Qui praedicat periculum in illo peribit: William of St-Amour's Anti-Mendicant Sermons

Abstract. William of Saint-Amour is known today mainly for his anti-mendicant treatise, *De periculis novissimorum temporum* (1256). In his own day, however, he was no less famous for his sermons. This paper will argue that his excommunication and exile from Paris was due more to his preaching than to the arguments he adduced in his more academic works.

On 5 October 1256, Alexander IV condemned the *De periculis novissimorum temporum* as a *libellum ... perniciosum et detestabilem* (*CUP* 1:288, 331–33).[1] Even then, that "hammer of the friars" (Lawrence 2001: 234), William of Saint-Amour (c. 1202–72), was known to be the driving force behind this first, great anti-mendicant text. On the surface, therefore, it would be natural to assume that the *De periculis* was the cause of his excommunication and exile. This assumption is correct in part, but it is a great over-simplification of the events immediately preceding Alexander's decree. In order to fully appreciate William's downfall, it is important to consider the role William's anti-mendicant sermons played, for although they had at their heart the goal of alerting the public to danger the mendicant orders posed, they also questioned the limits of papal dominion over the local bishops, and at least once criticized Louis IX's supposed religiosity. Thus although it is likely that William would have brought the censure

1. The following sources will be cited according to these abbreviations:

CUP *Chartularium Universitatis parisiensis.* In Denifle and Chatelain 1889–97. Cited by document and page number.

DP *De periculis novissimorum temporum.* In William of Saint-Amour 1632, 17–72. Cited by chapter and page number.

DP&P *De pharisaeo et publicano.* In Traver 2003, 191–205. Cited by paragraph and page number.

DQE *De quantitate eleemosynae.* In Traver 1995, 323–32. Cited by page number.

QAP *Qui amat periculum.* In Traver 2003, 155–78. Cited by paragraph and page number.

Resp. *Responsiones.* In Faral 1950–51, 340–61. Cited by 'article' (where applicable) and page number.

SQD *Si quis deligit me.* In Traver 2003, 179–89. Cited by paragraph and page number.

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of Alexander IV upon himself through the De periculis alone, William's extant public sermons, which in many ways were even more critical than the anti-mendicant tract, clearly forced Louis IX to finally side with the pope against the secular masters at Paris.

In the first few decades after their arrival at the University of Paris, the friars relied on the papacy to secure their position in university life. The papacy naturally saw the usefulness of the friars, and it generally took a great interest in their activities; both Innocent IV and Alexander IV, for instance, promulgated over three hundred bulls on issues pertaining to the friars (Dufeil 1976*b*: 282). Raynald of Jenne had been appointed cardinal protector of the Franciscans in 1227; when elected Alexander IV, he chose to keep this role.[2] The friars were fortunate to have such an important backer, for they quickly came into conflict with the local secular clergy. The story of this conflict at Paris has been told many times before, and it is not necessary to revisit it here, but a few general remarks should be mentioned.[3] First, general opposition to the friars' ministry grew amongst the secular clergy approximately in proportion to the number of papal bulls issued in the friars' favour. In Paris, any vaguely anti-mendicant sentiments would have been compounded by the fact that the friars, popular from the outset, time and again demonstrated that they were more loyal to their respective orders than to the university; they "were technically in the university, yet not of it" (Lawrence 1994: 154). The fact that all this was occurring at the same time as the university was attempting to win the right of local self-determination only served to make the whole issue more complicated (see generally McKeon 1964). When one considers the various conflicting interests embodied in a group of disputatious academics and jurisdictionally–sensitive ecclesiastics, it would have been much more surprising had no acrimonious dispute erupted.

Around the same time the seculars were composing the infamous *Apologia* of 1254, Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, "that poor, unbalanced Franciscan" (Reeves 1993: 59) unintentionally provided the seculars with further ammunition for their cause in the form of his *Introductorius in Evangelium*

2. Anglo-American scholarship generally continues to mix up Alexander's family tree (see instead Manselli 1960–: 2:189; Armstrong, Hellmann, and Short 1999–2002: 2:779 n. b).

