

POWER AND THE HOLY:
POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS INTERESTS IN THE CANONIZATION
OF VINCENT FERRER

*EL PODER Y LO SAGRADO:
INTERESES POLÍTICOS Y RELIGIOSOS EN LA CANONIZACIÓN
DE VICENTE FERRER*

Laura Ackerman Smoller
University of Rochester, USA
<http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4728-6002>

Abstract: This article explores some of the political and religious considerations in the canonization of St. Vincent Ferrer through a close and sometimes against the grain reading of canonization materials, letters, and early hagiography. The most aggressive promoters of Vincent's canonization were the Montfort dukes of Brittany, where the saint is buried, and who used their association with the holy friar to assert sacred legitimacy for their dynasty, which had come to power as the result of a bloody civil war and which adopted a quasi-royal image along the lines of the French monarchy. In Vincent's native Aragon, the situation was more complicated. The friar had helped bring the Trastámara dynasty to power there in 1412, but Vincent's role in announcing the crown of Aragon's 1416 withdrawal of obedience from the Aragonese pope Benedict XIII would diminish his symbolic value in his homeland. Only after Alfonso V's conquest of the kingdom of Naples did the Trastámaras begin to push in earnest for the opening of a canonization process as part of a strategy to show divine favor for the new Aragonese regime in Naples. Promoters of Vincent's canonization acknowledged that they had overcome various "impediments"—presumably, rumors of a heresy conviction, as well as concerns about Vincent's preaching on Antichrist and his actions vis-à-vis the Great Schism and the Council of Constance. In response, champions of the new saint subtly recast the friar as a gifted preacher whose apocalyptic sermons moved crowds to penitence and whose strenuous efforts brought unity to a divided church.

Keywords: Vincent Ferrer; supports for canonization; legitimation of the Montfort dynasty; Alfonso V in Naples.

Resumen: El presente artículo examina algunas cuestiones políticas y religiosas relacionadas con la canonización de San Vicente Ferrer, a través de una atenta y a menudo compleja lectura de los materiales de la canonización, de cartas y de hagiografía contemporánea. Los más fervientes promotores de su canonización fueron los Montfort, Duques de Bretaña, donde el santo fue enterrado; ellos utilizaron su buena relación con el dominico para afirmar la sagrada legitimidad de su dinastía, que había llegado al poder después de una sangrienta guerra civil y que adoptó una imagen casi real, similar a la de la monarquía francesa. En su Aragón natal, la situación era más complicada. El dominico había aupado a los Trastámara al poder en 1412, pero su protagonismo en el anuncio de la sustracción de la Corona de Aragón a la obediencia del papa Benedicto XIII disminuyó su importancia simbólica en su propia tierra. Solo después de la conquista del Reino de Nápoles por Alfonso V empezaron los Trastámara a impulsar con fervor la apertura del proceso de canonización, como parte de una estrategia para mostrar el favor divino con el que contaba el nuevo "régimen" aragonés en Nápoles. Los promotores de la canonización de Ferrer sabían que se encontrarían con varios impedimentos—presumiblemente, los rumores sobre sus convicciones heréticas, como aquellas vinculadas a la predicación de Vicente Ferrer sobre el Anticristo, y su posición respecto al Cisma y al Concilio de Constanza. En contrapartida, los defensores del nuevo santo lo presentaron sutilmente como sabio predicador que, gracias a sus sermones apocalípticos,

movía a la multitud a la penitencia y que no reparaba en esfuerzos para conseguir la unidad de la iglesia dividida.

Palabras clave: Vicente Ferrer; apoyos para canonización; legitimación de los Monfort; Alfonso V en Nápoles.

SUMMARY

1. Introduction.– 2. Political considerations in Brittany.– 3. Vincent and the Trastámaras.– 4. Religious considerations in the canonization process.– 5. Bibliography.

1. INTRODUCTION¹

Some time between 1456 and 1463, the Sicilian Dominican Pietro Ranzano sent a letter to his co-religionist Giovanni da Pistoia. Along with his epistle, Ranzano included a short biography of the newly canonized Dominican saint Vincent Ferrer, a text excerpted from book 20 of Ranzano's copious *Annals of All Times*. Ranzano's brief *vita* contains a detailed description of the process of canonization, to whose final stages in Rome Ranzano had been an eyewitness, including the ceremony in St. Peter's on June 29, 1455, in which Pope Calixtus III had formally enrolled Vincent in the catalogue of the saints. In preparation for the event, *nearly four hundred brothers of the Order of Preachers converged upon the city from neighboring regions*. Coming together with the Dominican Master General Martial Auribelli and legates from Brittany (the site of Vincent's tomb), and leading *a great crowd of both sexes*, the friars processed to the Vatican for the ceremony, singing hymns all the way². And at the head of the ranks of the Dominican friars, as they processed to St. Peter's, were furlled the insignia of Alfonso V, king of Aragon,

¹ Abbreviations used: AASS = *Acta Sanctorum: The Full-Text Database* (Cambridge, Chadwyck-Healey, 2000); ADM = Archives Départementales du Morbihan; BC = Biblioteca Casanatense; BHL = *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis*, 2 vols. (Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1900-1901); *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis, Supplementi* (Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1911); Henryk Fros, *Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis, Novum supplementum* (Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1956); UVB = Universidad de Valencia, Biblioteca

² Rome, BC, MS 112, ff. 66v-67: "Concurrerunt ea de causa / ad urbem ex regionibus finitimis quadringenti ferme ordinis predicatorum fratres. Qui una cum martiale britonibusque legatis / hymnos per urbem decantantes / subsequenter magna promiscui sexus multitudine : ad sancti petri apostoli templum quod est situm in uaticano pulchro agmine processerunt." (BHL 8660). As Ranzano makes clear, he had hastily copied this brief biography, rather than the full *vita* he had composed following the canonization. Part of Ranzano's description of the canonization process, with a preface addressing the Dominican Master General (not present in the manuscript), but not including the description of the canonization ceremony, appears in AASS, April, 1:523-24. On Ranzano and his missive to Giovanni da Pistoia, see Smoller 2014, pp. 63-67, 82, 121-32, 171-173, and references therein.

Naples, and Sicily, as well as of Pierre II, Duke of Brittany. Miracles –the cure of an epileptic youth, the healing of a woman’s bloody flux, the lifting of two adolescents’ fevers, and others not confirmed by Ranzano– capped the celebration³. Ranzano, looking back on it all, could not fail to see the hand of God at work, from the sudden death of Nicholas V that brought the aging Aragonese cardinal Alfonso de Borja to the papal throne as Calixtus III (in fulfillment of Vincent Ferrer’s own prophecy that none other than Calixtus would canonize Vincent), to the coruscation of miracles that confirmed the papal decision to elevate the holy friar to sainthood⁴.

Ranzano’s dramatic account lays bare some of the political considerations at work behind the creation of the new saint. The most important promoters of the canonization were all prominently represented in the canonization ceremony: Vincent’s own Dominican Order (and its tireless Master General, Martial Auribelli), King Alfonso the Magnanimous, and Duke Pierre of Brittany. As we shall see below, both rulers had good political reasons to work for Vincent’s canonization, although their contributions to its success were not equal. Although, befitting his rank, King Alfonso consistently appears before Duke Pierre in Ranzano’s narration, the Bretons could take credit for a greater share of the efforts, as the author several times implies. After all, while Alfonso had given *800 pieces of gold towards this pious work*, Pierre’s donation to the cause had been 2000 gold coins⁵. As for the Dominicans, Ranzano’s reference to Martial Auribelli’s *almost infinite labors* suggests the numerous machinations that must have gone on in the long push towards Vincent’s canonization. Some of this behind-the-scenes work may have involved answering religious objections to Vincent’s canonization, objections to which Ranzano several times appears obliquely to nod, as when he tells his readers that Auribelli never relented, even *when many things, often adverse, happened that were a great impediment to our cause*⁶.

