



Entangled Polemics? The Mendicant-Secular Controversy at the Time of the Great Western Schism and Beyond

Bénédictte Sere, University Paris Nanterre; Institut universitaire de France; Columbia University, benedicte.sere@icloud.com

At the heart of the debates surrounding the privileges of the mendicants lies a central controversy regarding the role of the papacy. From the mid-13th century onwards, the pope was not merely a participant in this controversy; as early scholarship by Yves Congar has demonstrated, his authority itself became a focal point of repeated contention. Arguments against the privileges of the friars were thus intertwined with debates about the papacy's role. This contribution explores some of the dynamics involved in this complex process. It examines documents from the time of the Great Schism (1378–1417), tracing how arguments raised in the controversy over the friars became deeply embedded in the broader debates surrounding the Schism and papal authority.



1. Introduction

The mendicant-secular controversy is not only a crucial episode in medieval Church history but also a revealing lens through which to examine broader questions of ecclesiastical authority and papal centrality. On one hand, the controversy between the mendicants and the secular clergy, which reached a boiling point between 1252 and 1256, was not merely a historical dispute but a continuation of a centuries-long struggle that profoundly influenced the structure and authority of the medieval Church, with its reverberations continuing to shape major theological and ecclesiastical debates well into the late Middle Ages and beyond. On the other hand, the figure of the pope has consistently been a central focus in scholarship, with much of the earlier research related to the mendicant-secular controversy, including the extensive work of Yves Congar (1961), concentrating on the intersection between ecclesiology and the local-level conflicts.¹

¹ See also, among many, M Bierbaum 1920 *Bettelorden und Weltgeistlichkeit an der Universität Paris. Texte und Untersuchungen zum literarischen Armuts- und Exemptionsstreit des 13. Jahrhunderts (1255–1272)*. Münster: Aschendorff. P Glorieux 1957 *Le conflit de 1252–1257 à la lumière du Mémoire de Guillaume de Saint-Amour. Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale*, 24: 364–372; D Douie 1954 *The Conflict Between the Seculars and the Mendicants at the University of Paris in the Thirteenth Century: A Paper Read to the Aquinas Society of London on 22nd June 1949*. London: Blackfriars Publications; P R McKeon 1964 *The Status of the University of Paris as Parens Scientiarum. An Episode in the Development of Its Autonomy. Speculum*, 39(4): 651–675; J D Dawson 1978 *William of Saint-Amour and the Apostolic Tradition. Mediaeval Studies*, 40(1): 223–238; J Ratzinger 1957 *Der Einfluß des Bettelordensstreites auf die Entwicklung der Lehre vom päpstlichen Universalprimat, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des heiligen Bonaventura*. In: Auer, J and Volk, H (eds.) *Theologie in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Festschrift für Michael Schmaus*. München: K. Zink. pp. 607–714; M-M Dufeil 1972 *Guillaume de Saint-Amour et la polémique universitaire parisienne, 1250–1259*. Paris: Picard. For more recent works, see the major studies A G Traver 2003 *The opuscula of William of Saint-Amour: The minor works of 1255–1256*. Münster: Aschendorff; A G Traver 1995 *William of Saint-Amour's Two Disputed Questions De quantitate elemosynae and De valido mendicante. Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Âge*, 62: 295–342; A G Traver 1999 *Rewriting History? The Parisian Secular Masters' Apologia of 1254. History of Universities*, 15: 9–45; A G Traver 2011 *The Forging of an Intellectual Defense of Mendicancy in the Medieval University*. In: Prudlo, D S (ed.) *The Origin, Development, and Refinement of Medieval Religious Mendicancies*. Leiden and Boston: Brill. pp. 157–196; G Geltner (ed.) 2008 *William of Saint-Amour, De periculis novissimorum temporum* (Dallas Medieval Texts and Translations 8). Paris et. al.: Peeters, and several further studies by Geltner cited below n. 4. For other approaches, see P R Szitty 1986 *The Antifraternal Tradition in Medieval Literature*. Princeton (NJ): Princeton University Press; P R Szitty 1974 *The Friar as False Apostle: Antifraternal Exegesis and the 'Summoner's Tale'. Studies in Philology*, 71(1): 19–46; L-J Bataillon 2007 *Une intervention maladroite de Pierre de Tarentaise en faveur des mendiants*. In: Prügl, T and Schlosser, M (eds.) *Kirchenbild und Spiritualität. Dominikanische Beiträge zur Ekklesiologie und zum kirchlichen Leben im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Ulrich Horst OP zum 75. Geburtstag*. Paderborn: Schöningh. pp. 143–177; R Lambertini 1993 *La scelta francescana e l'Università di Parigi: Il 'Bettelordensstreit' fino alla 'Exiit qui seminat'*. In: Santi, F (ed.) *Gli studi francescani dal dopoguerra ad oggi. Alla memoria di Ezio Franceschini (1906–1983) nel decimo anniversario della scomparsa. Atti del Convegno di studio Firenze 5–7 novembre 1990*. Spoleto. pp. 143–172; S Steckel 2013 *Professoren in Weltuntergangsstimmung. Religiöse Debatte und städtische Öffentlichkeit im Pariser Bettelordensstreit, 1252–1257*. In: Oberste, J (ed.) *Pluralität – Konkurrenz – Konflikt. Religiöse Spannungen im städtischen Raum der Vormoderne*. Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner. pp. 51–74; S Steckel and S Kluge 2017 *Under pressure. Secular-mendicant polemics and the construction of chaste masculinity within the thirteenth-century Latin church*. In: Höfert, A, Mesley, M and Tolino, S (eds.) *Ambiguous Masculinity and Power: Ruling*

This paper aims to highlight additional points of entanglement: the two polemical spheres unexpectedly intersected in the ecclesiological debates concerning the papacy during the fragmentation of the Church in the Great Schism. Our purpose here is not to revisit the well-worn issues regarding the pope and the mendicants, but to demonstrate how the polemical mechanisms within one sphere of the debates—the internal conflicts surrounding the Schism—might have infiltrated the mendicant-secular controversy as another, deeper and more structural sphere. The mutual contamination of distinct polemical spheres, through shared arguments, reveals how overlapping debates fostered the cross-fertilization of ideas and complicated each other's discourse.