3. Aside from the studies cited elsewhere in this paper, the following are essential for reconstructing the history of this conflict: Congar 1961; Douie 1954 and 1974; Dufeil 1976*a*; and Traver 1997–99 and 1999.

aeternum.[4] Shortly thereafter, William set off for Rome with a list of thirty-one errors excerpted from the text.[5] Although Innocent IV refrained from making any pronouncements on the writings of Joachim or Gerard,[6] William's time with the Pope was well spent, for Innocent's attitude towards the mendicants underwent a profound change that same year. On 10 May, he reduced the privileges of the "religious" concerning burials and hearing confessions (*CUP* 1:236, 263-64); in July, he repeated his order of 1247 that the statutes of the university be observed (*CUP* 1:237, 265); and finally, on 21 November, he promulgated *Etsi animarum* (*CUP* 1:240, 267-71).

Innocent's death sixteen days later came as a severe blow to the secular cause. The day after his election, Alexander IV cancelled the earlier restrictions imposed upon the friars (*CUP* 1:244, 276–78), and then spent the first part of 1255 re-establishing them both in the university hierarchy and society in general. He moved so quickly, in fact, that Gordon Leff has questioned whether he even tried to understand the seculars' grievances (1968: 42). In April, Alexander passed *Quasi lignum vitae*, which annulled the friars' suspension from the university and ordered that the two Dominican masters be restored (*CUP* 1:247, 279–85).[7] The seculars responded in *Radix amaritudinis* (2 October 1255) that Alexander's Bull would be *quasi lignum mortis* and they threatened to dissolve the university (*CUP* 1:256, 292–97).[8]

William's public emergence as the champion of the secular cause around this time heralded a change in tactics. Instead of merely debating the role the friars should play within the university, he questioned the very legitimacy of the mendicant orders. The first instance of this new approach appears in the series of disputed questions that Bonaventure and William exchanged

4. For Gerard see: Reeves 1993: esp. 59–61 and 187–90; Daniel 1968: 671–76; and Burr 1993: 14–21.

5. These errors are contained in *CUP* 1:243, 272-76. A critical edition and analysis may be found in Benz 1932: 415–55.

6. William would later complain in his (lost) sermon, *Ascensionis Domini* (25 May 1256): "quod 'liber Joachim, qui continent multas hereses, non potest condempnari Romae, quia sunt ibi plures defensores qui defendant eum'" (*Resp.*, a. 15, 346).

7. Between 14 April and 10 December, Alexander would ask that *Quasi lignum vitae* be enforced no less than six times (*CUP* 1:248, 285–86; 1:249, 286–87; 1:259, 298–99; 1:260, 299; 1:261, 299–300; and 1:262, 300–01).

8. The view that the university was dissolved (e.g., Rashdall 1936: 1:384–85; Moorman 1968: 128) has more or less been done away with; see Dufeil 1972: 171, Leff 1968: 42–47, McKeon 1964: 663–64, and Torrell 2005: 78.

in the fall of 1255 (for chronology, see Bougerol 1982). William's questions embodied an examination of voluntary mendicancy and found it wanting in theory and in its basis in Scripture. The *De periculis*, on the other hand, was a Scripture-based examination into the nature and causes of the dangers of the last days. Given the seemingly different goals, it is surprising how much they overlap.

Although it is somewhat misleading to do so, the *De periculis* is often considered the second phase of William's attack on the friars (Dawson 1978: 227). It is, in any event, the work for which William is remembered. And although it probably was not written at the request of "worried prelates of France," who wished to "protect the Gallic Church entrusted to them from the dangers of the last days, which will come through the *pseudo* and *penetrantes domos*" (*Resp.*, 359–60), we may be sure that these prelates were the intended audience.

