

THE MASTERS OF THEOLOGY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PARIS IN THE LATE THIRTEENTH AND EARLY FOURTEENTH CENTURIES: AN AUTHORITY BEYOND THE SCHOOLS*

IAN P. WEI

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

This article is an attempt to understand the nature of intellectual activity in medieval universities and the place or function of universities in medieval society as a whole. Above all, it is an attempt to understand the relationship between the two. Of course the social and political significance of medieval universities and intellectuals has long been a subject of debate.¹ It is beyond doubt that they addressed contemporary social and political issues. In looking at the impact of their views, however, existing work has been limited in a number of ways. Much work has focused on individual scholars and considered the extent to which they were true to their scholarly ideals once they left the schools. In other words historians have assessed the influence of intellectuals in so far as they were also or subsequently something else. Even when a more collective approach has been taken, the impact of ideas has always been considered as they were mediated through preaching and confession so as to affect the individual conscience, or through the legal structures of the church so as to affect wider social practice. While these approaches

* Versions of this article have been presented to seminars at the universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and Oxford. I have learned much from discussions on these occasions. I would also like to thank Professor Elizabeth A.R. Brown, Professor Jeffrey H. Denton, Dr Jean Dunbabin and Professor Anthony Tuck for their advice and encouragement.

¹ See B. Smalley, *The Becket conflict and the schools* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973), 1–17, who traces the debate back to the early fourteenth century. For reasons of space it is impossible to give a full list of modern work in this field, but crucial contributions include: J.W. Baldwin, *Masters, princes and merchants: the social views of Peter the Chanter and his circle*, 2 vols (Princeton: University Press, 1970); R. Bartlett, *Trial by fire and water* (Oxford: University Press, 1986); E.A.R. Brown, 'Cessante causa and the taxes of the last Capetians: the political applications of a philosophical maxim', *Studia Gratiana (Post Scripta)*, xv (1972), 567–87; E.A.R. Brown, 'Taxation and morality in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: conscience and political power and the kings of France', *French Historical Studies*, viii (1973), 1–28; A.B. Cobban, *The medieval universities* (London: Methuen, 1975); J. Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au moyen âge* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1957); F.M. Powicke, *Stephen Langton* (Oxford: University Press, 1928); Smalley, *The Becket conflict*; T.N. Tentler, 'The summa for confessors as an instrument of social control', *The pursuit of holiness in late medieval and renaissance religion*, ed. C. Trinkaus and H.A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974).

are valid and the work enormously valuable, learning has been maintained as a world somewhat apart. Scholars acting as scholars, in the process of writing and teaching, have remained distant from the exercise of power in society. It can, however, be argued that this represents a full understanding neither of the way in which medieval scholarship worked nor of its wider significance in society, and that we need to look again at the nature of work in the schools and at scholars' contact with the outside world when they acted as scholars, both collectively and as individuals drawing on a collective status. To this end, this article concentrates on the masters of theology at the university of Paris. Within the faculty of theology it is particularly instructive to consider the nature of a specific university exercise: the quodlibetal disputation. The study of quodlibetal disputations, and the manuscripts in which they survive, suggests direct links between the masters' academic work and the world beyond the schools. The article will therefore go on to examine the masters' involvement in the controversies over the privileges of the friars during the 1280s and their role in the struggles between Pope Boniface VIII, King Philip the Fair of France and the Colonna cardinals in the 1290s and 1300s.

In approaching the wider issues through this specific study, two notes of caution are necessary. First, the university of Paris enjoyed an exceptionally high status. During the twelfth century Paris became established as a leading centre of learning in Western Europe. By the early thirteenth century it was one of the first centres of scholarship to emerge with a coherent organization enjoying widely recognized rights and privileges. Moreover, it was for theology that the university of Paris was most renowned internationally. This article's conclusions may therefore mark the difference between the masters of theology at Paris and other scholars, rather than leading immediately to generalizations about medieval learning as a whole.

Secondly, conclusions drawn from a few decades need not apply to the whole medieval period, even with regard to Paris theologians. Indeed, the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries have been variously assessed in the long-term. The clash between Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair has been seen as a turning-point when the university had to choose between pope and king for the first time, the king replaced the pope as the dominant power over the university, and the university was increasingly composed of Frenchmen.² According to another view, however, a period of harmonious co-operation between the schools of Paris and the papacy lasted only to about 1215. It gradually broke down during

² G. Leff, *Paris and Oxford universities in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries* (New York: Wiley, 1968), 48–9.

the thirteenth century with the struggles over the privileges of the friars in the 1280s playing a prominent part. This period of disintegration and widespread discord ultimately led Pope John XXII in the 1320s to summon trusted theologians to the papal court at Avignon where he effectively established a central theological school which took over the functions of the university of Paris and other learned institutions.³ This interpretation presents the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries as a stage of potential independence for the Paris theologians rather than a point at which royal domination supplanted papal domination. Indeed yet another view stresses their continuing independence right through into the 1330s.⁴ Clearly there is good reason to consider the role of the masters of theology during the crucial period of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, but again easy generalizations will not automatically follow.

The quodlibetal disputation reveals much about the nature of intellectual activity within the faculty of theology at Paris. Its basic features were fully developed by the mid-thirteenth century and it continued to flourish until the 1330s.⁵ A quodlibetal disputation could only be held by a regent (or actively teaching) master of theology; it was his quodlibet. Quodlibets could only be held at or close to Christmas and Easter, but masters were not obliged to hold quodlibets and very few ever held them twice a year. That quodlibets could only be held at specific times of the year was an indication of their solemnity, a fundamental characteristic confirmed by the fact that other activities in the faculty were suspended whenever a quodlibet was held.

Each quodlibet consisted of two distinct sessions. The first session was the *disputatio*. It was a public occasion attended by an extremely varied audience which might even include people who were not members of the university. The audience had a crucial role to play because it dictated the subject matter of the disputation. Questions

³ R.W. Southern, 'The changing role of universities in medieval Europe', *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, lx (1987), 133–46.

⁴ S. Menache, 'La naissance d'une nouvelle source d'autorité: l'université de Paris', *Revue Historique*, cclxviii (1982), 305–27.

⁵ On quodlibetal disputations generally, see L.E. Boyle, 'The quodlibets of St. Thomas and pastoral care', *The Thomist*, xxxviii (1974), 232–56; P. Glorieux, *La littérature quodlibétique de 1260 à 1320*, 2 vols (Le Saulchoir, Kain: Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques, 1925; Paris: Vrin, 1935); P. Glorieux, 'L'enseignement au moyen âge: techniques et méthodes en usage à la faculté de théologie de Paris au XIIIe siècle', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, xxxv (1968), 128–34; J.F. Wippel, 'The quodlibetal question as a distinctive literary genre', *Les genres littéraires dans les sources théologiques et philosophiques médiévales: définition, critique et exploitation. Actes du colloque international de Louvain-la-Neuve 25–27 mai 1981* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut d'Etudes Médiévales, 1982), 67–84; J.F. Wippel, 'Quodlibetal questions, chiefly in theology faculties', *Les questions disputées et les questions quodlibétiques dans les facultés de théologie, de droit et de médecine* (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, xxxiv–xxxv; Turnhout: Brepols, 1985), 151–222.

could be asked by anyone, *a quolibet*, and they could be about anything, *de quolibet*; hence the name. At the first session these questions would be discussed and some sort of reply would be offered by a bachelor acting as a *respondens* or *responsalis*. The presiding master might or might not say very much. But at the second session, the *determinatio*, held within a few days, only the master spoke. He gave a definitive *solutio* or *determinatio* to each question raised at the first session.

Unlike much work in the schools, quodlibetal questions were characteristically not based on any one text. On the contrary, each question focused on a particular problem and it was then normal to look to a whole range of sources and to deploy arguments from all disciplines to solve the problem.⁶ So each question required the responding bachelor and the master to demonstrate the breadth of their knowledge and experience. The test was all the more severe because it was normal for many questions to be asked: fifteen to thirty were common and sometimes there were more. Furthermore, the questions could be totally unrelated. The variety and diversity of the questions asked at a single session were frequently enormous.

