that Innocent's grasp was omnipresent.<sup>18</sup> As cardinals, archbishops, and legates, the Chanter's circle oversaw the implementation of the Albigensian crusades and the purge of the University of Paris in 1210.<sup>19</sup> Langton saw fit, in 1207, to implement his burgeoning papal-backed authority by issuing a manifesto to a politically tense England, whose king refused to accept Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury. Regarding the growing unrest of the baronial class and his own concern over the English crown (and quite probably his dismay at King John's refusal of papal authority in determining the archbishop), Langton claimed that no secular leader need obey the rulership of a king who did not obey the laws of the King of Kings.<sup>20</sup> Robert de Courçon was given charge in 1213 to enforce Innocent's *Quia maior* and *Ad liberandam*, which called for the Fifth Crusade to be organized, and then acted on behalf of the papacy to broker a peace between England and France in 1214, during a

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<sup>17</sup> Jessalynn Bird, "Crusaders' Rights Revisited: The Use and Abuse of Crusader Privileges in Early Thirteenth-Century France," in *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, eds. Ruth Mazo Karras, Joel Kaye, and E. Ann Matter (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 134.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *The Medieval Imagination*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 61.

<sup>19</sup> Specifically, the Chanter's circle were given leave over the administration of the Albigensian Crusades, giving them a prototype testing ground with which they could refine their sermons, logistics, and grand strategy. Perhaps the best works on this aspect of the conquest of Languedoc as a proving ground for the Fifth Crusade are James M. Powell, *Anatomy of a Crusade: 1213-1221* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), and *Innocent III: Vicar of Christ or Lord of the World?* (Washington D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042-1216* (New York: Longman, 1988), 402.

period when Langton's powers had been suspended due to his refusal to excommunicate the rebellious barons of England.<sup>21</sup>

The university purge of 1210 began when it was revealed to the circle that a sect of logician-theologians at the University of Paris was teaching non-canonical, non-scriptural, beliefs. These beliefs largely stemmed from the teachings of a deceased master named Amalric, who had lectured primarily in logic before moving to the faculty of theology some years prior to his death.<sup>22</sup> To such an extent did the Amalricians' ideas concerning the nature of God and their neoplatonic interpretations of Aristotle disagree with canon (and the Chanter), that whispers of heresy came attached with any discussion of them. Something needed to be done about them, but due to the fact that thirteen out of fourteen of these "Amalricians" were members of the clergy, an official synod had to be called to try them for their heretical beliefs, in accordance with canon law.<sup>23</sup> Placed at the head of the investigation as sole judge was the archbishop of Sens, Peter Corbeil, who along with Peter the Chanter had taught a younger Innocent III the science of theology, and who had been raised to the powerful position of archbishop in 1200 by Innocent himself. Joining Corbeil were three other men: Peter of Nemours, the bishop of Paris, who had previously held private correspondence with both the pope and Corbeil in 1205, concerning papal disagreements with King Philip about a potential war in Occitania; Robert de Courçon, master of theology and another fellow student of Peter Cantor; and Stephen Langton, yet another master of theology and a close friend of the pope from their days at school in Paris.<sup>24</sup> The four man-tribunal quickly sent an informant back to the Amalricians as a spy in an effort to garner

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<sup>21</sup> Bird, "Crusaders' Rights," 135.

<sup>22</sup> J. M. M. H. Thijssen, "Master Amalric and the Amalricians: Inquisitorial Procedure and the Suppression of Heresy at the University of Paris," *Speculum* 71, no. 1 (1996): 48.

<sup>23</sup> Thijssen, "Master Amalric," 55 and 59.

<sup>24</sup> Leff, *Paris and Oxford*, 193; and Thijssen, "Master Amalric," 44. For a discussion on the 1205 letters between Innocent III, Peter Corbeil, and Peter of Nemours, see Lerner, "Uses of Heterodoxy," 194.

confessions to heretical beliefs. Three months later they received their evidence when the spy returned, after apparently having garnered the trust of the Amalricians and learning of their belief that God could be found in nature.<sup>25</sup> Ecclesiastical justice quickly followed and the written works of Amalric as well as those of like-minded master named David Dinant, and all the natural philosophies of Aristotle, were banned, and the heretics sentenced to death.<sup>26</sup> As Corbeil wrote:

The body of Master Amalric, who was the leader in the aforesaid depravity, was exhumed from the cemetery and buried in a field. At the same time, it was ordered at Paris that no one should teach from the books on natural philosophy for three years. The writings of Master David and the theological works in the French language were banned forever and burned. And so, by God's grace, the heresy was mowed down just as it was springing up.<sup>27</sup>

Interestingly, ties between Amalric and the French throne prevented the synod from explicitly naming some of the disciples of the heresy, as they enjoyed patronage by the king's son, Louis VIII. These names were ultimately suppressed from the record in an attempt to maintain relations with the French throne.<sup>28</sup> It has been speculated that the execution of the Amalricians served as a strategic victory for the papacy in garnering influence over Philip, who had possibly protected the Amalricians, despite or because of their heresies, as a potential source of political power due to their anti-hierarchical doctrines concerning the church, and a long-standing French tradition of

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<sup>25</sup> "Caesarii Heisterbacensis dialogus miraculorum," in *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, eds. Walter Wakefield and Austin Evans (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 261.

<sup>26</sup> Thijssen, "Master Amalric," 43.

<sup>27</sup> "Caesarii," 262.

<sup>28</sup> Lerner, "Uses of Heterodoxy," 190-192.

attempting to limit the excommunicative and judicial powers of the church within French lands.<sup>29</sup>

In the end, however, the Amalricians were burned at the stake, and "departed this world in unhappy martyrdom."<sup>30</sup> The use of the term "martyrdom" is especially telling in this account, seemingly suggesting that though the executed were heretics, their deaths were for the benefit of Christendom. This purge of dissident voices at the university, which came to be known as the condemnation of 1210, marked the first of many acts of censure at the University of Paris.<sup>31</sup>

Robert de Courçon, thanks in no small part to his aid in the elimination of the Amalricians and his conservative canonical outlook, was swiftly raised to the position of papal legate. By 1212 he instituted the incorporation of the faculty of theology at Paris into an independent governing body, separate from the chancellor of the school, bringing the theologians more closely under papal control.<sup>32</sup> Then, in 1215, Courçon penned a series of statutes for the University of Paris precisely dictating academic qualification standards. Among them, the faculty of theology was henceforth limited to a mere eight men, the required number of years one needed to spend in study to become a master of theology was set, and the practice of theology as a master was restricted to those aged 35 and older, thus narrowing potential candidates to those alive during Cantor's time.<sup>33</sup> This overhaul of the structure and powers of the faculty of theology was implemented at the behest of the papacy itself, as Courçon acknowledged in the opening paragraph of his decree to the university:

Let all know that, since we have had a special mandate from the pope to take effective measures to reform the state of the Parisian scholars for the better,

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 195-196.

<sup>30</sup> "Chartularium universitatis Parisiensis," (1210) in Wakefield and Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages*, 263.

<sup>31</sup> Thijssen, "Master Amalric," 43.