The purpose of this tract is threefold: First, to prove that the last days St Paul warned of are in fact here now or arriving very soon (*DP*, c. 8, 37–42);[9] second, to show what group of people will introduce the dangers of the last days (*DP*, c. 2, 21–28; also cc. 3, 5, 7, and 13); and, third, to explain how these dangers may be overcome (*DP*, cc. 9–12, 42–53). The second objective is obviously where the bulk of the anti-mendicant sentiment is located. In short, William presents a hierarchically rigid ecclesiology in which there are only two ordines: the inferior *ordo perficiendorum*, which comprises the laity, catechumens, and monks; and the *ordo perficientium*, which consists of deacons, presbyters, and bishops. Only the latter ordo has, intrinsically, the *cura animarum*. Since, according to Pseudo-Dionysius, these two ordines are based on the immutable celestial hierarchy, the ecclesiastical hierarchy just described is likewise immutable. Thus it remains that the friars, who are clearly not bishops, presbyters, or deacons, must belong to the lower *ordo*, and, consequently, they must not possess the *cura animarum*. When such people preach where they have not been invited to do so, then, they act as pseudo-preachers; in their effort to hear confessions, they are the *penetrantes domos* the Apostle warned of (2 Tim. 3.6).[10]

9. Here, William gives a list of signs by which we can tell whether these dangers have arrived yet. These include the appearance of the so-called *Evangelium aeternum* (signs 1–3); the arrival of people who seem *sanctiores*, preachers seducing many under an appearance of sanctity, and who seem to be *zelatores fidei* (signs 4–7); and, conveniently enough, the advent of people who announce the dangers of the last days (sign 8).

10. This paragraph is a *précis* of *DP*, c. 2, 21–28. Traver 2003: 38–52, gives a detailed

If the academic quaestiones were directed primarily at the university population, and the *De periculis* at the Gallican clergy, then the sermons' intended audience was even larger. Two features suggest this. First, for the first time, there is an emphasis on the attire of the pseudo-preachers. Whereas the *De periculis* speaks on many occasions about how these pseudo-preachers will seem or appear (*videri*, *apparere*) to be more holy, all extant sermons as well as at least two of the lost ones link the pseudo-preachers to holy-seeming attire;[11] in fact, the humbler the attire, the more useful it is for deceiving the faithful. Second, William is almost entirely unconcerned with proving his point in the sermons. In *Qui amat periculum*, for instance, William describes the two ordines hierarchy that we have seen in the *De periculis*, but instead of explaining why the two *ordines* perform different roles and therefore why the friars are unable to exercise the office of preaching, the sermon merely claims that in the Church some guide (*gubernare*) while others are guided. In fact, he offers the audience instructions for how to deal with someone who tries to usurp the duty of guiding. According to William, "When such a one comes to you who must be guided and not guide, and says to some of you, 'Entrust yourselves to me and my care,' say to him, 'You cannot, nor ought you, govern others'" (QAP, n. 20, 169).

QAP is the earliest of the extant sermons; William delivered it on 1 May 1256, precisely two months after Louis IX's peace agreement for the University of Paris came into effect. Louis had originally attempted to stay out of the conflict since his return to Paris in 1254 (Richard 1992: 134), as the pitch of the conflict increased, however, this proved impossible, and he was forced to intervene (*CUP* 1:268, 304–05). The long-term viability of his solution remains questionable,[12] but what is undeniable is that when Alexander IV learned of the settlement—either because by this point he was just generally an "antagonist of the secular masters" (Little 1964: 141) or because Louis' intervention implied that papal policy was irrelevant for

summary of the entire *DP*.

11. Besides the Mâcon sermon, another only known as *Ramis palmorum* discusses issues of attire as well (*Resp.*, aa. 17, 21, and 22, 347–48). *DP*, c. 3, 29, comes closest to referring to the physical attire of the pseudo-preachers, but since the idea that "sub habitu religionis decipiant" is specifically linked to "sub specie pietatis decipient," it is clear that attire is not the primary referent.

12. Little 1964: 140–41, believes it was "a reasonable, workable solution, and perhaps the last possible one of its kind." Dufeil 1972: 207–08, offers three reasons why the settlement was unfeasible, while Traver 1996: 145, offers a fourth.

the fate of the university (Traver 1996: 145)—he quickly quashed it (*CUP* 1:280, 319–23).