Essentially, the questions reflected the interests and preoccupations of the audience. This accounts for the sense of *actualité* so often identified in the quodlibets. Given the opportunity to ask a master about anything they wished, the audience naturally asked about what was controversial and topical, about what mattered to them. This sense of *actualité* was not confined to purely abstract and speculative questions of philosophy and theology. Indeed, it is a distinctive characteristic of quodlibets that many questions look beyond the schools, referring to contemporary events, and dealing with political and social issues at all levels of society, ranging from matters concerning pope and king to the business of everyday life. Sometimes questions tackled the principles involved directly. On other occasions the question consisted of a specific case (*casus*) to which principles had to be applied. References to contemporary events and problems were sometimes explicit, but often only a faint allusion was made. Such allusions were perfectly obvious to contemporaries, even if historians are left struggling today.

All these questions about human society were in a sense practical questions, cases of conscience, essentially concerned with what people should do. All aspects of human existence could be discussed, for in all fields of life sin could be committed and, therefore, problems of conscience arose. It was then the master's duty to advise. However theoretical the discussion, there was a persistent concern for the practical application of principle.

⁶ On the specific issue of the types of argument used in quodlibets, see J. Leclercq, 'Deux questions de Berthaud de Saint-Denis sur l'exemption fiscale du clergé', *Études d'histoire du droit canonique dédiées à Gabriel le Bras*, 2 vols (Paris: Sirey, 1965), i, 608.

But what significance should be attached to these questions about human society? Did the masters just comment on the world around them, and are quodlibetal disputations just to be understood as school exercises in which they made their comments? Or were they the occasion for determinations which were in some sense polemical and *engagé*, of importance beyond the schools even? Most historians have supposed that quodlibetal questions were a purely theoretical and essentially passive response to events and problems situated elsewhere.⁷ This limited assessment stems from attempts to gauge the significance of quodlibetal questions simply by studying the letter of the text. By examining the manuscripts in which they are preserved, however, it is possible to discover much more about the contexts in which they had their meaning, the attitudes which were held towards them, in short their true contemporary significance.

While the majority of manuscripts containing quodlibets were only intended for and used in the schools, and can only reveal how the quodlibet functioned in this context, some manuscripts were created for use outside the university. For example, one of the manuscripts left to the Sorbonne by Nicholas of Bar in 1310 contains a collection of about 170 quodlibetal questions determined by many masters and collected regularly in successive years from the mid-1280s to 1304.⁸ They all concern moral problems or the way in which human society should be organized. Nicholas of Bar had been a master of theology, but in 1286 he was named bishop of Mâcon. These questions were therefore disputed while he was bishop. As bishop of Mâcon, Nicholas obviously had someone make a collection of practical questions tackled in quodlibetal disputations each year. This shows not only that masters were required to answer questions about problems in human society, but that people outside the university wanted to know what they had to say and managed to find out.

Another example is a manuscript which contains texts dating from the 1280s and relating to the controversy over privileges granted

⁷ Early quodlibets dominated by practical questions and cases of conscience give Glorieux, *La littérature quodlibétique*, i, 55 'une impression de calme et de paix'. According to Leclercq, 'Deux questions de Berthaud de Saint-Denis', 607–8 the masters operated 'au niveau des idées' and he denies any polemical element in the practical questions: 'Précisément parce qu'elles sont déterminées par l'enseignement des principes, même si les problèmes à propos desquels on en traite sont d'actualité, les solutions que transmet cette littérature scolaire ne sont généralement pas de caractère polémique'. J.F. Wippel, 'The quodlibetal question', 82, will go no further than to remark that 'one can easily understand why a recent historical event could lead to the raising of a moral or legal or theological or philosophical question relating to the same . . .'; see also 'Quodlibetal questions', 192–3.

⁸ Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 15850. See Glorieux, *La littérature quodlibétique*, i, 230–1; P. Glorieux, 'Notices sur quelques théologiens de Paris de la fin du xiii^e siècle', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, iii (1928), 201–38.

to the friars.⁹ It includes copies of the official acts which lay at the heart of the conflict, sermons that were preached by protagonists on both sides in attempts to gain support, letters that were exchanged in the course of events, and material relating to embassies which the secular bishops sent to Rome. It was compiled by one of the bishops who led opposition to the friars as a sort of dossier of documents actually used by their party during the conflict. The polemical character of this material and the practical function it served are beyond doubt. It includes, however, questions concerning the issues at stake taken from the quodlibets of Henry of Ghent. Thus the determinations produced by Henry in the course of quodlibetal disputations were included in a dossier that existed because it fulfilled a polemical purpose. It follows that these magisterial acts made originally in the context of the schools were of use to the episcopal party in their struggle with the friars.

A letter contained within the same dossier demonstrates that the episcopal party were interested not just in the arguments a master might put forward, but also in the fact that these arguments were expressed by him in a solemn determination as part of a quodlibetal disputation. The letter was written in 1287 by William of Mâcon, bishop of Amiens, to the archbishop of Reims and in it William described what had happened in Paris that year:

All the doctors who have held quodlibetal disputations this year and to whom relevant questions have been put, namely master Henry of Ghent, master Godfrey of Fontaines, master Gervase, canon of Mont-Saint-Eloi, and master Nicholas Pressoir, have determined for us . . . We believe that they will give us their determinations **under seal**.¹⁰

William hoped to have the determinations which the masters had made in their quodlibetal disputations in writing and under seal. No quodlibet is known to survive in this form. But that the bishop merely conceived of this as a possibility indicates his awareness that quodlibets might have an impact beyond the schools.

Practical questions from quodlibets were also included in *summae* and manuals produced to assist in the work of confession. A

⁹ Paris, Bibl. Nat. lat. 3120. See P. Glorieux, 'Prélats français contre religieux mendiants. Autour de la bulle: "Ad fructus uberes" (1281-1290)', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise de France*, xi (1925), 310-11, n. 2; P. Glorieux, 'Un recueil polémique de Guillaume de Mâcon', *Studia Gratiana*, ii (1954), 621-42; L. Hödl, 'Theologiegeschichtliche Einführung', *Henrici de Gandavo tractatus super facto praelatorum et fratrum (Quodlibet XII, quaestio 31)*, ed. L. Hödl and M. Haverals (Leuven: University Press, 1989), x-xvi; R. Macken, *Bibliotheca manuscripta Henrici de Gandavo*, 2 vols (Leuven: University Press, 1979), i, 533-42; K. Schleyer, *Anfänge des Gallikanismus im 13. Jahrhundert; der Widerstand des französischen Klerus gegen die Privilegierung der Bettelorden* (Berlin: Ebering, 1937), 113-28.

¹⁰ Paris, Bibl. Nat. Lat. 3120, fo. 32v; *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, 4 vols, ed. H. Denifle and E. Chatelain (Paris: Delalain, 1889-97) (hereafter *Chartularium*), ii, no. 543 - my emphasis.

number of manualists seem to have searched quodlibets for practical advice. For example, John of Freiburg, who completed his *Summa confessorum* around 1297–98, incorporated questions taken from the quodlibets of Aquinas, Peter of Tarentaise and Peckham, although in the last-named case John thought he was still borrowing from Aquinas.¹¹ The Franciscan *Summa Astesana*, written in 1317, was another such work to include quodlibetal questions, this time those of Henry of Ghent.¹² This confirms that the masters' responses to questions asked in the schools about how human society ought to operate drew the attention of people beyond the schools and that they were actually made available to people in altogether different sections of society.

To sum up, these manuscripts clearly demonstrate that outside the schools there was considerable interest in quodlibetal questions, especially those which concerned the application of principle to human society, both as one type of magisterial expression among many and, more specifically, as formal determinations made in a solemn quodlibetal disputation. Furthermore, these manuscripts indicate that this interest was met, that determinations made orally at a solemn and unique occasion became physical objects that were transferred out of the schools to other contexts. They are material evidence that quodlibets mattered beyond the schools.

In a way this is obvious. But, if so, this has not been reflected in the way most historians have used quodlibets as evidence. Most historians have studied quodlibets in terms of the history of philosophy and theology defined in the narrowest possible way. They have been chiefly concerned to find out who said what, who said what when, and who said what first. The great thing about quodlibets has been the relative ease with which they can be dated, to become a framework in which other works can assume their place.¹³ Of course this means viewing the quodlibet purely as a technique used in the schools. References to events outside the schools simply make questions datable.¹⁴ Manuscripts that were made for use outside the schools are treated as if they were school manuscripts. But if manuscripts containing quodlibetal questions fulfilled functions beyond the schools, this suggests a more direct engagement between the masters as academic theologians and the world beyond the schools,

¹¹ L.E. Boyle, 'The *Summa confessorum* of John of Freiburg and the popularization of the moral teaching of St. Thomas and some of his contemporaries', *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274–1974: commemorative studies*, 2 vols, ed. A.A. Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), ii, 254–6; Boyle, 'The quodlibets of St. Thomas', 252–5.

