

# Jacques de Vitry (d. 1240) and the Religious Life of his Time

ROBERT BARTLETT  
*University of St Andrews*

## Abstract

In this article the scholar, preacher and bishop Jacques de Vitry (d. 1240) is taken as a vantage point to look at the religious life of his time. He had personal involvement with the nascent university of Paris, the earliest beguines of the Low Countries, the crusades against heretics and Muslims, and the first friars. He left varied and vivid descriptions of these movements. His writings also constantly reveal a counter-current of scepticism and derision on the part of those who dismissed these religious movements as sanctimonious or hypocritical.

## I

Jacques de Vitry was a man of many parts.<sup>1</sup> He was a scholar in Paris, in the period when Paris was ‘mother of all the arts’<sup>2</sup> – ‘arts’ here meaning, of course, the liberal arts, that is, academic study; he was a preacher of crusades, against both Muslims and heretics, and an important witness to the first beguines, those devout women of the Low Countries, who left their mark in all the Béguinages still scattered across Belgium and the Netherlands; later he became a bishop in the Holy Land, and finally, from 1229 to his death in 1240, a cardinal of the Roman Church; he was the author of letters, histories, a saint’s life and 400 sermons.<sup>3</sup> In this article,

<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of the Phipps Lecture delivered at the University of East Anglia in 2022. The lecture was endowed by James Buchan in memory of his wife, Evelyn Buchan née Phipps. I am grateful to him, to Nicholas Vincent and Hugh Doherty of the University of East Anglia, and to John Hudson, who had the kindness to read and comment helpfully on the text.

<sup>2</sup> ‘artium omnium matrem’: Thomas of Cantimpré, *Supplementum*, 1, ed. R.B.C. Huygens, in Jacques de Vitry, *Vita Marie de Oegnies* and Thomas Cantipratensis, *Supplementum* (Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis, 252, 2012), p. 169.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques de Vitry, *Epistolae*, in *Serta mediaevalia: textus varii saeculorum X-XIII in unum collecti*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis, 171, 2000), pp. 549–649; *Historia occidentalis*, ed. John Frederick Hinnebusch (Fribourg, 1972); *Historia orientalis*, ed. Jean Donnadieu, with French translation (Turnhout, 2008); *Vita Marie de Oegnies* and Thomas of Cantimpré, *Supplementum*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens (Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis, 252, 2012); *Sermones vulgares vel ad status*, 1, *Prologus*: [*Sermones*] I–XX XVI, ed. Jean Longère (Corpus Christianorum, continuatio mediaevalis, 255, 2013); Jessalynn Lea Bird, ‘James of Vitry’s sermons to pilgrims’, *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 25 (2008), pp. 81–113; *Reverendissimi D. Iacobi De Vitriaco [...] Sermones in Epistolas & Euangelia Dominicalia totius anni* (Antwerp, 1575). On the manuscripts, see

## 2 ROBERT BARTLETT

Jacques de Vitry is taken as a vantage point to look at the religious life of his time, since his experience was so many-sided and wide-ranging and he lived at a period of immense importance in the religious history of Latin Christendom. That period was the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, a time when the European university was born, when the new mendicant Orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans, came into being, when Gothic art and architecture flourished, scholasticism took shape and new philosophical and scientific texts were flooding in from the Greek and Muslim world. It was the time of the troubadours and of the first flourishing of Arthurian romance.

One source, although rather a late one, says that in the year 1187 Jacques de Vitry ‘was studying sacred theology in the city of Paris’.<sup>4</sup> If this date is correct, he must have been born by 1170 at the very latest. We have good evidence of his activities from 1211, when documentary sources begin, but this means that there is still a long part of his life before that, which has to be surmised. We do know, however, that he studied in Paris, not only from that late reference, but also because he says so.<sup>5</sup> Jacques left a colourful (and much cited) account of student life in Paris.<sup>6</sup> He is looking back twenty or thirty years later, and sees, not ‘the good old days’, but ‘the bad old days’. Paris, ‘like a scabby goat or sick sheep’, corrupted all who came to her, especially the clerks (which would include, by definition, all the students). In the Paris of those days, no one considered fornication a sin. The prostitutes would grab the clerks as they passed by and try to drag them off to the brothels. If they refused to go along, the prostitutes shouted ‘Sodomite!’ at them. There were buildings with lecture halls above and brothels below.

Nor were the students’ motives at all admirable. Some just wanted to learn new things, which is the sin of empty curiosity; others wanted to be known, which is vanity; some wanted to become rich. And they not only disputed with each other on the grounds of different views and opinions, but formed factions based on nationality. Probably the most well-known section of Jacques’ picture of Parisian student life is his list of the insults that one national group applied to the others:

---

John Frederick Hinnebusch, ‘Extant manuscripts of the writings of Jacques de Vitry’, *Scriptorium*, 51 (1997), pp. 156–64. French translations, in addition to that of Donnadieu mentioned above, include *Lettres de la Cinquième Croisade*, tr. G. Duchet-Suchaux (Turnhout, 1998); *Histoire occidentale*, tr. G. Duchet-Suchaux (Paris, 1997); *Histoire orientale*, tr. Marie-Geneviève Grossel (Paris, 2005). There is an English translation of the Life of Marie: *The Life of Marie d’Oignies by Jacques de Vitry*, tr. Margot H. King [Toronto, 1993]. The documentary evidence for Jacques’ life was first surveyed by Philipp Funk, *Jakob von Vitry* (Leipzig, 1909), a work which is still very valuable, and there is a full survey of his many-faceted career by Jean Donnadieu, *Jacques de Vitry (1175/1180–1240): entre l’Orient et l’Occident: l’évêque aux trois visages* (Turnhout, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> ‘studente in sacra theologia in civitate Parisiensi’: *Historia foundationis venerabilis ecclesiae beati Nicolai Oigniacensis ac ancillae Christi Mariae Oigniacensis*, ed. R.B.C. Huygens, in Jacques de Vitry, *Vita Marie de Oegnies*, appendix II, pp. 207–13, at p. 209.

<sup>5</sup> ‘dum Parisius essemus in scolis’: Thomas F. Crane, *The Exempla, Or, Illustrative Stories from the Sermones Vulgares of Jacques De Vitry* (London, 1890), pp. 12–13; Crane places a comma after ‘essemus’ but the logic of the story requires this to be a complete phrase referring to Jacques.