This article explores those political and religious considerations in the canonization of Vincent Ferrer. Beginning with Vincent’s final preaching and burial in the duchy of Brittany, the reigning ducal family, the Montforts, seized upon the holy friar’s image as a way to promote their own sacred

³ *Ibidem*, ff. 67r-68r.

⁴ *Ibidem*, ff. 64r-64v. Cf. Navarro 2000, especially pp. 60-64.

⁵ *Ibidem*, ff. 63r-63v: “Alfonsum aragonum rex . . . in hoc pium opus octingentos contulit aureos.”

⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 63v: “Martialis [Auribelli] fere infinitos suscepit labores curans: ne quo modo ab incaepo desisteretur. Et cum multa euenirent sepe aduersa : que rei nostrae maximo fuerunt impedimento: nunquam tamen est uisus exteritus.”

legitimacy in the wake of a bloody civil war waged there in 1341-65. The Montforts carefully cultivated an association with the Dominican preacher as a way both to answer challenges to their rule and to legitimize a ruling style increasingly modeled upon that of the French crown. In some ways, a similar political climate informed the push for canonization in the crown of Aragon, where Vincent's had been the leading voice behind the Compromise of Caspe, which had brought a new ruling dynasty, the Trastámaras, to the throne in the person of Alfonso's father, Fernando de Antequera. But unlike the situation in Brittany, the Trastámaras were essentially Castilian outsiders. And, in a further twist, it was Vincent who had been deputized by Fernando to announce, in January 1416, Aragon's withdrawal of its obedience from the Aragonese pope Benedict XIII (Pedro de Luna). Further, by 1455, at the time of Vincent's canonization, Alfonso sat as well on the hard-won throne of Naples, a conquest he liked to portray as divinely arranged. An Aragonese saint, associated with the Trastámara dynasty, could be a useful thing in mid-fifteenth-century Naples.

Finally, while we cannot be sure of the nature of the "many things, often adverse" that impeded Martial Auribelli's work, it appears that there were religious objections that could have stalled Vincent's canonization, as well: if not his long support of the Avignon papacy during the Great Schism, then at least his repeated proclamations that Antichrist had been born in 1403, as well as nagging rumors that the friar had been convicted of heresy. All of these factors, I will argue, become apparent in an against-the-grain reading of circumstances surrounding Vincent's canonization.

2. POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN BRITTANY

As Pietro Ranzano's narration in his *Annals* makes clear, the earliest and most persistent demands that Vincent be named a saint came from the Dukes of Brittany. While Ranzano observes that, upon Vincent's death, *almost all the princes who in France and in Spain held power, along with certain flourishing cities*, sent letters and messengers to postulate Pope Martin V for Vincent's canonization, he adds that *the most diligent of all was Jean [V], duke of Brittany* (r. 1399-1442)⁷. When Martin, and then his successor Eugenius IV, found themselves detained by other more pressing matters, those efforts

⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 61r: "Ad hunc [Martin V] omnes pene principes qui in galliis atque in hispaniis imperia per illud tempus tenebant: quaedam praeterea florentissimae ciuitates et litteras et oratores miserunt / postulantes / ut tantus uir . . . sanctorum cathologo ascriberetur. Omnium tamen diligentissimus fuit Ioannes britonum dux."

were stymied, however⁸. Still, Ranzano reserved special praise for the Breton duke Jean, regarding whose death (in 1442) he remarked that Jean *above all mortals had this matter* [of Vincent's canonization] *in his heart*⁹. Jean's son Pierre II (r. 1450-57) also received plaudits from Ranzano, not simply for his large donation of gold to the cause, but also for hosting a Dominican Chapter General in Nantes in 1453, after which the Duke redoubled his efforts with the Roman curia on behalf of Vincent's canonization¹⁰.

Ranzano's estimation squares with what we know from other sources about Breton involvement in the canonization efforts. Vincent had come to the duchy early in 1418, at the invitation of Duke Jean V, who had sent his messenger on at least three separate occasions to ask the noted Dominican to come preach there. Jean had greeted the preacher upon his arrival in the ducal city of Vannes with a grand procession and, along with the Duchess Jeanne, was an avid presence at Vincent's sermons in Nantes and Vannes. When, in the spring of 1419, Vincent lay dying near the ducal residence of l'Hermine in Vannes, the duchess was in constant attendance on his bedside and herself washed the saintly corpse in preparation for its entombment. And when a dispute arose between the Vannes cathedral and local Dominicans about the custody of that body (now a precious relic), it was Duke Jean who, in the end, gave the nod to the cathedral in his favored city of residence¹¹. Other records reinforce Ranzano's description of a Duke Pierre who was so diligently devoted to seeing the process through that he dispatched a messenger from Vannes to Rome to report on a fresh miracle –just as Calixtus was announcing his intention to canonize Vincent¹². Similarly, we find Pierre sending an ambassador from Nantes to Rome to watch over the curial phases of the process, levying a tax on his subjects to help defray the costs of the canonization, and at last receiving a missive from a grateful Calixtus III announcing Vincent's elevation to sainthood and thanking the duke for his *singular devotion* to the cause¹³.

⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 61v. Ranzano seems to express frustration that the Dominicans did not actively press for Vincent's canonization until the 1450 canonization of the Franciscan Bernardino of Siena. See Smoller 2014, pp. 30, 37-39.

⁹ BC, MS 112, ff. 61v-62r: "Ad haec mors ioannis britaniae ducis cui praeter ceteros mortales / cordi id negocium erat / accessit."

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, ff. 62v-63r.

¹¹ This information all can be found in the inquest held in Brittany in 1453-1454 as part of the canonization process. For precise references, see Smoller 2014, pp. 18-24. Perhaps it was Jean who directed the cathedral clergy to compile a list of miracles, which was eventually delivered to Pope Martin V: *ibidem*, p. 52.

¹² BC, MS 112, ff. 65v-66r.

¹³ Smoller 2014, pp. 34-35; see also Fages 1905, pp. 387-388, for Calixtus's letter (quotation, p. 388). On Vincent's importance to the duchy of Brittany, see also Velasco 2008, pp. 399-408.

The Breton dukes had good reason to associate themselves with the saintly Dominican. The Montforts' claim to the ducal throne had been hard won through nearly twenty-five years of bitter civil war. When, in 1341 Duke Jean III had died childless, the succession had been disputed between his half-brother Jean de Montfort and his niece Jeanne de Penthievre. To further complicate the situation, Jeanne de Penthievre was married to the nephew of King Philippe VI of France, Charles of Blois. Although Jean de Montfort had spent little time in Brittany before 1341, Valois support of the claims of Charles of Blois drove many in the fiercely independent duchy to the Montfort cause. While Charles's death at the Battle of Auray in 1364 effectively settled the ducal title on the Montfort line (in the person of Jean de Montfort's son Jean IV), a cult soon sprang up around Charles, who was found to have been wearing a hair shirt underneath his armor at Auray and who had long cultivated a reputation of holiness. With support from the French crown, the Penthievres, and the Franciscan Order which he had patronized, the case for Charles's sainthood proceeded in Avignon. Evidence suggests that Gregory XI was on the verge of canonizing Charles in 1376, just one week before his return of the papal see to Rome¹⁴. The Montforts may have won the ducal throne, but they could not boast of having a saint in the family.

