

BELIEFS IN PROGRESS: THE BEGUINS OF LANGUEDOC AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW HERETICAL IDENTITY

Delfi I. Nieto-Isabel

Institute for Research on Medieval Cultures (IRCVM). University of Barcelona

e-mail: delfinieto@ub.edu

Rebut: 19 desembre 2019 | Revisat: 20 abril 2020 | Acceptat: 30 abril 2020 | Publicado: 30 juny 2020 | doi: 10.1344/Svmma2020.15.7

Abstract

In October 1319, the archbishop of Narbonne and the Dominican inquisitor Jean de Beaune surrendered to the secular arm the first members of the group of men and women known to historians as the Beguins of Languedoc. The execution that followed marked a turning point in the evolution of a religious movement that had legitimately developed for decades under the wing of the most radical branch of the Franciscan Order. In a matter of months, these individuals and their supporters were forced to adapt to clandestinity in order to survive. The aim of the present paper is to show that the Beguins of Languedoc were perceived by ecclesiastical authorities as a ‘new heresy’ whose novelty made it necessary to provide a working definition that helped to better prosecute it. It will also be discussed how some of the features of an alternative religious culture were built into the inquisitorial discourse and how the resulting ‘heresy’ was in fact co-constructed between inquisitors and religious dissenters.

Paraules clau: Heresy, Beguins of Languedoc, Inquisitorial Records, Beliefs, Spiritual Franciscans

Resum

L'octubre de 1319, l'arquebisbe de Narbona i l'inquisidor dominicà Joan de Belna van lliurar al braç secular els primers membres del grup d'homes i dones coneguts pels historiadors com a beguins del Llenguadoc. L'execució que se'n va seguir, va marcar un punt d'inflexió en l'evolució d'un moviment religiós que s'havia desenvolupat legítimament durant dècades sota l'ala de la branca més radical de l'Orde Franciscà. En qüestió de mesos, aquests individus i els seus seguidors es van veure forçats a adaptar-se a la clandestinitat per sobreviure. L'objectiu d'aquest article és mostrar com les autoritats eclesiàstiques van considerar als beguins del Llenguadoc com una “nova heretgia”, la novetat de la qual els obligava a elaborar una definició pràctica que els ajudés a perseguir-la. També s'estudiarà com alguns dels trets del que de fet era una cultura religiosa alternativa es van incorporar al discurs inquisitorial i com l'“heretgia” resultant va ser el resultat d'una co-construcció duta a terme pels inquisidors i els propis dissidents religiosos.

Key Words: Heretgia, beguins del Llenguadoc, registres inquisitorials, creences, franciscans espirituals

In May 1329, Bernard Pastor, a merchant from the village of Marseillan, was brought before the Dominican inquisitor Henri de Chamayou accused of bearing false testimony.¹ It seems that not long before, Bernard had voluntarily travelled to the episcopal court of Béziers, where Henri de Chamayou stayed, to bring him a letter informing the inquisitor that after the burning of a certain Beguin named Raimon Forner and his companions in Pézenas on 21 September 1321, the notary Raimon Berlet accessed the site of the execution “imbued of an evil spirit” and bent his knee adoring it, and grabbing the bones of the burned wrapped them up in a cloth as if they were the relics of saints. When some people arrived and asked him about what he was doing, the notary answered that he was gathering the bones of the burned martyrs, for they were better Christians than those who had condemned them, and were already in Paradise.

In the letter to the inquisitor, Bernard Pastor begged him to put an end to such schismatic danger and provided the names of almost ten different witnesses. This circumstance, that is, a group of people who jointly decided to come forward and accuse someone of heresy providing detailed testimonies, was quite unusual. In fact, the inquisitor apparently felt that this was too good to be true and immediately initiated further enquiries by summoning said witnesses.² It was soon established that both the letter and the depositions were the result of a well-thought conspiracy to incriminate the notary who, it seems, was not a very likeable person, for several of the witnesses mention their hate for him and their desire to see him lose his office and properties.³

The most interesting point that this particular case makes is that in trying to tarnish the reputation of the notary, the false accounts of Bernard Pastor and his friends reproduced to the letter not only practices but also arguments and even whole expressions in the vernacular that can also be found all over the trials against the “burned Beguins and Beguines”, better known to historians as the Beguins of Languedoc. In other words, while trying to frame Raimon Berlet, the men of Pézenas showed that they knew exactly how to build a believable picture of what a supporter of this group was supposed to look like. The present paper will outline the formation process of this recognisable identity. The aim is to show that the Beguins of Languedoc were perceived by ecclesiastical authorities as a ‘new heresy’ whose novelty made it necessary to provide a working definition that helped to better prosecute it. It will also be discussed how some of the features of an alternative religious culture were built into the inquisitorial discourse and how the resulting ‘heresy’ was in fact co-constructed between inquisitors and religious dissenters.

¹ See Bibliothèque nationale de France, Collection Doat, Manuscript 27, fol. 204r: “Bernardus Pastoris de Marcelhano mercator habitator Pedenacii, diocesis Agathensis.” The manuscripts of the Collection Doat will hereinafter appear as Doat [Number]. The records of Bernard’s full *culpa* extend over Doat 27, fols. 204r–210r.

² The depositions of the main conspirators, Guilhem Mascon, Guilhem Benet de Cazouls, Imbert de Roquefixade, Johan Mauri i Raimon Caplieu, can be found in Doat 27, fols. 210r–216r.

³ Doat 27, fol. 209v: “et desiderans quod ipse Raymundus condempnaretur ad perdendum officium suum, scilicet notariatus, et quod perderet magnam vel maiorem partem bonorum suorum.” The conspirators were all sentenced to strict life imprisonment in the inquisitorial gaol of Carcassonne, but first they were to be publicly exposed on a scaffold wearing yellow double crosses and red tongues—the mark of false witnesses—both in the square before the cathedral of Saint-Nazaire in Béziers and in the market square of their hometown, Pézenas; see Doat 27, fols. 241v–245r.

1. The Early Years: Between Rebuke and Rebellion

In 1299, the archbishop of Narbonne, Gilles Aycelin, summoned a provincial council that was to be held in Béziers. Among other issues, the council addressed the matter of a certain group of men and women, commonly known as *Beguini seu Beguinæ*, who publicly preached the end of the world and the advent of the Antichrist (MARTÈNE, DURAND 1717: IV, 226).⁴ The acts of the council described their activities as a superstitious cult—*cultum superstitionis*—that was promptly forbidden. Also according to the acts, said men and women made vows of virginity and chastity that they did not keep, dressed in a distinctive manner, celebrated secretive gatherings, preached, and tried to excuse this transgression by claiming that they were not preaching but merely talking about God to comfort each other.

Most authors see the group mentioned in the acts of the provincial council of Béziers as unquestionably connected to the positions of the controversial Franciscan theologian Peter of John Olivi.⁵ The text does not mention Olivi, whose writings were condemned in a general chapter of the Franciscan Order held in Lyon that same year, and neither does it explicitly refer to the Friars Minor, only hinting at the involvement of some members of a certain “praiseworthy order.” However, the presence of Beguines in the area of Narbonne is documented since at least the 1280s, and the connections between *beguinæ* and the Spiritual branch of the Franciscan Order were not new either.⁶ Olivi’s claim that King Charles II of Naples was afraid that his eloquence might *inbeguiniri* his sons—the princes held hostage by King Pere III of Aragon—further hints at the close ties between both spiritual contexts (DENIFLE, EHRLE 1885–1887: vol. 3, 539). Thus, the mention of the *Beguini seu Beguinæ* in the acts of Béziers is probably the earliest documentary evidence related to the group later known as the Beguins of Languedoc.⁷

⁴ It is important to note that, despite the fact that the Dominican inquisitor Bernard Gui would much later claim that these groups called themselves Poor Brethren of Penitence of the Third Order of St Francis, this denomination does not seem to have been widespread. In contrast, the terms Beguin and Beguine were not only commonly used by ecclesiastical authorities—sometimes as a slur—but also, and most importantly, by these men and women and their sympathizers long before they became a persecuted movement.

⁵ Both Raoul Manselli and Louisa Burnham think it likely that the men and women censured in the council of 1299 were Olivi’s followers (MANSELLI 1959: 41; BURNHAM 2008: 34). In turn, David Burr, strongly inclined to believe this claim, also discusses other possibilities that involve a not so immediate connection; cf. BURR 2001: 92–93.

⁶ For instance, in 1288, among the thirty people summoned by the archiepiscopal court to testify in the case of a certain visionary called Rixendis of Narbonne, three women were described as Beguines (THÉRY 2008: 63–90). There is no evidence to support the idea that the Narbonnese Beguines documented in 1288 were inclined towards apocalyptic expectations, but they were already associated with Franciscan circles. Although it is not possible to assert that the Beguines who followed Rixendis were among the group that was censured in 1299, they did share in the same spiritual climate that would result in the Olivian Beguin movement. This case is discussed in detail in NIETO-ISABEL 2017.