As the epitome of supreme authority within the medieval Roman Church, the pope played a multifaceted role. In the wake of the Parisian mendicant-secular controversy (1252–1256) and during the Great Western Schism (1378–1417), the pope emerged not only as a central figure in the Church's structure and politics but also as a focal point of ideological and institutional controversy.² This controversy was as much about spiritual authority as it was about the governance and organization of the Church itself. The conflict embodied a profound tension between two competing visions of ecclesiology and Church governance: on the one hand, the mendicant orders—primarily the Franciscans and Dominicans—and on the other, the secular clergy. During the Great Western Schism, the mendicants largely aligned with the emerging Pontificalist faction (Sère, 2025). As the following observations aim to illustrate, this alignment provoked new forms of antifraternal polemics, which not only drew on the controversies of previous generations but also incorporated a newer, more unexpected, and perhaps even more fervent antipapal sentiment. As these intellectual entanglements of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were shaped against the backdrop of a complex history of earlier conflicts, any analysis must begin with a brief contextualization.³ It is well known that the mendicant orders championed a revitalized approach to poverty, and especially Apostolic poverty, preaching, and

Bishops and Eunuchs in the Pre-Modern World. London: Ashgate. pp. 268–295; S Metzger 2022 Aristotelian Virtue and Apostolic Poverty in the Polemical Debate Between Thomas of York, OFM, and Gerard of Abbeville. In: Brinzei, M et al. (eds.) *La pensée radicale au Moyen Âge. Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of the SIEPM, Paris, 22–26 August 2022 (Rencontres de philosophie médiévale)*. Turnhout: Brepols. pp. 573–583.

² See B Sère 2016 *Les débats d'opinion à l'heure du Grand Schisme. Ecclésiologie et politique*. Turnhout: Brepols.

³ Overviews and discussion can be found in G Geltner 2012 *The Making of Medieval Antifraternalism: Polemic, Violence, Deviance and Remembrance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; G Geltner 2004 'Faux Semblants': Antifraternalism Reconsidered in Jean de Meun and Chaucer. *Studies in Philology*, 101: 357–80. G Geltner 2009 A False Start to Medieval Antifraternalism? William of St. Amour's *De periculis novissimorum temporum*. In: Geltner, G and Cusato, M F (eds.), *Defenders and Critics of the Franciscan Life: Essays in Honor of John V. Fleming*. Leiden and Boston: Brill. pp. 127–143. A Traver 2017 The Place of William of Saint-Amour's *Collectiones catholicae* in the Secular-Mendicant Conflict at Paris. In: Sharp, T. et al. (eds.) *From Learning to Love*. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies. pp. 183–202.

pastoral care.⁴ The emergence of the mendicant orders in the early 13th century was marked by a vibrant spirituality that sought to rejuvenate Christian life, engaging directly with the laity—often in ways that challenged traditional ecclesiastical hierarchies. These orders presented a novel Apostolic vision of the Christian vocation, one that emphasized humility, service, and a personal relationship with God. However, their approach stirred apprehension among the secular clergy, who largely viewed the mendicants as encroaching on their roles and privileges. The tensions arising from these dynamics reflected broader societal changes and religious transformations in medieval Europe, including urbanization and its spiritual demands, in what Lester Little (1983) framed as a new profit economy. Issues of authority, jurisdiction, and church governance were increasingly subjected to scrutiny both in practice and within emerging ecclesiological discourses.

In this fraught context, the pope was far from being a mere neutral arbiter. From the earliest conflicts onward, he emerged as both a key actor and a focal point of contention. The pope was generally entrusted with maintaining the unity of the Church while navigating the competing interests and criticisms of various factions. 13-century popes actively supported the mendicant orders, recognizing their potential for fostering spiritual renewal. However, this very support drew them into the conflict, making them targets of criticism from the secular clergy and other dissenting voices. Papal authority thus became a flashpoint in the broader ecclesiastical struggle, symbolizing both the hopes for reform and the fears of division within the Roman Church. As the esteemed theologian Yves Congar (1963) articulates, the stakes of this controversy were profoundly ecclesiological: they called into question the very organization and authority of the Church, shedding light on tensions intertwined with broader questions of obedience, governance, and the nature of ecclesiastical power.

This explains why the statements and materials generated by the 13th-century secular-mendicant controversy were extended—and at times radicalized—in response to subsequent upheavals within the Church. In a significant contribution, Guy Geltner (2012) observed that many conflicts employing ‘antifraternal’ arguments over the decades were in fact addressing tensions and issues that were distinct from the original quarrels arising from the Parisian controversy of 1252–1256, and thus introduced new emphases. When we speak of ‘antifraternalism,’ we must therefore recognize that it refers to an overlapping and entangled discourse encompassing various strands, rather than a coherent, unified tradition.

⁴ Among a huge literature, see M Cusato 2016 The radical renewal of pastoral care in the Italian communes, 1150–1250: prelates, secular clergy, and the mendicant orders. In: Peters, G and Colt Anderson, C (eds.) *A Companion to Priesthood and Holy Orders in the Middle Ages*. Leiden and Boston: Brill. pp. 306–345; S Farmer (ed.) 2016 *Approaches to Poverty in Medieval Europe: Complexities, Contradictions, Transformations*, c. 1100–1500. Turnhout: Brepols.

The Great Schism represents a significant and pivotal moment in this history, as its intense debates introduced a new argumentative core to the ongoing ecclesiological discussions that this paper examines. Specifically, it traces the long trajectory of the intersection between antifraternernal and antipapal critiques, exploring how these two strands became increasingly intertwined over time, and how the former could, at times, have embodied the latter. Christendom not only found itself divided between two rival popes, one in Rome and the other in Avignon, but also witnessed the rise of fervent antipapal sentiments that spread throughout the region.⁵ The legitimacy of papal authority was increasingly called into question, as competing allegiances formed and calls for reform arose among both theologians and the laity. The opposition to the papacy that emerged during this period was not simply a reaction to the Schism; rather, it built upon pre-existing critiques of the papacy, thereby intertwining with the antifraternernal sentiments that had emerged during the earlier controversy. We can indeed expand upon Geltner's argument, which emphasized how the tradition of criticism arising from the controversy often obscured specific local conflicts. When applied to ecclesiology, we might also suggest that debates over papal authority represented a distinct line of argumentation. Our understanding of both controversies will be enriched if we examine their intersections more closely. This article thus seeks to revisit the issue of ecclesiology, aiming to provide a more comprehensive historical perspective. Specifically, it explores how the conflict between clerics and friars interacted with long-standing criticisms of the papacy, how different arguments became intertwined, and how these issues influenced one another over time.