<sup>32</sup> Leff, *Paris and Oxford*, 25 and 197.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 169.

wishing with the counsel of good men to provide for the tranquillity of the scholars in the future, we have decreed and ordained in this wise....<sup>34</sup>

Perhaps most telling of the authority lent to Courçon's position is the fact that were his decrees disobeyed, the perpetrator was to be instantaneously punished by excommunication.<sup>35</sup>

Additionally, the statutes took care to officially recognize the purge of 1210 and to legally justify the post-mortem excommunication of Amalric of Bene, an action that up to that point had not been canonically sanctioned.<sup>36</sup> Later in the same year, Courçon solidified himself as a major political player across Europe when he organized and drafted the Fourth Lateran Council with the pope, in an effort to better codify the papal definition of and appropriate punishments for heresy, effectively laying a retroactive foundation for the Albigensian Crusades.<sup>37</sup>

Simultaneously, Innocent sent Cardinal Niccolò de Romanis (d. 1218) to England in order to oversee the transition of Stephen Langton to Archbishop of Canterbury and implement the first charter for the University of Oxford, giving the papacy two firm strongholds (the universities of Paris and Oxford) with which it could produce the new heterodoxy.<sup>38</sup>

Central to the methods of political maneuvering that the Chanter's circle employed were the processes by which heresy was defined and condemned. Indeed, the intellectual and social control adeptly asserted over such matters by the papal powers and represented in the Parisian theology faculty held life and death consequences for most of Christendom. The potential for

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<sup>34</sup> "Chartularium universitatis Pariensis," (1215) in *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lynn Thorndike (New York: WW Norton, 1975), 27-28.

<sup>35</sup> "Chartularium" (1215), 30.

<sup>36</sup> Thijssen, "Master Amalric," 50-51.

<sup>37</sup> John C. Scott, *The Influence of the Medieval University on the Latin Church and Secular Politics: From the Later Middle Ages to Modern Times* (New York: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), 106.

<sup>38</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 70.

mass harm and destruction to those harboring heretical beliefs had been building for quite some time, as seen in the Third Lateran Council, which stated of heretics:

they and all who defend and receive them are anathematized, and under penalty of anathema we forbid everyone to give them shelter, to admit them to his land, or to transact business with them.... Let their possessions be confiscated and let the princes be allowed to reduce to slavery men of this kind.<sup>39</sup>

Langton and Innocent both made use of the Third Lateran as a legal precedent of sorts, having used it to justify the (theoretical) confiscation of lands from King John for slights against members of the Church.<sup>40</sup> For the academic-ecclesiastics of the early thirteenth century the call to war was not too far a stretch from these previous writings of the church, and heresy was centrally defined as a matter of choice between canonical doctrine and everything else, which was rapidly being codified as evil and divinely treacherous error. Citing the Third Lateran, *Ad abolendam* (1184), and the *Vergentis in senium* (1199), Innocent's pontificate held that heresy was the divine corollary to treason, and should be punished as such.<sup>41</sup> The chancellor of Oxford, around 1200, stated simply, "Heresy is an opinion chosen by human faculties, contrary to sacred scripture, openly held, and pertinaciously defended. *Hairesis* in Greek, *Choice* [sic] in Latin."<sup>42</sup>

During their episcopal tenures, the Chanter's successors also acted strongly to streamline and centralize what might be deemed an institution of crusading within the ranks of the Paris

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<sup>39</sup> Peters, "Lateran III," *Heresy and Authority*, 169.

<sup>40</sup> Bird, "Paris Masters," 121.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 122 and 147.

<sup>42</sup> Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, 190. Similar anecdotes concerning the will and committal to heresy abound; one notable instance is Pelster's *Ein Gutachten* in which a passage reads, "Errare enim possum, hereticus esse non possum; nam primum ad intellectum pertinet, secundum ad voluntatem." For further details see McLaughlin, *Intellectual Freedom*, 282.



masters. Courçon, acting as papal legate in charge of French crusade preaching in 1213, transferred the bulk of designated crusade preachers of the Albigensian Crusades (Langton and Vitry included) to the task of preparing for Lateran IV, and the preaching of the Fifth Crusade.<sup>43</sup> Within the decade following Courçon and Langton's papal appointments, an institutionalized need for experienced preacher-theologians was created with the tenth canon of Lateran IV, which demanded experienced preachers to visit every diocese in place of a bishop. This demand was met almost exclusively by those few Parisian masters who had survived the university purge.<sup>44</sup>

When the Fourth Lateran Council was called by Innocent III, the Albigensian Crusades were well underway, and the notion of reconciliation with heretics had long since been left behind. The Fourth Lateran is of central importance to the study of Chanterian influence within academia and politics. It officially codified the church under the pope's authority as being the sole source of salvation for all mankind.<sup>45</sup> More importantly, it ruled that any secular authority could be admonished and censured by the church, and that any who were deemed heretical in their beliefs were to have their lands forfeited to any Catholic that was willing to take up arms against them.<sup>46</sup> This last guarantor of land and wealth for those who heeded the call against heresy proved an apt recruiting tool for the church in France, though one must wonder to what extent King Philip Augustus may have taken the decree of papal authority over all secular lordships as a potential threat to his dominion.

With the Fourth Lateran, Innocent and the rest of the Chanter's circle made new sweeping and ecclesiastically binding changes to the contemporary understanding of heresy. Perhaps most

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<sup>43</sup> Jessalynn Bird, "The Victorines, Peter the Chanter's Circle, and the Crusade: Two Unpublished Crusading Appeals in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Latin 14470," *Medieval Sermon Studies* 48 (2004): 11.

<sup>44</sup> Tyerman, *Fighting for Christendom*, 128, and Maier, *Crusade Propaganda*, 6-8. The tenth canon is also of use in understanding the preference for trained theologians, in that it explicitly condemns a lack of theological knowledge in any bishop and cites the utmost need for preachers both *potentes opere et sermone*. See Norman P. Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1 (Washington D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 239.

<sup>45</sup> "Lateran IV," in Peters, *Heresy and Authority*, 174.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

notably, Innocent was the first pope to define heresy explicitly as a crime equal in weight only to treason, stressing the view that heresy was now to be considered a traitorous act against what might be thought of as the Christian community.<sup>47</sup> A definition aligned well to the pastoral reform of the Chanter's circle, who viewed an individual's sins as sins against their community.<sup>48</sup> The council as well codified that those deemed heretics, as traitors, were now to be held accountable to secular censure and persecuted to the fullest punishments available, swiftly ensuring secular aid for ecclesiastical crimes.<sup>49</sup> Amid the council talks, one anonymous eyewitness account recalls discussions of the political concerns surrounding what to do with Raymond of Toulouse in Occitania, concerns over the barons of England, and rumors of the papal management of the crusades, suggesting just how intrinsically political the canonical sanctions were.<sup>50</sup> As to how well these new sanctions represented the doctrines of the Chanter's group, one need not look much farther than the stipulation that yearly confession to an ecclesiastic official was put into effect, a subject that both Courçon and the Chanter himself had written about at length and endorsed.<sup>51</sup> The Chanter's circle of theologians had by 1215 asserted their intellectual control over doctrine to such an extent that they effectively asserted authority over Christian society itself.<sup>52</sup>

Another decretal of Innocent III, the *Cum ex officii nostri*, as well as Courçon's decrees at the University of Paris in 1210, 1212, and 1215, provide a firm basis for uncovering the actions

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<sup>47</sup> Thijssen, "Master Amalric," 60.

<sup>48</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Patricia Ranum (New York: Zone Books, 1990), 12. See also the explanation of medieval life as a network of social relations on 19. Also of note is the requirement of confession in Lateran IV, which required the priest at hand to not simply listen to the penitent's sins, but to actively comment on the sins as they affected family and community. Lateran IV, Canons 21 and 48.

<sup>49</sup> Lateran IV, Canon 3.

<sup>50</sup> "The Giessen Codex," in "A New Eyewitness Account of the Fourth Lateran Council," eds. Stephan Kuttner and Antonio Garcia, *Traditio*, Vol. 20 (1964), 121-122. Latin original reprinted in pp. 123-129.