⁷ For an in-depth analysis of the textual basis, doctrinal features, and devotional practices of the Beguin communities of Languedoc and an up-to-date list of bibliographic references on these groups, see NIETO-ISABEL 2018.

Besides the usual set of accusations—gathering at night and breaking vows—the main concerns of the council of Béziers regarding these men and women were not so much the apocalyptic beliefs they held but their very public displays of religiosity (MARTÈNE, DURAND 1717: IV, 226). Not only did they preach the end of the world, but they also engaged in new kinds of *pœnitentia* and abstinence, and practiced new observances. Apparently, the fears of the council were not totally unwarranted, for the appeal of the Olivian cause among the population would only grow in the following years. According to her deposition of September 1325, a woman named Astruga de Rundaria joined the Third Order of Saint Francis around 1305, when she also took a vow of virginity in the Church of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce in Sérignan, Olivi's own home village (Doat 28, fol. 224v). It was around that same time that the widow Ermessenda Grossa took a vow of chastity “persuaded by certain friars” (Doat 27, vol. 14r), and that the later renowned Prous Boneta, barely a nine-year-old by then, did the same after visiting Olivi's tomb in Narbonne (Doat 27, fol. 56r).

Moreover, on 18 August 1309, a procurator sent a plea to Pope Clement V on behalf of the urban elites of Narbonne in the midst of the increasing tensions among Franciscan ranks.⁸ They claimed that Olivian writings had been unjustly condemned and informed the pontiff that the Rule of St Francis was not being properly observed, for those who remained faithful suffered and were imprisoned for it. Finally, they begged the Pope to grant the remains of Brother Peter of John a special status so that he could be venerated. Dissensions on the issue of poverty had shaped incipient opposing factions within the order, for the first time bringing up the brewing conflict between obedience to the papacy and obedience to the vows and the Rule of St Francis. The convents in north-central Italy and southern France were particularly active in their support of rigorist views—hence the involvement of the citizens of Narbonne—and these ‘radical’ friars were soon referred to as Spiritual Franciscans, in contrast to their more moderate brethren, known as conventual Franciscans, or ‘the community’.

On 1 March 1311, as part of the debates leading up to the Council of Vienne, Bonagratia of Bergamo also presented an appeal before Pope Clement V (DENIFLE, EHRLE 1885–1887: vol. 2, 365–74). In it, Bonagratia and other moderate Franciscans reasserted the rightfulness of the condemnation of Olivi's work, but they also warned against certain groups born from Olivian doctrine who gathered in conventicles posing a great danger (DENIFLE, EHRLE 1885–1887: vol. 2, 372). Among other transgressions, Bonagratia claimed that they considered Olivian doctrine to be evangelical, given that according to them, it had been revealed by the Holy Spirit; they believed marriage to be but a private brothel, and maintained that an angel had taken away papal authority from Pope Nicholas III due to his wickedness, which led them to elect their own pope

⁸ The full text of the plea is not extant, but its presentation is recorded in the document known as *Sol ortus*, a sort of catalogue of the different instances of repression of the Spiritual branch of the Order of St Francis and its followers compiled by the Franciscan Raimon de Fronsac after May 1318 (DENIFLE, EHRLE 1885–1887: vol. 3, 1–32).

(DENIFLE, EHRLE 1885–1887: vol. 2, 371). Furthermore, they worshipped Olivi as a saint, and believed that he was the angel described in Apocalypse 10:1 as the one who came after the angel who carried the seal of the living God.

Despite the obvious partiality of Bonagratia's rhetoric, he seems not to have been too off the mark about the tenets of these groups. Some of the depositions that would later be given before inquisitorial courts mention how, during the temporary respite of the aftermath of the Council of Vienne and the so-called Clementine settlement, Olivian sympathisers attended the rather incendiary preaching of Spiritual friars. Mateu, a priest from Belveze-du-Razès, confessed that around 1313, when he was still only a cleric, he heard the friar Raimon de Johan publicly preaching in Montréal (Doat 27, fol. 85v).⁹ After the sermon, Mateu asked him why he did not go overseas if he wished to suffer for his faith, and Raimon responded that the enemies of the faith were already among them, for the Church was the *meretrix magna* described by John in the Apocalypse, which would persecute the ministers of Christ and the poor.¹⁰ To this, Raimon still added that the Roman Church had not had a true Pope since Celestine V, whose followers and true successors were in Sicily. It was also around 1313 that, at the request of one of the most influential actors of the Beguin network, Guilhem Verrier, the Narbonnese tailor Blas Boer first contacted some Spiritual friars and Beguins, who considered Olivi a saint and whom he heard reading Olivian writings.¹¹

After the death of Clement V in 1314, matters took a turn for the worse, but the lay implication and support to Olivian positions did not diminish. Olivi's cult kept growing and attracting crowds from around the Languedocian region up until the destruction of his tomb at some point in 1318. The first involvement of several deponents also dates from this period. The silk merchant Bernard Castilló supported a group of Beguines and paid for their housing in his hometown, Montpellier, around ten years before his confession in August 1325;¹² the widow Sibil·la Cazelles was already

⁹ It should be noted that despite the fact that the record dates Mateu's confession in 1320 "anno domini millesimo trecentesimo vicesimo," this could be the result of the Doat copyist mistakenly omitting the last part of the year. All the confessions corresponding to this particular general sermon, held in Carcassonne on 11 November 1328, were given between 1324 and 1328 and thus 1320 seems too early a date. However, Raimon de Johan who in most depositions is usually described as an "apostate" is here still considered a member of the Franciscan Order, and moreover, he was publicly preaching, all of which suggests that, in any case, this episode could not have happened later than 1317.

¹⁰ Doat 27, fol. 86r: "(...) se passurum propter fidem cum ipse non iret ultra mare ubi inimici fidei, respondit et dixit audientibus aliquibus personis qui sibi loquitur sic inimici fidei sunt inter nos nam Ecclesia qua regimur figuratur nobis per illam magnam meretricem de qua loquitur Bertrandus—(sic. probably 'Beatus')—in apocalipsi, et ista persequitur ministros Christi et pauperes."

¹¹ Doat 27, fol. 84r: "(...) duodecim anni possunt esse inductus per Guillelmum Dominici Veirerium de Narbona familiaritatem fratrum minorum qui portabant habitus parvos et etiam Begguinorum habere incepit, et cum eis frequentare; a dictis Begguinis audivit quandoque legi scripturam fratris Petri Joannis quem sanctum patrem reputabant."

¹² Doat 27, fols. 20r–21v: "(...) quibusdam Beguinis quandam domum suam (...) amore Dei accomodavit (...) committens hec a decem annis et citra."

acquainted with the Beguines of the Boneta household in Montpellier around 1315;¹³ more or less at the same time, Amada Orlach gave frequent alms to the Beguins of Lodève;¹⁴ and it was also around then that Amoda Sepian became a Franciscan tertiary in Limoux before moving to Narbonne on the occasion of the “feast of Brother Peter of John.”¹⁵

According to the account of Raimon Barrau, who was the prior of the Dominican convent of Béziers from 1316 onwards, Spiritual Franciscans and Beguins were widespread in the whole diocese of Béziers, in Narbonne, Lodève, Agde, Perpignan, Carcassonne and beyond, and they were widely supported not only by the population but also by the bishop of Béziers and his whole episcopal court (BOTINEAU 1965: 504–05). Barrau’s tone is extremely hostile and he does not get all of his facts right, for he points to Bernard Délicieux as the “diabolical leader” of the dangerous group,¹⁶ but his testimony attests to the climate of involvement of both lay and ecclesiastical society in the conflicts of the Franciscan Order.¹⁷ Moreover, on 21 February 1316, after the friars of Narbonne and Béziers rebelled against their superiors, took over their convents, and were excommunicated for it, the consuls of Narbonne made a public protestation. The citizens of Narbonne had been forbidden from hearing the friars’ preaching and from being confessed by them, and the consuls felt the need to defend the rights of the many Narbonnese devotees of Saint Francis who daily went to mass at the church of the Franciscan convent and had their relatives buried there.¹⁸ The interdiction must indeed have been a problem for the people involved in the Beguin network, for the inquisitorial records reveal that several of them used to seek confession

¹³ Doat 27, fol. 16v: “(...) Beguinarum de Montepessulano decem anni sunt elapsi familiaritatem habuit inter quas erant Na Prous Bonete, detenta in muro, et eius soror et socia quas in eorum domo aliquando visitavit.”

¹⁴ Doat 28, fol. 192r: “(...) decem anni sunt et amplius sunt elapsi quibusdam Begguinis tunc en Lodova morantibus qui postea fuerunt condemnati et combusti elemosinas frequenter dedit.”