¹² Boyle, 'The *Summa confessorum*', 262; Boyle, 'The quodlibets of St. Thomas', 253–4, n. 61.

¹³ Glorieux, *La littérature quodlibétique*, i, 69.

¹⁴ E.g. see P. Glorieux, 'Le quodlibet de Pierre de Tarantaise', *Recherches de Théologie Ancienne et Médiévale*, ix (1937), 240–1; Wippel, 'Quodlibetal questions', 192–4.

and a whole new set of questions needs to be asked. With this in mind, it is worth examining the masters' involvement in political struggles outside the schools.

There can be no doubt that the masters of theology at the university of Paris were heavily involved in the bitter struggles between the secular clergy and the mendicant friars for much of the thirteenth century and well into the fourteenth. They certainly played a prominent part in the renewed controversy sparked off by the bull *Ad fructus uberes*.¹⁵ This bull was issued by Pope Martin IV in December 1281 and permitted the friars to preach and hear confessions without any authorization from the local clergy.¹⁶ It therefore aroused the keen opposition of many of the French bishops who felt that the bull seriously diminished their authority.

The opposition to *Ad fructus uberes* now hinged on the 21st canon of the fourth Lateran Council, *Omnis utriusque sexus*, and on one of the last clauses of the bull. The canon *Omnis* had in effect required the faithful to confess once a year to their own parish priests. *Ad fructus uberes* specifically maintained this obligation. The opponents of the bull argued that since it upheld *Omnis*, every member of the church must still confess all his sins to his own parish priest each year. Anyone could now confess to a friar, but this confession had to be repeated to the parish priest. Of course this completely undermined the privilege which had been granted to the friars.¹⁷

The bull was not, however, published immediately and it does not seem to have been known in Paris until early December 1282.¹⁸ Before it became known, the friars anticipated the line of attack that would be taken against it and moved first to involve the masters of theology at Paris as a group, by persuading them to support collectively a position that denied the validity of the attack on the bull. It was presumably at their behest that in November 1282 Ranulphe of Homblières, the bishop of Paris and himself formerly a

¹⁵ For general accounts of the university's involvement in these struggles during the thirteenth century, see Y.M.-J. Congar, 'Aspects ecclésiologiques de la querelle entre mendiants et séculiers dans la seconde moitié du xiii^e siècle et le début du xiv^e', *Archives d'Histoire Doctrinale et Littéraire du Moyen Âge*, xxviii (1961), 35–151; D.L. Douie, *The conflict between the seculars and the mendicants at the university of Paris in the thirteenth century* (Aquinas Paper no. xxiii, 1954); P. Gratien, 'Ordres mendiants et clergé séculier à la fin de xiii^e siècle', *Études Franciscaines*, xxxvi (1924), 499–518; L. Hödl, 'Theologiegeschichtliche Einführung', vii–cxvii; A.G. Little, 'Measures taken by the prelates of France against the friars (c. A.D. 1289–90)', *Studi e Testi*, xxxix (1924), 49–66; G. Post, 'A petition relating to the bull *Ad fructus uberes* and the opposition of the French secular clergy in 1282', *Speculum*, xi (1936), 231–7; Schleyer, *Anfänge des Gallikanismus*. For accounts of the 1280s in particular, see also Glorieux, 'Prélats français', 309–31, 471–95.

¹⁶ *Chartularium*, i, no. 508.

¹⁷ Glorieux, 'Prélats français', 315–16.

¹⁸ Glorieux, 'Prélats français', 313–14, 318.

regent master of theology at the university, summoned fifteen masters of theology to a meeting. Not all the regent masters were called, but the group included masters from every category within the faculty. Two questions were put to them: 'whether someone who truly repents, confesses and is absolved by someone empowered to do so, is bound to confess the same sins again; and whether someone could be prevented from repeating his confession'. The masters replied in the negative to both questions and issued their response under seal.¹⁹

Attempts were then made to persuade other masters of theology to support the consultation. However, by this time the real significance of the questions posed seems to have become known and the attempt failed.²⁰ In spite of this, the consultation of November 1282 became a key event in the controversy. It had a significance far beyond the university. An authenticated copy (or *vidimus*) of the consultation, dated 1282, is to be found in the Archives du Nord amongst documents relating to the diocese of Cambrai.²¹ John Peckham had a similar copy transcribed into his Register of Letters in January 1285.²² According to the Chronicle of Brother Nicholas Glassberger, the bishop of Bamberg put his seal to another copy in 1287.²³ The views of the masters seem to have carried weight throughout the church. The French bishops themselves recognized the force of the consultation as they now sought to win support for their case within the university and ultimately to have the consultation retracted.

We know of the bishops' immediate response in December 1282 as a result of questions put to Henry of Ghent in the quodlibetal disputation he held at the end of the month and the answers he gave.²⁴ Two archbishops and eleven bishops addressed the faculties of theology and law. One of the archbishops put forward the interpretation of *Ad fructus uberes* which maintained that every member of the church was still bound to confess all his sins to his parish priest once a year. The faculties were asked to give their opinion on the matter. Henry tells us that the lawyers gave the prelates their unanimous support, but says nothing about the faculty of theology.

¹⁹ *Chartularium*, i, no. 510.

²⁰ Glorieux, 'Prélats français', 317–18.

²¹ Archives du Nord, 3G 418, pièce 8270. I owe this reference to Professor J.H. Denton.

²² *Registrum epistolarum fratris Johannis Peckham, archiepiscopi Cantuariensis*, 3 vols, ed. C.T. Martin (London: Longmans, 1882–85), iii, 878–82. This is a *vidimus* of a *vidimus* made by an 'officialis curiae Parisiensis' in 1284, which is itself a *vidimus* of an earlier *vidimus* also made by an 'officialis curiae Parisiensis' in 1282.

²³ *Chronica fratris Nicolai Glassberger*, in *Analecta Franciscana*, ii (1887), 98. The chronicle also records that a *vidimus* was made by an 'officialis Curiae Parisiensis' in 1286, from which the bishop made his *vidimus* in 1287.

²⁴ Quodlibet VII. 22–24; Henry of Ghent, *Quodlibeta*, 2 vols (Paris, 1518), i, fos. 273^v–287^v. For his account of events, see VII.24, *ibid.*, i, fo. 279^{r-v}. See also Glorieux, 'Prélats français', 318–20.

Probably the theologians, given the number of friars among them, were not all in agreement with the prelates. However, Henry himself argued at length in the bishops' favour.

In the next few years the French bishops were mainly concerned with attempts to obtain a further judgement in Rome.²⁵ In December 1286, however, Paris again became the centre of events. The bishops were clearly desperate to gain the support of the university and above all the faculty of theology. Moreover, they wanted this support in writing and under seal. To this end they called a series of assemblies. An account of events in Paris during December, possibly written by Godfrey of Fontaines, is worth examining in some detail.²⁶ According to this source, the prelates of the kingdom of France met at Paris and caused all the masters of all the faculties and all the bachelors and students to come to hear what they had to say. So all the masters and scholars, including the friars, met in the hall of the bishop on 7 December. Four archbishops and twenty bishops were present. The archbishop of Bourges, Simon of Beaulieu, then delivered a sermon which became a bitter attack on the friars and their claims with regard to hearing confession. The archbishop went on to say that they had often asked the friars, personally as well as through the king and other magnates, to stop interfering, but they continued to preach and hear confessions in every diocese, claiming that they had papal privileges on this matter. He said that they had now come to complain to the masters and scholars about the insolence of the friars. They had asked the friars to send their privileges to the Holy See in order that the pope might interpret them more clearly, but the friars had refused. And so, in order that those gathered might discuss and see what was granted by these privileges, they had decreed that they should be publicly read out. At this point, according to the account, someone else read out the privileges and then Innocent III's constitution *Omnis utriusque sexus*. The bishop of Amiens, William of Mâcon, then argued that the constitution was not derogated by the privileges and that the friars were not allowed to hear confessions or impose penances without special permission from the bishops and parish priests, or from the people. Apparently no friar spoke out against him and the bishop concluded by calling on the university to stand in the way of the injury caused by the friars.²⁷

However, the friars were not silent for long and this assembly set off a series of attacks and counter-attacks. On the two following

²⁵ Glorieux, 'Prélats français', 320–31.

²⁶ *Chartularium*, ii, no. 539.