Two factors made that lack particularly troubling to the Montfort dukes of the early to mid-fifteenth century. The first was continuing pressure from the Penthievre family, a situation made especially acute around the time of Vincent Ferrer's advent in the duchy by the fact that Charles of Blois's grandsons were coming of age, while the reigning duke, Jean V, had only a four-year-old son. And the Penthievre progeny were hardly complacent. In February 1420, less than a year after Vincent's death in Vannes, they seized Jean V, holding him captive for five months. And though two of Charles's grandsons were condemned for their role in the kidnapping, a third grandson was still causing trouble well into the 1450s. The family would formally renounce their rights to the duchy only in 1480¹⁵.

The second factor propelling the Montforts to cast about for some sort of saint with whom to associate themselves was their concerted move to present themselves as independent sovereigns in the model of the French monarchy. In particular, Jean V borrowed ceremonial elements from his nominal Valois overlords, such as the gold circlet he had placed on his head at his coronation in 1401, his adoption of the practice of sealing documents with a seal of majesty, and his annexation of the phrase *by the grace of God* to his

¹⁴ Summary based on Smoller 2014, pp. 25-28. On the Breton War of Succession, see Galliou-Jones 1991, pp. 217-219. On the near canonization of Charles of Blois, see Vauchez 1978.

¹⁵ Summary based on Smoller 2014, p. 29.

title as duke of Brittany. Where Jean V could not imitate the French crown, however, was in the claim to have saintly relatives, such as the canonized saints Louis IX and Louis of Toulouse, a fact that was essential to French monarchs' identity as *most Christian kings of France*¹⁶. Lacking a saint in the family, the Montforts in the fifteenth century actively pursued other means of associating themselves with the holy, including a move to appropriate the memory of the Breton Saint Yves, whose 1347 canonization had succeeded in part thanks to the efforts of Charles of Blois¹⁷. One must view in the same light the efforts of Jean V and his sons François I (r. 1442-50) and Pierre II to associate their family with the saintly Vincent Ferrer and to do everything they could to promote his canonization.

A story related at the Brittany canonization inquest— and repeated in embellished form by Ranzano —reveals some of the ways in which the Montfort dukes deployed Vincent's sanctity for dynastic ends. As one of Duchess Jeanne's female companions told the papal commissioners, before the duchess even knew she was pregnant, Vincent told her that *God would bless the lord whom she was carrying* [in her womb], making the sign of the cross over the duchess's belly in blessing and prophesying the subsequent birth of *the current duke*, that is, Pierre II¹⁸. In his *Vita Vincentii*, Ranzano makes the saint's benediction precede the pregnancy, stipulating that Jeanne had been unable to conceive before that moment, but that she thereafter gave birth to many sons. And the hagiographer links this miracle to the birth of Pierre and his subsequent efforts on behalf of Vincent's canonization¹⁹. In Ranzano's re-telling of the same in his *Annals*, Vincent had made the sign of the cross over the duchess's womb, upon which the holy friar predicted *that she would conceive and give birth to a son*, who would become the ruler of Brittany and to whom would be given the task of seeing that the Roman church recognized Vincent as a saint²⁰. What neither version quite indicates

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 25-26, 29-30; Guillouët 2000, pp. 35-36.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 24-28, 37-39.

¹⁸ Vannes, ADM, MS 87 G 11, witness 7 (Perrina de Bazvalen): "M[agister] V[incentius] dixit domine ducisse ignoranti tunc se esse pregnantem quod Deus benediceret illum dominum quem ipsa ducissa portabat et benedixit ei cum signo crucis et dicit [*sic*] quod ducissa peperit post ducem modernum." (The manuscript is not foliated, and I cite by witness number.) Edition: Fages 1904, p. 25. (Fages's edition is abbreviated and sometimes defective, so I cite from the manuscript.) Pierre was born in 1418, the year Vincent came to Brittany; he became duke upon the death of his older brother François in 1450. See Smoller 2014, p. 33.

¹⁹ Ranzano, *Vita Vincentii*, 4.1.3 (BHL 8658), in AASS, April, 1:509. See Smoller 2014, pp. 33-34.

²⁰ BC, MS 112, f. 59v: "Caeterum cum uincentius / ioanne ipso petente / coniugis eius uterum cruce signasset : interque signandum / praediceret illam concepturam parituramque filium / qui patre mortuo esset et britanibus imperaturus / et operam daturus: ut se quoque mortuo inter christi sanctos a romana ecclesia referretur."

is the particular desperation with which Jean V must have yearned for the birth of a son at that time (although his son François had been born in 1414): should his own line fail, the duchy would revert to the Penthièvre family. In the end, however, Pierre II could present himself as the product of Vincent's miraculous intercession, the object of Vincent's prophecy, and the agent of Vincent's well-deserved canonization. Vincent had become a Montfort saint.

3. VINCENT AND THE TRASTÁMARAS

If Ranzano, in describing the arduous steps that had led to Vincent's canonization, gave the most credit to the dukes of Brittany, he also made note of the contributions of Alfonso V of Aragon. While he defers consistently to the monarch's rank in his writing, by listing his name before Pierre's whenever both duke and king appear in his narrative²¹, Ranzano nonetheless gives the impression that Alfonso's efforts on behalf of Vincent were not quite as strenuous as those of the dukes of Brittany. This differential is epitomized in the relative financial contributions of the two rulers: 2000 gold pieces on the part of Pierre II, as opposed to a mere 800 from Alfonso. While in many ways, the Trastámaras, like their Montfort counterparts in Brittany, represented a new dynasty in need of the sacred legitimacy that could be conferred by association with a saint, a number of particularities in the political situations in Aragon and Naples help to explain the more muted support portrayed in Ranzano's account.

As with the Montfort dukes in Brittany, the Trastámaras had come to power in the wake of bitter strife. Having ruled in Castile since 1369, the Trastámaras acceded to the throne of Aragon in 1412, following two years of violent interregnum upon the 1410 death of Martí I, the last of the dynasty that had united Aragon and Catalonia under a single crown. The situation had been resolved by a method proposed by (and likely heavily influenced by) the Avignon pope Benedict XIII: a group composed of nine God-fearing men, drawn equally from the kingdom of Aragon, the principality of Catalonia, and the kingdom of Valencia, were to meet and decide among the various contenders to the throne. Vincent Ferrer was among the three representatives from Valencia. On June 28, 1412, the nine took their vote, with Vincent casting the first ballot and publicly announcing the results of what has long been known as the Compromise of Caspe. The Castilian Fernando de Antequera was now king of Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia²².

²¹ E.g., BC, MS 112, ff. 63r-63v.

²² For recent accounts, see Daileader 2016, pp. 64-73; Pérez 2014, pp. 782-785 (and pp. 789 and 791 on Pietro Ranzano's reticence on this topic); Narbona 2007, pp. 31-35. Some

Although Fernando was the nephew of the late King Martí, he was viewed by many as an outsider. Vincent Ferrer, the Valencian who had announced Fernando's election as king, played a crucial role in shoring up the new monarch's legitimacy. As Philip Daileader details, Vincent preached a number of sermons defending the decision at Caspe: in Valencia on December 27, 1412; in villages between Valencia and Barcelona in the spring and summer of 1413; and in Lleida in Lent of 1414²³. And when Fernando made his grand entry into the city of Valencia, on December 23, 1414, the procession in his honor included a float on which was represented Vincent Ferrer, along with saints Francis and Dominic and various apocalyptic symbols: the *entramès de Mestre Vicent*²⁴. A cart bearing the same imagery greeted Fernando's son Alfonso at his February 1415 solemn entry into the town, as well as in the processions surrounding his June 1415 wedding in Valencia²⁵. As Óscar Calvé Mascarell has convincingly argued, the float's imagery combined Vincent's own vision of Christ, which had inaugurated and authorized his preaching mission as *legatus a latere Christi*, with the tale of the three lances—aimed at the world's destruction, but whose launching had been stayed for a period by the preaching of the Franciscans and Dominicans²⁶. This representation of the Dominican friar who had proclaimed Fernando king, which heralded the monarch's entry into Valencia, stressed Vincent's particular closeness to God. Just as Vincent himself had come to present the outcome of Caspe as divinely inspired, the *entramès de Mestre Vicent* linked the new ruling dynasty with the holy friar to whom God had appeared and spoken²⁷.