¹⁵ Doat 28, fol. 237v: “(...) decem anni et amplius sunt elapsi recepta fuit et professa in tertio ordine beati Francisci apud Limosum. Item tempore quo fiebat festum de fratre Petro Johannis sicut de sancto ivit Narbonam et inibi habitavit.” All the aforementioned depositions took place at some point in 1325, and they all use similar formulas in line with “decem anni et amplius sunt elapsi” to date the specific episodes the deponents recount. Although these dates cannot be trusted to be accurate, for the phrasing itself is rather vague, they do speak about the time before the inquisitorial prosecution and thus help us establish the context of that troubled but not yet dangerous period for the Beguin communities.

¹⁶ Bernard Délicieux was a Franciscan friar who, among other things, can be credited with leading an organized and nearly successful campaign against the abuses of inquisitors in their prosecution of heretics in Languedoc at the end of the thirteenth century. Almost two decades later, in 1317, he appeared before the Pope to defend the rebel friars of Narbonne and Béziers and was finally imprisoned and forced to face over forty charges, including resisting the Dominican inquisitors and killing Pope Benedict XI by means of sorcery. On the figure of Bernard Délicieux, see FRIEDLANDER 2000.

¹⁷ Barrau’s account was part of a memorandum he wrote for Pope Benedict XII in 1337. The main purpose of this document was to vindicate Barrau, who had been accused of taking part in the conspiracy that tried to incriminate the bishop Guilhem Frérol in the alleged poisoning of the then late John XXII.

¹⁸ Doat 51, fol. 458: “multi viri boni et mulieres de dicta universitate confluant quotidie pro divinis misteriis audiendis ad domum seu ecclesiam minorum Narbone predictam, ubi palam et publice misteria quotidie celebrantur, et pro feri celebrandis, et dicendis missas et orationes propter animas parentium, amicorum et benefactorum eorumdem, qui in dicto monasterio sunt sepulti.” For an extensive discussion of this episode and the links between the wealthiest groups of the city and the Spiritual branch of the Franciscan Order, see PIRON 1998: esp. 305–07, and more recently, BURNHAM 2009.

with Spiritual Franciscans; for instance, and only in Narbonne, Berengaria Donas, Guilhema Berenguer, Guilhema Civile, and Peire Esperendiu admitted to have been confessed by friars of the local convent.¹⁹

On 27 April 1317, the Pope summoned the insurrectionist friars of Narbonne and Béziers to Avignon (EUBEL 1898: 118–20), and many lay supporters followed them on their way. Once there, deprived of all means of appeal, they were entrusted to their superiors while awaiting the papal verdict. The papal bull *Quorundam exigit*, issued in October, left to the superiors all decisions concerning the rigour with which the Rule of St Francis had to be followed, and forced the rest of the brethren into submission to them (EUBEL 1898: 128–30). All Franciscans had to wear the same habit and maintain granaries and cellars for sustenance. These material stipulations were but a symbol of a much more complex disagreement between the original Franciscan ideal of humility and the new reality of a widespread and influential religious order and the demands it entailed. Thus, just as clothing revealed social status, ecclesiastical laws were in place to establish the standards for religious clothing, and not for nothing were Spiritual Franciscans known as the friars “who wore short and tight habits.”²⁰

Michele da Cesena, the recently elected Minister General of the Franciscan Order, questioned the friars on their acceptance of the bull and, in general, on their submission to papal authority in matters regarding the Franciscan Rule. Those who were willing to submit were sent to remote convents with sealed letters that indicated how they were to be punished for their rebellion. The rest were handed over to Michel le Moine, the inquisitor of Provence, on 6 November 1317. By papal order, the Franciscan inquisitor questioned them on their will to submit to papal authority or otherwise be treated as heretics.

2. Persecution Unleashed

Sancta romana was promulgated in December 1317, barely a month after the Spirituals were transferred to Michel Le Moine. In this papal bull, John XXII likened Beguins and other such spiritual expressions to rapacious wolves in sheep’s clothing (EUBEL 1898: 134). These ‘new religions’ adopted their own habit, gathered in conventicles, elected their own superiors—whom they called ministers—lived in community, begged publicly, and, most importantly, pretended to be professed members of the Third Order of St Francis (EUBEL 1898: 135). However, nowhere in *Sancta romana* did the pontiff mention the apocalyptic expectations that the provincial council of

¹⁹ Berengaria was the wife of a merchant (Doat 28, fols. 219v–220r), Guilhema Berenguer had moved to Narbonne with her sister from their hometown of Montagnac (ibid., fol. 207r), Guilhema Civile was the wife of a weaver (ibid., fol. 226v), and Peire was a weaver himself (Doat 28, fol. 249v).

²⁰ For instance, in December 1325, both Andreu Berenguer and his wife Agnès, from Montagnac, described them in this way: “fratres minores portantes habitus parvos et strictos qui dicebantur Spirituales” (Doat 27, fol. 11r); “sciens fuisse de illis portantibus habitum curtum” (Doat 27, fol. 12r).

1299 had so clearly identified. This was probably a result of the fact that at this particular moment the main concern of the papacy was subduing the groups that seemed to branch off from orthodox Franciscan spirituality and to support the claims of the Spiritual friars, who by then were already perceived as a source of schismatic danger themselves. Thus, the bull was mostly devoted to point out in which way these Beguins took the appearance of a legitimate religious order even though they did not have papal approval to do so, and ended by enabling episcopal authorities to act against such individuals (EUBEL 1898: 135).

In May 1318, four Spiritual friars were handed over to the secular arm in Marseille, and the news spread quickly through the Beguin network. In his testimony, the Franciscan tertiary Peire Calvet recounted how a renowned member of the group, a certain Peire Trencavel, had brought the news to Cintegabelle, and claimed that the friars had been burned due to the envy of other Franciscans and for defending their rule, which they considered evangelical (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1366). Maria de Serra, also a tertiary, admitted that as early as in May 1318, someone from Narbonne—presumably the same Trencavel—arrived in Cintegabelle carrying the relics of one of the friars burned in Marseille (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1372). Meanwhile, in Belpech, Bernard de Na Jacma had the confessions of the four friars in writing (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1340). Some of the members of the network had personally known them, such as the widows Ermessenda Grossa and Sibil·la Cazelle, both of them from Gignac,²¹ and some others had acquaintances among the rebel friars. For instance, Bernard Mauri had supported the friars from the Franciscan convent of Narbonne, although allegedly only before they were remanded to the inquisitor of Marseille.²² Thus, the Beguin network was mostly informed about the ordeal of Avignon and Marseille by the surviving friars, who provided their own explanation for what was happening, and with it the basis for the arguments that the members of Beguin communities would later defend before the inquisitors.

The execution of Marseille had quite an impact on Beguins and sympathisers alike. Peire Esperendiu heard the Beguins of Narbonne claim that the friars should have never been burned and that they had been condemned most unjustly.²³ In Belpech, Peire Morés believed that Christ had been spiritually condemned and crucified anew in the four friars of Marseille (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1316); and according to the deposition of Raimon de Bosch, said Peire even added that the four friars were like the four arms of Christ's cross (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1302). Inquisitors directly asked about the executed friars and what the suspects thought about them, for

²¹ Respectively, Doat 27, fol. 14r: "Item unum de quatuor fratribus minoribus Massiliæ combustis novit, et apud Ginhacum vidit," and Doat 27, fol. 16v: "(...) unum de fratribus minoribus qui combusti fuerunt Massiliæ olim novit."

²² Doat 35, fol. 25v–26r: "(...) fuit adherens appellationibus et provocationibus factis ad sedem apostolicam per fratres Gillelmum de Sancto Amantio, Franciscum Santii, Servianum et pluries alios commorantes tunc in conventu fratrum minorum Narbonæ. (...) quod non postquam dicti fratres qui combusti fuerunt Massiliæ ducti fuerunt Massiliam ad dictum inquisitores hæreticæ pravitatis."

²³ Doat 28, fol. 250r: "(...) alios quos nominat loqui de fratribus minoribus Massiliæ combustis audivit, et inter alios unum dixit 'lassas les anar, car a grant tort sont justifiats et morts'."

this information soon turned into a sort of ‘heresy marker.’ In fact, the burning of the friars also became a time marker that was used both by inquisitors in their interrogations and by deponents in their answers. Bernard Castelló dated a conversation he had with the Beguines he housed in Montpellier to a time “after the burning of the four friars in Marseille”;²⁴ Bernard Peyrotas, when asked about how long he had held his heretical beliefs, answered that he had done so “from the time he heard about the unjust condemnation of the four Franciscan friars in Marseille to the capture of the last Beguin in Lodève”;²⁵ and the priest Peire de Tornamira claimed that he had taken off the habit of the Beguins after the execution of the four friars (GERMAIN 1857: 338).