The Great Schism provided fertile ground for critical ideas and reformist movements, crystallizing aspirations for a model of ecclesial governance that was less centered on the authority of the pope and more inclusive of diverse voices within the Church.⁶ Amid this turmoil, a multitude of distinct currents emerged, proposing alternative ecclesiological models to address the crisis of governance. Among these currents were cessionism, subtractionism, neutrality, ecclesial and ecclesiological reformism, anti-Roman sentiment, proto-Gallicanism, and conciliar theories advocating for a constitutional approach to Church authority. Of these various streams, conciliarism became one of the most influential paradigms, proposing that the exercise of ecclesiastical authority should involve general councils rather

⁵ Among an abundant literature, see J Rollo-Koster 2022 *The Great Western Schism, 1378–1417. Performing Legitimacy, Performing Unity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; J Rollo-Koster and T M Izbicki (eds.) 2009 *A Companion to the Great Western Schism (1378–1417)*. Leiden and Boston: Brill; H Millet 2009 *L'Église du Grand Schisme, 1378–1417*. Paris: Picard.

⁶ See Sère, 2016; B Sère 2018 *Obediencia, reformatio and veritas: Ecclesiological Debates during the Western Great Schism (1378–1417)*. In: Steckel, S (ed.) *Verging on the Polemical: Exploring the Boundaries of Medieval Religious Polemic across Genres and Research Cultures = Medieval Worlds*, 7: 98–113.

than being the unilateral prerogative of the pope. This theory, grounded in specific interpretations of ecclesiastical tradition and Scripture, sought to limit papal power in favour of a more collaborative governance structure, marking a pivotal moment in the evolution of ecclesiological thought and practice.

In this context of institutional crisis and doctrinal proliferation, antifraternality arguments resurfaced as a significant ideological force and gradually transformed into a broader critique of the papacy itself. What began as opposition to the practices and privileges of mendicant friars evolved into a powerful vehicle for questioning papal authority, creating an opposition that targeted not only the mendicants but, by extension, the papal institution as a whole. This convergence of antifraternality and antipapal critiques marks a profound shift in the theological and political landscape of the Church; it also illustrates how internal disputes could influence and shape broader ecclesiastical dynamics.

How does this fusion of antifraternality views and antipapal sentiments become a constitutive element of several polemical currents? How did antifraternality criticisms evolve beyond a straightforward attack on the mendicant friars into a potent mode of challenging papal authority? In the first part of this investigation, I will examine the many manifestations of the mendicant-secular controversy, which proliferated in diverse and often elusive forms, creating the impression of an omnipresent yet difficult-to-pin-down debate in the contemporary sources. I will then analyze the theoretical emergence of what Thomas Izbicki calls 'Dominican papalism,' which articulated itself as a supportive stance for papal ideology amidst the polemics of the time. Finally, I will advance the hypothesis that the fusion of antifraternality views and antipapal critiques provided a formidable catalyst for several polemical currents, including reformism, Gallicanism or rather Proto-Gallicanism (as the transfer of authority over the French Church from the papacy to the monarchy) and even a more radical questioning of the Christian institution itself. Altogether, this exploration aims to shed light on the interplay between theological discourse, institutional power, and the evolving ecclesiology of the Church at a time of great crisis and profound change.⁷

2. Resonances of the Secular-Mendicant Controversy at the Time of the Great Schism

A quick glance at the textual sources from the time of the Great Schism suggests that issues stemming from the secular-mendicant controversy are evident on nearly every

⁷ We keep in mind that theoretical debates, while interesting, are not the only possible approach to antifraternality or antipontificalism. Other types of sources could provide a different perspective, such as social, economic, and political sources. Criticisms of the pope and the mendicants thus take on multiple shades depending on the sources considered.

page. Indeed, the multifaceted nature of the controversy's reverberations makes it impossible to catalogue all relevant instances. Therefore, it is useful to proceed by examining several exemplary episodes of conflict from—and following—the period of the Great Western Schism. This exploration will focus on the ways the controversial issues refract, branch out, and evolve in response to the given contexts. A recurring point of convergence across different issues was that the mendicant friars were not only competitors of local actors but also under the protection of the papacy. This led to repeated confrontations between the local Church and the universalist ambitions of pontifical power. At the heart of this conflict were questions of constitutionalism within the Church and the limits of papal authority.

As a first example, we may consider the famous controversy stirred by the Aragonese Dominican Juan de Monzon regarding the Immaculate Conception.⁸ In May and June of 1387, during his *vesperiae* and in his first lecture as a Master at the University of Paris (*resumpta*), Monzon presented several propositions that challenged the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, as well as the hypostatic union. This sparked a controversy that persisted until 1389. For Monzon, the Virgin was not exempt from original sin; this view aligned with maculist theology, which had been developed within the Dominican order in the 13th century.

However, the University of Paris had traditionally supported the immaculist position, strongly defending the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. After reviewing his propositions, the University of Paris condemned Juan de Monzon on July 6, then by the Bishop of Paris, Pierre d'Orgemont, on August 23, and finally by the Avignonese Pope Clement VII, to whom he had appealed. Realizing the gravity of his situation, Monzon fled to Aragon before the university delegation could take action against him. This delegation included Pierre d'Ailly, a rising figure at the University (Lamy, 2000) and the young Jean Gerson, a *baccalaureus cursor* (a junior lecturer delivering cursory lectures on theology) assigned to examine the propositions.⁹ De Monzon was excommunicated in absentia on January 27, 1389, in Avignon, and again on March 17 in Paris.¹⁰ In the aftermath, Dominicans who had supported and defended Monzon were

⁸ See M Lamy 2000 *L'Immaculée Conception: étapes et enjeux d'une controverse au Moyen Âge (XII^e–XV^e siècle)*. Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, esp. 575–562; R N Swanson 1999 The 'Mendicant Problem' in the Later Middle Ages. In: Biller, P and Dobson, B (eds.) *The Medieval Church: Universities, Heresy and the Religious Life: Essays in Honour of Gordon Leff*. Woodbridge: Woodbridge–Rochester, NY: Boldwell Press. pp. 217–238.

⁹ The delegation also included Gilles de Champs, Jean de Neuville, Pierre d'Allainville, and Pierre Plaoul—the protagonists of the *via cessionis* to remove Benedict XIII.