If Vincent's saintly reputation helped to bolster Fernando's early rule in Aragon, the preacher's role in the final stages of the Great Schism would, however, weaken Vincent's stature in the realm and, perhaps, his value as a symbol of Trastámara legitimacy. According to Daileader, Vincent's pronouncement of Aragon's withdrawal of obedience from the Avignon pope Benedict XIII, which took place on January 6, 1416, in Perpignan, cost him dearly. Many resented his seeming betrayal of a fellow Aragonese; just two days

contemporaries in the lands of the Crown of Aragon were critical of Vincent for his role at Caspe: Ferrando 2013, pp. 54, 60. Modern historians have often interpreted the events along nationalist lines: Toldrà 2004, pp. 163-168.

²³ Daileader 2016, pp. 73-75; Esponera 2009, pp. 105-106. Daileader (2016, pp. 73 and 223, n. 96) points out that the decision may have cost Vincent some (but not significant) support.

²⁴ Cabanes 2000, pp. 17-31; Massip 2013-2014, pp. 62-63; Calvé 2016, pp. 159-241; 2018, pp. 201-224.

²⁵ Calvé 2016, pp. 159, 161; Ryder 1990, pp. 34-36.

²⁶ Calvé 2016, pp. 186-189. A version of the tale appears in *The Golden Legend's* entry on Saint Dominic: Voragine 1993, II, pp. 47-48.

²⁷ Daileader 2016, p. 75.

following the announcement, Fernando, for the first time ever, issued orders to his officials to furnish Vincent with a bodyguard or escort to protect him from harm²⁸. Daileader strongly implies that hostility to Vincent following the break with Benedict was the major reason for the friar's subsequent departure from the peninsula –to which he never was to return²⁹. The problematic memory of Vincent as, in Daileader's words, *helping [a] Castilian king to depose an Aragonese pope* may explain why the Trastámaras did not push as aggressively as the Bretons would for Vincent's canonization in the decade following his death in 1419³⁰.

Fernando's son and heir Alfonso, who had been present during the dramatic events in Perpignan, certainly made efforts to associate his dynasty with saints and the sacred. In 1423, upon his conquest of Marseille, Alfonso acquired the relics of the Angevin Saint Louis of Toulouse, which he installed in the Cathedral in Valencia. The theft of the relics of Louis of Toulouse served two key symbolic purposes. First, Alfonso could claim the saint, whose body he now possessed, as a distant relation; and second, and more importantly, the translation of the Angevin saint's relics into Trastámara hands foreshadowed Alfonso's hoped-for conquest of Angevin Naples³¹. Alfonso deposited other precious relics with the Valencia Cathedral, as well: pieces of the Holy Sepulcher, the True Cross, and the Holy Sponge; fragments of the bodies of various saints, including Saint George; and, in 1437, the Holy Grail³². As Nikolas Jaspert has observed, Alfonso's placement of these important relics in the Valencia Cathedral had the effect of moving the realm's sacred center from Barcelona, where Martí had built up an impressive relic collection, to Valencia, creating a new spiritual center for the new dynasty³³.

After Alfonso's lengthy conquest of Naples, completed only in 1442, the Trastámaras once again found themselves seeking to establish themselves as the legitimate rulers of a realm in which they were outsiders. To this end, Alfonso deployed a variety of strategies, including a lavish triumph in 1443 that evoked both Roman imperial models and the mythological Arthurian

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 167; Martínez Ferrando 1955, pp. 104-105 (no. 65).

²⁹ Daileader 2016, pp. 166-168.

³⁰ Quotation: *Ibidem*, p.167. See also Esponera 2009, pp. 107-108.

³¹ See Jaspert 2000, p. 1843; Molina 1998, p. 89; Ryder 1990, pp. 114-115.

³² Alfonso received a heavy subsidy for his Neapolitan ventures after "pawning" the relics with the cathedral. See Jaspert 2000, pp. 1843-1844; Barber 2004, pp. 169-172; Navarro 1998, pp. 116-117, 123-128; Torra 1996, pp. 515-517.

³³ Jaspert 2000, pp. 1843-1844; Ryder notes also Alfonso's promotion of Franciscan Observants in Aragon: Ryder 1990, p. 312. On Martí, see Navarro 1998, pp. 106, 111-116, 118; Torra 1996, pp. 506-511.

court³⁴. Alfonso also stressed the divine hand of the Virgin in his victory in Naples, letting it be known that she had appeared to him in a dream to reveal the manner in which he would be able to breach the city walls, and erecting a church (Santa Maria della Pace) in honor of that vision shortly after the conquest³⁵. Alfonso also promoted both local, Neapolitan saints (like Gennaro and Michael) and Catalan/Aragonese saints (such as Saint Eulalia, sacred to Barcelona, and Saint George, associated with the monarchy) in his new lands, putting forth the message that the Trastámaras both were tied to autochthonous sacred figures and had brought their own holy connections with them to Naples³⁶.

Alfonso's most strenuous efforts to associate himself with the sacred in the early years of his reign in Naples, however, had to do with his promotion of the cult of the Observant Franciscan Bernardino of Siena. Alfonso had benefited from the lucky chance that the aging preacher—already a superstar—had suffered his final illness and died in the town of L'Aquila, in Alfonso's own Neapolitan territory, on May 20, 1444, a scant two years after the monarch's successful siege of Naples. Alfonso wasted no time in attempting to link his own family, who had long promoted the Franciscan Observance, with Bernardino's memory. A painting from 1444 by Colantonio, now in the Museo di Capodimonti in Naples, depicts Francis giving his rule to the Friars Minor and Poor Clares. Bernardino is clearly visible among the kneeling Franciscans; just as apparent are the arms of Aragon and of Alfonso himself among the floor tiles in the painting³⁷. Further, Alfonso petitioned the pope in August 1444 to open canonization proceedings on behalf of Bernardino. To Alfonso also was dedicated a life of Bernardino composed by Barnabeo of Siena, dated April 1, 1445, just before Pope Eugenius IV formally opened the canonization process³⁸. And following Bernardino's 1450 canonization, the monarch would also contribute heavily (5000 ducats) to the construction of a new basilica to house the saint's tomb, begun in 1454³⁹.

The promotion of the canonization of Vincent Ferrer, therefore, must be seen as part of a multi-pronged propaganda effort aimed at demonstrating Alfonso's legitimacy as the rightful ruler of Naples, but (at least after 1416) not so much part of attempts to promote the dynasty's stature in Aragon. This

³⁴ See Ryder 1990, pp. 248-250; Jaspert 2000, pp. 1839-1840; Serra 2008.

³⁵ Molina 1998, pp. 87-88.

³⁶ Jaspert 2000, pp. 1844-1846.

³⁷ Molina 1998, p. 88.