Over the next two years, different episcopal courts would follow the directives of *Sancta romana* and prosecute suspects of involvement in the Beguin movement all over Languedoc.²⁶ Evidence of this early episcopal inquisitorial activity is recorded in later depositions, showing the active part played by the archiepiscopal court of Narbonne, and the bishops and episcopal officials of Béziers, Maguelone, and, especially, Pamiers and Lodève in the attempts at dismantling these communities. The earliest extant reference in this regard is provided by a letter sent by Pope John XXII to the bishop of Maguelone, Andreu Fré dol, on 18 September 1318 in which the pontiff commanded Fré dol to inform him about “several inquisitions against Beguins” carried out in his diocese (EUBEL 1898: 157). As for later mentions of the involvement of this particular court, Alisseta Boneta, Bernard Castelló, and Bernard Peyrotas confessed that they had visited a group of Beguins and Beguines imprisoned in the episcopal gaol of Maguelone, and Ermessenda Grossa was deposed by the bishop himself years before her questioning of November 1325 by Henri de Chamayou.²⁷ In this same line, Bernard Mauri’s confession provides one of the earliest testimonies of the inquisitions undertaken by archiepiscopal authorities, for he admitted that the vicars of the archbishop had questioned him in Narbonne around 1319, and that he was later captured and imprisoned in the archiepiscopal gaol for twenty-four weeks, after which he was released. In close collaboration with the archiepiscopal inquisitor, the Dominican inquisitor of Carcassonne Jean de Beaune sentenced Mauri to wear crosses, to go on pilgrimage, and to make

²⁴ Doat 27, fol. 20r: “(...) post combustionem vero illorum quatuor Messaliæ (sic.) combustorum, a prædictis Beguinis (...) audivit.”

²⁵ Doat 28, fol. 21r: “(...) a tempore quo audivit dici illos quatuor fratres minores Massiliæ combustos fuisse iniuste condemnatos usque ad tempus quo fuit captus ultimo in Lodova, scilicet anno domini millesimo trecentesimo vicesimo secundo.”

²⁶ This prosecution campaign also caused ripples outside Languedoc among the Beguin communities of Girona, Mallorca, and Barcelona. For a discussion on the spread of Olivian beliefs in the region and a list of bibliographic references on the subject, see NIETO-ISABEL 2017.

²⁷ The Beguins imprisoned in Maguelone would be burned on 18 October 1321 in Lunel. Doat 27, fol. 27v: “Item Beguinos et Beguinias in carceribus episcopi Magalonensis detentos qui postea fuerunt in Lunello combusti in ipsius carceribus visitavit”; Doat 27, fol. 20r: “(...) et demum captis et detentis eisdem in carcere domini Magalonensis episcopi eos visitavit”; Doat 28, fol. 26v: “(...) et tunc visitavit quinque Begguinos qui detinebantur in carcere domini episcopi Magalonensis”; Doat 27, fol. 16r: “confessum fuisse in curia domini episcopi Magalonensis.”

public penance.²⁸ Bernard Mauri was probably sentenced on 14 October 1319, during the first known general sermon that ended with the execution of members of the Beguin network.²⁹

Mai de Blandisio, Peire de Fraxino, and Bernard Raimon de Monesc were handed over to the secular arm by the archbishop Bernard de Fargues and the inquisitor Jean de Beaune and burned in the graveyard of the church of Saint Felix (MANSI 1761: 257). Their deaths were witnessed by many in the city but the news would also reach Beguin communities farther away. In Narbonne, Peire Esperendiu attended the execution, where he heard Bernard Mauri preach—not too publicly, one might presume—and Guilhema Civile used it as a time marker in her own deposition.³⁰ In Belpech and Saverdun, Bernard de Na Jacma and Mateu Terré saw them as martyrs, and nearby, in Cintegabelle, Raimon d’Antusan kept a piece of wood from the stake to which they had been bound when they were burned (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1332). The archpriest Germà d’Alanh, who acted as archiepiscopal inquisitor from 1320 to 1323, was also involved in the early inquests into the Beguin movement, as attested by the later depositions of Guilhema Berenguer and the merchant Peire Montlaur, who confessed before the Dominican inquisitors Jean du Prat and Pierre Brun in December 1325 and January 1326, respectively.³¹

Other episcopal courts were also active in these early stages of the prosecution of Beguin communities. The harness-maker Peire Massot and the tailor Peire Dayssan confessed first before the bishop of Béziers, the aforementioned Guilhem Frédol, and only later, in 1325, would they appear before Dominican inquisitors.³² All the inquisitions conducted by Bernard Gui on actors of the Beguin network were also presided over by the bishop of Pamiers, Jacques Fournier. For instance, Bernarda d’Antusan declared that she and her husband Raimon were released after having complied with the will of the bishop of Pamiers and the inquisitor of Toulouse (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1356).

²⁸ On the basis of the *Chronica* of Nicholas the Minorite, which largely drew on the work of Michele da Cesena, Louisa Burnham notes that the archbishop of Narbonne was working alongside the inquisitor of Carcassonne from 1321 onwards, however, the case of Bernard Mauri allows us to move that date back to at least October 1319; cf. BURNHAM 2008: 169, n. 142. On this early conviction of Bernard Mauri, see Doat 35, fol. 24r–v: “(...) vicarios generales Reverendi in Christo Patris Domini Bernard Dei gratia archiepiscopi Narbonensis (...) fuit citatus, captus et detentus ac inquisitus in et super facto fidei et stetit captus in carceribus dicti Domini archiepiscopi Narbonensis per viginti quatuor septimanas vel circa (...) unacum religioso viro fratre Johanne de Belna ordinis prædicatorum inquisitore quondam hæreticæ pravitatis de gente Carcassonæ sententialiter in dicto loco Narbona crucesignatus, et aliis pœnitentiis astrictus.”

²⁹ According to his deposition, Mauri was sentenced to wear crosses from around the feast of Saint Luke, on 18 October 1319, up until the feast of Saint Martin (11 November) or Saint Catherine (25 November) of that same year, which would fit the date of the sermon (Doat 35, fol. 24v).

³⁰ Doat 28, fol. 250r: “Item quando frater Maduis et P. de Fraxino fuerant condemnati in cimiterio Sancti Felicis Narbonæ ipse loquens interfuit et a longe audivit frater Bernardum Maurini tunc prædicantem; ibid., 227v: “(...) in qua credentia stetit continue usquequo frater Madius fuit condemnatus.”

³¹ Doat 28, fol. 208v: “(...) dicens se de prædictis antea confessa fuisse domino Germano de Alanhano, non tamen omnia supradicta dixerat coram ipso”; Doat 28, 224r: “(...) confessum se fuisse asserit dudum ante confessionem præsentem coram domino Germano de Alanhano, inquisitore per dominum Narbonensem archiepiscopum deputato.”

³² Doat 27, fol. 14r: “(...) dicit se fuisse confessum in curia domini episcopi Bitterrensis”; Doat 28, fol. 214v: “(...) ad tempus quo ivit ad confitendum domino episcopo Bitterrensi.”

But the most effective episcopal court in this regard was doubtlessly Lodève. Under the direction of the bishop Jacques de Concoz many suspects of involvement in the “heresy of the Beguins” were captured in 1320 and forced to abjure.³³ Jacques de Concoz, who occupied the episcopal see from 1318 to 1322, was himself a Dominican, and, furthermore, he was the confessor of John XXII. In 1320, it was he who answered on behalf of the Pope the request of an unnamed bishop who asked for guidance on how to identify and prosecute Beguins, and Concoz referred him to the expertise of the inquisitors of Carcassonne and Toulouse—Jean de Beaune and Bernard Gui at the time. Jean de Beaune’s response is recorded in Doat 37 (fols. 74v–81v) and provides the basis to understand the inquisitorial definition of this dissident movement in this early period.³⁴

The main argument in Jean de Beaune’s 1320 reply to the bishop’s request was papal authority, for, according to the inquisitor, refusing to submit to papal orders equalled heresy. Since papal power supersedes the Franciscan Rule, the pontiff had full authority to issue a bull such as *Quorundam exigit*, and was also allowed to suppress any religious order.³⁵ From this, it followed that since the four friars burned in Marseille had rejected not only the content of the bull itself but also, and more importantly, the ability of the Pope to modify their Rule in any way, their condemnation as heretics had been fully justified, and so was their punishment. Thus, the attitude of suspects about this episode was key to judge whether they had trespassed the limits of orthodoxy.

Another more specific piece of evidence was also to be taken into account regarding this group, namely their defence of Olivian doctrine as Catholic and of Olivian writings as revealed by the Holy Spirit.³⁶ Finally, Jean de Beaune also discussed the different ways to counteract the tactics used by the suspects to avoid convictions on the grounds of ignorance, false compliance, and allegedly twisted arguments. The inquisitor claims that it is not plausible that they remained ignorant when the errors for which the friars had been condemned had been so publicly exposed.³⁷

³³ Berengaria Estorg, Bernard Durban, Bernard Malaura, the aforementioned Bernard Peyrotas, Jacma Lauret, Manents Maur, and Martí de Sant Antoni were all deposed at the episcopal court of Lodève in 1320.