²⁷ For details of Simon of Beaulieu's role in the controversy as a whole, see F. Lajard, 'Le cardinal Simon de Beaulieu', *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, xxi (1847), 20–40. For details of William of Mâcon's role, see B. Haureau, 'Guillaume de Mâcon, canoniste', *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, xxv (1869), 380–403.

days, according to the same account, sermons were preached by the friars in which they put their case and replied to the attacks upon them. Then, on 22 December, the bishops called another meeting.²⁸ A master of theology preached a sermon condemning those who did not obey their lords and prelates. Then the bishop of Amiens argued their case further, answering points made by the friars in their sermons. Finally, the bishop asked everyone, of whatever nation, to transcribe the privileges and send them to their own lands so that all might know what was really granted to the friars by them.

Evidently the French bishops were anxious to influence the views of the masters and to draw them more actively into the dispute. Their particular concern about the masters of theology and their desire to have the consultation of November 1282 retracted is revealed even more clearly in the letter written in 1287 by William of Mâcon to the archbishop of Reims which I have already mentioned.²⁹ William describes another meeting which took place in Paris in December 1286. The masters of theology, including friars, gathered in the chapel of the bishop of Paris. They were asked to explain and to say whether they held to be true in every case the general proposition to which certain masters of theology had applied their seals in November 1282. The masters gathered in 1286 replied that they held the proposition to be true except in certain cases and especially in that case to which *Ad fructus uberes* pertained. Moreover, those present who had sealed the proposition in 1282 said that the conclusion which the friars wanted could not be inferred from the general proposition, and that if they had known of the papal privilege, they would never have sealed that proposition so thoughtlessly. However, when they were asked to put this in writing, they said that they could not do this until they had consulted with the others who had sealed the original proposition. On the other hand, they would give a letter addressed to the pope, begging him to avoid the terrible danger which could arise out of dissension between the prelates and the friars, especially when the masters of the faculty of theology backed the prelates on this matter. Unfortunately for William of Mâcon, he did not yet have even this letter.

The French bishops were not, however, only interested in what the masters of theology might agree to do in special assemblies. They were also very much concerned about what individual masters might say in the course of their quodlibetal disputations. On the one hand, they did not wish any master to determine against them and they seem to have made an attempt to stop masters accepting

²⁸ See also *Chartularium*, ii, no. 543 for another account of this meeting by William of Mâcon himself.

²⁹ *Chartularium*, ii, no. 543.

anything that might be deemed a 'contentious question'.³⁰ And certainly William of Mâcon tells us that although questions were put to the friars concerning the need to repeat confessions, they all refused to accept them. On the other hand, the bishops seized on any determination in their favour. I have already referred to William of Mâcon's description of certain masters determining for the bishops in their quodlibets and William's hope that he would be able to bring these masters even more actively into the campaign against the friars by getting their determinations under seal.³¹

However, one of the leading representatives of the friars gave a different version of events when he preached at Orléans in January 1287. According to the Dominican master of theology, John of Saint-Benedict, another line of argument had also been maintained in Paris during December 1286, to the effect that no one could require confessions to be repeated. He did not say who put forward this point of view, but he said that he hoped soon to have it under seal. He also noted that the bishops had not yet obtained an official act from the masters of either theology or law to counter the consultation of 1282.³²

For a while, after the frantic activity of December 1286, the major events of the controversy took place elsewhere. Early in 1287 both William of Mâcon and John of Saint-Benedict preached before the masters and scholars of the university of Orléans.³³ The death of Pope Honorius IV in 1287 and the election of the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV in February 1288 created a new sense of urgency and the French bishops were at first mainly concerned with taking their case to Rome. In 1289, however, the bishops held a council in Paris at which Henry of Ghent gave the opening sermon. A surviving list of the ensuing anti-mendicant decrees says that these measures were taken after consultation with the masters of theology, the masters of

³⁰ Godfrey of Fontaines, Quodlibet IV.13; *Les quatre premiers quodlibets de Godefroid de Fontaines*, ed. M. de Wulf and A. Pelzer (Louvain: Institut supérieur de Philosophie de l'Université, 1904), 274–7. Godfrey was asked about a master of theology who was required to give a truthful answer to a question which he knew was necessary for salvation. Could the master deem the question contentious and a cause of scandal, and so refuse to make a determination? This was one of a series of quodlibetal questions about the circumstances in which questions could be refused which were prompted by the bishops' actions. Others asked in the same academic year were: Gervase of Mont-Saint-Eloi, Quodlibet V, q.55, ed. J. Leclercq, 'L'idéal du théologien au moyen âge. Textes inédits', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, xxi (1947), 134–5; Richard of Middleton, Quodlibet III.22, partially ed. *ibid.*, 133 (where it is incorrectly titled III.23), fully ed. *Quodlibeta doctoris eximii Ricardi de Mediavilla* (Brescia, 1591), 119.

³¹ See *Chartularium*, ii, no. 543.

³² Glorieux, 'Prélats français', 478–9.

³³ See *Chartularium*, ii, no. 543 for William of Mâcon's account. The sermons preached in Orléans in 1287 survive in Paris Bibl. Nat. lat. 3120, fos. 35^{ra}–46^{va}; see Hödl, 'Theologieggeschichtliche Einführung', xii; Schleyer, *Anfänge des Gallikanismus*, 119–20.

law and other learned men.³⁴ Furthermore, it was to Paris that Pope Nicholas IV sent two legates, Benedict Gaetani and Gerard of Parma, to settle the question of the friars' privileges in his name.

What happened at the council of Paris in 1290 is described in an anonymous account which very much favours the papal legates and the friars.³⁵ The legates summoned a meeting of prelates in Paris on 11 November 1290. The bishop of Amiens spoke, attacking the privilege granted to the friars with regard to hearing confessions. He noted that several masters had determined against this privilege and gave their reasons. The papal legates said nothing.

The council met again on 29 November in the church of Sainte-Geneviève. William of Mâcon called on Benedict Gaetani to revoke the friars' privilege as he had received papal authority to do. The future Pope Boniface VIII then spoke. He mocked William of Mâcon for having laboured so long at Rome to no effect. Then he declared that he had no power to revoke the privilege, but only to confirm it, which he did. After this he launched into an attack on the masters of Paris:

I wish that all the Paris masters were here, whose foolishness now becomes clear, and who have rashly and impiously presumed to interpret the said privilege, thinking that the Roman curia gave it without deliberation. They really ought to know that the Roman curia has feet made of lead and not feathers. For these masters imagine that we consider them learned whereas we think them more stupid than the stupid because they have filled not only Paris but the whole world with their noxious doctrine. Therefore by the authority specially delegated to us for this purpose, we revoke and annul whatever attacks have been made by anyone against the said privilege. Otherwise every privilege granted by the apostolic see could be annulled by the subtleties of the masters.

This assessment of the worth and functions of the masters of theology was unacceptable to Henry of Ghent. He called the masters together and persuaded them to oppose the cardinals, wondering why they could not discuss the privilege when they were permitted to discuss the gospel. The cardinals responded by suspending Henry from lecturing. The next day many masters of theology accompanied by masters from the other faculties came to appeal on Henry's behalf. Cardinal Benedict Gaetani delivered yet another bitter attack on the masters of Paris, forbidding them to

³⁴ The proposals put by the bishops to Nicholas IV and the decrees of 1289 survive in a single document, ed. Little, 'Measures', 50–6, with comments 56–63. Henry of Ghent's opening sermon is Schleyer (ed.), *Anfänge des Gallikanismus*, 141–50. See also J. Marrone, 'The absolute and the ordained powers of the pope: an unedited text of Henry of Ghent', *Mediaeval Studies*, xxxvi (1974), 14, n. 31.