<sup>6</sup> *Historia occidentalis*, 7, ed. Hinnebusch, pp. 90–3.

The English are drinkers and have tails, the French are proud, effeminate and adorned like women, the Germans are given to fury and disgusting when they have been drinking.<sup>7</sup>

There was obviously a rich student culture of insult and derision. If a Breton passed by, nursing their Celtic dreams, the trick was to shout 'King Arthur's dead!'

Jacques was clearly happy to leave this world and enter another, 160 miles north-east of Paris, where there was a recently founded house of Augustinian canons at Oignies, on the banks of the Sambre, in the diocese of Liège, a site now in Belgium. There he found, not only a community of canons, but also, living in a cell attached to the priory church, a holy woman renowned for her ascetism and spiritual gifts, Mary.<sup>8</sup> Mary was from Nivelles, not far from Oignies. Oignies, Nivelles and other important sites in the story of Jacques de Vitry, are all in what contemporary writers called 'Lotharingia', the curious borderland between what we now call France and Germany, but which was, in that period, mainly French speaking but part of the Holy Roman Empire, and hence ruled by German kings. This area, from Flanders to Cologne, was the most urbanized, commercial and wealthy part of Europe north of the Alps, as witnessed by a remarkable collection of vessels and religious objects in precious metal produced at Oignies itself in the 1230s.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the 'Vitry' in the name of Jacques de Vitry was in this region, although it is hard to be sure since there are at least fourteen places called Vitry (the name comes from the late Roman *Victoriacum* - 'Victor's Place' - and Victor was quite a common Roman name).

Jacques spent a lot of time with Mary at Oignies, who encouraged him to be ordained a priest and to undertake public preaching.<sup>10</sup> He heard her confessions and, soon after her death in June 1213, he wrote her Life. This circulated widely. It survives in thirty manuscripts in the Latin original and was translated into Dutch, English, French, Italian, Norse and Swedish.<sup>11</sup> In fifteenth-century England the priest who was Margery Kempe's amanuensis read it and learned from it to have patience with Margery's 'weeping and crying'.<sup>12</sup> In his long prologue to the Life, Jacques

<sup>7</sup> 'anglicos potatores et caudatos affirmantes, francigenas superbos, molles et muliebriter compositos asserentes, teutonicos furibundos et in conuiuuiis suis obscenos dicebant'... *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>8</sup> There is a large literature on Mary. See Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (ed.), *Mary of Oignies: Mother of Salvation* (Turnhout, 2006); Vera von der Osten-Sacken, *Jakob von Vitrys 'Vita Mariae Oigniencensis': zu Herkunft und Eigenart der ersten Beginen* (Göttingen, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> *Portfolio Trésor d'Oignies*, photographs by Guy Focant, text by Denis Mathen (Musée provincial des arts anciens du Namurois, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Later, the belief arose that Jacques became a regular canon at Oignies but there is nothing in his own writings to support this, nor any contemporary evidence. The Dominican encyclopaedist, Vincent of Beauvais, writing in the two decades after Jacques' death, did make this claim, which led to the wide (and current) dissemination of the idea: *Speculum historiale*, 30/10, ed. O. Holder-Egger, *Monumenta Germaniae historica, Scriptores* 24 (Hanover, 1879), p. 165.

<sup>11</sup> Suzan Folkerts, 'The manuscript transmission of the *Vita Mariae Oigniencensis* in the later Middle Ages', in Mulder-Bakker (ed.), *Mary of Oignies: Mother of Salvation*, pp. 221–41, at pp. 230–1, 240–1.

<sup>12</sup> *The Book of Margery Kempe*, c. 62, ed. Sanford Brown Meech and Hope Emily Allen (Early English Text Society, original series, 212, 1940), pp. 152–3. On the Middle English version of the Life,

## 4 ROBERT BARTLETT

sketches out what has come to be the classic portrait of the women later called beguines. He says that there are in the bishopric of Liège

many companies of holy virgins, in various places, who spurn the pleasures of the flesh for Christ, who also despise the riches of this world through love of the heavenly kingdom, cleaving to their heavenly spouse in poverty and humility and getting a small livelihood from the labour of their hands<sup>13</sup>

He goes on to mention the married women and widows who also observe a religious way of life before turning to the category into which Mary of Oignies fell: married women who, ‘with the consent of their husbands, abstain from licit embraces, and lead a celibate and truly angelic life.’<sup>14</sup> Jacques also points out – and this is a point of general importance – that some people were not at all impressed by these women, since there were ‘some shameless men, enemies of all religion, who maliciously defamed the religious way of life of these women, making up new names against them’<sup>15</sup> – this last has generally been interpreted, very reasonably, as a reference to the term ‘beguine’, a word not used by Jacques in the *Life* and of unknown origin but clearly at first a term of abuse, although soon adopted as a self-description.<sup>16</sup> Beguines did not follow a rule or take solemn vows and so were sometimes the object of suspicion on the part of the Church authorities, quite apart from the insults of those ‘shameless men’. Later in life, when he was more important in the Church hierarchy, Jacques secured from the pope permission for

devout women, not only in the bishopric of Liège but both in the kingdom [that is, France] and the empire, to live together in the same house and to invite each other by mutual encouragement towards the good.<sup>17</sup>

What do we learn about Mary of Oignies from the *Life* that Jacques wrote? First, about her extremes of asceticism. Not only did she renounce

---

see Jennifer N. Brown, ‘Marie d’Oignies’, in Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt (eds.), *The History of British Women’s Writing, 700–1500*, 1 (Basingstoke, 2015), pp. 198–206; Carol F. Heffernan, ‘The vita of Marie d’Oignies and late medieval England’, *Neophilologus*, 105/1 (2021), pp. 137–45.