In this first sermon, William chose as his theme the verse *Qui amat periculum peribit in illo* (Eccli. 3.27), which provided the opportunity to focus on the dangers of the last days in a manner very reminiscent of the argument of the *De periculis*.[13] The sermon addresses five related topics: that the dangers must come; what these dangers are; through whom they will come; how the people who will introduce the dangers will come; and, last, how this class of people may be recognized.[14] Since a few citations to Scripture (2 Tim. 3.1; Matt. 24.21) suffice to prove the perilous nature of the last days, and since they are dangerous by definition, William chose to devote more space to a discussion of who will introduce these dangers. This section repeatedly asserts that these introducers will feign an appearance of sanctity or piety.[15] An ordinary gloss to Apoc. 6.5, which explains that "the Devil sends forth false brothers who might subvert" the faith *sub habitu sanctitatis*, allows William to make the allusion to the friars that much more obvious (*QAP*, n. 15, 161–62; cf. DP, c. 3, 29).

The fact that one cannot trust external appearances provides a natural segue to a discussion of ecclesiology, for one can, in the end, only trust those who possess the cura animarum. *QAP* essentially reiterates the model presented in the *De periculis*, but in far simpler terms. The false apostles are those who preach non missi; that is, they preach although they are neither bishops nor presbyters, nor even vicars or archdeacons (*QAP*, n. 17, 163–64; cf. DP, c. 2, 24, 7, 36, and 14, 58; and *Resp.*, a. 24, 348–49). The problem with these preachers is not that they will necessarily say wicked things; in fact, they will preach very well indeed—however, they will do so not out of a concern for the truth, but only in order to be praised (*QAP*,

13. In terms of content, *QAP* is closest of the extant sermons to the DP. One way of verifying this is through a comparison of the biblical pericopae utilized in both. *QAP* cites (depending on how one deals with the few instances of repetition) parts of seventy-three different verses; of these, only twenty (27.4%) are not found in the DP. In terms of the references to canon law—William's only other major *auctoritas*—the few references in *QAP* are all found in the DP.

14. Traver 2003: 59-62, believes these five sections are respectively based on chapters 1, 4, 13, 2, and 13 of the DP, yet it is clear that the third section of *QAP* shares more with DP, c. 3 (esp. 28–29).

15. *QAP*, n. 9: 158, n. 10: 158, n. 11: 159, n. 12: 158, n. 13: 159; cf. ibid., n. 15: 161, n. 23: 170, and n. 27: 172. Naturally, this is listed as one of the errors in the *Resp.*, a. 34, 352.

nn. 17–18, 165–66). These infiltrators, these literate false religious who feign an appearance of sanctity, and who always study but never attain true knowledge (*QAP*, nn. 22–23,170–71; cf. DP, c. 13,54–55) will behave in such a way because they are penetrantes domos (2 Tim. 3.6), attempting to steal into people's consciences and lead women and men astray; the appearance of the Evangelium aeternum is cited as proof of this goal (*QAP*, n. 19,166–67).

Since the purpose of the sermon was to educate the audience about the hypocrites in the Church, William next presented a convenient list of seven signs by which the false religious may be recognized; these run the gamut from challenging the mendicant orders' mission to insulting them. The highlights include: they wish to live off of the Gospel through preaching; they preach where there is already an abundance of preachers; they seek their own honour before the Lord's;[16] they cannot bear to have the truth spoken about themselves; and, when insulted or attacked, they scurry off to the Papal curia to beg for letters of excommunication (*QAP*, nn. 30–37, 173–77).

William's Pentecost sermon, *Si quis diligit* me was the proverbial straw that broke Louis' attempt at neutrality. Traditionally, the causes for William's decision to include the king in this sermon have been left unexplained (e.g., Little 1964: 141; Le Goff 1996: 213). Michel-Marie Dufeil has even questioned (without answering) whether William's sermon or Louis seizure of the *De periculis* came first (1972: 229; 1976*b*: 287). There are, however, two reasons why we should assume the sermon was first.