³⁴ Although the response itself is not signed, it is clear that it had to be written by either the inquisitor of Carcassonne or the inquisitor of Toulouse. Sylvain Piron convincingly argues that it had to be the work of Jean de Beaune by noting the stark differences between this text and the writings of Bernard Gui on Beguins. For a detailed analysis of the production context and the inclusion of this response as part of a compilation made by Jean de Beaune as a result of his involvement in the prosecution of Beguins, see PIRON 2006a. The document is also edited in MANSI 1761: 274–76.

³⁵ Doat 37, fols. 75v–76r: “(...) illi qui pertinaciter asseverunt quod Papa Romanus condendo et promulgando quandam constitutionem seu declarationem seu interpretationem regulæ fratrum minorum quæ constitutio incipit ‘Quorundam’ et hæc condemnauerat vitam Christi (...) Prædicta igitur asserentes pertinaciter credo esse velut hæreticos condemnandos (...) Item asserentes quod Papa non potuit cassare regulam beati Francisci vel aliquam aliam quamvis eam potuerit confirmare expresse obviat potestati apostolicæ (...) ita potest eundem ordinem tollere.”

³⁶ Doat 37, fols. 76v–77r: “Item de doctrina insana fratris Petri Joannis de ordine fratrum minorum quam præfati insensati dicunt esse a Spiritu Sancto revelatam, et nullum errorem vel hæresim continere dicunt quod in his quæ scripsit super Apocalipsim beati Joannis inveniuntur quamplures continentes hæresim et errorem.”

³⁷ Doat 37, fol. 79v: “(...) quod contra tales tamquam contra credentes hæreticorum erroribus sit procedendum, non obstante quod ad velamen suæ malitiæ dicant se tales nescivisse, nec credere eos errores tenuisse, quia propter errores esse condemnatos (...) non sit verisimile quod apud eos remanserit ignotum et ignoratum illud quod est tan famosè publice divulgatum.”

The analysis of the eighty-one depositions that include information about the beliefs in circulation within the Beguin network shows how these issues introduced by Jean de Beaune, which were in part a result of the earliest interrogations, kept coming up over the following decade.³⁸ The injustice of the executions of friars and Beguins, the belief that they had died as glorious martyrs and were in Paradise, the issue of papal authority, the illegitimacy of *Quorundam exigit*, and the Catholic nature of Olivi's writings rank the highest among the different tenets that made up what we could call the Beguin belief system.

The most immediate consequence of the first inquisitions on the Beguin movement was the need to extend the original line of questioning regarding the burning of the friars in Marseille to encompass the executions that soon followed across Languedoc. Around 80% of these depositions include references to wrongful condemnations. In the spring of 1322, in Cintegabelle, Bernarda d'Antusan admitted that she thought the four dead friars to be martyrs, adding that the same could be said about the Beguins that had been burned in the following years (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1352). Also in Cintegabelle, Peire Calvet commented how when they first heard about the deaths of the friars they had all agreed that they were holy martyrs, and the following year, when Beguins started to be burned, Peire and others in his group claimed that they had been unjustly condemned too (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1366). Nearby, in Belpech, the "minister of Beguins" Peire de Mazères provided the motives that lay behind the execution of the friars, once again repeating that they had been unjustly condemned for claiming that the Pope could not dispense from vows of poverty, that forcing Franciscans to have cellars and granaries was against the evangelical Rule of St Francis, and that he should therefore not be obeyed (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1310). About three years later, in the fall of 1325, in Narbonne, the weaver Guilhem Quartier still confessed that he had discussed the matter many times with many people and that they all thought that the executed Beguins had been unjustly condemned—a *tort et a peccat*—that they had led a saintly life and were the light of the Catholic faith, and that, as such, they were already in Paradise as holy martyrs.³⁹

The failure, or better yet, the refusal to comply with *Quorundam exigit* was right at the root of the problem, not only for the authorities but also for the members of the Beguin network. During the earliest extant interrogations of March 1322, Maria de Serra summed it up in rather simple terms: the Pope should not have granted granaries and cellars to Franciscans, for Saint Francis had not authorised it (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1374). Guilhem Ros went further and claimed that the Pope, who had lost his authority when he condemned the four friars in Marseille, had

³⁸ This analysis is based on the in-depth study of the inquisitorial records concerning the Beguins of Languedoc in NIETO-ISABEL 2018.

³⁹ Doat 28, fol. 205v: "Item cum diversis personis de Narbona et aliunde quas nominat loquutus fuit et eas loqui audivit diversis vicibus, pluries et diversis temporibus et locis de facto Begguinorum (...) quod dicti Begguini fuerant homines de bonæ vitæ et sanctæ et erant lumen sanctæ fidei Catholicæ et quod *a tort et a peccat* fuerant condemnati, et quod erant salvi et sancti martires in paradiso."

unjustly issued an edict on granaries and cellars, and upon doing so, he had become the mystical Antichrist who prepared the way for the Great Antichrist (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1360). In the inquisitions carried out in 1325, the issue of *Quorundam exigit* remained front and centre in the suspects' depositions. In Carcassonne, Jacma Sobiran recounted how even before the summoning to Avignon in 1317 the Franciscan Raimon de Johan had told her that the Spiritual friars did not want granaries and cellars.⁴⁰ In Montpellier, the aforementioned Bernard Castilló said that just as the Pope could not allow a priest to marry, neither could he allow Franciscans to have granaries and cellars, and therefore, he should not have made a decretal about it.⁴¹ In Lodève, the butcher Bernard Malaura believed that the friars who had died for refusing to comply with said decretal were holy martyrs.⁴² And in Narbonne, whereas Berengaria Verrier thought the Pope had sinned when he ordered Franciscans to have granaries and cellars, her husband Guilhem Verrier outright believed the pontiff was a heretic and the mystical Antichrist for doing so.⁴³ The weaver Guilhem Ademar added that such an edict diminished the evangelical perfection of the Rule, and the tailor Blas Boer claimed to have heard that it was an unjust constitution and that the friars did not have to abide by it.⁴⁴ Finally, the testimony of Peire Esperendiu, an eyewitness to the execution of October 1319 in Narbonne, rather poignantly conveys the words he heard from the priest Bernard Mauri on that occasion, which were also a reference to the controversial bull, "Pour ordi et pour brun se voulent lassar cremar aqueste gent marida, sont bien mal estrut" ("For barley and undyed cloth they want to let these people burn to death, the poor wretches"); after which Peire whispered in the manner of a prayer "Sancta Maria, vere istae bonae gentes moriuntur a grant tort" ("Holy Mary, truly these good people die unjustly") (Doat 28, fol. 250r-v).

The text of the sentence pronounced by Michel le Moine had blamed Olivian writings, and specifically the *Lectura super apocalypsim*, for the heretical errors of the Spiritual friars. His works would not be officially condemned by the papacy until 1326, but already in 1320, Jean de Beaune's response makes it clear that the opinions of theologians provided a strong enough basis

⁴⁰ Doat 28, fol. 212r: "Item dixit ipsa loquens se audivisse a dicto fratre Raymundo, et aliis antequam citati fuissent, quod non debebant nec volebant habere granaria nec cellaria, nec aliqua reservare."

⁴¹ Doat 27, fol. 20v: "Item quod non potuerat dispensare quod unus cappellanus duceret uxorem nec quod fratres minores haberent granaria et cellararia. Item quod non potuerat nec debebat fecisse illam decretalem quam fecerat super granariis et cellarariis."

⁴² Doat 28, fol. 17r: "(...) se audivisse a pluribus quod fratres minores qui noluerunt obedire constitutioni facte per dominum Papam et propter hoc fuerant incarcerati et puniti erant sancti et martires."

⁴³ Doat 28, fol. 121v: "(...) et quos iste dominus Johannes Papa vicesimus secundus qui nunc est peccaverat quia concesserat fratribus minoribus quod haberent granaria et cellaria"; Doat 28, fol. 242v: "Item habebant dictum dominum Johannem Papam suspectum quod esset hæreticus et mysticus Antechristus, pro eo quod condemnaverat quatuor fratres minores Massiliæ condemnatos et combustos vel quia fecit eos condemnari pro eo quod petebant puram observantiam votorum suorum, et quia dominus Papa fecerat decretalem super granariis et cellariis habendis per eos."