<sup>13</sup> ‘multas sanctarum virginum in diversis locis catervas, que spretis pro Christo carnalibus illecebris, contemptis etiam amore regni celestis huius mundi divitiis, in paupertate et humilitate sponso celesti adherentes labore manu tenuem victum querebant’: *Vita Marie de Oegnies*, prologue, p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> ‘ex consensu maritorum a licitis amplexibus abstinentes, celibem et vere angelicam vitam ducentes’: *ibid.*, prologue, p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> ‘quosdam impudicos et totius religionis inimicos homines predictarum mulierum religionem maliciose infamantes et ... nova nomina contra eas fingebant’: *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Jacques does mention the term in a later sermon: Joseph Greven, ‘Der Ursprung des Beginenwesens. Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Godefroid Kurth’, *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 35 (1914), pp. 26–58, at p. 44. Its origin was a mystery to contemporaries: Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. Frederic Madden (3 vols., Rolls Series, 1866–9) 2, p. 476: ‘Beguinos sive Beguinias sese fecerunt appellari, ratione nominis incognita et auctore penitus ignoto’. For further discussion of the name, Walter Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200–1565* (Philadelphia, 2001), pp. 121–3; von der Osten-Sacken, *Jakob von Vitry’s ‘Vita Mariae Oigniacensis’*, pp. 152–6.

<sup>17</sup> ‘ut liceret mulieribus religiosis non solum in episcopatu Leodiensi, sed tam in regno quam in imperio in eadem domo simul manere et sese invicem mutuis exhortationibus ad bonum invitare’: *Epistulae*, 1, p. 552.

meat and wine, living mainly on black bread and water, sometimes going without food or drink for eight days or more, weeping so copiously that an irritated priest once asked her to stop (with bad consequences for him), and cutting down her sleep to the minimum ('for in sleep we do not earn any merit since we do not exercise free will'), but sometimes she engaged in self-harm, cutting her flesh with a knife, and having to be dissuaded from cutting off the skin of her feet after she had walked through the wicked town of Nivelles. Once she undertook a heroic programme of 1100 genuflections a day for forty days, having a regular pattern of an initial 600, followed by a recitation of the psalms, with a genuflection and Ave Maria at each psalm (so, another 150), then 300 more, this time striking herself with a rod at each genuflection, and drawing blood with the last three blows, 'as a condiment to the others', and finishing off with fifty to make up the 1100.<sup>18</sup> When Jacques praised Mary's 'wonderful moderation', it is probably not this piece of ascetic pyrotechnics he had in mind.<sup>19</sup>

Indeed, Jacques stresses that Mary's routines are to be admired but not necessarily imitated. This is a distinction with a long history, for heroic asceticism had been part of Christianity since its early days, and it left the question what should the ordinary everyday Christian do. If virginity, vegetarianism and abstention from alcohol were admirable virtues, should they not be attempted by all candidates? Medieval Christianity resolved the issue, to some extent, by having a two-tier system: there were saints, distinguished by their asceticism and virtues, who went straight to heaven at death, then there were all the ordinary Christians, who, unless they died in mortal sin, could work their way to paradise through the sufferings of purgatory. This distinction was, of course, something that Protestantism abolished.

## II

Apart from Mary's asceticism, in reading the *Life* we learn about her many vivid visionary experiences. Mary was on familiar terms with God and the saints. She often saw the Christ child in the priest's hands as he elevated the Host; saints came to her to announce that their feast days were imminent; transported in the spirit, she wandered through paradise, delighting in the saints and being received by the apostles and angels before coming to the Godhead. Sometimes she would stay in bed for three days, embracing her bridegroom, Christ, sometimes holding him between her breasts as a child. One day when she was in her cell, 'she heard the most sweet voice of the Lord, saying, "This is my beloved daughter, in whom I am well

<sup>18</sup> *Vita Marie de Oegnes*, 1. 8, 1. 5, 1. 10 ('Dormiendo enim non meremur, quia usum liberi arbitrii non habemus'), 1. 7, 2. 4, 1. 9 ('ad condimentum aliarum'), pp. 67–9, 62–3, 79–80, 66–7, 119–20, 73.

<sup>19</sup> 'miro moderamine': *ibid.*, 1. 13, 2. 4, pp. 87, 116.

pleased.”” This is quite an endorsement, echoing God’s words of approval at Christ’s baptism and transfiguration.<sup>20</sup>

Mary was never canonised, but that is true of the vast majority of thirteenth-century saints. Papal canonisation had only begun in the late thirteenth century and nobody believed that it was the only way to recognize a saint. Saints were people who were treated as saints: you prayed to them, they performed miracles in life and after death, they had their feast day and liturgical commemoration, they had a Life written to celebrate them. It was only during the lifetime of Mary of Oignies that the papacy first formulated a claim to monopolize the process of canonization and papal claims were, as always, claims. Of the people who lived in the thirteenth century and were treated as saints, only one in twenty was canonised by the pope.<sup>21</sup> So, we can treat Mary as a saint in the wider sense, since miracles were attributed to her, she had a written Life and a liturgical Office, and there were relics - her humble clothes were treasured at Oignies and after her death Jacques de Vitry acquired one of her fingers that he hung around his neck.<sup>22</sup> If we consider the history of sanctity, we find she fits well into a general trend of the last centuries of the Middle Ages, in which very gradually more and more female saints and lay saints were recognised – never by any means a majority but unmistakably increasing in numbers.

From her Life, we also learn that Mary had special knowledge, including the power to see the fate of souls after death. This is a very satisfying gift. As we know from Dante, putting your enemies in hell can be fun, and even by giving them a hard time in purgatory you could pay back people who had offended or upset you. Among those consigned to purgatory in Mary’s visions, we find some who must have been very close and familiar acquaintances. The priory of Oignies had been founded, not long before Mary arrived there, by three brothers, the oldest of whom, Giles, had become the first prior, and he was still in office during Mary’s time attached to the priory. Also living nearby was Giles’ mother, who was now approaching 100, and her daughter, the sister of Giles and the other brothers. This sister fell ill and was on her deathbed. Mary, despite being in her cell, was able to perceive that a great crowd of excited demons had gathered around the poor woman’s bed, and rushing to her side, ‘opposed those unclean spirits, and not only fought them with prayers but also drove them away with her cloak, like flies’.<sup>23</sup> The dying woman’s brothers, however startled by this behaviour they may have been, joined Mary in prayer and eventually the demons were driven off, and Mary returned to her cell and shut the door.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 2. 4, 2. 8, 2. 7, 2. 8 (“‘Hec est filia mea dilecta, in qua plurimum delector’”), pp. 123, 140, 133, 139, 142; cf. Matthew 3: 17; 17: 5; Mark 1: 11.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton and Oxford, 2013), p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> ‘The Liturgical Office of Mary of Oignies by Goswin of Bossut’, tr. Hugh Feiss, in Mulder-Bakker (ed.), *Mary of Oignies: Mother of Salvation*, pp. 175–96.