¹⁰ On the excommunication, see H Denifle (ed.) 1894 *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis. Tomus III: ab anno MCC usque ad annum MCCLXXXVI*. Paris: Fratres Delalain, n. 1567, 506–511 (hitherto cited as CUP III). On Gerson's narrative, see P Glorieux (ed.) 1960–1971, Jean Gerson, *Œuvres complètes*, 8 vols. Paris: Desclée, here *Lettre aux Messieurs de*

imprisoned by the Bishop of Paris and forced to make humiliating recantations. The rest of the order, finding the demands imposed by the University of Paris too harsh, withdrew from the university in 1389.¹¹

Over the next decade, tensions persisted, but the question of reintegration remained open. In 1400, from his retreat in Bruges, it was none other than the university chancellor Jean Gerson who took the initiative to request the Dominicans' return, despite continued resistance from the university's most anti-Jacobin faction. This request is detailed in his *Lettre aux Messieurs de Navarre* (Glorieux, 1960–1971; 19). Gerson's primary aim was to serve the interests of the University of Paris, which he saw as being disadvantaged by the exclusion of the Dominicans. He intimated that the Alma Mater would show clemency if the Jacobins were willing to take the first step toward reconciliation, suggesting that the university would welcome repentant members. He employed a rhetoric of mercy and forgiveness, using the metaphor of the shepherd and the sheep to convey his message.¹² As a result, the Dominicans were reinstated on August 21, 1403. This reinstatement coincided with the university's restoration of obedience to the Avignonese Pope Benedict XIII, following a five-year period of withdrawal, also in 1403 (Sère, 2022; 25–42). The university's restoration of allegiance to the pontiff and the Dominicans' reinstatement at the University of Paris were interconnected, underscoring the close relationship between the papal and mendicant causes.

Just as relations between the pope and his opponents fluctuated, so too did those between the Dominicans and their secular counterparts, particularly Jean Gerson, the

Navarre, vol. 2. § 6. 36–42, at p. 19, Bruges (May–September 1400): 'Nolo putet aliquis me hoc loco justificationem seu defensionem partis illius quae depulsa vel avulsa est suscepisse, Fratres Praedicatores loquor; viderint ipsi quid egerunt. Ego enim fidenter et constanter affirmo condemnationem errorum praefati de Montesono rationabiliter et catholice factam; quae dum defenderetur in romana curia, ego ipse, baccalareus cursor tunc existens, cum ceteris praecellentissimis atque sapientissimis viris ab Universitate legatis, praesens interfui.' At this time, Gerson wrote the draft of the treatise against Juan de Monzon, see G. Ouy 1962 *La plus ancienne œuvre retrouvée de Jean Gerson: Le brouillon inachevé d'un traité contre Juan de Monzon (1389–90)*. *Romania*, 332: 433–492. Later on, his works are full of antimendicant references: P. Glorieux (ed.) 1960–1971, vol. 3, § 88, 10–26 (= Jean Gerson, *De consiliis evangelicis et statu perfectionis*); vol. 6, § 282, 210–250 (*De potestate ecclesiastica, De statu papae et minorum prelatorum*), vol. 9, § 424 (le "Discours sur le fait des Mendians", *Quomodo stabit regnum eius*), ainsi que dans les sermons, *Redde quod debes, Si non laveris te*. See P. Glorieux 1961 *Prélats français contre religieux mendiants. Autour de la bulle Ad fructus uberes (1281–1290)*. *Revue d'histoire de l'Église de France*, 11: 309–331.

¹¹ Lamy, 2000, 572: 'L'Université de Paris rétrograda les frères prêcheurs au dernier rang, après tous les autres maîtres et bacheliers, tant séculiers que réguliers, pour tous les actes scolastiques et les cérémonies et ordonna que désormais tout candidat aux grades universitaires devrait prêter serment d'approuver la condamnation des propositions de Jean de Monzon – C'était se priver de la présence des dominicains qui ne pouvaient consentir à de telles mesures.'

¹² *Ibid.*, 39: 'Sed numquid qui ceciderunt non adjiciunt ut resurgant? Quin etiam pia mater Universitas haec quae hactenus filiis irata est, numquid tandem misericordiae recordabitur, aut continebit in ira sua misericordias suas? Numquid tot oves pascuae suae si deliquerint aut erraverint, aeternaliter abjiciet? Immo et si redire contemnerent, exemplum Christi pii pastoris imitandum erat ut quaererentur et pia quadam violentia ad ovile proprium obnitentes traherentur; quanto amplius dum id totis, ut dicitur, affectibus et votis expostulant et precantur.'

university chancellor and a parish priest himself, as has been thoroughly examined by Nancy McLoughlin (2006). Though Gerson had worked to reinstate the Dominicans for the benefit of the university and under pressure from the court, he subsequently turned against them. In 1408, in his sermon *Bonus Pastor*, he proposed a reduction of the privileges of the mendicants in the name of Church reform. By 1409, he had shifted his focus to criticize the Franciscan Jean Gorrel, who had revived mendicant arguments from the 13th century (de Gorello, 1889). In his *Discours sur le fait des mendiants* (Discourse on the Matter of the Mendicants, 23 February 1410), Gerson opposed the papal bull *Regnans in excelsis*, issued on 12 October 1409 by Alexander V, who had been elected pope at the Council of Pisa earlier that year and was himself a Franciscan. This bull granted the mendicants the right to absolve cases that were traditionally reserved for episcopal oversight.¹³ It also allowed the faithful to obtain *litterae confessionales* from the Apostolic Penitentiary, which granted them the freedom to choose their confessor, and gave such confessors the right to absolve even in reserved cases.¹⁴

Faced with these far-reaching privileges, Gerson now considered the Dominicans, named *faulx freres*, a threat to the Church, even ranking them among the four other great persecutions (*persecutions de sainte eglise*), alongside the tyrants, the heretics and the Antichrist.¹⁵ He staunchly defended the rights of the secular clergy over their mendicant counterparts. In the face of papal dominance, Gerson sought to elevate the role of bishops, particularly in matters concerning reserved cases; he also defended parish priests against the competition posed by the mendicants, who were essentially seen as the delegated *militia* of the pontiff. By denouncing abuses related to reservations and excommunications, Gerson aimed to redistribute pastoral and sacramental authority within the ecclesiastical structure. He deplored the novelties introduced by the mendicants, advocated for the local pastoral authority of parish priests, and resisted the inevitable rise of papal power structures, particularly that of the Apostolic Penitentiary, which handled the reserved cases.

¹³ Cases reserved for bishops are defined by the custom of each diocese and established in synodical statutes. Reserved cases mainly concern the penitential forum: these are sins that the bishop of a diocese reserves for himself, forbidding parish priests from absolving them. The bishop may then hear the sinner in confession himself or delegate the task to auxiliary penitentiaries.