<sup>51</sup> Ian Wei, *Intellectual Culture in Medieval Paris: Theologians and the University, 1100-1330* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 239 and 242.

<sup>52</sup> Wei, *Intellectual Culture*, 237 and 246.

and motives of the faculty of theology in conjunction with Innocent himself. These include statutes which altered the core makeup of the university faculty and its curriculum at the behest of the pope. Though less widespread in their readership than the Councils, these charters offer a telling look into the political machinations of the papacy at the University of Paris, and were known well at the university and throughout upper church leadership.<sup>53</sup>

The influence of the Chanter's circle at the University of Paris upon the politics and religion of medieval Europe is difficult to overstate. Historian Gordon Leff said of the situation that whatever happened at the university had "European-wide ramifications," and that the faculty of theology in particular were "the doctrinal and intellectual nerve center of Christendom."<sup>54</sup> Put simply, the university's authority over all issues moral and academic in nature was not, generally, a disputed point.<sup>55</sup> The discipline of theology and the pursuit of its political applications during the Albigensian and Fourth Crusades saw it continue to soar to new heights of importance concerning official dogma, until its shadow grew to encompass the understanding of all other academic fields as well. During the rule of Innocent III, the theologian was catapulted into the esteemed role of the *universal expert*.<sup>56</sup> So distinguished was the faculty of theology at Paris, that its authority extended to the near-exclusive right to arbitrate matters of ecclesiastical doctrine, papal authority, and the suppression or authentication of suspect and erroneous philosophical works.<sup>57</sup> It is through this unparalleled influence on intellectual thought in the Middle Ages that the University of Paris exercised its influence over the culture and politics of Europe, becoming what has been called a "state within a state," and its theologians garnering the title of the *vox*

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<sup>53</sup> The full account text of these university decrees may be found in Heinrich Denifle, ed., *Chartularium universitatis parisiensis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> Leff, *Paris and Oxford*, 187 and 164, respectively.

<sup>55</sup> Wei, *Intellectual Culture*, 169.

<sup>56</sup> McLaughlin, *Intellectual Freedom*, 171.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 239 and 282.

*populi* of the thirteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Though their claims were held to be universal, their reach was not, and needed to be enforced throughout the periphery of France in territories like Occitania, where heresy roamed free.

Academic methodologies no doubt played a great role in developing the various doctrines of medieval Christendom. Doctrines whose creation can largely be accorded to the purview of the Parisian theologians. The medieval masters were renowned for their logic-based analysis and public debate, which stressed the argumentation of various interpretations of doctrinal beliefs in a classically *pro et contra* style.<sup>59</sup> These debates were closely tied to the political events of the day and primarily concerned the appropriate interpretation of scripture, and thus also the defining of heresy. Paris, after all, had become the economic hub of France by the onset of the thirteenth century, and the university was the cosmopolitan nucleus of Paris.<sup>60</sup> The love for scholarly discourse reflected this. However, for Pope Innocent III, this cosmopolitan appreciation for open, diverse, and at times quite lively discourse, reflected far too well the immense value of religious and intellectual debate held in the Occitanian south. In the decentralized and urban atmosphere of Occitania, Cathars and Catholics predominantly lived side by side, and heretics could freely discuss their views as equals with the church's representatives. Even the Chanter's circle had their own words repudiated and tossed back at them.<sup>61</sup> The papacy needed a way to expunge the

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<sup>58</sup> Scott, *Medieval University*, 79, 100, and 102.

<sup>59</sup> For insights to the processes of scholarly debate see Scott, *Influence of the Medieval University*, 96-97; and McLaughlin, *Intellectual Freedom*, 181. For an overview of the *quodlibeta*, or "free discussions," see Leff, *Paris and Oxford*, 163.

<sup>60</sup> Sharon Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology, and the Daily Lives of the Poor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 12.

<sup>61</sup> Bird, "Paris Masters," 130.

undesirable elements that such a system of open discourse invariably produced, and sought to regain a cultural control over Occitania.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> For notes on the role of cosmopolitanism in the Albigensian Crusades see Joseph R. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades* (New York: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 8. For cathar-catholic interactions in Occitania see Strayer, *Albigensian Crusades*, 22-23 and 42.

## CHANTER CIRCLE PEDAGOGIES AND THE PROLIFERATION OF VIOLENCE

The pedagogies of Peter the Chanter, as seen in his writings and those of his followers, are rife with a positive doctrine of pain and suffering. Starting with Chanter's own work, *De penitentia*, which focused on appropriate forms of prayer, the need for a penitential mindset in the believer was essential to the circle's moral theology. The *De penitentia* itself is perhaps most notable for its use of drawn images, commissioned by the Chanter, for the education of illiterate laity.<sup>63</sup> Important to our study is this relationship between the penitential theology of the circle and its popular target audience. In an effort to further stress the abject humility desired in all Christians of good faith, the images of people at prayer contained within the work were portrayed as average and modestly dressed, emphasizing the populist-centered preachings of the circle in what Richard Trexler has described as an attempt to universalize its moralist teachings.<sup>64</sup> This example is better contextualized as being one of many endeavors by Chanter and his disciples to reinforce a penitential humility in the masses around the time when the circle was also implementing a sacrament of penance in Paris.<sup>65</sup>

Stephen Langton's own focus on suffering well reflected both the norm being established by the Chanter's circle and his own theological training in Peter the Lombard's teachings. Lombard espoused the *Assumptus* theory of Christ's body, that it contained the substance of mortal man and was thus capable of suffering, a point with which the Victorines agreed.<sup>66</sup> In fact, alongside Peter Comestor's *Histories* and a general study of the bible as a whole, Peter the Lombard's gloss on the Pauline epistles was a specialty of Langton's, which he taught at the

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<sup>63</sup> Baldwin, *Paris 1200* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 154.

<sup>64</sup> Trexler, *The Christian at Prayer* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), 337 and 357.

<sup>65</sup> Baldwin, *1200*, 171.

<sup>66</sup> Donald Mowbray, *Pain and Suffering in Medieval Theology: Academic Debates at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth Century* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009), 27.

University of Paris. And his interest and opinions on such studies greatly influenced his colleagues and students, helping to add further weight to the growing moralistic movement based in the Chanter's teachings.<sup>67</sup>

Perhaps most predominant in the minds of Langton and his contemporaries in this endeavor was the looming menace of Catharism in Languedoc. The Cathar heresy specifically espoused that Christ could not have been made of earthly substance and thus could not have suffered on the cross.<sup>68</sup> This theological division between the Cathars and Chanter's circle surely helped to add greater weight to the political motivations of Innocent's pontificate, and assured the continued emphasis of Christ-like suffering and penitence in the circle's sermons during the early thirteenth century.

In this way, we might see both Langton and Vitry's sermons in a similar light to how Kaske interprets the *exempla*, in that they both strived to craft a narrative description of suffering to illustrate the morality of Catholic doctrine.<sup>69</sup> This connection is not surprising when we take into account the Parisian masters' familiarity with the methods of the *exempla*, with many of them, Langton and Vitry included, writing in that style regularly.<sup>70</sup> The aforementioned stress on martyrdom and righteous suffering permeates the sermons of the Chanter's circle. In a sermon most likely given for the feast day of Saint Catherine of Alexandria (c. 287-305 CE), Langton spoke to the divine grace of the virgin saint as she was horrifically martyred upon the wheel, "And so the virgin's flesh was gloriously broken upon the wheel and she was killed by a multitude of men. In the end she was beheaded and her body buried by the angels on mount

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<sup>67</sup> Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England 1042-1216* (New York: Longman, 1988), 399-400.