³⁸ Alfonso's letter petitioning the pope was included by Barnabeo in this *Vita* (BHL 1188): AASS, May, 5:278; dedicatory epistle at 5:277. See also Pellegrini 2009, p. 50*. I draw here also upon Smoller forthcoming.

³⁹ Langer 2015, p. 280.

hypothesis helps to explain a number of curious facts. First, there was no canonization inquest for Vincent held in Valencia, the place of the saint's birth and the setting of a number of important events in his early career. Similarly, to the best of my knowledge, the crown of Aragon witnessed no formal efforts to collect Vincent's miracles beyond an inquest held in Lleida in 1451 and the Valencian Dominican convent's hiring of a notary to register miracles in May of the same year⁴⁰. As Philip Daileader has proposed, Alfonso had witnessed first hand the hostility the friar had incurred following the subtraction of obedience from Benedict XIII and may have made a deliberate calculation that an inquest in Valencia might bring forth witnesses opposed to Vincent's candidacy for sainthood⁴¹. Indeed, there is a dearth of evidence indicating an intense Aragonese push for Vincent's canonization before the conquest of Naples. Tellingly, in J. Ernesto Martínez Ferrando's collection *San Vicente Ferrer y la casa real de Aragón*, a lengthy lacuna exists between 1416 and 1450, in which the friar's name evidently does not appear in the royal archives. Alfonso, it seems, did not deem it useful actively to promote Vincent's sanctity until nearly a decade had passed following his conquest of Naples⁴². And when he finally did intervene, in the form of a letter written to the pope (presumably Nicholas V) that Martínez Ferrando dates to 1450 (before the 1451 opening of the canonization process), the monarch includes a cryptic line hoping that his *tardiness does not work against this saintly man*⁴³. In other words, Alfonso appears here to acknowledge that this petition was his first on behalf of Vincent's canonization.

Aside from worries about Vincent's reputation in Aragon, Alfonso's tardiness might also find a partial explanation in the complex nature of his own relations with the papal see. As Alfonso pursued his claims to the kingdom of Naples and inserted himself into the turbulent world of *Quattrocento* Italian politics, he sometimes encountered what Alan Ryder called a *frosty atmosphere in the curia*⁴⁴. Alfonso and Eugenius IV were rarely on good terms; at one point, as Alfonso backed the anti-papal Council of Basel, Eugenius engaged

⁴⁰ On the Lleida inquest, see Smoller 2014, pp. 219-220. For the hiring of the notary, Fages 1905, p. 379. The Dominicans put out a call for the gathering of miracle tales at their 1451 Chapter General, held in Rome. See Reichert 1900, p. 256. Chapters General met at Pentecost, which fell on June 13 in 1451.

⁴¹ Daileader 2016, p. 200.

⁴² Martínez Ferrando 1955, pp. 128-129. The gap appears between entries number 79 (December 30, 1416) and 80 (October 6, [1450]).

⁴³ Martínez Ferrando 1955, p. 129 (no. 80): "e, por tanto, la mi tardanza no empache el beneficio d'este santo ombre." Again, this letter indicates the greater efforts of the Dukes of Brittany, who had already sent a collection of Vincent's miracles to Alfonso's late brother Enrique, who had died in 1445.

⁴⁴ Ryder 1990, p. 212; Esponera 2009, pp. 109-112; Gómez 2009, pp. 115-117.

the services of the *condottiere* Giovanni Vitelleschi against the Aragonese monarch⁴⁵. Another low point was the 1440 unmasking of the forged Donation of Constantine by one of Alfonso's stable of humanists, Lorenzo Valla, part of a concerted attack on papal claims of suzerainty over the kingdom of Naples⁴⁶. While Alfonso and Eugenius came to a sort of reconciliation in 1443, after the monarch's triumphal entry into his new realm, Alfonso had more pressing demands to make of the pontiff at that point than to ask for Vincent's canonization: to be invested formally with the kingdom of Naples, to have his bastard son (and heir apparent to Naples) legitimized, and to see two of his most loyal bishops promoted to the rank of cardinal⁴⁷. Only with the election of Pope Nicholas V in 1447 did Alfonso see a more compliant pope upon the throne of Saint Peter⁴⁸.

Other evidence supports the conclusion that the monarch did not push in earnest for Vincent's canonization until after the accession of Nicholas V. In a letter written by Alfonso to Pope Calixtus III on April 28, 1455, the king both congratulated his *very own creature*, as Ryder put it, upon his promotion to the papal see and solicited Calixtus to complete the process of canonizing Vincent Ferrer⁴⁹. Alfonso's phrasing here is telling: *his holiness should remember the insistence and supplication that the said lord [Alfonso] has made by various of his ambassadors and letters, DURING THE LIFETIME OF NICHOLAS V OF GOOD MEMORY, ...for the canonization of the glorious master Vincent Ferrer*⁵⁰. If Jean V of Brittany had begun petitioning for canonization almost immediately upon the death of Vincent Ferrer, Alfonso's two papal letters on the same topic strongly suggest that the crown of Aragon was late in coming to the game, beginning only with the reign of Nicholas V in 1447-55.

Nicholas's letter of October 18, 1451, establishing the commission of three cardinals that began the canonization process, implies the same. Describing the lead-up to his decision to open canonization proceedings, Nicholas traced a history that went back to the years just following Vincent's death. As would Pietro Ranzano, he began his story with the efforts of Jean V

⁴⁵ Ryder 1990, 215-224.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 241, 313, 321-323.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, 255-257. Ryder (1990, p. 257) notes that Eugenius privately continued to express his dissatisfaction with Alfonso.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 259-261.

⁴⁹ The quoted phrase is Ryder's 1990, p. 261. Letter: Martínez Ferrando 1955, pp. 130-132 (no. 81).

⁵⁰ Martínez Ferrando 1955, p. 131 (no. 81): "la sua sanctedat se deu recordar de la instància e supplicació queu lo dit senyor ha fetes per diverses embaxades sues e letres, *vivint papa Nicola quint, de bona memoria*, immediat predecessor de la sua sanctedat, per la canonització del gloriós mestre Vicent Ferrer" (my emphasis).

of Brittany, noting that the Duke had forwarded a record of Vincent's miracles to Martin V and had subsequently petitioned Eugenius IV on behalf of the holy friar. Only following his own acquisition of the papal title in 1447, however, does Nicholas's narrative add the names of Juan of Castile and León and Alfonso of Aragon as postulators for Vincent's canonization. Further, Nicholas's letter appears to show that this latter request came only in 1451, following the Dominicans' Chapter General meeting in Rome in June of that year. For that reason, it seems reasonable to me to date Alfonso's first letter on the matter not to 1450, as Martínez Ferrando posits, but rather to October 6, 1451, that is, at the very time Nicholas was deliberating about whether to open the canonization process⁵¹.

Still, once Alfonso had decided that his dynasty's connections with the Valencian friar could form an important part of his royal propaganda in Naples, he appears to have viewed the canonization process as a way to achieve that end. Even though there was, as mentioned before, no canonization inquest held in Vincent's own Valencia, a local inquest did take place in Alfonso's new capital of Naples in August through November 1454. There, twenty-one of the twenty-four witnesses whose depositions survive had clear roots in the crown of Aragon, indicating the extent to which Vincent was being crafted as a saintly manifestation of the new dynasty. While the major shaping force behind the Naples inquest was the Dominican Master General Martial Auribelli, who seems to have acted as its procurer, the Trastámaras did make their presence—and their ties to the holy preacher—apparent in the proceedings. First of all, unlike Duke Pierre II in Brittany, Alfonso himself testified at the inquest, perhaps as the very first witness heard by the tribunal. While his full deposition is no longer intact, Alfonso at the very least added his eyewitness confirmation to thirteen of the twenty-seven articles of interrogation that had been drawn up by the Master General⁵². Several other Naples witnesses had extremely close connections with the monarch: the king's own confessor, the Dominican bishop of Majorca; his personal physician; and a member of Alfonso's immediate household. Fittingly, the bishop of Majorca recalled in his testimony Vincent's role in the Compromise of Caspe, which had brought Alfonso's father to the throne of Aragon⁵³.