<sup>23</sup> ‘Tunc illa ... ad lectum egrotantis cucurrit et immundis spiritibus se opponens non solum precibus pugnabat, sed etiam pallio suo tanquam muscas abigebat’: *Vita Marie de Oegnies*, 2. 3, p. 102.

Not long afterwards St Peter appeared to her and revealed that the dead woman was now suffering dreadful pains in purgatory, and explained why:

she was being tortured by fierce heat because she had loved the world and earthly pleasures too ardently; sometimes she was afflicted by great cold because she was slow to do good, and especially because she was negligent in correcting her children and her household; moreover, she was vexed wretchedly by thirst, since in her lifetime she had devoted herself too much to drinking; and she was bearing the great inconvenience of nakedness because she had been excessive in her clothes.<sup>24</sup>

The source for most of the stories in Jacques' *Life of Mary of Oignies* must be Mary herself. She alone could have told him of her visions, the voices she heard, other experiences without any witnesses and everything that had happened before Jacques met her. Jacques wrote these up, in the Latin he had learned from childhood, but the core incidents must have been supplied by Mary, in French we presume. The *Life* is, in some sense, her first-hand – if mediated – account, and what it shows is that personal feelings and relationships could be transmuted to the visionary plane. In this account of the fate of the prior's sister after death, we hear Mary's judgements, not God's. We do not know what the woman had done to deserve this savage posthumous revenge from Mary.

We hope that Jacques never discussed this story with the prior of Oignies and his brothers. But at least their sister was only in purgatory. At the next level of reprobation, Mary was able to see who went to hell and why. For instance, this was the fate of anyone who died in a tournament. Tournaments were repeatedly condemned by the Church, clearly to no effect. But the devil loved them. At one time Mary encountered him spending the night in Nivelles because there was a tournament nearby the next day.<sup>25</sup> The most chilling example of Mary's insight into the fate of souls after death is recorded not in Jacques' *Life*, but in the supplement to it written fifteen years later by Thomas of Cantimpré, at that time an Augustinian (he later joined the Dominicans), who claimed that he was simply recording the things that Jacques had left out for lack of space. According to this account, Mary had prayed to the Lord that he should let her know the state of her mother's soul. Soon thereafter, as Mary was hearing Mass being celebrated by Prior Giles in the church of Oignies, 'a shadowy spirit' materialized before her and, when asked who it was, replied,

I am your mother ... your prayers cannot help me, for the locks of hell hold me in perpetual damnation ... I was brought up and lived surrounded by

<sup>24</sup> 'vehementi enim calore torquebatur eo quod mundum et voluptates seculi nimis ardentem amasset, aliquando frigore maximo cruciatur eo quod pigra ad bonum fuerit, et maxime quia filios suos et propriam familiam nimis negligenter correxerit; siti preterea miserabiliter anxietur eo quod nimis in vita sua vacasset potationibus, nuditatis etiam, eo quod superflua fuisset in vestibus, sustinebat maximum incommodum': *ibid.*, 2. 3, p. 103.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, 1. 9, 2. 4, pp. 71, 121–2.

what had been acquired by usury and unjust commerce, I knew this and did not attempt restitution'.<sup>26</sup>

She disappears, leaving Mary blessing the justice of God's judgments – 'nor did she cry any more that the one from whom she drew the beginnings of the flesh was handed over to eternal death.'<sup>27</sup> We do learn from this story the prominence of moneylending and commerce in the towns of the Low Countries but we also learn something about Mary.

Among Mary's special powers was foreknowledge, and one of the things that Mary foresaw was the Albigensian Crusade, supposedly three years before it began. In fact, the Albigensian Crusade played an important part in shaping Jacques' Life of Mary. By this time, the early thirteenth century, the crusade had become deeply embedded in western Christendom. This was a gradual process. The expedition of 1095–99 to conquer Jerusalem that historians label the First Crusade was obviously not described in those words by the participants. Not only did they not know it would be the first, they did not know what a crusade was. But, over time, when efforts to secure, or recover, Jerusalem, involving the dispatch of large armies and fleets from western Europe to the eastern Mediterranean, had to be repeated, a model of what a crusade was came to be formed in the minds of churchmen and others. But the fact that these campaigns were directed against Muslims did not mean that this was part of the definition of crusade. Crusades were holy wars, since they were authorized by the pope and brought spiritual benefits to the participants, in the form of remission of sins, but they could be directed against anyone, that is, anyone the papacy regarded as a threat to God and his Church.

One of these perceived threats was heresy, especially that often labelled Cathar but known by many other names. Writing later in the thirteenth century, in 1250, Rainier Sacchoni, who was a heretic turned inquisitor, said

Cathars believe that the devil made the world and everything in it and that the sacraments of the Church do not help us to salvation and are not true sacraments but fraudulent and diabolical sacraments of a church of the wicked ... they deny the future resurrection of the body and purgatory.<sup>28</sup>

He presents the heresy as a form of dualism, with a good God of the spirit and a wicked force of matter. Jacques de Vitry, who uses the word

<sup>26</sup> "'Ego sum ... mater tua ... nichil me tue iuvare poterunt preces, cum me quidem dampnatam perpetuo inferni claustra detineant ... Enutrita ... fui et vixi in hiis que per usuras et iniusta mercimonia acquisita fuerant; conscia michi mali ablata restitui non curavi": Thomas of Cantimpré, *Supplementum*, 11, pp. 181–2.

<sup>27</sup> 'nec flevit amplius morti perpetue traditam, per quam carnis initia sumpserat': *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> 'Communes opiniones omnium Catharorum sunt istae, scilicet quod diabolus fecit hunc mundum et omnia quae in eo sunt. Item quod omnia sacramenta ecclesiae ... nihil prosunt ad salutem, et quod non sunt vera sacramenta ... sed deceptorum et diabolica, et ecclesiae malignantium ... negant carnis resurrectionem futuram ... negant purgatorium': Rainier Sacchoni, *Summa de Catharis*, ed. A. Dondaine, *Un Traité néo-manichéen du XIIIe siècle, le Liber de duobus principis* (Rome, 1939), pp. 64–78, at pp. 64–5.