¹⁴ Glorieux, 1960–1971, vol. 2, § 24, 90–93 (Jean Gerson, *Lettre sur les cas réservés* ou *Epistola super moderatione casuum reservandorum in foro*). See V Beaulande-Barraud 2014 Jean Gerson et les cas réservés: un enjeu ecclésiologique et pastoral. *Revue d'Histoire de l'Église de France*, 100: 301–318.

¹⁵ McLoughlin, 2006, 250. See also Glorieux, 1960–1971, vol. 7.2, §387, 979 (Jean Gerson, *Discours sur le fait des mendiants*): 'Et nous le veons es persecutions de sainte eglise. Le premiere fut mal, par tirans, la seconde pire par les heretiques, la tierce tres male par les faulx crestiens que l'apostre appelle faulx freres. La quarte sera incomparable par Antecrist'.

3. Dominican Papalism as a Sign of the Convergence of Polemics

Although the emergence of competing popes in 1378 saw the Dominican order—like the rest of Christendom—torn into two camps, the latter's positions began to evolve from 1409 onwards with the Council of Pisa. After this Council, which elected Alexander V, a Franciscan pope, the order adopted a resolutely pontificalist stance, and the Roman camp ultimately prevailed in the balance of power, leading to the reunification of the order. By 1414, the order was fully reunited with the election of Leonardo Dati, who became the sole Master and a key proponent of Roman pontificalism.

Over the course of the 15th century, the Dominican order emerged as a staunch advocate of papal monarchism, taking a position which Izbicki has termed 'Dominican papalism' (1995, 1997, 2000). This form of papalism, which became integral to the identity of the order, transcended local debates and can be seen as an intellectual response to the convergence of two major polemics facing the Dominicans: antifraternalist criticisms and antipapal attacks. Dominican papalism thus served as a theoretical defense, supporting both the papacy and the Dominican order. Key figures such as Sanche Mulier, Jean Hayton, Nicolas Eymeric, Leonardo Dati, and Jean Domenici were pivotal proponents of this discourse, which was grounded in a robust ecclesiological stance advocating for papal supremacy, especially in the face of collegial, oligarchic, conciliar, and constitutionalist movements. In parallel, there appears to have been a recurrent, albeit not systematic, overlap between fraternalist or antifraternalist perspectives and broader ideological affiliations—namely anticonstitutionalist and constitutionalist positions.

Later in the century, Dominican papalism and anticonciliarism paved the way for the development of Thomism, particularly through the doctrinal theorization of Juan de Torquemada, which supported Roman pontifical ideology. The entire Dominican Order embraced papalism, as reflected in its official discourse. The Dominican narrative increasingly aligned with the official Roman narrative of the Church. This assimilation was fully realized in opposition to the Council of Basel in the 1430s, which sought to establish conciliarism as the guiding philosophy of the Latin Church while also addressing the Hussite heresy. The theology of Thomas Aquinas thus became the primary theological foundation for the Dominican Order's firmly entrenched papalism.¹⁶

¹⁶ T Prügl 2003 Dominicans and Thomism at the Council of Basel (1431–1449). *Annuaire Historiae Conciliorum*, 35(1–2): 363–380, at 363: 'Nonetheless, I want to shed some light on the fate of Thomas Aquinas' theology at the Council of Basel as its use and reception underwent a remarkable change, becoming the main theological source of an enhanced papalism'. The author here emphasises the fact that Aquinas' texts were in widespread circulation and use at the Council of Basel.

4. The Fusion of Debates: A Crucial and Effective Component of Any Polemic?

The question of the limitation of pontifical power—that is, ecclesiological constitutionalism—thus seems to have absorbed the issues of antifraternel views without resistance. Initially, the controversy sparked by William of Saint-Amour's views in the 1250s focused solely on the mendicant privileges. Over the subsequent decades and centuries, however, this controversy became increasingly intertwined with antipapal concerns, undergoing a significant evolution—branching out, metamorphosing, and expanding. It evolved into a lens through which the era's broader anxieties and issues were projected and explored. To understand this transformation, we must trace its ramifications.

To gauge the fluidity of polemical motives, we now turn to two key areas: First, the issue of Gallicanism (or proto-Gallicanism)—the transfer of authority over the French Church from the papacy to the monarchy; and second, the question of Church reform.

4.1. *Proto-Gallicanism in the Wake of the Council of Basel and the Pragmatic Sanction*

During the reconquest of Paris by Charles VII's troops in 1436, the University of Paris lost much of its prestige, primarily due to its alignment with the occupying English crown. As a result, Charles VII's court remained wary of the university, and its fiscal and judicial privileges were no longer upheld. In response, the university went on strike in 1441, suspending its courses.¹⁷ Dean Gérard Machet, a former master of the Faculty of Theology, administrator of the College of Navarre, and now the king's confessor, emerged as the key mediator between the university and the government. Machet was not only the architect of the 1438 Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges—an edict asserting the supremacy of a general council over the pope and promoting the proto-Gallican cause of reducing papal influence in France—but also the principal theorist behind Charles VII's broader religious policy.¹⁸

In the wake of the Council of Basel, the resurgence of the secular-mendicant controversy assumed significant political dimensions, particularly when it was perceived that the pope was supporting the mendicants, expressing his stance directly through a papal bull. Gérard Machet voiced his concerns about this development in his letter 118, dated March 1442:

¹⁷ CUP IV, n. 2521.

¹⁸ On Gérard Machet, see P. Santoni 1968 *Gérard Machet, confesseur de Charles VII, et ses lettres*. In: *Positions des thèses soutenues par les élèves de la promotion de 1968*. Paris: École nationale des chartes. pp. 175–182, and the 2026 edition of P. Santoni at CNRS, with the French translation of the 400 letters of Gérard Machet (2025).

I prefer in fact to privilege the oath and the statutes of the faculty rather than to loosen the reins, especially with regard to the religious mendicants who impose themselves and seek to prevail by numbers or by apostolic bulls.¹⁹

In fact, the bull *Ad jugem*, issued by Pope Eugene IV on 24 March 1442, was a direct response to a statute enacted by the Faculty of Theology at the University of Paris on 27 October 1441. This statute prohibited members of the mendicant orders from reading Peter Lombard's *Sentences* during vacation periods. Moreover, during the time designated for such readings, only one reader per order was allowed—except for the Dominicans, who were granted permission for two.²⁰ In response, Eugene IV ordered that students presented by the mendicant orders be admitted without delay to read the Bible or the *Sentences*, thus reaffirming the privileges of the mendicants and challenging the university's restrictions. This episode obviously reiterated familiar dynamics over mendicant teaching rights, particularly visible in the aftermath of the 13th-century strike, when the Dominicans secured their second chair.