Not surprisingly, when Calixtus III celebrated Vincent's canonization on June 29, 1455, Alfonso made much of the fact in Naples.

⁵¹ ADM, MS 87 G 11, p. 2; edition: Fages 1905, p. 381. For Martínez Ferrando's date of the first letter from Alfonso, see n. 43, above.

⁵² UVB, G.C. 1869, M. 690, *Proceso de la canonización de San Vicente Ferrer, 9 del junio 1590*, ff. 289v-290r. Edition: Fages 1904, pp. 447-448.

⁵³ Drawing upon Smoller 2014, pp. 44-45, 61-63, 73-75.

As Nikolas Jaspert notes, to commemorate the occasion the king ordered the production of sumptuous painted banners, which were adorned with the arms of the crown of Aragon. This decorative scheme stood in marked contrast to Alfonso's more usual commissions, which called for the display of the arms of Sicily and Naples, as well as those of Aragon⁵⁴. The message of Alfonso's exclusive focus on his (and Vincent's) Iberian roots at the moment of the saint's canonization seems clear: just as the Valencian friar had been chosen by God for sainthood, so, too, had God designated the Trastámaras of Aragon to be rulers of Naples.

Similarly, we can perhaps detect the influence of Alfonso in the first *vita* of the new saint, whose author, Pietro Ranzano, had close ties to the Aragonese court in Naples⁵⁵. Although he was working from the canonization inquests, in which the majority of the testimony came from the inquest held in Brittany, when Ranzano came to catalogue miracles worked by Vincent Ferrer during his lifetime and after his death, he included almost no miracles from the duchy of Brittany, even though, as the site of the saint's tomb, it might be expected to have witnessed numerous *post mortem* miracles—as is, in fact, apparent in the canonization inquests. Instead, Ranzano opted to present a preponderance of miracle tales set in lands belonging to the crown of Aragon, including a number not found in the canonization inquests⁵⁶. It is hard to avoid concluding that Ranzano in this *vita*, mindful of the interests of his friends in Naples, went out of his way to emphasize Vincent's ties to Aragon.

A fitting pictorial representation of the new saint's importance to the Trastámara rulers of Naples appears in the altarpiece painted by Colantonio for the Neapolitan Dominican church of San Pietro Martire. In the panel beneath the saint's portrait are depicted a kneeling Isabella of Chiarmon-te, wife of Alfonso's son and successor in Naples Fernando (Ferrante of Naples), with her two children⁵⁷. In Colantonio's panel, just as Alfonso hoped, Vincent's sanctity and his powers of miraculous intercession surround and protect the Aragonese Neapolitan dynasty.

⁵⁴ Jaspert 2000, p. 1846. Still, as Jaspert notes (pp. 1846-1847), the most important saint promoted by Alfonso in Naples was Saint George.

⁵⁵ See Smoller 2014, pp. 122-125. On the relationship between this work and other early *vitae*, see Wittlin 1994.

⁵⁶ This paragraph is based on Smoller 2018, pp. 92-95.

⁵⁷ See discussion in Smoller 2014, pp. 197-198; Calvé 2016, pp. 458-462. As Calvé notes, the painting is now dated to 1455-1456, during the lifetime of Alfonso. This fact would underscore the importance of the association with Vincent Ferrer, as Alfonso struggled to obtain papal recognition of the legitimacy of Fernando.

4. RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS IN THE CANONIZATION PROCESS

When Pietro Ranzano catalogued the final push towards Vincent's canonization in the brief *Life* he sent to Giovanni da Pistoia, he noted that *frequently many adverse things happened that were a great impediment to our cause*⁵⁸. Fortunately, the Dominican Master General Martial Auribelli providently foresaw (*providit*) these difficulties, and *he excluded all the things that could be adverse [to the case]*⁵⁹. While Ranzano does not specify here what sorts of objections were raised to Vincent's sanctity, a close reading of a number of sources reveals a number of impediments that Auribelli must have been working to neutralize, as well as the strategies that Auribelli and other promoters of Vincent's sanctity adopted in order to silence his detractors.

Auribelli's foresight of the potential obstacles to Vincent's canonization must have been greatly aided by the experienced curial advocate Andrea de Sancta Cruce, whom the Dominicans, Duke Pierre II, and Kings Juan and Alfonso had hired as their procurer for the canonization process. Nicholas V's 1451 letter of commission notes that Andrea had, on their behalf, presented the case for opening the process to a general consistory, enumerating Vincent's miracles and supplicating the pope and cardinals to appoint a commission to inform themselves about the friar's life and miracles⁶⁰. Andrea would also serve simultaneously as curial procurer for the bishop and chapter of Salisbury, as they sought the canonization of Osmund of Salisbury, a venture that met with success in 1457, just two years following Vincent's elevation to sainthood. For his Salisbury employers, Andrea provided helpful advice about information that was most likely to sway the pope; he must have passed along similar tips to the promoters of Vincent's cause⁶¹. In effect, Andrea's job was not unlike that of a Washington lobbyist. As a knowledgeable insider, he could advise his clients on how best to grease the wheels of power.

Among the issues Andrea signalled to Martial Auribelli may have been the persistent rumor that Vincent had been convicted of heresy by the Aragonese inquisitor general Nicholas Eymeric. According to the Franciscan Leonardo da Griffoni, in a treatise composed during the tense period in 1398 when most of the Avignon cardinals broke with Benedict XIII, among the

⁵⁸ BC, MS 112, f. 63v (see n. 6, above).

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 64r: "Omnibus quae in rem erant prouidit. Cuncta quae aduersari potuerunt exclusit."

⁶⁰ Fages 1905, p. 381; ADM, MS 87 G 11, pp. 2-3 (the manuscript is damaged here).

⁶¹ See Smoller 2014, pp. 65-66; as well as Smoller 2018, pp. 83-84. On Andrea de Sancta Cruce, see also Esposito 1981. Andrea would later appear in the employ of Alfonso V's son Fernando. See, e.g., Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS NAL 3198, f. 30r-46r.

pontiff's many faults was his protection of notorious heretics, including his own confessor, Vincent Ferrer. According to Griffoni, Vincent had preached a Good Friday sermon in which he alleged that Judas Iscariot had, in fact, been saved, after silently in his heart confessing to the crime of betraying Jesus. Eymeric, as Griffoni related, had initiated an inquisitorial process and found Vincent guilty of heresy, but Benedict XIII had confiscated the records and had them burned in order to destroy all memory of the case. Unfortunately for Vincent, however, as Griffoni alleged, Eymeric had told him and all the other cardinals about the incident⁶².

The story of Vincent's heresy conviction continued to circulate in subsequent years. According to Philip Daileader, who seems inclined to believe the tale, Jean Gerson, writing in 1402, offered Benedict XIII a number of suggestions for how he might answer the accusation that he had ordered the burning of the heresy records. The charges surfaced again during the 1409 Council of Pisa, where eight witnesses mentioned both Vincent's heresy trial and Benedict's destruction of the records. Although three persons stood up to dispute these claims, again, as Daileader shrewdly notes, none of those who rebutted the charges out and out denied that Vincent had been tried for heresy or that Benedict had had the evidence thereof burned⁶³. But if the story still had any currency at the time of the canonization trial, it must have been one of those adverse things that Auribelli effectively eliminated, for not a trace of it appears in the canonization inquests or the early hagiography⁶⁴.