<sup>68</sup> Mowbray, *Pain and Suffering*, 30.

<sup>69</sup> R. E. Kaske, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to Interpretation* (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1988), 88.

<sup>70</sup> Tyerman, *England*, 160.

Sinai, where the law was given, and oil exited her bones, and in place of blood milk poured forth from her wounds.”<sup>71</sup>

What remains to be seen is how the writings, and in particular the sermonic writings, of the Paris masters encouraged what Tyerman has referred to as a "positive doctrine of holy war."<sup>72</sup> What particular signs and moral doctrines did the circle of the Chanter espouse in common, and how were these emblematic teachings given coherence across the sermons of Langton's confidants? Key to answering these questions is Jessalynn Bird's observation that the anti-vice sermons of the Chanter's circle helped to build a movement which inspired self-reform in the laity, a penitential appeal, promoting a more sustainable unity of orthodox dogma.<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, as has become clear through examination of the Chanter circle's correspondence, the sermonic rhetoric (especially in the *exempla*) was geared toward teaching the laity, and withheld doctrinal disputes thought to be the purview of theologians.<sup>74</sup> This implementation of a self-motivated tendency among the laity to understand themselves as penitential beings was realized largely through three common motifs within Chanterian sermons: the desire for abject humility in the face of prideful sin, the taking of the cross without regret, and a divinely called return to the Holy Land.

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<sup>71</sup> Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. Lat 14470, 264va. "Orone virgine gloriose ita fracte sunt rote quod carcentes super multitudinem hominum eos interfecerunt. Ad ultimum decollata est et corpus eius ab angelos in monte Synai ubi lex data sepultum, et ex ossibus eius oleum exiit et pro sanguine de vulnera eius prodiit lac." All translations by Andrew X. Fleming unless otherwise noted. This manuscript has been identified by Jessalynn Bird as a miscellany of the Victorines, and houses sermons from other members of the Chanter's circle, including two crusade sermons of Jacques de Vitry, see Bird, "Victorines." Additionally, while this particular miscellany does not attribute the sermon directly to Langton, Powicke and Roberts have expertly identified it as being near identical to several other sermons which have been well-established as belonging to Langton. See Roberts, *Studies in the Sermons*, and Maurice Powicke, *Stephen Langton: Being the Ford Lectures Delivered in the University of Oxford in Hilary Term 1927* (London: Merlin Press, 1965).

<sup>72</sup> Tyerman, *England*, 86.

<sup>73</sup> Jessalynn Bird, "Medicine for Body and Soul: Jacques de Vitry's Sermons to Hospitallers and their Charges," in *Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, ed. P. Biller and J. Ziegler (Boydell and Brewer, 2001), 107.

<sup>74</sup> Jessalynn Bird, "The Construction of Orthodoxy and the (De) Construction of Heretical Attacks on the Eucharist in Pastoralia from Peter the Chanter's Circle in Paris," in *Texts and the Medieval Repression of Heresy*, eds. Caterina Bruschi and Peter Biller (Rochester: York Medieval Press, 2003): 47-48.



The Paris masters' emphasis on the virtue of *humilitas* is well attested.<sup>75</sup> In his *De penitentia*, the Chanter expressed that private prayer was morally superior to public displays of prayer, as it ensured a more contrite authenticity in the prayer-giver. Although he was quick to clarify that the need for learned clerics to educate the laity through public prayer and sermons was of utmost importance.<sup>76</sup> This attention to the example of the humble follower of Christ is well born out in much of the era's sermons, including Jacques de Vitry's sermons to crusaders. Among many examples is Vitry's frequent use of the tales of Job and Isaiah to illustrate the humility of the righteous. Opening one sermon with Isaiah's proclamation that the sinner is like the blind man, Vitry seamlessly ties this thought into the verses of Job, calling for the educated preacher to "treat weak sinners as carefully and gently as midwives treat women."<sup>77</sup>

The rhetoric of humility in the Chanter circle's sermons was often offset, however, with images of grandiose rewards, before being fully driven home to the avowed crusader. Such an example appears in the same sermon of Vitry, wherein the promise of eternal glory is paraded before the prospective crusader: "The Lord invests his vassals with the heavenly kingdom by the cross of ordinary thread or cloth."<sup>78</sup> Such promise of eternal glory and salvation would certainly ring an appealing tone to those contemplating the taking of the cross during the closing crescendos of a heated sermon. For those crusaders who lived on without the release of

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<sup>75</sup> Mark A. Zier, "Sermons of the Twelfth Century Schoolmasters and Canons," in *The Sermon*, 328.

<sup>76</sup> Richard C. Trexler, *Religion in Social Context in Europe and America 1200-1700* (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002), 371.

<sup>77</sup> Jacques de Vitry, *Sermo II*, in Maier, *Crusade Propaganda*, 101. This sermon is housed at Troyes, Bibliothèque Municipale, 228, ff. 149rb-151va. The verses referenced are Isa. 43.8 and Job 26.13. It is important to note here Vitry's affinity for utilizing bible verses that are easily referenced to sentiments or allegories in multiple biblical passages, likely reflecting his desire to provide an open format to the written sermon in an effort to allow for increased flexibility when deciding the most ideal passages to recite to a particular crowd. The language here specifically echoes another of his favoured passages: "In that day the Lord with his hard, and great, and strong sword shall visit leviathan the bar serpent, and leviathan the crooked serpent, and shall slay the whale that is in the sea." Isa. 27.1, Vulg. In this way Vitry's message seems to be twofold. Firstly, that the crusade preacher acts to lead the laity out from the error of heresy and, secondly, that the crusader acts to destroy it bodily.

<sup>78</sup> Vitry, *Sermo II*, 127.

martyrdom, however, such humble signifiers of their salvation could be used to maintain the hierarchy of the papacy's power. Renowned veteran of the Third, Fourth, and Albigensian Crusades, Duke Leopold VI of Austria learned such a lesson from the hand of Innocent III, who wrote to him:

There is much more merit in the gibbet of Christ's cross than in the little sign of your cross... For you accept a soft and gentle cross; he suffered one that was bitter and hard. You bear it superficially on your clothing; he endured his in the reality of his flesh. You sew yours on with linen and silken threads; he was fastened to his with hard, iron nails.<sup>79</sup>

In this regard, we can understand the humility encouraged in the laity, and particularly amongst the secular nobility, as being both a thematic point of belief stressing the values of living a Christ-like life, as well as being a mechanism with which the administration of Innocent's pontificate could leverage some small amount of obedience in their crusaders.

Finally, concerning the uses of humility, is the penitential doctrine so dear to the Chanter's circle. In another sermon addressed to crusaders and those who would become them, Vitry explicates at length an analogy between the daily lives of medieval Europeans and the reign of Jesus Christ. Shaping an understanding of Christ as an Emperor stripped of his rightful lands, and of the crusaders as his fief's levies, the crusading army is assembled to avenge their

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<sup>79</sup> Innocent III, *Opera omnia*, in Riley-Smith, *The Crusades*, 133.

liege lord and regain the lost patrimony through humble and trying military service.<sup>80</sup> Their great enemy: the prideful Satan and his heretical followers.<sup>81</sup>

The taking of the cross, much like the desire to act in authentic humility, was a constant theme in crusading sermons which held both a symbolic connection to the life of Christ and a more subtle display of pride for the faithful warrior. While the taking of the cross, as a ceremony for anointing new crusaders, is shared with near all crusading endeavors since the eleventh century, the perceptions of what that responsibility meant became more clarified with the Paris masters.