'heretics' dozens of times, rarely specifies which kind, although in the *Life of Mary of Oignies* there is a single mention of '*hereticos Provinciales*',<sup>29</sup> meaning 'the heretics of the south of France' (rather than specifically Provençal), so a category entirely geographical rather than doctrinal in nature. In one of his sermons, however, he describes the heretics as 'those who maintain that the devil created all visible and physical things', so agreeing exactly with the first part of Rainier Sacchoni's definition.<sup>30</sup>

The historiography of heresy is vast, but it might be worth just mentioning two main debates in the interpretation of Cathar heresy, one concerning the differing weight to be given to external influences in the origins of Catharism, the other the degree to which heresy was in the eye of the beholder. Some scholars see a significant role in the growth of Catharism for texts and individuals with their roots in eastern forms of Manicheanism, especially the Bogomil heresy that originated in tenth-century Bulgaria and spread to Byzantium; others stress its home-grown roots in anti-clericalism and an emphasis on a literal reading of Scripture, and regard it as in some sense kindred to the so-called Gregorian reform movement of the eleventh century. These different emphases obviously relate to wider assumptions about historical change: can mere outside influence explain developments, or must there be something in the society itself that renders it open to these influences? More recently – and this is the second debate – some scholars have argued that 'Catharism' is a misleading term anyway. There are moderate and radical variants of this view, just as there were supposedly moderate and radical dualists among the supposed Cathars. The moderate view is that 'Catharism' is 'a construct' and since this is now said about everything, it is indeed not a radical view. More forthright is the combative Mark Pegg: 'When scholars use the term Catharism,' he writes, 'they create the very reality they supposedly discover'; for him Catharism is 'a fantasy'.<sup>31</sup>

But if, while recognising that 'Albigensian' was the usual contemporary label applied to the southern French heretics targeted by the Albigensian Crusade, we step clear of terminology, and avoid the word Cathar and ask about the existence of dualist belief in the south of France, there can be no doubt that the Church authorities thought that southern France was full of dangerous dualist heretics, and that something must be done about it. The pope from 1198, Innocent III, one of the most vigorous and interventionist of all medieval popes, launched missions, first run by Cistercians, later joined by an entirely new institution, the Order of Preachers, that is, the Dominicans, established in Toulouse under the aegis of the bishop, Fulk, who authorized them and provided funding. Pope Innocent had eventually decided that peaceful persuasion

<sup>29</sup> *Vita Marie de Oignies*, 2. 7, p. 133.

<sup>30</sup> 'Qui asserunt quod omnia visibilia et corporalia creavit diabolus': Crane, *The Exempla ... of Jacques De Vitry*, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> 'The Paradigm of Catharism; or the historians' illusion', in Antonio Sennis (ed.), *Cathars in Question* (York, 2016), pp. 21–52, at pp. 29, 37.

was not enough. In November 1207, he wrote to the king of France, encouraging him to launch a military campaign against the heretics of the south of France and offering the same remission of sins that crusaders to the East were promised. The king declined but his aristocracy were more enthusiastic and in the summer of 1209 crusading armies from northern France marched southwards down the Rhône, sacked Béziers and captured Carcassonne, beginning a war that was to last twenty years and lead to northern French domination of the south of France and the creation of the inquisition. Despite being 600 miles away in Oignies, Mary was kept up-to-date by visionary bulletins, including one describing an incident when crusader reinforcements from Germany and Frisia were ambushed and slaughtered at Montgey, south-east of Toulouse. Mary saw angels taking their souls straight to heaven.<sup>32</sup>

One important figure in all these events was Fulk, bishop of Toulouse, the man who, as just mentioned, sponsored the creation of Dominic's community of preachers. He had a colourful career.<sup>33</sup> A member of an Italian merchant family settled in Marseilles, he first came to prominence not as an ecclesiastic but as a troubadour. He wrote love poetry – he was praised by Dante, who put him in the heaven of Venus (*Paradiso* 9), where those who had transmuted carnal love into spiritual love had their reward – and he also composed poems with crusade themes, praising Richard the Lionheart in particular. His last datable poems are from 1195 and, at some point after that, he underwent a complete change of life, and became a Cistercian monk at the monastery of Le Thoronet in Provence, his wife and two sons also entering monastic life. Le Thoronet is one of the most complete and perfect examples of Cistercian architecture and was best built at just this time, the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries; Le Corbusier called it 'this architecture of truth.'<sup>34</sup> Since Fulk became abbot of the house, he must have been deeply involved in the construction, although not for long, since in 1205 he became bishop of Toulouse. The Cistercians, the spearhead of the anti-Cathar mission, now had their man in the chief centre of heresy and resistance. Fulk was whole-hearted in his support of the Albigensian crusade and the assault on heretics. As John of Garland later wrote in his *Triumphs of the Church*, describing the destruction of the Albigensian heretics: 'Fire and the sword, and the

<sup>32</sup> *Vita Marie de Oignies*, 2. 7, pp. 133–4; other sources for the incident at Montgey are Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*, 218–19, ed. Pascal Guébin and Ernest Lyon (3 vols., Société de l'histoire de France, 412, 422, 442, 1926–39) 1, pp. 217–19; *La Chanson de la croisade albigeoise*, 69–70, ed. Eugène Martin-Chabot (3 vols, Paris, 1931–61) 1, pp. 168–72; the event occurred in April 1211.

<sup>33</sup> Stanisław Stroński, *Le troubadour Folquet de Marseille* (Cracow, 1910); Rita Lejeune, "L'évêque de Toulouse, Folquet de Marseille, et la principauté de Liège", in *Mélanges Félix Rousseau. Etudes sur l'histoire du pays mosan au Moyen Age* (Brussels, 1958), pp. 433–448; the fundamental study is N. M. Schulman, *Where Troubadours were Bishops: the Occitania of Folc of Marseille, 1150–1231* (New York, 2001).