³⁵ H. Finke (ed.), 'Das Pariser Nationalkonzil vom Jahre 1290. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Bonifaz VIII. und der Pariser Universität,' *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Alterthumskunde und für Kirchengeschichte*, (Rome, 1895), 178–82 and again *Aus den Tagen Bonifaz VIII* (Münster i. W.: Aschendorff'sche Buchhandlung, 1902), Quellen, iii–vii. See also Glorieux, 'Prélats français', 490–5.

consider the friars' privilege again and issuing a violent condemnation of the masters. According to the anonymous account, questions were again asked about the friars' privilege at the quodlibetal disputations which followed the council, but no one accepted them. The account describes how William of Mâcon retired from Paris in confusion and claims that this marked the end of the controversy stirred up by the bull *Ad fructus uberes*. Of course it did not and indeed, as pope, Benedict Gaetani himself made a much more even-handed attempt to resolve the conflict with the bull *Super cathedram* in 1300.³⁶

But without pursuing the controversy further, it is now possible to be more specific about how the masters of theology were involved, both as individuals and collectively. Obviously they were able to provide the protagonists with a reasoned case. But their involvement was not only at this purely intellectual level and they were not simply consulted as a source of useful arguments. What counted was not just the validity of the arguments, but also the fact that the masters of theology at Paris had expounded them. In other words, the masters had an authority which mattered beyond the university. Both the friars and the French bishops sought to employ not only the masters' ideas, but their authority as well. On the one hand, the masters had a collective authority which the friars were first to exploit in November 1282 and of which the bishops sought to make use thereafter at the many assemblies they called in Paris. On the other hand, individual masters had an authority which derived from their status and, as a result, quodlibetal disputations were considered solemn acts just like the consultations. Indeed, both consultations and disputations could be put under seal and thus translated into physical objects of significance outside the university. It was primarily this assessment of the masters' authority that Benedict Gaetani condemned in 1290, rather than specific arguments.

Of course the masters' wider connections were also a recognized factor. The anxiety of both the friars and the bishops to win support in the university and their certainty that the masters' authority would make an impact outside the university can be explained partly in terms of their view of the place which the university and the masters had in the French church. The masters and scholars of the university came from far and wide, and they could convey both information and interpretations of that

³⁶ Clementinarum Lib. III, tit. 7, c. 2; *Corpus iuris canonici*, 2 vols, ed. A. Friedberg, (Leipzig, 1879–81), ii, cols. 1162–1164. See also T.S.R. Boase, *Boniface VIII* (London: Constable, 1933), 190–3; Douie, *The conflict between the seculars and the mendicants*, 4, 29–30; Little, 'Measures', 63–4. Much resented by the friars, *Super cathedram* was withdrawn by Benedict XI in 1304 before being reimposed by Clement V at the Council of Vienne (1311–12); see Gratien, 'Ordres mendiants et clergé séculier', 511–18.

information back to the churches and communities from which they had come. As we have seen, on 22 December 1286 William of Mâcon asked the assembled members of the university to send transcriptions of the friars' privileges to their own lands, presumably accompanied by the 'correct' interpretation. To win support at the university of Paris was thus to influence the clergy all over France and indeed internationally.³⁷

Furthermore, it was not only a question of where the masters came from; where they would go was also very much to the point. Many masters went on to hold important ecclesiastical posts and the secular bishops clearly expected the secular masters to perceive the interests of the diocesan clergy as their own. On 7 December 1286, Simon of Beaulieu, the archbishop of Bourges, explained that the bishops had come to complain to the university 'because what we are, you will be. I believe that there is not a prelate among us today who was not educated at this university.'³⁸ It is worth remembering that four archbishops and twenty bishops were present at the time. To win support at Paris was thus to influence the prelates of the future as well as those of the present.

All this is broadly relevant to our understanding of the way in which the masters responded to and were involved in the struggles between Boniface VIII, Philip the Fair, and the Colonna cardinals. But there are two specific points to be made about the masters' involvement in the controversies of the 1280s which are vital for our understanding of their involvement in the affairs of the 1290s and 1300s.

The first point concerns the ideas about the nature of the church which the masters of theology put forward during the 1280s in response to the controversy over the friars' privileges. The secular clergy felt that their status was being challenged and they questioned the pope's authority to grant privileges to the friars at their expense. Those secular masters who supported the French clergy were led to address the fundamental issues of papal sovereignty and limitations on papal power.³⁹ Did the pope have the right to diminish the bishops' authority? This depended on issues such as whether the bishops derived their power directly from God or through the pope. Thus, to give just one example, in his quodlibetal disputation of 1286 Gervase of Mont-Saint-Eloi was asked: 'Whether the authority to bind and loose is derived by the lesser prelates from the pope, so that all their authority comes from the

³⁷ The document ed. Little, 'Measures', 50–6 containing the French bishops' proposals to Nicholas IV and the decrees of the council they held in Paris in 1289 survives in England. Little, *ibid.*, 64 suggests that this should be understood as a continuation of the 'policy of propaganda' urged in 1286.

³⁸ *Chartularium*, ii, no. 539.

³⁹ See Marrone, 'The absolute and the ordained powers', 15.

pope.⁴⁰ Gervase came down firmly on the side of the secular clergy. Of course he recognized the unique position of the pope and his special authority. Peter had received certain powers for himself alone and they were derived from Peter by the pope. So the pope could make decisions where Christ had made none or had not expressed himself, or where Christ's words needed interpretation. He could also punish prelates and even depose them. However, Gervase completely rejected the idea that bishops owed their authority to the pope. Peter had received certain powers on behalf of the church, not so that he might confer them, but so that he might ensure their proper execution. Furthermore, it had to be remembered that Christ gave powers to the apostles before he gave the primacy to Peter, and the bishops were the direct successors of the apostles. Although the pope had plenitude of power (*plena potestas*), he did not have the power to go against what Christ had done, he could not take power away from those to whom Christ had given it, and he could not contradict Christ's express statements. It was not therefore for the pope to change without cause what had been firmly established by Christ. The pope's powers were limited and his special authority was confined to certain areas.

The secular masters thus elaborated a conception of the church which maintained the position of the bishops in the face of papal authority.⁴¹ This must not be forgotten in any analysis of the role of the masters in the disputes between Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII. Many masters of theology at the university of Paris had already committed themselves to certain views of papal authority and particular interpretations of specific texts. Part, at least, of the French clergy had set itself against some of the papal claims to absolute authority. It must be remembered that Boniface VIII's pronouncements had implications not only for the relationship between pope and king, but also for the relationship between clergy and pope. The masters and the French clergy were perhaps as concerned about the latter as the former.

This continuity between the controversies of the 1280s and the disputes of the 1290s and 1300s extends to the individuals involved, and this is the second point that must be made. Those masters who had been in Paris during the years preceding the disputes between Philip the Fair and Boniface VIII had not only discussed the nature of the church and the pope's authority in great detail, they had also clashed bitterly with the future Pope Boniface VIII at the council of

⁴⁰ Quodlibet I.80; B.G. Guyot (ed.) as an appendix to Congar, 'Aspects ecclésiologiques', 159–61. See also *ibid.*, 70, 150, n. 389.

⁴¹ For detailed analysis of the views of the secular masters, see Congar, 'Aspects ecclésiologiques', 52–88. For his general comments on the limiting of papal power, see *ibid.*, 52–3, 64. See Marrone, 'The absolute and the ordained powers', 7–27, for Henry of Ghent's unique contribution, and 21 for Marrone's comments on the limiting of papal power.

Paris in 1290. Benedict Gaetani had challenged their worth, their functions and, above all, their authority. His version of papal supremacy had severely limited what they might debate and had humiliated them. This was not likely to be forgotten.⁴²

In the struggles involving Boniface VIII, Philip the Fair, and the Colonna cardinals, the cardinals appear to have been the first to refer to the masters of theology at Paris as a group and to attempt to use their collective authority against the pope. During the first half of 1297 they seem to have sought a formal consultation with the masters concerning the question of whether or not a pope had the power to renounce the papacy. This was of course a direct reference to the renunciation of Pope Celestine V in December 1294 and was in effect a question about the legitimacy of Boniface VIII's election which had followed Celestine's renunciation.

The Colonna cardinals were not, however, as successful in winning support at the university of Paris as they might have wished. They were not granted a full consultation backing their views, although they may have obtained some sort of document under seal of which the text does not survive.⁴³ The chief evidence for some sort of consultation and for support given to the cardinals by the masters of Paris comes from depositions made during proceedings against Boniface VIII held at Avignon in 1311.⁴⁴ Peter Colonna and William, bishop of Bayeux, claimed that the masters disputed the question of the legitimacy of Boniface's papacy, that they decided against him, and that their views were communicated to the king and used in the campaign against Boniface. Their depositions also suggested that the masters' determination made an impact. According to Peter Colonna, Boniface proceeded against the Colonna cardinals in part as a response to the determination, as well

⁴² See the comments of H.-X. Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile sous Philippe le Bel et la genèse des théories conciliaires', *Revue des Questions Historiques*, lxxxix, n.s. xxxv (1911), 35; L. Delisle, 'Das Pariser Nationalkonzil vom Jahre 1290. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Bonifaz VIII und der Pariser Universität', (a review of Finke, 'Das Pariser Nationalkonzil'), *Journal des Savants*, (1895), 243; Douie, *The conflict between the seculars and the mendicants*, 3.