Against the backdrop of the Pragmatic Sanction of 1438, Pope Eugene IV's intervention with the bull *Ad jugem* of 1442 reignited the secular-mendicant conflict, as the secular masters sought to force the mendicants into securing a revocation of the bull. This situation merged antipapal and antifraternal rhetoric in ways that blurred the line between the two. Machet worked diligently to manage the conflict, utilizing his position and presence in Paris to navigate the tensions.²¹ He positioned himself as a defender of the secular masters, following in the footsteps of his former mentor and close friend, Jean Gerson. Yet, like Gerson before him, Machet also sought to accommodate the mendicants at the university,²² mindful of the escalating tensions between the two factions.²³ His moderation can be understood within the proto-

¹⁹ Santoni, 2025, Letter 118 (forthcoming, see n. 27).

²⁰ See Santoni, 2025, *Introduction*, (forthcoming, see n. 27). Peter Lombard's twelfth-century text was required reading for all masters of theology, and they were expected to write a commentary on the text as part of their examinations. The University of Paris' prohibitions and restrictions thus acted as a barrier to advancement for members of religious orders.

²¹ Santoni, 2025, Letter 114 (forthcoming, see n. 27): 'Je suis resté à Paris quelques mois, l'esprit tranquille, hors du tumulte des gens de la cour, et j'y ai repris mes leçons magistrales, jusqu'à trois fois. Il me semblait être reporté aux jours d'autrefois, quand l'université était florissante, éclairée par tant de brillants luminaires et merveilleusement parée. J'exerçais en votre absence la charge de doyen de notre faculté : que ne vous y ai-je trouvé, en bonne santé! J'ai voulu voir les professeurs dans mon lieu d'habitation. Un conflit avait resurgi entre les séculiers et les moines mendiants, que j'ai pour le moins apaisé.'

²² Santoni, 2025, Letter 224 (forthcoming, see n. 27): Gérard Machet suggests that '... soient préservées la concorde et la paix envers les frères des quatre ordres mendiants, qui, selon les paroles de l'Apôtre, sont 'très aimés à cause de leurs pères', je veux parler de nos docteurs, qui ont semé pour nous le bon grain de la foi et de la doctrine, et de la sagesse desquels brillent l'Eglise et notre faculté renommée dans le monde entier.'

²³ Santoni, 2025, Letter 242 (1444) (forthcoming, see n. 27), Letter to Pierre Mazelier. Machet is concerned about the conflict. He longs for peace: *ut fratres in vinculo pacis maneant* (Eph 4, 3). In 1456, in Letter 249 (late 1444 – early 1445)

Gallican context of the 1440s. During the most turbulent periods of the Council of Basel, Machet championed the constitutionalist ecclesiology promoted by Jean Gerson and the Fathers of Constance. He viewed this approach as a way to control papal power, regulating it through the bishops, and imposing limits on it through *epikeia* (equity) and moral conscience. Over the course of his career, Gérard Machet wrote more than 400 letters, and during the years 1444–1445, a period of significant activity (114 letters), he invoked the authority of Jean Gerson to legitimize his religious policy and defend the Pragmatic Sanction, which he had both theorized and initiated. By positioning himself as both the mediator in the resurgent secular–mendicant controversy at the University of Paris and the architect of the proto–Gallican ecclesiology embodied in the Pragmatic Sanction, Machet pursued a unified goal: the limitation of absolute papal power, with the vision of a Church governed by the French king, who would lead the *ecclesia gallicana*.

4.2. The Discourse of Reform

Guy Geltner noted how the erstwhile secular–mendicant controversy evolved to encompass a broader discourse on reform, reflecting what he referred to as the ‘critical–reformist position.’²⁴ One example of this stance concerns the well-known Alsatian humanist Jacob Wimpheling. In 1503, Wimpheling published a notable letter by Bonaventure, addressed to the Franciscans (*Bonaventura ad fratres mendicantes*),²⁵ which reminded the friars of their duties towards bishops and parish rectors.²⁶ Echoing Parisian critiques, Wimpheling issued repeated invectives against the mendicants, charging that ignorance was their sole claim to distinction.²⁷ He accused them of disregarding scholarship, deceiving the public through fraud, leading scandalous lives, making numerous errors in Latin, and failing to adhere to any religious precepts. Consequently, reformist discourse increasingly turned its attention to the mendicants. Wimpheling was particularly enraged when, in Schlestadt (now Sélestat), the Franciscans incited the people to turn against their parish priest. He warned them sternly: ‘Beware! If the people turn away from their priests, you will be responsible for the calamities that may follow.’²⁸ In this context, Wimpheling advocated for reform,

addressed to Pierre Vaucel, ‘maître principal du collège royal’, Machet wrote: ‘J’ai reçu il y a quelques jours le double don de vos lettres du 21 novembre et du 7 décembre. La première lettre presque tout entière porte sur la plainte des frères mendiants qui sont en conflit avec notre faculté (*querelam fratrum mendicantium qui cum facultate nostra contendunt*)’, Santoni, 2025, Letter 249.

²⁴ Geltner, 2012, here 16–17 and 43–44. See also Szittyá, 1986, 18–27.

²⁵ *Bonaventura ad fratres mendicantes*, quoted by Ch. Schmidt 1966 *Histoire littéraire de l’Alsace à la fin du XVe et au commencement du XVI^e siècle*. Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher (reprint of 1879 original). p. 107, n. 12, bibliography n. 75.

²⁶ Quoted by Schmidt, 1966, 107.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 108: ‘...les plus grands, les plus profonds théologiens ont tous été séculiers et *nulla unquam cuculla induti*’.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, quoting the *Soliloquium ad d. Augustinum*, f° b 3.

adopting a clear antifraternality stance that promoted a parish-centered ecclesiology, in direct opposition to the papalism of the curia and its claims of universal authority.

It is therefore true that antifraternality became one of the central and most powerful arguments against the abuses and shortcomings of the Church, particularly in calls for reform. At the beginning of the 16th century, Wimpheling also wrote a quasi-apologetic treatise in defense of Chancellor Jean Gerson, titled *Defensio pro Gersonio* (1506). This work aimed to counter the attacks from a mendicant who had accused Gerson of harboring hatred for religious orders and showing irreverence towards his superiors, including the popes of the Great Western Schism. Wimpheling's *Defensio* also emphasized the miracles attributed to Gerson's tomb in Lyon. Wimpheling defended the privileges and jurisdiction of the secular clergy, of which he was a member, against the mendicants. In the nineteenth century, Charles Schmidt noted in his *Histoire littéraire de l'Alsace à la fin du XV^e et au début du XVI^e siècle* that Wimpheling's *Defensio* is less a biography of Gerson and more a revival of the controversy. It essentially serves as a *Defensio pro divo Johanne Gerson et clero seculari*, reaffirming the issues central to the antifraternality and secular-clerical debates (Schmidt, 1966; 102–122).