<sup>34</sup> In the preface to François Cali, *La Plus grande aventure du monde* ([Grenoble] 1956), published in English as *Architecture of Truth: The Cistercian Abbey of Le Thoronet*.

learned doctor, extirpate the wicked; Fulk, bishop of the holy city, mows them down (*Falcat eos Fulco*).<sup>35</sup>

But this is to jump forward. Fulk did not triumph at once and had a long struggle with both the count of Toulouse and the citizens of Toulouse. In April 1211,<sup>36</sup> things became so hot for Fulk in his episcopal city that he deemed it wise to leave Toulouse and he made his way to northern France to seek support, eventually coming to the diocese of Liège, where he was struck by the faith and devotion he witnessed, especially that of the holy women who revered Christ's Church and venerated the sacraments. After his experience in the south of France, he thought he had found in the diocese of Liège 'the land of promise' (a comparison that Liège has rarely enjoyed since). He came to Oignies, he met Jacques and Mary, he celebrated Mass and consecrated an altar in the church of Oignies. He also encouraged Jacques, whose reputation as a preacher was growing, to turn his talents to support the campaign against heresy.

Jacques became deeply involved in the war against the Albigensians. One of the main narrative sources for the Albigensian Crusade tells how, in the winter of 1211, just after bishop Fulk came north,

William, the venerable archdeacon of Paris, and a certain other, called Master Jacques de Vitry, at the command of the bishop of Uzès, whom the lord pope had appointed legate for the business of the faith against the heretics, ... assumed the office of preaching and, fired by zeal for the faith, went around both France and Germany all that winter and signed with the cross on their chests an incredible number of the faithful for Christ's service.<sup>37</sup>

Jacques clearly believed that force was justified in certain conditions. 'If we do not fight the enemies of the Church,' he said in a sermon to the Military Orders, 'the Saracens and heretics would already have devastated the entire Church.'<sup>38</sup> This is the constant refrain of crusading apologists – the crusade is a defensive war. And a passing reference shows Jacques not only recruiting crusaders in northern France and Germany but also in the south of France seemingly debating with heretics, for, many years later, he wrote, 'I remember one time when, in the land of the

<sup>35</sup> 'Pravos extirpat et doctor, et ignis, et ensis;/ Falcat eos Fulco, praesul in urbe sacra': *De triumphis ecclesiae*, 5, ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1856), p. 92.

<sup>36</sup> 2 April 1211 according to Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*, 222, ed. Guébin and Lyon, 1, p. 272.

<sup>37</sup> 'Tempore illo Willelmus, venerabilis archidiaconus Parisiensis, et quidam alius, nomine Magister Jacobus de Vitriaco, de mandato episcopi Uticensis, quem dominus papa pro negotio fidei contra hereticos legatum prefecerat ... predicationis officium assumpserunt, qui, zelo fidei succensi, Franciam, immo et Alamannium, circueuntes, tota hieme illa incredibilem fidelium multitudinem ad Christi miliciam signo crucis in pectoribus signaverunt': Pierre des Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis*, 285, ed. Guébin and Lyon, 1, pp. 281–2.

<sup>38</sup> 'Si autem hostibus Ecclesiae non resistimus, iam totam Ecclesiam Saraceni et haeretici devastassent': Jean-Baptiste Pitra (ed.), *Analecta novissima spicilegii Solesmensis altera continuatio*, 2, *Tusculana* (Paris, 1888), p. 419.

Albigensians, we were disputing against certain heretics, in the presence of many knights...'.<sup>39</sup>

### III

Apart from the sword and the spoken word, the written word could be a tool of orthodoxy. As Mary of Oignies lay dying, Fulk urged Jacques to write her Life, as Jacques explains in the Prologue:

you said it would be very useful to you and to many others if you could preach publicly against the heretics of your province what God was working in modern saints in our days.<sup>40</sup>

One can see, in Jacques' Life of Mary, not only many tropes of the ascetic and visionary life, but also some things that would be useful weapons against the heretics, things that would, in Jacques' words, 'make the unbelieving heretics blush'.<sup>41</sup> If this holy woman saw the Christ child in the hands of the priest at the elevation of the Host, how could one doubt that 'the sacraments of the Church help us to salvation'; how could one deny purgatory when Mary had such intimate knowledge of it? So, the Life of Marie of Oignies was actually commissioned by, and dedicated to, one of the leading figures in the Church's anti-heretical campaign, Fulk, bishop of Toulouse.

### IV

A major change occurred in Jacques' life when he was appointed bishop of Acre in the Holy Land. After the conquest of Jerusalem by Saladin in 1187, Acre had also come under Muslim control, and its lengthy siege and eventual capture in 1191 by Richard the Lionheart and Philip Augustus were celebrated as the main achievement of the Third Crusade. It was by far the most important city in the crusader kingdom. With a good natural harbour on the Mediterranean, it was a Christian bridgehead that could be supplied by the fleets of the Italian trading cities. So, in 1216, Jacques left Oignies and the diocese of Liège and headed off to new tasks and a new world, going first across the Alps to Italy to receive consecration from Innocent III, a contemporary of Jacques' who had also studied theology in Paris. His journey to Italy, which he describes in a letter, was not uneventful.<sup>42</sup> As he came down into the Lombard plain, a river swollen with melting snows swept away his baggage, including a chest full of books and another in which he had placed Mary of Oignies' finger, but both were

<sup>39</sup> 'Memini quodam tempore, cum in terra que dicitur Albigensium coram multis militibus contra quosdam hereticos disputaremus ...': Crane, *The Exempla ... of Jacques De Vitry*, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> 'tu diceres valde tibi et multis aliis esse commodum si contra hereticos provincie tue ea, que deus in sanctis modernis in diebus nostris operatur, in publicum posses predicare': *Vita Marie de Oegnies*, prologue, p. 53.

<sup>41</sup> 'Erubescant infideles heretici ...': *ibid.*, prologue, p. 51.

<sup>42</sup> For the following account, *Epistulae*, 1.

saved without much damage. Spending a few days in Milan, that ‘den of heretics’, he was encouraged by the success of the new Order of Humiliati in resisting the heretics.

Jacques was to be disappointed in his purpose of receiving consecration from Innocent III, since he arrived in Perugia, where the papal court was residing, to find that Innocent had died the day before (16 July 1216). He did, however, visit the church where the pope’s body was lying prior to burial and found that it was half-naked, since it had been despoiled of all its precious vestments by looters – a common enough fate for dead rulers, who were covered in valuable movables like expensive clothes, rings and the like, but could no longer protect themselves or offer patronage to any – there is a famous description of the similar despoilation of the body of William the Conqueror in 1087.<sup>43</sup> Next day, the new pope, Honorius III, was elected. This may seem like a very short gap between popes but Innocent III had actually been elected on the day of his predecessor’s death. Jacques was soon consecrated as bishop of Acre and ready to set off for the Holy Land.