⁴³ *Chartularium*, ii, no. 604. See also Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile', 35–7; G. Digard, *Philippe le Bel et le saint-siège de 1285 à 1304*, 2 vols (Paris: Sirey, 1936), i, 313–14; J. Leclercq, 'La renonciation de Célestin V et l'opinion théologique en France du vivant de Boniface VIII', *Revue d'Histoire de l'Eglise de France*, xxv (1939), 189.

⁴⁴ The depositions were first edited by C. Höfler, 'Rückblick auf P. Bonifacius VIII. und die Literatur seiner Geschichte . . .', *Abhandlungen der historischen Classe der koeniglich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, iii (part 3) (1843), 45–84 from Codex Barberini XXXIII, 75. This is, however, a later manuscript, incorrect in many respects. The depositions were then partly edited by H. Denifle, 'Die Denkschriften der Colonna gegen Bonifaz VIII. und der Cardinäle gegen die Colonna', *Archiv für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, v (1889), 497–500 and fully by L. Mohler, *Die Kardinäle Jakob und Peter Colonna*, (Paderborn: Görres-Gesellschaft, 1914), 251–77 from Arch. Vat. AA Arm.C.641. For other evidence suggesting determinations in the cardinals' favour, see Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile', 36, n. 1.

as attacking those who had made it. Moreover, he claimed that the Colonna cardinals found the masters' support necessary, along with that of the king, in order to carry on their struggle, and Philip the Fair had to act above all after the masters had determined against Boniface and he had obtained their determination under seal. The bishop of Bayeux asserted that the attacks on Boniface were generally believed because the masters' conclusions were known. Thus the depositions suggest that the masters influenced the pope, the king, the cardinals, and a wider public, presumably in Paris.

The manner in which the Colonna cardinals tried to use the authority of the masters in 1311 is significant in itself. Plainly they believed that the masters' views could have great influence and were anxious to make it seem that they were backed by the masters, even if this were not the case. However, the depositions of 1311 are unquestionably misleading.⁴⁵ Far more significance should perhaps be attached to what we know specific masters said or wrote, and to the manner in which this seems to have affected the policy of both the Colonna cardinals and the French royal government.

A number of leading Parisian theologians declared their views on the question of papal renunciation. They did so in various forms, both within a strictly university context and outside. As early as 14 September 1295, the Franciscan Peter-John Olivi wrote a letter from Narbonne, in which he refuted the objections of papal renunciation that had been put forward by Conrad of Offida, a spiritual Franciscan.⁴⁶ In the same year Godfrey of Fontaines held a quodlibetal disputation during which he tackled the question: 'whether prelates can freely renounce their status and dignity'.⁴⁷ He too confirmed the legitimacy of papal renunciation. In the course of another quodlibetal disputation the following year, Peter of Auvergne considered 'whether the pope can give up or renounce his office in any case', and concluded that the pope could indeed renounce the papacy in certain cases.⁴⁸ In July 1297 Nicholas of

⁴⁵ No master of theology is known to have sealed a consultation. Peter Colonna named two friars, but they were bachelors rather than masters in the faculty of theology. It would seem that any consultation can only have been sealed by masters of arts and bachelors in theology. See *Chartularium*, ii, no. 604; Digard, *Philippe le Bel*, i, 313–14; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 189. J.R. Eastman, *Papal abdication in later medieval thought* (Lewiston, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), 60–2 seems to accept the depositions of 1311 uncritically.

⁴⁶ L. Olier, 'Discussiones Petri Iohannis Olivi de renuntiatione papae Coelestini V. Quaestio et epistola', *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum*, xi (1918), 333–5 and 366–73 for edition of text. See also Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 49, 100; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 185.

⁴⁷ Quodlibet XII.4; *Les quodlibets onze et douze de Godefroid de Fontaines*, ed. J. Hoffmans (Louvain: L'Institut supérieur de Philosophie, 1932), 96–100. See also Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 54–8; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 186.

⁴⁸ Quodlibet I.15; ed. Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 137–41 from Paris, Bibl. Nat. Lat. 15841, fo. 7^{va}–vb. See Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 186–8 for other manuscript references and analysis of the text. See also Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 58–60.

Nonancour was among the cardinals who insisted on the validity of Celestine V's renunciation⁴⁹ and he subsequently preached in the same vein.⁵⁰ During the same year Olivi developed his argument in favour of the pope's power to renounce the papacy.⁵¹ Also in 1297, Giles of Rome wrote his treatise *De renunciatione papae*, justifying Celestine V's renunciation.⁵² A few years later, John of Paris, in his treatise *De potestate regia et papali*, borrowed heavily from Giles of Rome and Godfrey of Fontaines also to justify papal renunciation.⁵³

Six leading masters had thus put forward their views. They included three secular masters (Godfrey of Fontaines, Peter of Auvergne and Nicholas of Nonancour), a Franciscan (Peter-John Olivi), an Augustinian (Giles of Rome), and a Dominican (John of Paris). They were different in many ways and represented distinct groups within the faculty. Nevertheless they had all recognized Celestine V's renunciation as licit. So, far from supporting the attacks against Boniface VIII on the grounds that Celestine V could not have renounced the papacy, the leading masters of theology seem to have been unanimous in their support for Boniface's legitimacy as pope.

This concensus among the masters seems to have had an impact on the line taken by the Colonna cardinals and, above all, by the French royal government. The illegitimacy of Boniface's election ceased to be their main charge, and when they raised the matter of Celestine's renunciation it was as often to reproach Boniface for selfishly pushing Celestine in this direction as it was to deny the legitimacy of the renunciation itself. On occasion the royal government even seemed to accept the legitimacy of the renunciation. It seems very likely that it was the masters' unanimity which brought this about if we consider precisely how the government and the

⁴⁹ Ed. Denifle, 'Die Denkschriften der Colonna', 524–9. See also Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile', 35; Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 66; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 189.

⁵⁰ Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 69–70.

⁵¹ Olier, 'Discussiones Petri Iohannis Olivi', 329–33 and 340–66 for edition of text. See also Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 39–51, 99–100 who dates this *quaestio* to 1295; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 189–90.

⁵² *Bibliotheca maxima pontificia*, 21 vols, ed. J.T. Rocaberti, (Rome, 1690–99), ii, 1–64. See also J.R. Eastman, 'Giles of Rome and his use of St. Augustine in defense of papal abdication', *Augustiniana*, xxxviii (1988), 129–39; J.R. Eastman, 'Giles of Rome and Celestine V: the franciscan revolution and the theology of abdication', *The Catholic Historical Review*, lxxvi (1990), 195–211; Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 70–7; P. Herde, 'Election and abdication of the pope: practice and doctrine in the thirteenth century', *Monumenta iuris canonici*, series C: subsidia, vii (1985), 433–6; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 190.

⁵³ *De potestate regia et papali*, chs. 22–25; J. Leclercq (ed.), *Jean de Paris et l'ecclésiologie du XIII^e siècle* (Paris: Vrin, 1942), 248–60. See also Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 77–80; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 190–1. For John's use of Giles of Rome and Godfrey of Fontaines in this section, see also Eastman, 'Giles of Rome and Celestine V', 204–5; Leclercq, *Jean de Paris*, 36, 130; B. Tierney, *Foundations of the conciliar theory* (Cambridge: University Press, 1955), 174.

cardinals changed their approach.⁵⁴ For the government and the Colonna cardinals did not reject the masters because they had disagreed with them, nor did they try to force the masters into line. On the contrary, they continued to seek the support of the masters and to try to involve them in action against Boniface whenever they could. Moreover, in altering the emphasis of their attack on Boniface, they stressed ideas and arguments similar to ones which masters of theology at Paris had already put forward during the preceding years. This was the case with regard to two distinct lines of attack.

First, the Colonna cardinals and the French royal government set about attacking Boniface VIII's government of the church, quite apart from the question of the legitimacy of his election. In so doing they expressed views on the nature of the church and took issue with those which they regarded as implicit in Boniface's actions and to which he himself gave expression on several occasions. As early as June 1297, perhaps recognizing their failure to convince the masters that Celestine V had not been entitled to renounce the papacy, the cardinals wrote directly to the chancellor and college of masters and scholars at the university of Paris, appealing for their support against Boniface VIII.⁵⁵ This was an appeal based on opposition to Boniface's conception of the church and what this implied in practical terms. They did not present the university with a long set of arguments to convince them that a pope could not renounce the papacy, concluding that Boniface's election was invalid. Of course they took this view, and also condemned Boniface both for pushing Celestine into renunciation and then for his treatment of Celestine afterwards. Most significantly, however, they attacked Boniface's government of the church at great length, making it clear that their criticisms would have applied even if he had been a legitimate pope.