Vitry's sermons again provide us with an invaluable insight into this ritual of the crusading culture. Of note is that, despite Innocent's letter to Leopold, the cross of the crusader was not merely viewed as a trinket to be patched upon the shoulder, but rather was given the full allegorical meaning of Christ's own cross. Put simply, a crusader did not merely wear the cross, he bore it. Vitry clarifies this by acknowledging that while all Catholics who have been baptized have, in a sense, been *signed* with the cross, it is the duty of the crusader to carry the cross *put on his shoulders*.<sup>82</sup> Maier as well points out the near Christ-like qualities embedded into the imagery of the crusaders shown in the sermons, writing that they "...built up an image of crusaders as morally superior people: taking the cross not only meant entering a life with exceptional devotional qualities because of the crusader's special relationship with Christ, it also liberated the crusader from all sins and thus distinguished him or her from the mass of ordinary people."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Jacques de Vitry, *Sermo I*, in Maier, *Crusade Propaganda*, 99. This military metaphor hearkens back to the unity expressed through sacrifice in Chanter's portrayal of the crusading struggle as an act of penitential devotion. As such, pain itself, as endured through the strife of warfare, mimics Christ's suffering, and can be understood to be an agent of ritual unification among the followers of the orthodoxy.

<sup>81</sup> This is made more poignant through a passage of one of Vitry's anti-heretical sermons, in which he recites from Isa. 14.13, remarking that though they may seek to ascend to the throne of heaven, the most high of them shall be brought down to the pit. Jessalynn Bird, "The Victorines," 24.

<sup>82</sup> Vitry, *Sermo II*, 107.

<sup>83</sup> Maier, *Crusade Propaganda*, 64.

In this regard, the Chanter's circle helped to promote what Maier has termed a "dividing culture," placing those who heeded the call of the cross as being the ideal of Christian righteousness, while relegating those who failed to take the vows to a status of potential enemy of the faith.<sup>84</sup> This division is named numerous times over the course of Vitry's sermons. Utilizing the plight of Job, who is unable to hear the saving blood of Christ through the wickedness of the earth, and assuring the audience that the devil will strike down the lazy and weary who do not heed the call. "He is the devil," Vitry says, "watch out that you are not among the last, that you are not late for doing good. Those who prevent good bring about damnation." <sup>85</sup>

As a whole, the intense focus placed upon affirmative interaction by the laity with the crusade, as seen in Vitry's sermons, helps to paint a picture of the early thirteenth-century sermon as a platform for engaging a popular audience with the moral reforms of Innocent's pontificate. The sermons, acting as educating tools, made extensive use of an atmosphere of immediacy, relaying the paramount moral importance of individual and community engagement with crusading. The taking of the cross was a central ritual in this endeavor. Promoting a unity in Christ-like suffering and a shared stake in the future of Christianity was paramount, and often as not characterized by the atrocities of what *would* happen should the faithful falter in taking up arms in the name of the Chanter circle's burgeoning hegemony of what orthodoxy ought to be. Langton rallies his listeners to heed this call as well, saying, "Blessings are bestowed on the one that places their heart on the part of the weights of doing everything for God... on the other hand, if you allow your sins and grave outrages, if it is true the passion for adultery outweighs a little fast and alms, brother, your balance is treacherous."<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Vitry, *Sermo II*, 103 and 123.

<sup>86</sup> BnF, MS. Lat 14470, 264rb. "In altera parte statere cuncta Dei beneficia sunt corde pondera... Si dimisit tibi peccata enormia et gravia tu econtra, si pro adulterii domini passione modicum ieiunas modicam elemosinam

The third and final motif of the Paris masters' sermons is the divinely-mandated return to the Holy Land. In his 1213 call to arms for the fifth crusade, *Quia maior*, Innocent III struck at the heart of what should become the Fifth Crusade. "He who wishes to follow me to the crown," he wrote, "let him hasten to the battle which now is proposed for the testing of all."<sup>87</sup> The crusade was the opportunity for salvation for all, the embodiment of the Chanter circle's ardent desire for a universal morality of the Christian faith, implemented through the destruction of all that was not appropriately Christian. Understanding the strength of religious fervor for holy war near the end of Innocent's pontificate, Vitry's hailing of the martyr crowned in eternal beatitude becomes fully contextualized. "Those who strive mightily for him might be happily crowned by him," reads part of the *Quia maior*.<sup>88</sup> And later on, "true crusaders follow the sign-post of eternal beatitude."<sup>89</sup>

Jacques de Vitry made extensive use of the imagery of the signpost in his sermons to crusaders. Drawing from an extensive set of biblical passages but focusing especially on Isaiah and Jeremiah, Vitry's sermons repeatedly sound the call to "raise a sign in Zion," effectively reimagining the crusaders as the lost tribes of Israel who, coming from every nation, must now descend upon Jerusalem in the name of God.<sup>90</sup> In this, Vitry's sermon and the *Quia maior* match perfectly in understanding the Holy Land as a literal and allegorical proving ground for the souls

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praestas et ista vera tibi preponderare, frater, statera tua dolosa." This passage follows direct reference to Prov. 11:1, "A deceitful balance is an abomination before the Lord: and a just weight is his will." It is possible that this line serves as a double entendre of sorts, alluding also to the faulty weights of usurers, another favorite target of the Chanter circle's ire.

<sup>87</sup> Innocent III, *Quia maior*, in *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187-1291*, eds. Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters, and James M. Powell (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 107.

<sup>88</sup> Innocent III, *Quia maior*, 108.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>90</sup> Vitry, *Sermo II*, 127. There are literally dozens of calls to raise the sign in Vitry's sermons.

of the faithful.<sup>91</sup> Indeed, it was not uncommon for the circle to utilize the tale of the tribes of Israel as an example par excellence of the *just war*.<sup>92</sup>

Innocent's decree and Vitry's sermons match closely in another regard as well, that being the association of Muslim-controlled Jerusalem, and the impending crusade to take it back, with an apocalyptic understanding of the world. In addition to declaring the followers of Islam as heretics of the foulest divine treason, Vitry specifically cites the invocation of Mohammed's name as bringing about the prophecy of Isaiah, "the faithful city has been made a whore; once the city of perfect beauty, the joy of the whole world; justice used to dwell in her, but now murderers."<sup>93</sup> Remarkably similar in tenor is Innocent's suggestion that the apocalypse could be imminent, as the world was nearing 666 years since the founding of the Islamic heresy, by the "pseudo-prophet Mohammed."<sup>94</sup>

Moreover, within this context of heeding the signposts to the Holy Land, the biblical passages and metaphors chosen become increasingly militant. From Innocent's savage subjunctive, "let us gird ourselves to come to the aid of the crucified," to Vitry's recitation of Isaiah's passage concerning the cup of wrath, the martial conquest of heresy becomes central to the tenets of the reformers.<sup>95</sup> "For some the cross is a key," Vitry says to his audience of would-be crusaders, "for others a mace."<sup>96</sup>

With this in our minds then, it can be understood that a large basis of an individual's personal identity in the early thirteenth century could be found in the call for a return to the Holy Land, and a desire to save it for Christendom with violence. Taking account of these three

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<sup>91</sup> Vitry, *Sermo I*, 97, and Innocent III, *Quia maior*, 107.

<sup>92</sup> Bird, "Paris Masters," 137.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 95. The verse is Isa. 1.21

<sup>94</sup> Innocent III, *Quia maior*, 108-109.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 109 and Vitry, *Sermo I*, 96.