Unlike *QAP*, the similarities between *SQD* and the *De periculis* are quite limited in scope.[17] If *SQD* were written even partly in reaction to the seizure of the De periculis, one would expect William to back down, deny, or defend some of the contentious statements he had made—as he would later do in the Responsiones. Yet this is precisely what William does not do. Instead, in thirteen of the twenty cases where *SQD* parallels the De periculis, the connection is either to William's ecclesiology or to the final

16. William here and in his final anecdote (nn. 38–40: 177–78) seems to be alluding to the joint encyclical (1255) penned by the Franciscan John of Parma and Dominican Humber of Romans, where they write of their own orders as "two great luminaries which by celestial light shine upon and minister to those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death" (quoted in McGinn 1998: 164).

17. For instance, of the thirty-six *pericopae* utilized in *SQD*, twenty-seven (75%) are not found in the DP. Furthermore, almost all pericopae found in both works derive from the second and fourteenth chapter of the DP.

chapter, which lists forty-one different signs by which one can recognize the harbingers of the last days. There is nothing apologetic about *SQD*; the sermon is clearly an extreme extension of concerns William had previously raised.

One document that may explain William's attack on Louis is an April letter from Alexander to the King (*CUP* 1:275, 314–15). This letter, *Dilecti filii fratres*, was probably written too late for William to have known of it when he was composing *QAP*, but he certainly could have learned of it in time for *SQD*. In the letter, Alexander asks for Louis' help in dealing with the insolence of certain Parisian clerics which is causing the Dominicans trouble. Since *Dilecti* is not concerned with William, but the general plight of the Dominicans, it does not by itself explain William's subject matter in *SQD*; however, Louis' reaction to it could. If William thought Louis would accede to Alexander's request, perhaps contrary to what he thought the king had previously promised,[18] then an attack on the King's fraternity with the mendicants makes that much more sense.

The theme of the Pentecost sermon derives from a verse in John, *Si quis diligit me sermonem meum servabit* (14.23), which allows for a disquisition on what it means to truly love God. After a relatively straightforward account of how we should love God, the sermon veers into familiar territory. If, as Augustine says, *religio* should bind us fast to the one true, omnipotent God, it remains that "one who is not so bound to God is not religious, though he may have a humble habit." Such people are Pharisees: they only have an exterior habit, but no religion in their heart (*SQD*, n. 5: 180–81). Mention of the Pharisees, those great men, both rich and powerful, who

18. This, at least, is what Rutebeuf suggested took place in his poem, "Le dit de Guillaume de Saint-Amour":

> Mestre Guillaumes au roi vint,
> La ou des genz ot plus de vint,
> Si dist: "Sire, nous sons en mise
> Par le dit et par la devise
> Que li prelat deviseront:
> Ne sai se cil la briseront."
> Li rois jura: "En non de mi,
> Il m'avront tout a anemi
> S'il la brisent, sachiez sanz faille:
> Je n'ai cure de lor bataille."
>
> (Faral and Bastin 1959: 1:246-47, ll. 75–84).

For Rutebeuf's relationship with William, see Serper 1963.

assumed a humble habit that was cheaper than was fitting, turns naturally to a discussion of hypocrisy.[19] Recently, this sin has increased so much that it has reached everyone—even, William added, the women (*SQD*, n. 5: 182). Thus it is that kings rise in the middle of the night to say matins and hear six pairs of Mass during the day.[20] And though they would not even wear one nice robe, they would allow one war to arise in which one thousand Christians would be killed. These kinds of things, William noted, are not found in Scripture. Rather, a king's duty lies in dispensing judgement and justice, and to that end, riches should indeed be used (*SQD*, n. 5, 182–83).

The second section of *SQD*, lists five ways by which one may keep the Lord's word. True to form, William's examples are generally none-too-subtle attacks on the friars. For instance, to keep the Lord's word, one must not sell it, which is precisely what one does if he has not been called to the task of preaching (*SQD*, n. 9, 184; cf. DP, c. 2, 24 and c. 14, 61). Talk of being called naturally requires a brief ecclesiological excursus, but this time the emphasis has changed again. Those who, having been neither called nor asked, do not have the *cura animarum* and are unable to absolve; therefore, one who dies having confessed to such an individual goes to hell *ex contemptu sui pastoris* (*SQD*, n. 9, 184–85).