⁴⁴ Doat 28, fol. 229v: "Item quod dictus dominus Papa non poterat in regula dictorum fratrum minorum dispensare sicut nec in Evangelio, quia totum est idem nec eis concedere granaria et cellaria, quin esset ad diminutionem Evangelicæ perfectionis et regula eorundem"; Doat 27, fol. 84r-v: "Item audivit ab eisdem quod constitutio facta super granariis et cellariis dictorum fratrum erat iniuste facta. Item audivit a quibusdam hominibus quos nominat quod dicti fratres non tenebantur dictæ decretali obedire."

as to consider the doctrine of Brother Peter of John ‘demented’, and to assert that all those who thought that it was Catholic—and, furthermore, the result of divine revelation—were at the very least foolish and at the very worst heretics. Actually, around 40% of the deponents responded to this description. Not only did they consider Olivian writings in general as Catholic, but they provided further evidence that these had indeed played an important role in the definition of their belief system. In 1322, Peire de l’Hospital, an inhabitant of Montpellier, confessed that he believed what Olivi—whom he called holy father—had written in his *Postilla*, which had been read to him over thirty times in the vernacular (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1616). Bernarda d’Antusan admitted that she had heard Olivian writings read to her and other Beguins in the vernacular, especially the *Postilla*, and that she believed these to be Catholic (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1354). Peire Domenge added that Olivian doctrine and writings were just as Catholic as the doctrine of Saint John the Evangelist, and that just like him, Olivi was a saint in Paradise, although he admitted that John had greater glory (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1606). Others, like Peire Calvet, believed that Olivian doctrine on the Apocalypse was good and Catholic and had been sanctioned by Clement V, in what was a clear reference to *Fidei catholicae fundamento* and the aftermath of the Council of Vienne (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1370).⁴⁵ A few years later, Berenguer Jaoul, a merchant from Lodève, still maintained that Beguins extracted their opinions from the doctrine of Brother Peter of John, and that they did so because of the goodness of said doctrine, which posed a stark contrast to the pomp and arrogance of Roman prelates.⁴⁶

Thus, all the tenets ranking highest in the belief system of the Beguin network according to the extant inquisitorial records were already included in Jean de Beaune’s reply to the unnamed bishop in 1320. However, this early definition of Beguins and their sympathisers evolved over the following years drawing on the fieldwork experience of inquisitors.

3. A New Heretical Paradigm

The perfect example of this situation is the episode that allegedly gave rise to the controversy on the poverty of Christ, one of whose protagonists was also Jean de Beaune. In the course of the proceedings that led up to the general sermon held in Narbonne on 28 February 1322, an unnamed suspect claimed that Christ and the apostles possessed nothing, neither individually nor in common.⁴⁷ During the customary inquisitorial consultation that followed, Jean de Beaune

⁴⁵ Other Beguins also defended the Catholic nature of Olivian writings while mentioning the caveat of the propositions censured at Vienne; see the deposition of Peire Tort claiming that Olivian doctrine had been purged from all errors at the Council in PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1410.

⁴⁶ Doat 28, fol. 19r: “(...) et ita dicebant se habere et colligere ex doctrina fratris Petri Johannis ordinis minorum et ista fierent ut dicebant propter seu bonitatem, et quia sequebantur bonam vitam adiciendo quod illi qui regunt Ecclesiam Romanam vinebant in pompis deliciis supervia et fastu.”

⁴⁷ This episode is recounted in the *Chronica* of Nicholas the Minorite (GÁL, FLOOD 1996: 62). An excerpt of the *Chronica* focusing on the controversy that followed can be found in EUBEL 1898: 224, n.1. The historicity of the actual events has been questioned by historians, see the analyses in TOCCO 1884: 519–22; POU Y MARTÍ 1996: 345–48; PIRON 2006b: 70–71; and BURR 2001: 263.

presented this claim as one of the heretical errors for which the accused was to be condemned. However, the lector of the Franciscan convent of Narbonne at the time, Berenguer Taló, who was among the experts, refused to comply with the inquisitor's assessment (EUBEL 1898: 224, n.1).⁴⁸ Berenguer declared that not only was the idea not heretical, but it was also a truth held by the Franciscan Order and sanctioned by the bull *Exiit qui seminat*, issued by Pope Nicholas III in 1279. Jean de Beaune immediately accused him of heresy and both of them presented their appeals before John XXII, a process that would end up with the promulgation of *Cum inter nonnullos* in November 1323, which stated that defending that Christ and the apostles never owned anything, individually or in common, was indeed heretical.

Accordingly, from March 1322 onwards, the issue of Christ's possessions—or more accurately, lack thereof—joined the list of the most frequently mentioned claims in the depositions of the actors of the Beguin network. Some of their testimonies were actually quite detailed in this regard, for instance, in May 1322 Peire Tort confessed to having heard some Franciscans in Narbonne preach that Christ and the apostles owned nothing; they had also said that Christ had advised the apostles not to carry gold or silver in their belts, and not to carry a pouch or a satchel, for anyone who refused to renounce their properties could not be his disciple (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1396–98). Peire still added that Christ had no money for him or his apostles and that he didn't use money unless under extreme necessity, but instead appointed Judas to manage and distribute it to the poor (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1398). Around that time, Bernard de Na Jacma insisted that Christ and the apostles had not owned anything and that therefore Franciscans could not own anything either, and when asked whether that meant that the Pope could not dispense them from such obligation, he referred to the ruling of Pope Nicholas IV on the matter (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1334).⁴⁹

Different versions of this same belief kept appearing in the inquisitions conducted in the late summer and fall of 1325. In Carcassonne, Narbonne, and Montpellier, members of the Beguin network admitted that they had heard and believed that Christ and the apostles had no possessions, either individually or in common, and some, as Guilhem Ademar, even added the Virgin to this group.⁵⁰ Moreover, most of the testimonies drew a more or less explicit parallel between Christ's poverty and the poverty of the Franciscan Order, a comparison that, according to Na Prous Boneta,

⁴⁸ Little is known about the figure of Berenguer Taló—whom Pou y Martí presents as the lector of the convent of Perpignan (POU Y MARTÍ 1996: 345–47)—however, Sylvain Piron aptly notes that his appointment as a lector in this region and period proves that he was not a member of the Olivian faction, and was therefore not defending Spiritual positions but rather taking a stand for the whole Franciscan Order (PIRON 2006b: 71).

⁴⁹ Nicholas IV, the first Franciscan pope, was behind the promulgation of *Supra montem*, the de facto rule of the Third Order of Saint Francis. Given that Bernard de Na Jacma was a Franciscan tertiary, his mention of the pontiff is not surprising, however, the fact that Nicholas IV was one of the first censors of Olivian works and that, furthermore, the most common references in this regard were in fact to Nicholas III and *Exiit qui seminat*, a mistake in the copy or in the transcription cannot be completely ruled out.

⁵⁰ Doat 28, fol. 230r: “Item quod Christus et apostoli et beata Virgo Maria nunquam habuerant aliquid nec in proprio nec in communi.”

was also established by Christ himself, who allegedly told her that Saint Francis began his order in the same perfection and altitude that Christ had when he adhered to poverty with his apostles.⁵¹ Thus, as Peire de l'Hospital put it, claiming that Christ did have possessions was deemed as heretical by some (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1614), and, in Na Prou's words, even tantamount to branding Christ himself as a sinner.⁵² As Guilhem Verrier concluded in a remarkably flawless logical display, according to Beguin views Christ did not own anything, for otherwise Francis would have been more perfect than him, which could not be true.⁵³

The apocalyptic expectations apparent in the earliest account of the activities of these communities were further proof of their ties to Olivian positions, and, as Jean de Beaune's 1320 text suggests, the circulation of the *Lectura super apocalipsim* among them was also considered as incriminating evidence. Around twenty deponents mention how they saw, kept, read, or heard reading from Olivi's last work, which had been translated into the vernacular. It was there that they found the background for the apocalyptic scenario that was already perceived as imminent at the turn of the century. In the developments that were to follow, the Antichrist was expected to play a preeminent role, but in his *Lectura*, Olivi had foreseen the advent of two such figures, the mystical and the great Antichrist, and the members of the Beguin network were well aware of this fact and had their own candidates in mind.

Among many other examples, the Franciscan tertiary Raimon Esteve confessed in March 1322 that he had been read the *Postilla* many times, and that it said that there was a double Antichrist coming, namely, the mystical and the great Antichrists (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1388). According to Olivi, the mystical Antichrist was to be a false pope who would persecute the righteous from his position at the head of a corrupt Church; therefore, it was only natural to point the finger at John XXII, the Pope who had initiated the official persecution of Spiritual Franciscans, and over twenty deponents actually did so. The tertiary Mateu Terré declared that, just as John the Baptist paved the way for Christ, John XXII was doing the same for the great Antichrist, for he persecuted the Spirituals who wanted to defend the Rule of St Francis (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1378). In fact, according to him, the actions of the Pope showed the signs of the Antichrist for he first appeared to defend poverty and humility only to end up persecuting the poor.