<sup>96</sup> Vitry, *Sermo II*, 107.

themes--humility, the cross, and the return--the crusade sermons of Vitry and the other Paris masters might help to shed light on how the people of the early thirteenth century conceptualized their identities within a crusading culture.

## VIOLENCE IN THE SERMONS OF STEPHEN LANGTON

Stephen Langton and his works have occupied the writings of historians for over a century. A political power-house, religious reformer, and supporter of the barons in England, his actions and writings had immediate consequences for the political and theological landscapes of the thirteenth century. He divided the bible into chapters, drafted the Magna Carta, wrote hundreds of sermons, and was the second theologian to ever write commentaries on the literal, allegorical, and moralistic interpretations of every book of scripture (the first to do so was Peter the Chanter).<sup>97</sup> Perhaps in part because of these great accomplishments, the crowded field of modern Langton scholarship (including a number of exquisite sermon collections) has as of yet failed to adequately study Langton's relationship as a preacher with the rest of the Chanter circle, or to contextualize his more violently worded works within their crusading context.

One reason for this shortage is certainly the lack of available sermons by Langton directly addressed to potential crusaders, of which there are none currently known. This is not to say, however, that they never existed. We know that Langton contributed significantly to the preaching efforts of the Albigensian Crusades at the behest of Innocent III, and most likely served in this capacity with Jacques de Vitry and Robert de Courçon, from whom we still have extant crusade appeals.<sup>98</sup> Vitry himself identified Langton, along with Courçon, as being among the brightest "stars in the firmament" in propagating the orthodoxy of Innocent's pontificate.<sup>99</sup> Furthermore, Magdalen College Ms. Lat 168, containing a number of Langton miscellanies, shows an extant table of contents referencing a sermon by Langton titled "ad crucissignatos."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Baldwin, *1200*, 195.

<sup>98</sup> Roberts, *Studies in the Sermons*, 18-19.

<sup>99</sup> Jacques de Vitry, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, in Felix Liebermann, ed., "M. Parisiensis Vita sancti Stephani archiepiscopi Cantuariensis," *Ungedruckte Anglonormannische Geschichtsquellen* (Strassburg: 1879), 329.

<sup>100</sup> Magdalen College, MS. Lat. 168, 51v.



Unfortunately, the corresponding sermon has been lost to time.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, we may yet examine the martial imagery available in his sermons within the context of a crusading culture, and consider whether or not his sermons might be seen to adhere to the same literary frameworks as his Chanter circle compatriots.

In line with the themes of urgency and humility apparent in Vitry's sermons, Langton gave his own inception sermon at the University of Paris on the book of Exodus, highlighting an understanding of the Church as heir to the tribes of Israel.<sup>102</sup> The underlining value of abject humility seen so far in Chanterian works is, perhaps, even more tangible in the sermonic writings of Langton. *Humilitas*, as a tool "to confound the pride of the devil," is the calling of the devout, according to Langton.<sup>103</sup> In fact, Langton frequently helps to establish the need for humility throughout his sermons, rarely referring to the great enemy, *diabolus*, without the epithet *superbus*. Further adding to the undercurrent of humility and penitential doctrine, possibly in an attempt to connect this message with the popular audiences that the Chanter's circle so often sought to educate, Langton begins several of his sermons with Paul's "the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong."<sup>104</sup> Indeed, the truth of Christian orthodoxy takes a place in Langton's sermons as both a weapon against and a protection from the enemies of the church for the humble crusader. "The word of God is pure," Langton writes, "He is a breastplate [in the] continual fight between man and the devil."<sup>105</sup> And again, "If any Christian fights against the strongest pagan, he shall find the sword lent to him both sharp and

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<sup>101</sup> Personal Communication, Anne Chesher, Assistant Librarian (2015).

<sup>102</sup> Baldwin, *1200*, 201.

<sup>103</sup> Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. Lat 14593, 46va. "Ad contendam superbia diabolos."

<sup>104</sup> 1 Cor. 1.27 Vulg. This verse begins three separate sermons attributed to Langton in BnF MSS. 14470, 263vb; 16463, 52ra; and 14593, 46va. "Infirma mundi elegit Deus."

<sup>105</sup> BnF MS. Lat. 14859, 276ra.

strong... for the sword is taken by these men when the word of God is spoken."<sup>106</sup> It seems then that the gospels, or the gospels as understood by the orthodoxy of Innocent's pontificate, are metaphorically understood as being the humble crusader's keys to victory over paganism and heresy, and the weapons without which no Christian fighter might succeed. Incidentally, these triumphal keys were only available to the crusading army via the religious education offered by sanctioned sermon-givers such as the educated circle of the Chanter. Langton himself recognized the importance placed upon preachers for guiding the laity to salvation, and likened the offers of prelate for theologians at the schools of Paris to Jesus' own selecting of disciples.<sup>107</sup>

The second thematic element of Chanterian crusade preaching, the taking of the cross, also held a predominant space in Langton's sermons. "Brethren," he calls, "if a distinguished man of the army has zealously adorned himself with the love of the cross, let him into the midst of the enemy of the Emperor."<sup>108</sup> Similar in theme to Jacques de Vitry's crusade sermons, God is depicted by the highest title of secular rulership, and the crusaders as his rightful levies. Indeed, the signing of the cross for a crusader appears as a symbolic gesture of arming the emperor's soldiers with their weapons. "If any one of my brethren of the Cross goes to fight against the pagan," Langton stipulates, "while he is marked by the character of the cross, he is free to gird himself with the embrace of the cross to be an answer and deliver up the sword to them."<sup>109</sup> The signing of the cross forms a thematic element central to Langton's sermons, just as it did for Vitry's sermons and the Chanter's *De penitentia*. The call to take the cross is apparent throughout

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<sup>106</sup> BnF MS. Lat. 14470, 263vb. "Si quis Christianus pugnaturus contra paganum fortissimum inveniret qui sibi gladium mutaret acutissimum et fortem... His gladius dum verbum dei dicitur accipitur." Translation by John S. Ott.

<sup>107</sup> Baldwin, *1200*, 176-177.

<sup>108</sup> BnF MS. Lat. 16463, 134ra.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

dozens of Langton's sermons, often as the sword by which crusaders might go against the enemies of Christendom and achieve "eternal glory."<sup>110</sup>

Finally, the return to the Holy Land, as seen in the writings of Vitry and Innocent, is woven deftly into the fabric of Langton's sermons. Exodus and Isaiah feature prominently, from the pilgrimage of Tobias to the opening of Jerusalem's gates to the tribes returned.<sup>111</sup> Again, Vitry's retelling of the slaughtering of the slothful is apparent, when Langton likens the crusaders' goal to that of the Israelites coming to slay the Amalekites, "and on entering Israel, the Lord fought against Amalek, for Moses had prayed."<sup>112</sup>

As a whole, Langton's sermons largely coincide with the rest of the Chanter's teachings, and reflect an ideology that held violence against the enemies of Christendom as being a necessary part of the salvation of Christendom. Baldwin once noted that "Langton was the exemplary product of the Chanter's theological pedagogy."<sup>113</sup> With this in mind, future research may do well to consider the role of Stephen Langton, as a grand mover of theology and politics, within the light of Chanter circle pedagogies. Langton was never far from the reality of conflict. In fact, he frequently found himself promoting it. And his writings, much like the writings of the rest of the Chanter's circle, reflect this reality.

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<sup>110</sup> Leipzig, MS. Lat. 443, 88vb.

<sup>111</sup> BnF MS. Lat. 14593, 103va, and Brussels II. 953, 136vb.