He did not enjoy the atmosphere of the papal court but found one thing a solace, as he himself says:

many rich and secular people of both sexes had abandoned everything for Christ and fled from the world, who were called Minor Brothers or Minor Sisters; they live according to the form of the primitive Church ... I believe that the Lord wishes to save many souls through these simple poor men before the end of the world.<sup>44</sup>

Here, in a letter written in 1216, we have a contemporary view of the Franciscans, although without a mention of Francis, and it is interesting that Jacques stresses the sisters as well as the brothers, although he does note the difference in their living arrangements, the men wandering, the women living in communities in towns. Mary of Oignies herself had expressed a desire to be a mendicant and was only restrained with difficulty by her friends from going off to an unknown neighbourhood to beg door to door.<sup>45</sup> And we could note that apocalyptic touch: the Franciscans and the end of the world were to be dancing together for generations to come. Jacques’ friend, the ex-troubadour Cistercian bishop Fulk, could have told him of Dominic and his preachers, and here Jacques encounters the other main branch of that new phenomenon, the friars.

The letter in which Jacques describes all this was written in Genoa while on board the ship that was to take him to the Holy Land. Plenty could be said of his detailed account of the vessel and of the sea voyage

<sup>43</sup> Orderic Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 7. 16, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (6 vols., Oxford Medieval Texts, 1968–80) 4, pp. 100–2.

<sup>44</sup> ‘multi enim utriusque sexus divites et seculares, omnibus pro Christo relictis, seculum fugiebant, qui Fratres Minores et Sorores Minores vocabantur ... Ipsi autem secundum formam primitive ecclesie vivunt ... Credo autem quod ... dominus per huiusmodi simplices et pauperes homines multas animas ante finem mundi vult salvare’: *Epistulae*, 1, pp. 553–4.

<sup>45</sup> *Vita Marie de Oignies*, 2. 2, pp. 96–7.

that he described in a subsequent letter, but we will pass on. Coming to Acre, which was a port city with all the usual activities of a port city, Jacques was shocked: 'I found the city of Acre to be like a monster, a nine-headed beast, with each head in conflict against the others.'<sup>46</sup> He was almost overcome:

When I had entered the monstrous city and found it full of shameful deeds and iniquities without number, I was deeply confused in mind. Fear and trembling came upon me and darkness covered me (Psalm 54) because I had taken on a heavy and insupportable burden.<sup>47</sup>

Jacques does not exactly come across as a prig, but he is a great source for the views of those who thought he was, who found overt expressions of religiosity not saintly but sanctimonious. This seems to be the pattern in Jacques' judgements. After his devastating description of the students of Paris, he comments,

if anyone wanted to live among them soberly and justly and devoutly, these unchaste effeminate at once deemed them to be miserly, despicable and hypocritically and excessively religious.<sup>48</sup>

The 'anyone' who wanted to live devoutly surely included Jacques himself. Then, when he was at the papal court in the summer of 1216, to receive consecration as bishop of Acre, he explains that he did not feel at home among the court personnel and bureaucrats:

I found many things contrary to my spirit, for they were so taken up with secular and temporal affairs, with kings and kingdoms, with litigation and disputes, that they scarcely permitted any talk of spiritual matters.<sup>49</sup>

Perhaps the officials of Honorius III tried to avoid Jacques as he approached them eager for talk of spiritual matters.

The stories he tells in his sermons (he was a recognised master of such *exempla*) often have the theme of spiritual goals pursued in the face of worldly or mocking opposition. For instance,

when a girl proposed to preserve her virginity and her parents offered her a husband and riches, she would trample all that underfoot and reject it, especially when the riches had been wrongly acquired. But the wise men of this world, that is, secular prelates and other malicious men, wanted to

<sup>46</sup> 'inveni autem civitatem Aconensem tanquam monstrum et beluam IX capita sibi adinvicem repugnantia habentem': *Epistulae*, 2, p. 562.

<sup>47</sup> 'Cum autem monstruosam civitatem ingressus fuisset et eam innumeris flagitiis et iniquitatibus repletam invenissem, mente valde confusus sum, timor et tremor venerunt super me et contexerunt me tenebre, quia tam grave et inportabile onus': *ibid.*, p. 567.

<sup>48</sup> 'Si qui ... sobrie et iuste et pie inter illos vivere voluisset, avari et miseri, ypocrite, superstitiosi, confestim ab impudicis et mollibus iudicabantur': *Historia occidentalis*, 7, ed. Hinnebusch, p. 91.

<sup>49</sup> 'Cum autem aliquanto tempore fuisset in curia, multa inveni spiritui meo contraria: adeo enim circa secularia et temporalia, circa reges et regna, circa lites et iurgia occupati erant, quod vix de spiritalibus aliquid loqui permittebant': *Epistulae*, 1, p. 553.

destroy her and drag her back from her good intention, saying, ‘this one wants to be a beguine’.<sup>50</sup>

Here we do find Jacques using the term ‘beguine’ – the sermon is considerably later than the Life of Mary of Oignies and probably the word had become more widespread in the interval, and he makes it clear that it is being used mockingly by secular men deriding a girl for preferring virginity to a rich husband.

A more concrete and detailed example of the clash of individual aspirations towards holiness and a derisive hostility to such yearnings is found in the Life of Mary, where Jacques introduces a noble knight from the locality, Yvain de Roavia.<sup>51</sup> Perhaps his parents had chosen ‘Yvain’ as a fashionable Arthurian name, since Chrétien de Troyes’ *Yvain* would have been circulating about the time this young noble was born. Roavia is the Latin name for the settlement of Rêves just south-east of Nivelles, where there was a knightly family with the surname ‘de Roavia’. An ‘Yvain de Roavia’ appears in a charter for the Cistercian nunnery of Aywières, a house with which Jacques de Vitry had warm relations. This noble knight, who was ‘much given to the vanities of the world’, had changed his life through the advice and prayers of Mary of Oignies. He had, Jacques writes, ‘left the world and turned to the Lord’, but, as the subsequent events make clear, this did not mean that he had entered a monastery or taken orders, for we next find him in the house of a rich burgher of Nivelles, who was his landlord and also his creditor. For, as Jacques says, Yvain had lived there in a worldly way and – just like a knight – had many superfluous expenses, and it was not easy for Yvain to cut this man off, for he was bound to him by debt. We have already encountered usury – lending at interest – and sharp practice in commerce in this world and it was not only the peasantry who could become entangled in the nets of debt. The knightly class, with its need for high status living and often with limited cash flow, was another prime target for lenders. And this created a bond that it was hard to escape from. It is possible to sell all one has and give it to the poor, as Jesus advises in the counsel of perfection, but he does not say anything about debt.