In contrast, there was not so much consensus on the identity of the great Antichrist, nor on the timeline of the upcoming events. The idea present in Olivi's *Lectura* that this second Antichrist would also be a sort of pseudopope, fostered the belief that he would falsely appear as the most

⁵¹ Doat 27, fol. 61v: "Item quod Jesus Christus dixit sibi quod in illa perfectione et altitudine quibus sanctus Franciscus incepit ordinem suum in illa perfectione et altitudine incepit Christus cum suis Apostolis tenere paupertatem."

⁵² Doat 27, fol. 61r-v: "(...) iste Papa confessus est Christum esse peccatorem in hoc quod dixit Christum habuisse in proprio et in communi."

⁵³ Doat 28, fol. 243v: "Item dixit quod si Christus habuerit in proprio vel in communi sanctus Franciscus esset perfectior Christo quod non est verum."

pious of men, which in turn prompted some of the members of the Beguin movement to expect him to rise from within their own ranks. Maria de Serra, who in 1322 thought that the great Antichrist was already about twenty years old, believed that he was a member of the Order of St Francis, who would thus appear under the guise of perfection and sanctity (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1372). In this same vein, Peire Tort claimed that said Antichrist would come from the Franciscan Order and provided some candidates, that is, Angelo Clarenó and Felip of Majorca (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1414).⁵⁴ Moreover, Peire's deposition exemplifies the uncertainty about the time when these events would come to pass. Thus, on the one hand, Bernard de Na Jacma—who also saw Felip of Majorca as the most likely candidate—believed that the great Antichrist would have run his course by 1330 (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1336–38), Mateu Terré pointed to 1325 (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1378), and Raimon d'Antusan to the thirteenth centennial of Christ's Passion, that is, around 1333 (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1348). On the other hand, both Raimon de Bosch and Peire de l'Hospital referred to the *Postilla* to claim that the persecution led by the great Antichrist would conclude within the following fourteen years (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1300).

It is clear that Olivi's *Postilla* was the source for the apocalyptic imagery described by the deponents, specifically regarding the passage in Revelation 17 on the great prostitute and the beast.⁵⁵ For instance, Bernarda d'Antusan confessed that she had heard Olivian works read to her and other Beguins in the vernacular, especially the *Postilla*, where she learned that Babylon, the great prostitute that rode a many-headed beast with ten horns and was the mother of fornication, held a golden goblet full of abominations in her hand, and that this woman was none other than the carnal Church (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1354). This image was frequently brought up and elaborated on, as in the deposition of Guilhem Ros, where he stated that, according to Olivi's *Postilla*, the Roman Church was Babylon, the great prostitute who sat on the seven-headed, ten-horned beast that was drunk on the blood of the saints, fornicating and abandoning the cult of Christ, her legitimate spouse, for the delights and riches of the world (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1362). Peire de l'Hospital in turn claimed that he had learned in the *Postilla* that the Roman Church was Babylon, the great prostitute who rode the beast that Saint John execrated in the

⁵⁴ Angelo Clarenó was one of the leading figures of the group of Italian Franciscan dissidents of the March of Ancona who were established by Pope Celestine V as the Poor Hermits of Pope Celestine. Clarenó's most renowned work, the *Liber chronicarum sive tribulationum ordinis minorum*, written between 1323 and 1326, recorded the sufferings endured by his fellow Spiritual Franciscans at the hands of their superiors inserting such tribulations into a long train of persecutions whose origin he traced back to the beginnings of the order. On Italian Spirituals and the figure of Clarenó see, among others, AUV 1979 and ACCROCCA 2017. As for Felip of Majorca, well known for his radical Franciscan views, he was the brother of the late King Sanç I of Majorca and the uncle of the future King Jaume III, during whose minority he acted as regent. Felip was a friend of Clarenó's and lived his final years in the kingdom of Naples, where his sister, Queen Sança—married to King Robert of Naples—provided him and his Beguin friends with a safe haven. On Felip of Majorca, see EVANGELISTI 2007 and POU Y MARTÍ 1996: 235–254.

⁵⁵ Rev. 17: 3, "I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was full of blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns", and Rev. 17:5–6: "On her forehead was written a name, a mystery: Babylon the Great, the Mother of prostitutes and of the detestable things of the earth. I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of those who testified to Jesus.

Apocalypse (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1630); and Raimon de Bosch carried on saying that the vernacular translation of Olivi's *Postilla* described a woman dressed in gold with a golden cup in her hand who sat on a beast with seven heads and ten horns, and on top of her head one could read the words "Babylon, the great prostitute, mother of fornication," to which he added that this woman was the Roman Church (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1298).

Some of the confessions cited in the previous pages, extracted by Bernard Gui between 1321 and June 1322 informed the inquisitor's elaborate description of the Beguins of Languedoc in his *Practica inquisitiones heretice pravitatis*. Much more thorough than Jean de Beaune's aforementioned account of the defining traits of the group, Gui incorporated into the sections of his work devoted to the "erroneous articles of the Beguins and their followers" and to the proper way of interrogating them most of the information provided by the fourteen men and two women whose *culpa*e appear recorded in his book of sentences. The *Practica* insists on the same issues discussed by Jean de Beaune in 1320, namely papal authority and power over the Franciscan order, the rightfulness of the condemnation of the four Franciscan friars in Marseille and of the Beguins executed later on in Languedoc, and the erroneous and heretical nature of Olivian writings—especially the *Lectura*. However, the Beguin belief system presented in Gui's manual also adds the controversy on Christ's poverty—which only came up in 1321—the different practices related to the cult of the Beguin martyrs, and, in sum, the answers obtained during the interrogations conducted by the inquisitor down to the last detail.

This is apparent in relation to the far-reaching topic of the wound in Christ's side, specifically the question whether the spear pierced Christ's body before or after he was dead. According to John 19:33–34, Christ was already dead, however, in his *Lectura super Iohanne*, on the basis of the mystical experiences of several female visionaries he was acquainted with, Olivi had left the door open for a new interpretation of the scene of the crucifixion in which Christ was still alive.⁵⁶ In 1312, *Fidei catholica fundamento*—which was partly the result of the examination of Olivian views by a commission of theologians—clarified the Church's stance on the matter, namely, that Christ's spirit had already left his body when the soldier came along (EUBEL 1898: 86). More than a decade later, Gui still cited the Olivian interpretation of the episode, albeit somewhat distorted, as part of the Beguin belief system (MOLLAT 1964: vol. 1, 138). The Dominican inquisitor included in his description of this specific article an alternative version in which Christ, although appearing dead, was still alive, which, according to Beguins, would have been provided by the original Gospel of Matthew. This argument in fact echoes Ubertino da Casale's attempted defence of the Olivian position back in 1311, but, more importantly, reproduces almost to the letter the record of the deposition of the Beguin of Belpesch Peire Morés on this point.⁵⁷ In the

⁵⁶ For further discussion on this issue see ROY HARRIS 1985: 27–28 and BURR 1985: 273–88.

⁵⁷ Although Olivi was quite vague on this point, Ubertino defended his allegedly heretical views and claimed to have seen one manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew containing this version of events (BURR 2001: 154–55). It is worth mentioning here a notarized document attesting to the existence of a copy of the Gospel of Matthew in the abbey of Saint Victor of Marseille in which the episode of the lance happened while Christ was still alive. This document was

words of the said Peire, according to Matthew, Christ was still alive when the spear pierced his side, and his soul was still in his body, but John the Evangelist did not record it that way because Christ indeed seemed dead; therefore the Church removed it from the Gospel of Matthew so that the Gospels did not contradict each other (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1328). Only one other deponent questioned by Gui, Peire Tort, mentioned the spear wound in Christ's side, although he merely claimed not to have believed that Christ was still alive at that moment (PALES-GOBILLIARD 2002: 1412). In 1325, only Guilhem Ademar would answer affirmatively when asked about this particular tenet, but his deposition did not include any reference to the Gospels.⁵⁸

Gui's extremely accurate account of Beguin beliefs strongly suggests that as far as the Beguins of Languedoc are concerned, the *Practica* is mostly a structured exposition that put together the different doctrinal points, expressions, and practices that came up during the interrogations carried out between 1321 and 1322. This idea is reinforced by his description of the rituals involving the worship of the bones of the dead Beguins, where Gui states that he himself had touched such alleged relics, thus legitimising this particular piece of information through his own inquisitorial authority (MOLLAT 1964: vol. 1, 132). In contrast, a few specific articles of faith listed in the section devoted to Beguin errors cannot be found anywhere in the extant depositions, which could hint at the existence of other depositions whose records are now lost.⁵⁹

All of the above points to the fact that Olivian doctrine indeed provided an ideational basis for the Beguin belief system, but that is not to say that Olivian writings were read and taken at face value by his followers. His works were translated, reworded, and interpreted by active and passive readers alike who thus added their own views to the doctrinal corpus of the Franciscan theologian. But, furthermore, Olivi's detractors and the repressors of the lay movements that blossomed around radical Franciscanism also contributed to the formation of said corpus, or, at the very least, to our current idea of it.