Another likely religious objection to Vincent's canonization is the fact that Vincent repeatedly preached that Antichrist had been born in the year 1403⁶⁵. The obvious conclusion from that piece of information was that the son of perdition would become manifest and begin his three-and-a-half year reign of terror in 1433, his biography being in every respect an inversion of the life of Christ. That Vincent's frequent and highly specific apocalyptic pronouncements had raised eyebrows in the friar's own lifetime is apparent from the letter he wrote to Benedict XIII on July 27, 1412, in which Vincent explained and defended his thinking about the world's end⁶⁶. Similarly, in a treatise against flagellants, largely aimed against the band of penitents that followed Vincent during his preaching tours, Jean Gerson recommended

⁶² See Schmitt 1958, pp. 44, 70-72; Heimann 2001, pp. 143-145; Esponera 2007, pp. 59-62; Daileader 2016, pp. 28-29.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, pp. 29-30, 32.

⁶⁴ If there were some memory of Eymeric's actions in Aragon, that would have been one more good reason to avoid holding a local inquest in Valencia.

⁶⁵ See Rusconi 1979, pp. 219-223; Fuster 2002, pp. 125-178; 2005, pp. 67-76; Daileader 2016, ch. 6, pp. 137-159.

⁶⁶ Fuster 2002, pp. 134-147; Smoller 2014, pp. 132-33, 136-37.

only the most general of preaching about the Last Judgment, noting that each person would meet his own judgment upon his death. Gerson seemed to imply here that Vincent's brand of highly specific apocalypticism was a threat to public order⁶⁷.

How Martial Auribelli and the promoters of Vincent's canonization handled the issue of his pronouncements regarding Antichrist is not entirely clear. On the one hand, Auribelli appears to have adopted a strategy of deliberate silence. In the articles of interrogation that he supplied for the Naples inquest, there appears not a word about Vincent's apocalyptic preaching⁶⁸. Nor does any mention of his proclamations about Antichrist occur in the shorter list of articles used in the inquest held in Toulouse in May and June of 1454, a list that may have been produced by the Dominican theologian and inquisitor Hugo Nigri⁶⁹. Still, it was impossible to prevent witnesses from remembering Vincent's moving and terrifying sermons about Antichrist⁷⁰. Hence, it appears that promoters of Vincent's canonization re-directed those memories by emphasizing the ways in which the preacher's message about the imminence of the Last Judgment effectively brought audiences to penitence. This tactic, at least, is the one adopted in the bull of canonization, issued by Calixtus III's successor Pius II on October 1, 1458, and it seems to have stuck. Vincent quickly became remembered simply as a preacher of the Last Judgment⁷¹.

Another ticklish subject with which Auribelli and others pushing for Vincent's canonization had to deal was the issue of Vincent's long association with the Avignon pope Benedict XIII. While the official line in the mid-fifteenth century was one of strict neutrality regarding the divided papacy of the Schism years, Benedict, who stubbornly had clung to his title long after the election of Martin V and the end of the Council of Constance, was not remembered with great fondness by many outside the crown of Aragon. Writing shortly after Vincent's canonization, Antoninus, the Dominican Archbishop of Florence, would feel compelled to address the issue head on, acknowledging that

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 137; Smoller 1994, pp. 94-95, 116-117. Early hagiographers also would feel compelled to deal with the issue of what was, by 1455, a patently erroneous prediction regarding Antichrist. See Smoller 2014, pp. 137-138, 142-143.

⁶⁸ The articles (absent articles 21 and 22) are in UVB, G.C. 1869, M. 690, ff. 273v-275r; edition: Fages 1904, pp. 408-410. See Smoller 2014, pp. 73-74.

⁶⁹ The Toulouse articles appear in two depositions, as in UVB, G.C. 1869, M. 690, f. 194v (Alricus de Ruppe), and Joannes Hugonis (ff. 228r-228v); edition: Fages 1904, p. 313 (Alricus de Ruppe; Fages omits the questions in his edition of Joannes Hugonis's deposition). On the possible role of Hugo Nigri as procurer, see Smoller 2014, pp. 71-72. On Nigri, Montagnes 1982.

⁷⁰ Examples in Daileader 2016, p. 159.

⁷¹ *Rationi congruit*, in Gaude 1857-1872, pp. 144-149. See Smoller 2014, pp. 172-173.

even though this Saint Vincent spent nearly his entire career under the obedience of Benedict XIII, ... and the Italians and many other nations judged him [Benedict], with his followers, to be an apostate and schismatic, ... in no way does this overshadow the saint's merits or diminish his sanctity⁷².

Auribelli's response to the nagging concern about Vincent's allegiance to Benedict was to recast the friar as a crucial player in the efforts to end the Schism. This strategy is most apparent in Auribelli's articles of interrogation for the Naples canonization inquest, in which witnesses were prompted to affirm

that the aforesaid Brother Vincent most miraculously worked for the union of God's holy Church, so that many dissident princes and kingdoms in the obedience of the various popes were brought by him to union and the obedience of a single pope⁷³.

It features as well in Pietro Ranzano's *vita*, composed just following the canonization at the request of both Auribelli and Calixtus III. There, Ranzano –with an apparently willful disregard for chronology– presented Vincent's most important life work as his healing of the Great Schism. In Ranzano's lengthy telling, *Vincent ... omitted nothing, in order that by his efforts the church would be brought to union*⁷⁴.

A final sticking point may well have been Vincent's persistent refusal to attend the Council of Constance, which at last brought the Great Schism to its end. In late January 1416, Alfonso, in a letter to the crown's ambassador at the Council, expressed his frustration at Vincent's unwillingness to participate in the gathering⁷⁵. He addressed Vincent himself in letters from April and again in August of the same year, in which Alfonso, fervently requesting

⁷² Antoninus Florentinus, *Chronicon seu opus historiarum* (Nurnberg: Koberger, 1484), Pars III, titulus xxiii, capitulum viii, §4, f. ccviii verso: "Advertendum autem diligenter quod sanctus iste vincentius etsi cursum suum pene consumaverat sub obedientia Benedicti .xiii. Avinioni cum sua curia residens et illum ytalici cum pluribus aliis nationibus apostaticum et scismaticum arbitrarentur cum sequacibus suis . . . in nullo hoc habet sancti merita obumbrare vel sanctitatem minuere." See Smoller 2014, p. 136.

⁷³ UVB, G.C. 1869, M. 690, f. 274v (article 15): "Item quod prefatus frater Vincentius pro unione ecclesie sancte Dei *miraculosissime* operatus est adeo quod multos principes et regna in obedientiam diversorum pontificum dissidentia ad unionem et unius pontificis obedientiam reduxit" (my emphasis). Edition, Fages 1904, p. 410. See Smoller 2014, pp. 73-75.

⁷⁴ AASS, April, 1: 491: "At Vincentius interea nihil omisit, quo minus sua opera unio Ecclesiae fieret." On Ranzano's handling of Vincent's relationship with Benedict, see Smoller 2014, pp. 139-143.

⁷⁵ Martínez Ferrando 1955, pp. 114-115 (no. 71): letter of Alfonso to Antonio Caxal. See Esponera 2009, pp. 108-109.

his attendance at the Council⁷⁶. Twice in 1417, Jean Gerson also would urge Vincent to come to Constance⁷⁷. And yet all of these appeals were in vain. Vincent's recent biographer Philip Daileader has insisted that the friar never accepted the authority of the Council, keeping firm to sentiments he had first articulated in 1380 that a council's authority could not be superior to that of a pope⁷⁸. If Auribelli's strategy was to present Vincent as miraculously working to end the Schism, his non-attendance at the Council that had accomplished that goal may well have posed a problem for the canonization trial.