As a disciple of Gerson, Wimpheling would have stood in opposition to the radical pontificalism promoted during his time. For instance, Wimpheling was deeply offended when the Dominican General Thomas de Vio, known as Cajetan, intensified his defense of Pope Julius II against King Louis XII of France in 1511, during the Second Council of Pisa. Wimpheling denounced this ultramontanism as an infringement on ecclesiastical freedom, arguing that the Church belongs primarily to the bishops, and that Peter cannot act without the consent of the episcopal hierarchy. Given his own status as a secular cleric, this argument constitutes a vigorous defense of his fellow clerics. Pointedly criticizing Cajetan, Wimpheling condemned both the ills afflicting the Church and the traditional ecclesiology of the local Church. This merging of antifraternality with antipapalism anticipated the concerns that would come to shape the Church in modern times.

5. Conclusions and Further Research

In many ways, the mendicant-secular controversy illuminates the evolution of ecclesiastical tensions within the medieval Church—tensions that both reflected and anticipated broader debates about political authority, ecclesiology, institutional governance, and reform. As we trace the trajectory of these controversies, particularly against the backdrop of the Great Western Schism, it becomes clear that the papacy served as both a focal point of contention and a symbol around which broader anxieties about the Church's future coalesced.

In particular, the ongoing controversies over the role of the mendicants contributed significantly to the growing antipapal sentiment, which was amplified by the Schism, putting considerable pressure on the legitimacy and effectiveness of papal power. These critiques, combined with antifraternism, transformed antipapalism into a powerful tool for challenging papal authority and ecclesiastical structures. In this context, conciliarism emerged as a response to the crisis, advocating for a model of authority centered on representative councils rather than the papacy. This approach, seen as an alternative to the centralized power of the pope, paved the way for reforms and foreshadowed the ecclesiological debates of the Reformation.

However, the mendicant-secular controversy was not confined to ideological arguments alone; it was deeply entangled with the political realities of the time. The rivalry between the secular clergy and the mendicants was particularly visible at universities, where academic debates about doctrine, authority, and ecclesial privilege often mirrored deeper allegiances and animosities. Jean Gerson championed the interests of the secular clergy, advocating for limits on mendicant privileges, particularly in the areas of confession and pastoral care, as we have seen. His advocacy reveals the extent to which the mendicant orders had disrupted traditional ecclesiastical structures, and how their rise spurred calls for a return to local parish authority.

The convergence of antifraternism and antipapal positions during the Great Western Schism marked a turning point in the development of Church reform movements. Throughout these debates, medieval Christianity wrestled with foundational questions about authority and obedience, as well as the very nature of the Church itself—questions that would continue to shape its identity long after the Schism had ended. Ultimately, these tensions laid the groundwork for the rise of anti-Jesuitism as a key outlet for the contradictions of the modern era (Fabre and Maire, 2010).

This approach, which examines how various conflict constellations contributed to intertwined discourses of criticism, could be expanded further in future research, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of how different issues and controversies interacted within the larger dynamics of religious history.²⁹ While the contexts of these discourses may differ significantly, the arguments discussed here—especially those related to antifraternism and antipapal themes—also intersect with broader interreligious polemics, such as the Jewish-Christian debates in late-medieval Iberia.

²⁹ See, as first examples of this research, the forthcoming article, B Sère (2025, 2026) *Intertwined Polemics and Instrumentalized Anti-Judaism: Pope Benedict XIII, Jewish-Christian Polemics, and the Great Western Schism*. *Hebrew Union College Annual*.

The antisemitic riots of 1391 and 1392 in Spain led to the deaths and forced conversions of numerous Jews. One of the most notable authors of this time was Profayt Duran, also known as Ephodi (יִדּוּפָא), who, after his forced baptism, was renamed Honoratus de Bonafide.³⁰ In his famous treatise *Kelimat ha-Goyim* ('The Shame of the Gentiles') (1396–1397), Duran offers an exegesis of Petrine texts, with particular emphasis on Matthew 16–18. This Jewish interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew represents a bold and distinctive polemical approach within the broader tradition of Jewish-Christian polemics.

Regarding Matthew 18:18, Duran writes:

וישו לו לבדר אמר שימסור מפתחות השמיים, ואיך יכול
לתיתם לזולתו פירי? וגם כי הכוח הזה בעצמו שנתן לפירי, נתן לכל תלמידיו. כי בפרק שמונה עשר למטיב אמר
לכולם: באמת אני אומר לכם

כי כל הדברים שתקשרו בארץ יהיו נקשרים בשמיים (מתי יח, יח) כי לכולם נתן הכוח ההוא.³¹

And Jesus said to him (Peter) alone that he would give him the keys to heaven; how then could Simon Peter give them to someone else? Moreover, this very power which he gave to Peter he gave to all his disciples; for in Matthew 18[:18] he said to all of them: "In truth I say to you, that all the things which you will bind on earth will be bound in heaven..." (Matthew 18[:18]). For he gave this power to all of them.³²

In his polemical treatise against Christianity, Profayt Duran was likely aware of the ecclesiological and intra-religious debates within Christianity, including the divisions wrought by the Great Western Schism. To critique Christian dogma, Duran focuses on papal authority, the power of the keys, and the issue of apostolic succession. His tone is ironic, yet his method is critically incisive, resembling modern approaches to theological critique. Through his pointed analysis, Duran challenges the foundational aspects of Christian ecclesiastical structure, highlighting inconsistencies and contradictions within the Church's claims to authority.

³⁰ On Profayt Duran, see the recent biography by M Kozodoy 2015 *The Secret Faith of Maestre Honoratus*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. See also J Cohen 1993 Profiat Duran's *The Reproach of the Gentiles* and the Development of Jewish Anti-Christian Polemic. In: Carpi, D et al. (eds.) *Shlomo Simonshohn Jubilee Volume*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University. pp. 71–84; M Jacobs 2007 Interreligious Polemics in Medieval Spain: Biblical Interpretation between Ibn Hazm, Shlomoh Ibn Adret, and Shim'on Ben Semah Duran. In: Dan, J (ed.) *Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), in Memoriam*. Vol. 2, English part. Jerusalem: The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies. pp. 35–57.