Conclusions

When analysing inquisitorial records in search of the beliefs maintained by any dissident group we must be aware that since deponents were not giving a voluntary statement of their creed, it is only possible to learn about those beliefs that posed a concern for inquisitors. Furthermore, in the early stages of the persecution, repressing authorities did not yet have a clear picture of the

mentioned in a piece entitled *Quod doctrina Petri Johannis fuit iuste dampnata*, which Piron argues was composed around 1311 in connection with Bonagratia of Bergamo's aforementioned appeal to Clement V (PIRON 2010: 351, n. 238). An edition of the notarized document can be found in DOUCET 1935.

⁵⁸ Doat 28, fol. 229r: "Item quod Jesus Christus erat adhuc vivus quando fuerat in cruce lancea percussus."

⁵⁹ The only known extant copy of the *Liber Sententiarum* is not complete. The records of the general sermon held in Pamiers on 19 June 1323, which at least included the conviction of one Beguin, Raimon Julià, only includes a list of sentences and no *culpae*,

specific features of the heretical movement in question, and needed to define these themselves before making decisions on who was and who was not a heretic or a sympathiser of heretics. This definition drew on two main sources, the official documents, regulations, and sentences pronounced by hierarchical authorities and the fieldwork experience of those officials in charge of suppressing heretical movements. Thus, in 1320, the aforementioned unnamed bishop who asked the Pope for guidance on how to identify and prosecute Beguins, probably had access to the documents related to the inquisition conducted by Michel Le Moine against the Spiritual friars, but lacked the basis for a more practical approach to the problem of their lay supporters. In this sense, the process of identification and definition of the Beguins of Languedoc by episcopal and papal inquisitors in the early 1320s went through several stages that kept adding more features to the whole picture of these communities.

The framing of the inquisitorial questioning of the Beguins of Languedoc kept evolving in parallel with the very definition of the group by the prosecuting authorities. Whereas the main concern of the provincial council back in 1299 had been the public display of a sort of alternative religiosity, the events of the early decades of the fourteenth century drew the attention of Dominican and episcopal inquisitors to the association of these groups with Spiritual Franciscans and, especially, to their involvement in Olivian circles. The nature of the interrogations experienced a sort of snowball effect in the sense that, while all deponents were probably questioned on the early set of issues, new information kept coming up that was promptly incorporated into the following questionings, especially if said information turned out to be controversial.

The Beguin belief system was by no means monolithic, it had fluid borders and provided room for the creation of varied narratives. However, inquisitors needed a fixed picture of what being a Beguin meant in order to uproot this form of dissent. The result was, as it generally is, a system of beliefs and, in turn, a specific dissident Beguin identity that were co-constructed by both the persecuted and their persecutors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ACCROCCA, Felice, 2017. "Pietro di Giovanni Olivi, Ubertino da Casale, Angelo Clareno. Tre leader del movimento degli Spirituali," *Storia della spiritualità francescana. I secoli XII-XVI*, M. Bartoli, W. Block, A. Mastromatteo (eds.), Bologna, Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna: 325–346.
- AUW, Lydia von, 1979. *Angelo Clareno et les spirituels italiens*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura.
- BOTINEAU, Pierre, 1965. "Les tribulations de Raymond Barrau, O.P. (1295-1338)," *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'École française de Rome*, 11: 475–528.
- BURNHAM, Louisa A., 2008. *So Great a Light, So Great a Smoke. The Beguin Heretics of Languedoc*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 2008.
- 2009. "La crise spirituelle de 1316 : les Franciscains de Narbonne et leurs relations avec les habitants de la ville," *Moines et religieux dans la ville (XIIIe-XVe siècle)*, Toulouse, (Cahier de Fanjeaux, 44), Privat: 469–491.
- BURR, David, 1985. "Olivi, Apocalyptic Expectation, and Visionary Experience," *Traditio*, 41: 273–88.
- 2001. *The Spiritual Franciscans. From Protest to Persecution in the Century After Saint Francis*, University Park (PA), The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- DENIFLE, Heinrich, EHRLE, Franz, 1885–1887. *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, vols. 1–3, Berlin, Weidmannsche.
- DOUCET, Victorin, 1935. "De operibus manuscriptis Fr. Petri Ioannis Olivi in Bibliotheca Universitatis Patavinae asservatis. (Finis)," *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, 28: 441–442.
- EUBEL, Konrad (ed.), 1898. *Bullarium Franciscanum*, vol. 5, Rome, Typis Sacrae Congregationis de Propaganda Fide.
- EVANGELISTI, Paolo, 2007. "Relazioni di potere ed etiche per il potere. Clareno, Filippo di Maiorca e la testualità politica francescana catalano-aragonese," *Angelo Clareno francescano, Atti del XXXIV Convegno internazionale, Assisi, 5-7 ottobre 2006*, Spoleto, Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto Medioevo: 317–376.
- FRIEDLANDER, Alan, 2000. *The Hammer of Inquisitors: Brother Bernard Délicieux and the Struggle against the Inquisition in Fourteenth-Century France*, Leiden, Brill.

GÁL, Gedéon, FLOOD, David (eds.), 1996. *Nicolaus Minorita: Chronica*, St. Bonaventure (NY), Franciscan Institute Publications.

GERMAIN, Alexandre, 1857. “Une consultation inquisitoriale au XIVe siècle,” *Publications de la Société Archéologique de Montpellier*, 4, no. 25: 309–44.

MANSELLI, Raoul, 1959. *Spirituali e beghini in Provenza*, Roma, Nella sede dell’Istituto.

MANSI, Giovanni Domenico (ed.), 1761. *Stephani Baluzii Tutelensis Miscellanea*, vol. 2, Paris, Riccomini.

MARTÈNE, Edmond, URSIN, Durand (eds.), 1717. *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, vol. IV, Paris.

MOLLAT, Guillaume (ed), 1964. *Manuel de l’inquisiteur Bernard Gui*, 2 vols, Paris, Les Belles Lettres.

NIETO-ISABEL, Delfi I., 2017. “Overlapping Networks. Beguins, Franciscans, and Poor Clares at the Crossroads of a Shared Spirituality,” *Clarisas y dominicas. Modelos de implantación, filiación, promoción y devoción en la Península Ibérica, Cerdeña, Nápoles y Sicilia*, G.T. Colesanti, B. Garí, N. Jornet-Benito (eds.), Florence, Firenze University Press: 429–48.

—2018. “Communities of Dissent. Social Network Analysis of Religious Dissident Groups in Languedoc in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries,” PhD. dissertation, Universitat de Barcelona.

PALES-GOBILLIARD, Annette (ed.), 2002. *Le livre des sentences de l’inquisiteur Bernard Gui (1308-1323)*, 2 vols, Paris, CNRS.

PIRON, Sylvain, 1998. “Marchands et confesseurs. Le Traité des contrats d’Olivi dans son contexte (Narbonne, fin XIIIe-début XIVe siècle),” *L’argent au Moyen Âge. Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l’enseignement supérieur public, 28e congrès, Clermont-Ferrand, 1997*, Paris: Publications de La Sorbonne: 289–308.

—2006a. “Un cahier de travail de l’inquisiteur Jean de Beaune,” *Oliviana*, 2, <http://oliviana.revues.org/26> [2019/09/19]

—2006b. “Censures et condamnation de Pierre de Jean Olivi: enquête dans les marges du Vatican,” *Mélanges de l’École française de Rome - Moyen Âge*, 118, no. 2: 313–73.

—2010. *Recherches d’histoire intellectuelle des sociétés médiévales* (Dossier pour l’obtention de l’habilitation à diriger des recherches à l’Université d’Orléans), Vol. 3. https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel00520102v2/file/HDR_Piron_vol_3.pdf

POU Y MARTÍ, José, 1996. *Visionarios, beguinos y fraticellos catalanes (siglos XIII-XV)*, Alicante, Instituto de Cultura Juan Gil-Abert – Diputación provincial de Alicante.

ROY HARRIS, Marvin, 1985. *The Occitan Translations of John XII and XIII-XVII from a Fourteenth-century Franciscan Codex (Assisi, Cheese Nuova MS. 9)* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, 75), Philadelphia (PA), American Philosophical Society.

THÉRY, Julien, 2008. “‘Inquisitio’ contre Rixende, fanatique du XIII^e siècle: la copie d’un document perdu des archives de l’archevêché de Narbonne par le minime François Laporte (BM Toulouse, MS 625, fols. 73-83, vers 1710),” *L’archevêché de Narbonne au Moyen Âge*, M. Fournié, D. Le Blévec (eds.), Toulouse, CNRS, Université de Toulouse II - Le Mirail: 63–90.

Tocco, Felice, 1884. *L’eresia nel Medio Evo*, Florence, Sansoni.