Sitting at the table of the rich burgher, eating fine food, Yvain begins to think of the glory he had in the world, so presumably his ‘conversion’ meant the adoption of a different, more austere way of life. Mary of Oignies, immediately informed in the spirit of what is happening, sends for Yvain and reinforces him in his first intention. ‘I will remain constant, good mother’, he tells her. However, he is of necessity still involved in secular affairs which require him to go frequently to the courts of powerful

<sup>50</sup> ‘Quando autem puella virginitatem suam custodie proposuit et parentes offerunt ei maritum cum divitiis, conculcet et respuat, et maxime ... quando sunt male acquisite ... sapientes huius seculi, prelati scilicet seculares et alii maliciosi homines, volunt eam interficere et a bono proposito retrahere, dicentes, “Hec vult esse beguina”’: Greven, ‘Der Ursprung des Beginnenwesens’, p. 44.

<sup>51</sup> *Vita Marie de Oegnies*, 2. 3, pp. 110–13.

men, and here his former companions and his relatives are very far from supportive of his new way of life:

they grieved for him as if he were dead, they pointed him out with their finger as if he were a monster, some derided him, some tried to weaken him with flattery, others sought to provoke him and wear him down with insults and indignities. Some minions of Satan even pulled him by his cloak or hood, this noble man who was not accustomed to such insults.<sup>52</sup>

This is a remarkably vivid picture of the change of life involved in ‘conversion’. A man who had been brought up from childhood to answer insults with violence now had to bear them patiently. ‘Sometimes’, writes Jacques, ‘as is only human, he was somewhat perturbed.’

We left Jacques arriving in the monstrous port city of Acre. But after his arrival in the Holy Land, there was still much ahead for him: preaching not only to Catholics, but also to Muslims, as well as dealing with the confusing variety of eastern Christian denominations, which he describes in detail; then there is the Fifth Crusade, the one that besieged and captured Damietta at the mouth of the Nile only to founder to defeat while marching south into Egypt – Jacques was with the army throughout the whole gruelling three years of the campaign, and his letters are a major source for its events (he did finally get to meet St Francis when the saint came to preach to the Sultan of Egypt); then a return to Italy, resignation of the bishopric of Acre, retreat to Oignies to the delight of his admirers, like Thomas of Cantimpré, who had been deeply moved as a teenager by Jacques’ preaching; then the offer of the important post of cardinal bishop of Tusculum, which he accepted, breaking Thomas of Cantimpré’s heart; and Jacques’ last decade, involved in the high politics of pope and emperor, namely, his friend and confidant Gregory IX and Frederick II, the wonder of the world, before his death on 1 May 1240 and his re-interment the following year in Oignies.<sup>53</sup> In his will he left to the Augustinian canons of Oignies money to purchase vineyards, ‘considering that, because of a lack of wine, educated and experienced people were unwilling to submit to the yoke of the Order in that place’.<sup>54</sup> This is an important sidelight on his time at Oignies.

Clearly there is not space here to discuss all this, as Jacques himself would admit. When, under the inspiration of Mary of Oignies, he

<sup>52</sup> ‘socii quondam eius, consanguinei etiam et familiares eum tanquam mortuum lugentes, immo tanquam monstrum digito ostendentes, alii deridebant, alii blanditiis emollire, alii iniuriis et contumeliis exasperare et frangere nitebantur. Quidam etiam diaboli satellites virum nobilem et talibus iniuriis non assuetum per cappam vel per caputium distrahebant’: *ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>53</sup> For the investigation of his bones in 2015, see R. Decorte, C. Polet, M. Boudin, F. Tilquin, J.-Y. Matroule, M. Dieu, et al. (2019), ‘An interdisciplinary study around the reliquary of the late cardinal Jacques de Vitry’, *PLoS ONE* 14(2): e0201424. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0201424>

<sup>54</sup> ‘considerans quod pro defectu vini persone litterate et mature in eodem loco iugum ordinis subire recusarent’: Edmond Martène and Ursin Durand (eds.), *Veterum Scriptorum et Monumentorum Amplissima Collectio*, 1 (Paris, 1724), col. 1279; Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *I testamenti dei cardinali del duecento* (Rome, 1980), p. 8.



embarked on his path as a preacher, he made an elementary beginner's mistake. He confesses:

always fearful within myself that I might fail and produce an imperfect sermon, I gathered up many things from every source, wanting to utter to the many who were gathered together whatever I had in my mind.

He admits 'I confounded myself with such prodigality' and quotes Proverbs 29:11: 'A fool uttereth all his mind but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.'<sup>55</sup> This is a good lesson.

Reading the works of Jacques de Vitry provides a perspective on the religious sensibilities of the Middle Ages which is far from simple. There are the holy men and women, like the beguines or the early Franciscans, but there is also plenty of evidence for a large and vocal population who derided them and their values. Jacques was enthralled by Mary of Oignies' asceticism and visions but not everyone will sympathise with a religious sensibility that led her to put her mother in hell. Jacques' preaching of the Albigensian Crusade supported a campaign that saw hundreds of people burned alive for their beliefs. There is no reason at all, of course, why we should expect the picture of the religious sensibilities of any age to be simple.

## PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://publons.com/publon/10.1111/1468-229X.13345>

<sup>55</sup> 'Dum verbum dei, licet indignus, laicis simplicibus predicare inciperem necdum exercitium seu consuetudinem faciendi sermonem ad populum haberem, semper michi metuens ne forte sermone imperfecto deficerem multa michi undecumque colligebam, multis vero congregatis quicquid in mente habebam in medium proferre volebam: totum enim spiritum suum profert stultus, sapiens vero reservat in posterum. Cum que tanta prodigalitate me ipsum confunderem ...': *Vita Marie de Oegnies*, 2. 6, p. 129.