According to the Colonna cardinals, Boniface VIII summoned prelates simply to extort money from them. He also interfered in elections and transferred archbishops, bishops and abbots from church to church for no good reason. He did this partly to ensure that when the legitimacy of his papacy was called into question, no one would dare speak against him for fear of their future, and partly to make money. Furthermore, he took no account of others who

⁵⁴ See the comments of Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 191–2. See especially 191, n. 27 for evidence that the royal government was occasionally prepared to concede the legitimacy of Boniface's election. However, Leclercq goes too far in suggesting that this was always the case. For example, at the assembly held at the Louvre on 12 March 1303, Nogaret continued to accuse Boniface of wrongful election; see *Documents relatifs aux états généraux et assemblées réunis sous Philippe le Bel*, ed. G. Picot (Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire de France; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1901), document xiii, 28–34. Again at the much larger assembly at the Louvre on 13 and 14 June 1303, Plaisians attacked Boniface's legitimacy as pope in the same vein; see *ibid.*, document xiv, 34–53, esp. 44–5.

⁵⁵ *Chartularium*, ii, no. 604a and, for full text, Denifle, 'Die Denkschriften der Colonna', 519–24. See also Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile', 32–5; Digard, *Philippe le Bel*, i, 331–4.

had a role to play in the government of the church. It was customary even for a true pope to seek the advice of the cardinals in difficult matters and to follow their opinions, indeed he was bound to do so. Boniface, however, did not ask the advice of the cardinals or wait for their agreement. Moreover, he now attacked them without respect for proper procedure. In fact cases concerning the status of cardinals could only be decided in a council. The cardinals had a clear role to play which gave them a position independent of the pope and with responsibilities to limit and check him if he acted reprehensibly. It was impossible for them to fulfil this role if the pope claimed too much for his own will, dressing it up as plenitude of power (*plena potestas*). Boniface's arbitrary government endangered the church.

Clearly the Colonna cardinals' attack on Boniface VIII's government would appeal to the French clergy,⁵⁶ and indeed almost identical letters were sent to numerous prelates.⁵⁷ However, the cardinals were also making a much more specific appeal to certain groups within and outside the university. For in attacking Boniface's government, they put forward views about the nature of the church which had much in common with the conception of the church elaborated in the 1280s by certain masters of theology at Paris in association with the French bishops led by William of Mâcon. As we have seen, the masters and bishops had argued that the pope was not the only member of the church with powers derived directly from God; the bishops had responsibilities which they did not owe to the pope and therefore enjoyed a position in the church which was in certain respects independent of the pope. Now the Colonna cardinals argued that Boniface was failing to respect the independence of the prelates when he interfered in elections and moved them from church to church. Moreover, they argued that the cardinals in particular had a position independent of the pope and that Boniface was preventing them from carrying out the duties which this position gave them. The letter was clearly designed to appeal to the masters and bishops who had opposed the friars.

That the cardinals should have sent the letter both to the university and to the prelates indicates their awareness that elements within the university were closely associated with the French bishops and that they were best tackled together. The letter also demonstrates that the nature of the church was widely perceived as being the fundamental issue at stake. This was true both in the 1280s and in the 1290s and 1300s, both within the schools of Paris and amongst the French clergy. For the masters of Paris and the French clergy, the controversy over the privileges of the friars and the

⁵⁶ Digard, *Philippe le Bel*, i, 332.

⁵⁷ See Denifle, 'Die Denkschriften der Colonna', 519, n. 1 and 523, n. 2 and n. 3 for textual variations in letters sent to prelates.

disputes involving Boniface VIII, the Colonna cardinals, and Philip the Fair were not distinct problems. Views expressed in the 1280s in response to *Ad fructus uberes* were of relevance when the government of Boniface VIII was challenged. The cardinals had failed to convince the masters that Boniface's election was illegitimate, and indeed an impressive consensus emerged against them. So now they picked up an issue on which many masters had already taken a stand, and a stand against Benedict Gaetani in person at that.

Attacks on Boniface VIII's government and disputes about the nature of the church were essentially concerned with the nature of papal office. The Colonna cardinals and the French royal government were, however, even more energetic in their attacks on Boniface's person. Initially they had made appeals to a general council based on the charge that Boniface's election had been invalid. When this approach failed to gain acceptance, they continued their appeals to a council on the grounds that Boniface was guilty of many terrible crimes, above all, heresy.⁵⁸

The idea that the pope could be deposed in the case of heresy rested on a long tradition.⁵⁹ But, significantly, this tradition had just been given fresh expression and in some cases developed further by the very masters who had defended the pope's right to renounce the papacy and in the course of the very disputations, letters, and treatises where they had put forward their arguments. Their discussions of the circumstances in which a pope might properly renounce the papacy had led them to define when he might feel obliged to resign and when he might even be deposed.

Even masters who set most store by papal authority admitted that a pope could be deposed in the case of heresy. Thus, in 1295, Olivi began his defence of the pope's right to renounce the papacy by noting that according to tradition a pope who fell into manifest heresy could be deposed, his point being that a pope could cease to possess papal powers.⁶⁰ He developed this approach further in his subsequent work.⁶¹ The views of Giles of Rome are harder to pin down, but in his treatise *De renunciatione papae*, he argued that a

⁵⁸ H.-X. Arquillière, 'L'origine des théories conciliaires', *Séances et Travaux de l'Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, clxxv, n.s. lxxv (1911), 577; Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile', 40–8; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 192.

⁵⁹ Arquillière, 'L'origine des théories conciliaires', 580–3; Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile', 51–3; O. Gierke, *Political theories of the middle ages* (Cambridge: University Press, 1900), 50, 154, n. 176; V. Martin, 'Comment s'est formée la doctrine de la supériorité du concile sur le pape', *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, xvii (1937), 124–9; J.F. v. Schulte, *Die Stellung der Concilien, Päpste und Bischöfe*, (Prague, 1871), 253–69 (second sequence of pagination); Tierney, *Foundations of the conciliar theory*, 56–67; B. Tierney, 'Pope and council: some new decretist texts', *Mediaeval Studies*, xix (1957), 197–218.

⁶⁰ Oliger, 'Discussiones Petri Iohannis Olivi', 366–73, esp. 367. See also Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 185; Martin, 'Comment s'est formée', 129–30.

⁶¹ Oliger, 'Discussiones Petri Iohannis Olivi', 353, 356–8. See also Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile', 53; Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 42–4.

manifestly heretical pope ceased to be pope in losing his faith. While Giles clearly resisted the conclusion that such a pope could be deposed against his will, certain passages taken in isolation are plainly open to this interpretation and it is implicit in arguments which he declined to follow through.⁶²

Godfrey of Fontaines, in his quodlibet of 1295, introduced a new approach concerning the 'final cause'. He argued with regard to any prelate that as he held his office for the good of the people, if he seemed to be unfit or unable to work to this end, he was not only able but actually bound to renounce his office. Godfrey went on to consider the specific case of the pope. Even he could be deposed 'because of crimes', the crimes of an incorrigible pope who scandalized the church being equivalent to heresy. Such a pope, however, could only be deposed by a council.⁶³

In 1296 Peter of Auvergne refined the argument concerning the 'final cause'. Characteristically, he quoted Aristotle, according to whom every being was ordered to a particular function. This was true of the pope. The function specific to the pope was the care of the faithful and their religious improvement. However, a pope might fail because of his own lack of learning, or because of physical infirmity leading to weakness of spirit, or because of the ill will of the people. If the pope regarded himself as powerless to care for the faithful and to be useful to them, he must give up his place to another who could perform the function.⁶⁴

John of Paris went furthest of all. In his treatise *De potestate regia et papali*, he specifically rejected the idea that the pope could only be deposed in the case of heresy. He also repeated the argument concerning the 'final cause' and linked it directly to the deposition of a pope for many crimes, not only heresy. A pope found to be unfit to fulfil his function was not only obliged to resign, but should be deposed. For the deposition of a pope, John considered that a general council would be most appropriate, but that the college of cardinals would suffice. Moreover, if a pope found wanting on grounds of personal defect were obstinate and violent, the secular power could assist in his removal.⁶⁵

⁶² Historians have interpreted Giles very differently. According to Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 190 and *Jean de Paris*, 130, Giles believed that a pope could be deposed in the case of manifest heresy. Tierney, *Foundations of the conciliar theory*, 161, 174 sees this as implicit in Giles' work. However, Eastman, 'Giles of Rome and Celestine V', 203–7 denies that Giles envisaged anything more than 'self-deposition' even in this case.