<sup>112</sup> BnF MS Lat. 14470, 225rb.

<sup>113</sup> Baldwin, *1200*, 199.

## LANGTON AND THE SEMIOTICS OF THE CHANTER CIRCLE MYTHOLOGY

The importance of sermonic language in the development of a bona fide crusading culture has been understudied. By the beginning of the thirteenth century, holy wars were predominantly announced by sermons and their fiery calls to arms were levied continuously across France to those who made up the armies, might join their ranks, or remained at home. The crusade sermon became the hallmark of recruitment for such ventures.<sup>114</sup> Most scholarship in this realm, however, has neglected the role of sermonic rhetoric in altering the epistemological and ontological processes of knowledge production throughout the Middle Ages.

What Tyerman deems the importance of "crowd psychology," when speaking of the need for crusade sermons to be met with public displays of taking the vows, rang equally true for the need of crusade preachers to connect on an emotional level with the laity to whom they spoke.<sup>115</sup> The need of papal legates to connect with their subordinate crusaders on an emotional level was of paramount importance, as the perceived sincerity of a crusader could make or break their legal claim to indulgences in the pastorally minded legal system that was overseen by the clergy.<sup>116</sup> This emotive connection could only be made possible through a shared method of meaning-making between the pontificate of Innocent III, his prelates, and the general populace. As such, it is our goal here to further establish what Tyerman termed a "sociology of crusading," by implementing a semiotic analysis of the methods employed by Langton, as a member of the Chanter circle, in reforming the contemporary understanding of Innocent's new orthodoxy.<sup>117</sup>

For the purposes of this study, it is ideal to adopt a semiotic framework which allows for the maximum examination of knowledge production at the macro level. Roland Barthes'

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<sup>114</sup> Maier, *Crusade Propaganda*, 3, and Tyerman, *England*, 152.

<sup>115</sup> Tyerman, *England*, 157.

<sup>116</sup> Bird, "Crusaders' Rights," 148.

<sup>117</sup> Tyerman, *England*, 167.

conception of the linguistic *myth* suits this need admirably for its function in interpreting the reciprocal relationship between accepted socio-cultural norms and fluctuations in societal perceptions of these norms. Our Barthesian methodology conceptualizes the espoused orthodoxy of the Chanter circle as a linguistic myth, a form of metalanguage in which the sign (of our sign, signified, and signifier) subsumes the entirety of the standard linguistic signifier, in effect granting those who accept the myth a language with which to communicate about other languages, and thus share in the process of creating a coherent if barely perceived unconscious reality.<sup>118</sup> In this light, we should understand the Chanter's circle, and their message, as fulfilling the role of what sociologist Pierre Boudieu defined as the *cultural producers*, viewing them as such:

Holders of an (always partial) delegated legitimacy in cultural matters, cultural producers – especially those who produce for other producers – [as the circle did through their sermons and correspondence] always tend to divert their authority to their own advantage and therefore to impose their own variant of the dominant world view as the only legitimate one.<sup>119</sup>

This research has observed three mythical signs in the works of Langton and the Chanter's circle: abject humility, the raising of the cross, and the triumphant return to the Holy Land. Such symbols serve as much needed markers in understanding the conceptualization of orthodoxy at the onset of the thirteenth century, and the examination of both the symbols individually and the

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<sup>118</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 116-117.

<sup>119</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, trans. Randal Johnson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 102.

essential unspoken reality which unites them can offer us an insight to how the Paris theologians altered the Christian mythology of their day.

Humility, as has been shown, formed a central tenet in the formation of right action for the medieval Christian. In his sermon *Paulus ait*, Langton quotes the fourteenth chapter of Isaiah on the physical and spiritual violence awaiting those of great pride, “thou art cast out of thy grave, as an unprofitable branch defiled, and wrapped up among them that were slain by the sword, and art gone down to the bottom of the pit, as a rotten carcass.”<sup>120</sup> Within the same sermon Langton wrote quoting Isaiah, “You shall be brought down to hell, under thee shall the moth and worms be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering in your tomb.”<sup>121</sup> The humility pushed for by the moral theology of the Chanter’s circle sought to create a self-regulating community of believers, content with their smallness in the scheme of things, but did not place all its faith in the acceptance of such a teaching. For the full regulation of Christian doctrine the promise of violence, particularly spiritual violence, helped to serve as a catalyst for maintaining a perception of reality which viewed even personal sloth as a crime punishable by torment. Those who were not corrupted by sloth would heed the call to crusade. “He ought to give thanks to the one lending the sword,” Langton spoke, “that he might draw it forth and in drawing it wield it against the enemy.”<sup>122</sup>

The raising of the cross played an equally important and equally violent role in the Chanterian understanding of reality. It signaled not just a return to distant and consecrated lands, but a return in arms, signaled by the signing of the cross at the individual level for the newly

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<sup>120</sup> Compare BnF MS. Lat 14470, 265ra. Vulgate, Isa 14:19.

<sup>121</sup> Vulgate Isa. 14:11, “Thy pride is brought down to hell, thy carcass is fallen down: under thee shall the moth be strewed, and worms shall be thy covering.” BnF MS Lat 14470, 265ra, “Detrahetur etenim usque in infernum superba, et subter sternet tinea et operimentum et tam vermes qui enim nobili strato utuntur considerare debent quod tineis sternetur lectus eorum et sepulchro.”

<sup>122</sup> BnF MS. Lat 14470, 263vb. “grates ageret mutuanti gladium extraheret extrahendo hostem feriret. Gladium nobis pugnaturis contra hostem omni pagano fortiolem.” Translated by John S. Ott.

affirmed crusaders. Riley has stated that the “vow to crusade was a moral imperative,” and it certainly seems likely to have been perceived as such.<sup>123</sup> Though the indulgence helped to sway both the poor and the opportunistic, the call to holy war reflected a fundamental aspect of the orthodoxy of crusading culture: humble penitential service. The circle was well aware of this impetus and sought at every turn to further it. Innocent wrote of crusading’s moral imperative in a letter to the archbishop and clergy of Magdeburg:

Because the critical situation demands and the common good requires the Christian people to hurry to the Holy Land without delay, bringing aid not only in material goods but also in person against the pagans, we order you our brothers, and we command you by means of this apostolic letter, to press on wisely... with the task of encouraging and persuading the faithful, so that those who are in a position to fight the war of the Lord take the sign of the cross....<sup>124</sup>

Our third and final concept for the construction of reality in the crusading culture of thirteenth-century France is the triumphant return to the Holy Land. Langton recounts the captivity of Jeremiah during the siege of Jerusalem, “the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison,” invoking the passion of one whose people desire nothing more than to return home.<sup>125</sup> This conception of the Holy Land as a home is significant, for it solidifies an understanding of Christendom as the heir of Jewish birthright at a time when the papacy was rallying to increase strictures on the financial capacities of European Jewish communities. Langton continues the

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<sup>123</sup> Riley, *Crusades*, 120.

<sup>124</sup> Innocent III, “To the Archbishop and Clergy of Magdeburg, 1199,” in *The Crusades: A Reader*, eds. S.J. Allen and Emilie Amt (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003), 224.

<sup>125</sup> Vulgate, Jer. 32:1, BnF MS. Lat 14470.

honored tradition of focusing primarily on Isaiah in his sermon, *Paulus ait*, recounting the fifth chapter, “woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness.”<sup>126</sup>

Effectively, the mythology promoted by the Chanter circle from the Fourth to the Fifth Crusades was one that reasserted Catholic Christendom as the heir apparent to the tribes of Israel, and redefined its authority from *an* Abrahamic faith to *the* Abrahamic faith.