How, exactly, Auribelli "excluded" this objection is not entirely apparent, but there are hints in the canonization inquests. In the Naples inquest, there is no mention of the Council in the articles of interrogation supplied by the Master General on which witnesses were questioned. The only discussion of Constance in the Naples testimony comes from the deposition of Fernandus, Bishop of Telesse (Ferrando Gimel de Urrea), a long-time companion of Vincent's. Fernandus's reference to Constance forms part of a strange story, in which Vincent's opinion had been solicited by representatives from the Council in order to settle a dispute about an obscure point of doctrine. Vincent's response had been uncharacteristically discourteous, as he first informed his interlocutors that *on account of the pride and arrogance of some of those present* [at Constance], *God did not wish to reveal this secret*, alleging that there was a *devil* there who did not permit the truth to come out. Then, after resolving their difficulty, Vincent added that he marveled *that men of such learning* did not know these matters, whose difficulty he dismissed by calling them *childish trifles (puerilia)*. Fernandus followed up these details by noting that, when Vincent's response was conveyed to the Council, *the whole Council took it to be a miracle*⁷⁹. This odd tale had a double effect: first, it glorified Vincent, whose erudition had been sought out and whose response was equally lauded as a miracle; and second, it served to undercut the reputation of the Council of Constance. Vincent, Fernandus's testimony implied, had such a deep understanding of doctrine that his ability to solve the Council's dilemma appeared to be miraculous. And he had good reason to stay

⁷⁶ Martínez Ferrando 1955, p. 119 (no. 75), and pp. 127-128 (no. 78). Alfonso also made arrangements to advance the necessary expenses for Vincent's voyage: *ibidem*, pp. 120-121 (no. 76).

⁷⁷ See Smoller 2014, pp. 134-135; Daileader 2016, pp. 168-169.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 168-174.

⁷⁹ UVB, G.C. 1869, M. 690, f. 283r: "dixit, quod propter superbiam et arrogantiam aliquorum ibi existentium Deus non vult manifestare hoc secretum quia ibi est unus diabolus qui non permitit ut veritas, [sic] Et tamen ista sunt puerilia, et miror tantos viros sciencia preditos ista ignorare, sic et sic est, et ita est veritas...et totum consilium tenuit ad miraculum." Edition: Fages 1904, p. 423.

away from a prideful, arrogant Council, which was haunted by a devil. Given the rocky trajectory of the conciliar movement in the years between Constance and the time of the canonization inquests, the tale might have resounded well with the *curia* in the mid-1450s, effectively silencing any worries about Vincent's failure to appear at the Council.

In the end, the insider tips provided by Andrea de Sancte Cruce, along with Martial Auribelli's relentless efforts, proved successful. Vincent was declared a saint. But Ranzano's description of the final stages of the canonization process leaves one with the impression that it might have turned out otherwise. On the very day Calixtus III had set to announce publicly his intention to enroll Vincent in the catalogue of the saints, everything suddenly seemed to unravel. As the numerous observers who had gathered outside the papal residence shifted anxiously on their feet, waiting for Calixtus to appear, Andrea de Sancta Cruce *was taken by a sudden syncope and fell to the ground, half dead*. At once there was a rush and clamor by the crowd, who despaired of Andrea's imminent death. The onlookers were divided. Some said that his collapse represented a judgment of God, *who by no means wished ... that a man be enrolled among the saints who did not appear to be worthy of such glory*. Others, including Ranzano, saw it as the occasion for God to indicate his favor by allowing Vincent's merits to work a spectacular public miracle⁸⁰. Ranzano draws out the tale with great drama: relating how the legates from the duke of Brittany, Martial Auribelli, and many others instantly dissolved into tears; how Ranzano and some of the other Dominican friars began earnestly imploring God and commending themselves to the merits of Vincent Ferrer; and how, just as Calixtus had appeared in his pontifical robes and taken his seat, Andrea sprang up from the ground, alive and well. At once, he made a lengthy and copious oration in praise of Vincent Ferrer, a speech easily judged the most prolix and excellent of the many good words said about the friar that day⁸¹.

Ranzano's narration omits only one crucial fact: that Andrea de Sancta Cruce was the procurer acting on behalf of the postulators for Vincent's canonization. He identifies him solely as *a noble Roman lawyer Andrea, with the cognomen de Sancta Cruce, who was there in order to make a speech in praise of Vincent*⁸². Ranzano's reticence here must not

⁸⁰ BC, MS 112, f. 64v: "sincopi repente correptus in terram semianimis concidit...Erant qui dicerent id dei iudicio factum : qui nequaquam pati pro summa iusticia uoluit ut referretur inter sanctos uir qui non uideretur tanta gloria dignus."

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, ff. 64r- 65v.

⁸² *Ibidem*, f. 64v: "Andreas cognomento de sancta cruce uir Romanus nobilis iure consultus / qui eo in loco erat in uincuntii laudem orationem habiturus."

have been out of ignorance. Rather, he must have deliberately obscured Andrea's true role lest his spectacular infirmity and healing appear to be more a calculated performance than a divine miracle in approbation of Vincent's sainthood.

Despite the eloquence of his humanist-polished prose, Ranzano's narrative of the end of the canonization process, thus, gives us a fairly accurate guide to some of the political and religious interests involved in the canonization of Vincent Ferrer. He correctly credits the Montfort dukes of Brittany as having been, from the first, the prime promoters of the sainthood of the Valencian friar whose tomb lay steps away from the duke's residence in Vannes. He acknowledges the role of Alfonso of Aragon in pushing for the canonization, all the while letting the observant reader see that this support on the part of the Trastámara monarch came later than and never equalled that provided by the dukes of Brittany. And in alluding to the Dominican Master General's *almost infinite labors*, Ranzano points not simply to the interest the Order of Preachers took in seeing the canonization of one of their own, but also to the behind the scenes work that Auribelli and others had to do in order to answer religious objections to Vincent's sanctity.

Evidence from the canonization inquests, letters, and early hagiography helps to flesh out the story lurking beneath Ranzano's rhetoric. In Brittany, Vincent was of vital importance to the Montfort family, as a symbol of sacred legitimacy in a duchy where their power was still contested following the Breton War of Succession. In Aragon, Vincent's reputation helped to bolster that of another new dynasty, the Trastámaras, but only, it seems, until his pronouncement of the crown's withdrawal of support from a pope who was a native son. Not until Alfonso V's success in pursuing his claims in Naples and the accession of a pope more compliant to Alfonso's will did the king of Aragon and Naples actively push for Vincent's canonization, and, even then, he viewed Vincent primarily as a symbol of the legitimacy of his dynasty's rule in Naples, but not back home in Aragon. Careful reading of the evidence shows us the possible religious objections to Vincent's canonization—the heresy charge, his preaching on Antichrist, his actions vis-à-vis the Schism and the Council of Constance—and how Auribelli and others subtly recast the friar as the preacher whose apocalyptic sermons moved crowds to penitence and whose strenuous efforts brought unity to a divided church. Saints were forceful characters in their lives and powerful symbols upon their deaths. It should not be so surprising, then, that Vincent Ferrer both made enemies during his lifetime and provided an irresistible stamp of divine legitimacy to the rulers of Brittany and Naples upon his death.

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Fecha de recepción del artículo: abril 2018

Fecha de aceptación y versión final: noviembre 2018