⁶³ Quodlibet XII.4; *Les quodlibets onze et douze*, 96–100. See also Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 56–8; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 186.

⁶⁴ Quodlibet I.15; ed. Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 137–41. See also Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 58–9; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 186–8.

⁶⁵ *De potestate regia et papali*, chs. 22–25; ed. Leclercq, *Jean de Paris*, 248–60. See also Eastman, 'Giles of Rome and Celestine V', 204–5; Eastman, *Papal abdication*, 77–80; Leclercq, 'La renonciation', 190–1; Martin, 'Comment s'est formée', 128–9; Tierney, *Foundations of the conciliar theory*, 171–7.

Thus, in denying the validity of those attacks on Boniface which were based on the supposed illegitimacy of his election, the masters had themselves indicated a different line of attack which they would find theoretically acceptable. Certain types of accusation against the person of a pope were admissible in principle. Arguably a pope could be deposed for a great many crimes or if he were found simply to be unfit to fulfil his function as a pope. But the overwhelming consensus was that a pope could be deposed in the case of heresy. On this an appeal to a general council could most certainly be based.

This is not to suggest that the masters intended that Boniface should be accused of heresy and other crimes, and certainly not that they recommended this procedure to the king. Nevertheless, it remains true that the king and the Colonna cardinals had relegated charges rejected by the masters of theology at Paris to second place, and they had given prominence to those which the masters had admitted to be theoretically possible. The masters were certainly not, therefore, passive victims, simply used by Philip the Fair to legitimize his policy as a matter of course. On the contrary, there is every reason to suppose that if the king wanted their support, he had to take note of their views and that they thus constituted a factor in shaping royal policy.

Certainly it is not surprising to discover the authority of the masters and the university as a whole being quoted in attacks on Boniface VIII, nor to find their involvement being sought and obtained. It became Philip the Fair's main object to have Boniface VIII deposed as a heretic by a general council, and to this end he summoned a great assembly to the Louvre on 13 and 14 June 1303. Those present included not only prelates, barons and representatives of the clergy and towns, but also the masters of theology and the professors of canon and civil law.⁶⁶ At the assembly, Boniface VIII was charged with terrible crimes, especially heresy.⁶⁷ The king was asked to see to the calling of a general council. Finally the king consented to the request and called on the prelates to back the appeal. Five archbishops, twenty-one bishops, and ten abbots declared their support.

The representatives of the university present did not formally adhere to the appeal on that occasion. A few days later, however, masters and students, apparently a majority of the faculties of the university, were called before the king. An account of the assembly held on 13 and 14 June was read out to them. The result was an act sealed by the university, formally adhering to the king's appeal.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ *Chronique latine de Guillaume de Nangis*, 2 vols, ed. H. Geraud, (Paris: Renouard, 1843), i, 335–6.

⁶⁷ For details of the proceedings, see *Documents relatifs aux états généraux et assemblées*, document xiv, 34–53; Digard, *Philippe le Bel*, ii, 165–70. See also *Chartularium*, ii, no. 634.

⁶⁸ *Chartularium*, ii, no. 634. See also Digard, *Philippe le Bel*, ii, 171.

While it should not be supposed that the entire university backed the king,⁶⁹ the significance of this adhesion and the way in which the university's authority could now be wielded was apparent within days. On 24 June a popular assembly was held in the garden of the royal palace.⁷⁰ Berthaud of Saint-Denys, formerly a regent master of theology at Paris and now bishop of Orléans, opened proceedings by preaching a sermon. At the end, John of Montigny, a bourgeois of Paris and one of the king's main officers of justice,⁷¹ urged those present to back the appeal: 'We wish you to know that the chapter of Paris and all the chapters of the kingdom of France, and the **university of Paris**, are in agreement . . .'.⁷²

This was by no means the only occasion on which the university's authority was quoted, and it was thought likely to impress not only the clergy and laity gathered in Paris. Letters which sought adhesions to the appeal throughout France recalled that it was being made, among others, 'through the university of Paris and the masters of theology . . .'.⁷³ In December 1310, William of Nogaret and William of Plaisians reminded Pope Clement V that the masters of theology and the rest of the university of Paris had adhered to the appeal and they wondered: 'Who of sane mind could possibly suppose that the university of Paris . . . would have acted but for the defence and stability of the faith?'⁷⁴ Able to claim the support of the university and finding it expedient to quote its collective authority, Nogaret and Plaisians thus put forward a view diametrically opposed to that expressed by Benedict Gaetani in 1290.

Such views were expressed because disputations within the university, especially quodlibetal disputations, mattered beyond the schools. They were not only intellectual exercises, but also acts of potential significance in other contexts. Consequently disputations, as well as consultations, could be put under seal and were embodied in written records that could be produced on other occasions. As such, they were concrete expressions of the authority of the masters and of the university as a whole. The importance of this authority

⁶⁹ See A. Dondaine, 'Documents pour servir à l'histoire de la province de France. L'appel au concile (1303)', *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum*, xxii (1952), 381–439. The king also thought it necessary to prohibit masters from leaving the kingdom without royal permission; see Menache, 'La naissance d'une nouvelle source d'autorité', 311.

⁷⁰ For contemporary accounts of this assembly, see John of Saint-Victor in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, xxi (1855), 641 and a letter from the Frescobaldi to Aymar of Valence, ed. C.V. Langlois, 'Une réunion publique à Paris sous Philippe le Bel (24 juin 1303)', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de Paris et de l'Ile-de-France*, xv (1888), 132–4. See also Digard, *Philippe le Bel*, ii, 171–2.

⁷¹ Langlois, 'Une réunion publique', 134, n. 1.

⁷² Letter from Frescobaldi, *ibid.*, 134 – my emphasis.

⁷³ *Documents relatifs aux états généraux et assemblées*, documents lii–lxxi, 94–7. See also Arquillière, 'L'appel au concile', 44.

⁷⁴ *Chartularium*, ii, no. 634, n. 5.

was recognized by the French bishops and the friars in the 1280s when both parties sought to win support in the university and to have it in writing. It was recognized by the Colonna cardinals and Philip the Fair, who relegated to second place a line of attack on Boniface VIII which the masters of theology found unacceptable, who took up others based on views which the masters had already elaborated, and who sought to involve the university in putting these lines of attack into operation. Boniface VIII too recognized the force of the masters' authority when in December 1301 he summoned the doctors of theology and the masters of canon and civil law to appear before him to help correct and condemn the excesses of Philip the Fair.⁷⁵

Of course it is clear that major players on the political stage did not approach the masters of theology for advice with an open mind. Those who consulted the masters generally knew what they wanted and hoped to obtain the masters' backing so that they could throw the masters' authority into the balance. This does not mean, however, that they were free to exploit the masters. They could put pressure on the masters, try to intimidate them and push them so far. But only so far. For if they wished to use the masters' authority, they had to avoid undermining it. In order not to destroy the masters' authority, they had to be careful to ensure that the masters were seen as independent. In effect this meant that the masters had to be granted some genuine independence. It was therefore necessary for anyone wishing to quote the masters' authority to accommodate their own position to what the masters really thought. If the French king in particular went too far, he might find that he had destroyed the institution whose mere presence brought him so much glory and whose authority he was often able to use. It would also be wrong to suppose that those who wished to use the masters' authority had no respect for the masters themselves; it was because they themselves felt the weight of the masters' opinions that they believed in the worth of their authority. Our judgement of the masters' role in politics cannot therefore be simple. No one asked the masters what to do and just took their advice. But equally no one could usefully deploy the masters' authority without some regard for their views.

The authority of the masters thus gave them roles to play outside the university and made their activities within the schools of concern to people beyond them. This is of fundamental importance to our understanding of both the nature of intellectual activity in the university and of the way in which power was exercised in society as a whole. The crucial point is that they cannot be understood apart.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, ii, nos. 621–3.

The masters of theology were more than just observers of and commentators on the world around them, and in certain contexts power was only deemed effective if legitimized by the authority of the masters of theology at the university of Paris.