William's strong point never was subtlety: just as his talk of "pseudo-preachers" clearly referred to the friars, his clever use of "kings" instead of "king" did not seem to fool anyone either. According to his *Responsiones*, William had managed to defend himself *coram clero et populo* before, but not this time (345; cf. a. 14, 346 and a. 39, 354). After *SQD*, Louis sent a copy of the *De periculis* to Rome.[21] On 17 June, before he had seen the *De periculis*, Alexander rejected the compromise Louis had proposed for the University and, in reaction to their role as the instigators of dissent, he deprived William and three others of their benefices in the same bull (*CUP* 1:280, 319–23). Shortly before William departed to defend himself, he delivered his last sermon, *De pharisaeo et publicano*. *DP&P* is perhaps

19. The theme of hypocrisy is not new: it is the ostensible theme of *QAP* (n. 5: 156), and William already brought it up in the *DQE* (329).

20. Mention of "pairs" no doubt refers to his well-known custom of asking for a second mass in the vernacular for the Latin-less members of his entourage.

21. The latest this would have happened would have been sometime in mid-July when Louis sent two of his clerics, John and Peter, to Anagni. It is possible, though, that he had already sent Alexander a copy of the DP (and was thus maybe sending a more recent edition of the text); see *CUP* 1:289, 334, and Dufeil 1972: 238.

best read as William's parting blast—proof that William had no intention of obeying Alexander's bull, *Vere fidei* (*CUP* 1:282, 324–26). The sermon, based as it is on the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Luc. 18.10–14), is a topical discussion of hypocrisy. In contrast to the publican, namely a secular who realizes he is a sinner and does not simulate sanctity (*DP&P*, n. 17, 200–01), the Pharisees, as members of a religious order, outwardly demonstrated austerity and sanctity, but were hypocrites in their hearts (*DP&P*, n. 3, 191). Hypocrites similar to the Pharisees exist today, and, true to form, William offered a list that should help his audience recognize them. The modern-day hypocrites in addition to William's usual complaints, wish to sit at the head of the table at the banquets of lords and prelates, and to have the first seat in the synagogue where, since they are more concerned with their own glory than the edification of others, they are more likely to be called upon to preach (cf. Lawrence 1994: 171); contrary to Paul's teaching (cf. 2 Tim. 2.4), these religious show a great interest in fulfilling the functions of judges and legal assistants; and, finally, these hypocrites love to be called "rabbi"—i.e., magister (*DP&P*, nn. 6–11, 194–98).[22]

Insofar as the *De periculis* is more interested in linking the friars with the Pharisees than discussing their status in the Church, *DP&P* is even more inflammatory in its anti-mendicant sentiment (e.g., n. 9, 196). Yet it escaped all censure whatsoever. And this highlights the interesting nature of William's condemnation. For although Alexander only ever condemned the *De periculis*, William's ill-timed sermon, *SQD*, prompted Louis to demand his excommunication and exile (*CUP* 1:289, 334). In a further irony, although the sermons mostly popularized aspects of the tract, what drove Louis to side definitely with the pope had little to do with the reasons Alexander must have found the *De periculis* problematic. For Louis must not have liked the attack on the friars' religiosity—all those elements that William decried as mere show—for Louis himself was inspired by their example and tried to imitate them as closely as he could.[23] Alexander, on the other hand, would not have appreciated William's traditionalist ecclesiology. William's insistence on the absolute immutability of the Church hierarchy implicitly challenged the authority of the papacy precisely at a time when it was not only attempting to maintain its authority over the University of Paris, but

22. In describing the problem associated with religious wishing to be called "master," William has come back to the one of the initial complaints in the *Apologia* of 1254.

23. Louis' expressed wish to abdicate and become a friar is notorious; see the *Vita S. Ludovici auctore Gaufrido de Belloloco* (Bourquet et al. 1840–1904: 20:7).

was also sensitive to claims about the limits to its temporal and spiritual authority. Thus, while it may be surprising just how William fell, it is not at all surprising that he fell.

Jonathan Robinson • *University of Toronto*

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