³¹ F Talmage 1981 *Kitvei Polmos le -Profet Duran*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center and Dinur Center. p. 45.

³² Revised translation from the basis of A D Berlin 1987 *Shame of the Gentiles of Profiat Duran: A Fourteenth-Century Jewish Polemic Against Christianity*. B. A. Thesis. Cambridge, Mass., Radcliffe College: Harvard University, 85.

Profayt Duran's discussion of papal power and apostolic succession reflects the ecclesiological debates of his time, particularly in the Kingdom of France.³³ He argues that the Gospel of Matthew does not indicate that the power of the keys was given solely to Peter, but rather to the entire apostolic college and all the disciples. Thus, papal primacy is not scripturally mandated. Duran asserts that bishops and priests, as successors to the apostles and disciples, all play a role in the governance of the Church. There is no exclusive monopoly of apostolic succession held by Peter alone.

This view resonates with the debates in the secular-mendicant controversy, which featured two opposing views of episcopal power: one that sees it as divine and inherent, and the other as derived from the authority of the pope. According to Duran's collegial ecclesiology, bishops have the power to bind and loose—meaning they can forbid or permit certain actions—a power that is not reserved solely to the pope. He presents this power not as a privilege granted exclusively to Peter, but as a concession to all the disciples, who also received from Jesus the power to forgive sins (John 20:22–23).

Therefore, bishops and priests are viewed as successors to the apostles and disciples, all equally sharing in the power of the keys. Duran uses the internal tensions within Christianity to bolster his anti-Christian arguments, asserting that the dogma of papal succession and the primacy of the pope lacks scriptural foundation. He challenges the notion that Jesus designated Peter as the Prince of the Apostles, emphasizing the equality of the apostles and denying any special Petrine privilege. Bishops, he argues, derive their power directly from Christ, not from the pope, and share equally in the power of the keys.³⁴

During the 13th century, the mendicant orders, particularly the Franciscans and Dominicans, sought to claim the power of the keys and challenge the authority of bishops, thus heightening the need to redefine the Church's hierarchical structure. This context made it easier for Profayt Duran to criticize the Dominicans and adopt an antipapal stance.³⁵ By the fifteenth century, however, the mendicants had disrupted

³³ See B Schmitz 2013 *Claves regni cælorum: le sens d'une métaphore entre hérésiologie et ecclésiologie* (xvi^e siècle). *Bulletin du Centre d'études médiévales d'Auxerre*, hors-série en ligne, 7. Les nouveaux horizons de l'ecclésiologie. Du discours clérical à la science du social. Retrieved from <http://cem.revues.org/12786> (16.9.2025).

³⁴ As evoked by Congar, 1961, 66, recalling the two tutelary authorities Rufinus (who declared that Peter had no superiority over the other apostles in the order of the priesthood) and Huguccio (who declared that the apostles are equal); F Delivré 2015 *Succession apostolique, autorité des évêques et pouvoir des clés dans l'Occident médiéval* (fin XI^e–milieu XVe siècle). In: Genet, J-P (ed.) *La légitimité implicite*. Vol. 1. Paris and Rome: Publications de la Sorbonne/Ecole française de Rome. pp. 121–143; T Prügl 1998 *Successores Apostolorum*. Zur Theologie des Bischofsamtes im Basler Konziliarismus. In: Weitlauff, M and Neuner, P (eds.) *Für euch Bischof – mit euch Christ*. Festschrift für Friedrich Kardinal Wetter zum siebzigsten Geburtstag. St. Ottilien: EOS. pp. 195–217.

³⁵ However, it is important to keep in mind that the Jews of Rome have always been the pope's protégés in the papal city. As a result, they have also consistently served as the privileged intermediaries between the pope and other

this dynamic in significant ways. The riots of 1391–1392, the Tortosa Disputation of 1413–1414, and the subsequent papal bull *Etsi doctoris gentium* (1415), alongside the anti-Jewish missions led by Dominican Vincent Ferrier, led to an increase in the number of conversos in Castile and Aragon. Many of these conversos, after joining the Dominican or Franciscan orders, became fervent missionaries and inquisitors.³⁶ Individuals such as Paulus de Sancta Maria, Geronimo de Santa Fe, and Alphonso de Valladolid, all of whom were former Jews, utilized their rabbinical knowledge to argue in defense of the pope and against members of their former faith. In response to this, 15th-century Jewish polemicists developed an antipapal stance, integrating it as a new dimension of their broader anti-Christian and antifraternial arguments. This shift reflects how the complex interplay of religious, political, and social forces in the late medieval period contributed to the shaping of religious polemics.

Jewish critiques of papal authority thus represent an important strand in this complex development, shedding light on the role of interreligious dynamics. The particular criticism voiced by Jewish authors may have been fueled by the anti-Dominican sentiments held by Sephardic authors during the 14th and 15th centuries, a period marked by turbulence in Spain. The papacy's overwhelming and unchecked power was often seen as an illegitimate product of historical development. In this context, the critique of both Christianity and papal authority was firmly grounded in scriptural and historical texts, reflecting an early form of historical-critical analysis. This final strand of argumentation offers an unexpected and insightful perspective on the monarchical papacy, examined through the lens of Jewish-Christian disputations in Spain—particularly in light of Dominican zeal and the forced conversions prompted by preaching missions. Altogether, the three main actors—the pope, the mendicants, and the Jews—highlight a set of intricate and highly complex relationships in Spain, providing a deeper understanding of the interplay between intrareligious and interreligious disputations. While this section has outlined key aspects of Jewish anti-Christian polemics, it is clear that much remains to be explored in this area. Future research will be essential to deepen our understanding of these interactions, particularly in relation to their broader historical and cultural contexts. There is much work to be done to fully grasp the complexity of these dynamics and their ongoing relevance.

Jewish communities across Western Europe. See K. Stow 2007 The '1007 Anonymous' and Papal Sovereignty: Jewish Perceptions of the Papacy and Papal Policy in the High Middle Ages. In: K Stow *Popes, Church, and Jews in the Middle Ages. Confrontation and Response*. London: Routledge. pp. 1–81 (IV) (reprint of 1984 original).

³⁶ See M D Meyerson 2004 Samuel of Granada and the Dominican Inquisitor: Jewish Magic and Jewish Heresy in Post-1391 Valencia. In: McMichael, S J and Myers, S E (eds.) *Friars and Jews in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Leiden and Boston: Brill. pp. 161–189. J Cohen 1982 *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

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The author has no competing interests to declare.

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