

Lecture 20: Christendom and its Discontents: Innocent III and the Fourth Lateran Council

I. Innocent III and the Ideal of Papal Monarchy

- A. Lothario de Segni or Pope Innocent III (r. 1198-1216)
- B. Defining Papal Monarchy and its Powers

II. The Fourth Lateran Council and Lay Devotion

- A. Calling the Council, November 1215
- B. Goals and Canons: Transforming Christian Society
- C. Religion and the Laity: Imitation and Devotion
 - Waldes of Lyon: Poverty and Preaching
 - Francis of Assisi: Sanctioned Salvation, 1210

III. Lay Devotion and its Discontents

- A. The Threat of Heresy
- B. The “cancer” of the Cathar Church in Southern France

Fourth Lateran Council (1215): Goals and Canons

Fourth Lateran Council met from 11-30 November 1215 (two weeks only)

- bishops, priests, monks, most powerful lay rulers in attendance
- issued 71 canons or decrees that shaped the medieval Catholic Church

Major Reforms:

1. Doctrine of **Transubstantiation** (defined the sacrament of the Eucharist taken at Mass: bread and wine = body and blood of Christ)
 2. Condemned the teachings of mystic Joachim of Fiore
 3. Defined the duties of secular rulers and bishops to fight **heresy**
 4. Addressed the **Jewish** populations in Christendom – forced them to wear badges and markers to distinguish them from Christians
 5. Decreed annual **confession** and taking of the **Eucharist** for all Christians = ritual of belonging in the Catholic Church
 6. Renewed the call to **Crusade** and retake Jerusalem
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Religion and the Laity: Imitation and Devotion

Lay Devotion took on a new fervor and definition:

Vita Apostolica = Life of the Apostles

Imitatio Christi = live in imitation of Christ

Waldes of Lyon (1140-1217) – renounced his possessions and secular life to live in imitation of the Apostles; sought to preach the Gospel as a layman.

-- His followers, the **Waldensians**, were initially condemned by the papacy

-- **Humiliati** = humble men and women, embraced a similar pious ideal: laymen and women living like the Apostles

Purgatory = place to purge your sins before going on to heaven

Acts of penance (caring for lepers and the poor) could expedite time in purgatory

Francis of Assisi (St. Francis) (1180/81-1226) -- accepted by Pope Innocent III in 1210; founded the **Franciscan Order** of Poor Friars

The Cathar Church and the Construction of Heresy

Heresy = false belief under the guise of correct Christianity

Cathars emerged in Southern France during the 1170s/1180s

Most of what we know about these “heretics” comes from the pens of Inquisitors – people persecuting the Cathars = problem of evidence

Cathar Church:

Leaders called *perfecti* = perfect ones

Limited rituals emphasizing **prayer** above all

Espoused a **dualist heresy** = dichotomy between Good and Evil; body and soul; Old Testament vs. New Testament

Posed a significant challenge to the institutional Catholic Church by 13th C.