Indispensable to understanding the development of an authoritative crusading mythology is the signification process, which unites these three concepts into a coherent metalanguage. It can now be seen that the Paris masters worked to deliberately shape the process of objectifying representative signs (things or actions) important to the myth of crusading, such as the taking of the cross. Bourdieu poignantly summed up this process as a series of “strategies of symbolic manipulation which aim at determining the (mental) representation that other people may form of these properties and their bearers.”<sup>127</sup> In other words, we have established that the circle sought to definitively manipulate the pre-existing Christian mythologies into a newer form, which placed the laity’s understanding of what it meant to be a good Christian within a stronger context of morally based pastoral care and crusading endeavors. Incidentally, this new context required a constant interaction between the laity and the circle’s delegates, conforming to what Bourdieu has defined as a *Charismatic Ideology*, an ideology which demanded the constant circulation of cultural capital via the Chanter’s circle.<sup>128</sup> As Bourdieu would put it, “the fields of cultural production are universes of belief which can only function in so far as they succeed in simultaneously producing [cultural] products and the need for those products.”<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> BnF MS. Lat 14470 fol. 264va, “Unde Ysa De qua fortitudine propheta ait, Ne vobis qui potentes estis ad bibendum vinum. Illa fuit sapiens Deo, sed stulta hoc seculo.” Vulg., Isa. 5:22. “Woe to you that are mighty to drink wine, and stout men at drunkenness.”

<sup>127</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 220.

<sup>128</sup> Bourdieu, *Cultural Production*, 76.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 82.



Central to this alteration of the Christian mythology was a signification process based in the overarching theme of holy war. The new focus of the Catholic reality was inextricably linked to the impression of violence as a means of doing good.<sup>130</sup> “Myth is neither a lie nor a confession,” Barthes wrote, “it is an inflexion.”<sup>131</sup> The reforms of Innocent’s pontificate did not reinvent the wheel of theological thought. They did, however, spur an understanding of reality which emphasized some and downplayed other elements of the Christian mythology in a way that they had never before been, and the valuing of righteous violence is the most apparent and prevalent of those values to be stressed.

Current events and propaganda in the form of papal bulls and decretals were freely woven into the sermons of crusade preachers and helped to establish the crusade sermon as the primary mechanism for the transmission of the new myth.<sup>132</sup> Personal violence in the form of penitential suffering and interpersonal violence in the form of holy war formed the framework within which the orthodoxy now operated, and acted as the unifying element of crusading culture’s narrative. Naturally, the new mythology was well suited to asserting its dominance over other forms of Christian interpretation, having an ideographic system to support violent acts when Innocent declared war on another Christian mythology, Catharism. It might even be seen that this hegemony of symbolic meaning could have lent itself to the creation of heretical sects. Originally, university censure had been used to correct the “false” beliefs held by Christians, not to punish heretical behavior. This was all changed when Innocent III utilized his trusted confidants within the faculty of theology at Paris to institute a particular idea of heresy as

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<sup>130</sup> This is, of course, not to imply that violence had not been implemented on a grand scale by Christendom until this point, or that holy war had not been seriously legislated prior to the circle’s coming to power. Christian orthodoxy in all its forms had been embroiled in one conflict or another since its Roman inception. But the crusading culture’s center-focus on violence as the core of Christian identity *was* a new take on the Christian mythology.

<sup>131</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, 129.

<sup>132</sup> Maier, *Crusade Propaganda*, 30.

a means of silencing dissenting beliefs. No longer could the educated elite, much less the lower-class populace, be thought of as Christians merely holding heretical beliefs. Because of those beliefs they were now deemed to be full-fledged heretics. They were defined by it, traitors to Christendom for all intents and purposes.<sup>133</sup> After the decretals of Innocent III in 1209, 1210, and the university condemnations of 1215, the delivery of heretical clergy to secular authority for capital punishment was widely accepted.<sup>134</sup>

The verses touted and the metaphors utilized to support the myth-shift necessarily reflected this new reality. Isaiah's verse, referenced to in the manuscript evidence by Langton, reads thus in full, "so shall their root be as ashes, and their bud shall go up as dust: for they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and have blasphemed the word of the Holy One of Israel."<sup>135</sup> So too does Jeremiah, another standby of the Chanter's circle, read "I have set thee this day over the nations, and over kingdoms, to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant."<sup>136</sup> This message was revealed fully by Innocent when he dispatched Cardinal Nicholas de Romanis to England in 1213 under orders to "root up and pull down and build and plant," and to Cardinal Pelagius on a similar mission to Constantinople later in the same year "to root up and destroy, to build and plant," and, finally, his reasons for holding the Fourth Lateran Council, "rooting up vices and planting virtues... eliminating heresies and strengthening faith."<sup>137</sup>

At its core, the Chanter circle was both a religio-political unit as well as an intellectual movement. Its members, Stephen Langton eminent among them, systematically implemented

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>134</sup> Thijssen, "Master Amalric," 60.

<sup>135</sup> Vulgate, Isa. 5:24.

<sup>136</sup> Vulgate, Jer. 1:10.

<sup>137</sup> John C. Moore, *Pope Innocent III (1160/61-1216): To Root Up and Plant* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 215, 217, and 207, respectively.

crusade recruitment efforts, acted to expunge non-compatible mythologies through legal institutions and holy war, and successfully acted to bring the majority of Christendom to a new mythology under the centralized leadership of the Chanter's circle.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> For a superb treatment of the circle's systematic approach to developing the crusade sermon as the primary form of religious dissemination, see John C. Moore's examination of the *Pium et sanctum* in Moore, *Root Up and Plant*, 113.

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Sermons in all their myriad forms constituted the primary platform for the dissemination of religious education in the early thirteenth century, with the crusade sermons of the Chanter's circle spearheading an effort to foster the growth and acceptance of Innocent III's reforms to the Christian mythology.<sup>139</sup> Violence, both literal and allegorical, was an invaluable aspect of this process, and the implementation of a systemic doctrine of meaning making, cushioned within an overarching framework of religious violence on behalf of papal authority, had a profound effect on the political and intellectual landscapes of the medieval Church and Mediterranean world.

The efforts of the Paris masters helped to shape a new understanding of the medieval Christian experience through an enveloping series of pedagogical reforms which centralized the control and propagation of orthodoxy within the hands of a select few intellectuals. This control in turn limited the potential for the construction of competing Christian narratives by granting the authority to violently dispense of proponents of non-legitimate mythologies as a moral right. On the whole, the Chanter's circle under the pontificate of Innocent III established an official Christian knowledge and selective mythological memory which viewed Christendom as the sole inheritor to the legacy of Israel and divinely mandated to commence in holy war, while simultaneously creating a framework for action capable of striving toward those ends.

At this stage in the scholarship of Innocent III's pontificate, the Chanter's circle, and the crusades, future research should consider implementing interdisciplinary frameworks in an effort to better contextualize the societal ramifications of mythological change, a course of study that is still quite useful even in the twenty-first century. Much work also remains to be done towards unpacking Langton's vast repository of sermonic writings as well. Additionally, further works of

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<sup>139</sup> Bird, "Soul," 227.

synthesis will be much needed to provide a center of gravity to the at times disparate types of research being done in medieval studies as a whole. The medieval world was an adaptive and global society, not a synchronic bubble frozen in time and space, and to better address the complexities of systems of thought that sought to affect all levels of society, future research should strive to incorporate methodological frameworks diverse enough to examine all levels of society.

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