



Primary Source Analysis: The Constitution of Narbonne 1260

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Abstract. After some reading and talking to people, I did have an answer that I'm satisfied with; clothing is something that people would commonly use to identify the state of mind and personality of an individual, also best reflects the spirit of a person. In Franciscan Order's case my understanding is that, if a person can not even accept the most simple and crude cloths, how can him/her aspire poverty? It is just not possible and realistic, if someone can not endure a winter with the cheapest and most common clothing, or go about barefoot how can that person say they are seeking for the poverty that Saint Francis and Bonaventure have believed? Dressing is also important since it shows the ordinary people a brief image of the whole Order, it presents a first impression to the people who don't know about Franciscan Order, imagine meets a person who says his religious group seeks for poverty and simple life, but that person actually is enjoying luxury life-style and luxurious items, nobody would believe the person. If the case is opposite around, you see a group of faithful people in poor cloths willing to abandon money and properties to seek for poverty and serve the god with their entire life. Things just get different if the first impression brought by different kinds of clothing.

Keywords: Keyword: The Constitution of Narbonne, Franciscan Order's case

1 Introduction

The source is a constitution from the Franciscan believers, containing 12 rubrics and hundreds of sub-clauses, written in between 1252-1260, more likely 1260 [1]. The Constitution brought the Franciscan believers a series of rules to follow, also united the Franciscan believers, all for serve the god better and reach the ideal realm of poverty.

This Primary Source was from the Book "Writings concerning the Franciscan order" by Dominic V. Monti in 1994, the book introduced Bonaventure as leader of Franciscan Order, also presents twenty documents and introductions to their importance [2]

2 Information of Author

The Author of this Primary Source was mainly Bonaventure (1221-1274), from several other sources, it seems like the Primary Source was not done by only one person, more likely to be created by the whole Franciscan order under Bonaventure's lead. Bonaventure was the Minister General of the Franciscan order, since Feb 1257, the experience split his life experience in two halves. Bonaventure was studying at University of Paris about the Arts faculty in 1235, he proceeded all the way to Master of Arts around 1243, in between these years Bonaventure gains lots of opportunity for him to learn and write about the philosophy of Aristotle, mainly because of the Arts curriculum at Paris was consisted of seven Liberal Art, supplemented by works of Aristotle. Bonaventure started to attend lectures and disputations in theology in 1243, this is the time that he started to get in touch with Theology and Religious, until year 1252, Bonaventure officially became a "Formed Bachelor" of Theology, he starts to perform the three main duties of a Master, which are: lecturing the Bible, preaching and engaging the disputations. This didn't last long, in 1253 lots of master's and students in University of Paris went on a strike, Bonaventure and two other Dominicans continues to teach and refused to join the strike, so they have been expelled from the University [3].

Therefore, the next stage of his life begins. Starting in 1253, Bonaventure joins and involves in lots of the Franciscan activities, starting to see the problems of the Franciscan Order which leads him to draft rules and the faith of the Franciscans, later been known as the Constitution of Narbonne [4]. This last to year 1257, when he became the Minister General of the Franciscan Order, he get the chance to lead the Franciscan Order and officially drafted the Constitution of Narbonne.

Besides Bonaventure, the Franciscan Order also played an important role in Constitution of Narbonne. Franciscans were consisted of three orders [5]. The First Order were the Priests and lay brothers who sworn to lead a life of prayers, Penance and Preaching [6]. And the First Order have three main branches, these three branches were all independent: the Friars Minor, Friars Minor conventual and the Friars Minor Capuchin [7]. The Second Order consisted of reclusive nuns belonging to the Order of St. Clair, known as Poor Clares. The Third Order is made up of religious people and lay people who emulate the spirit of St. Francis by engaging in teaching, charity and social service work. More strictly, the latter order includes the Third Order secular, whose laymen live in a world without oaths. And the third-order secular, whose members lives in religious communities.

3 Historical Information

The Primary Source itself was from the time of Mid 1200s, the time after the death of Francis, it was written to unify the order by using a common ideology under the large increased needs of unification. They collected both the order's legislation and the life of Francis, later forms the basis of the Constitution of Narbonne. And later the constitution of Narbonne basically replaced most of the biography of Francis. This symbolized the start of Bonaventure's rule in a moderated spirit.

Before the drafting and promulgation of the constitution, there were many problems and conflicts within the Order, even going back to the time before Francis' death in 1226. These conflicts stem from a commitment to maintain the pledge to maintain total poverty. The raiding expansion of members of the Order created a need for fixed monastic houses, but these would not have been justified if the rules of complete poverty of Francis were strictly adhered to. Three parties emerged gradually: Zealots, who insisted on a literal adherence to the original poverty rules that affected communal and individual poverty; Laxists, who supported many mitigation measures; and Moderates, or communities, who wanted a structure that allowed for some form of public property the law.

During the time of the Reverend St. Bonaventure (1257-1274) a certain balance was struck between these different schools of thought. Sometimes referred to as the second founder of the Order, he gave a sensible, gentle interpretation of the rules. During this period, monks spread throughout Europe and missionaries penetrated deep into Syria and Africa. At the same time, monasteries in university cities such as Paris and Oxford were also converted into seminaries, which quickly became one of the most famous seminaries in Europe. The golden age of Franciscans lasted until Bonaventure's death. The battle of order broke out again.⁵

4 Summary of Text

The Constitution of Narbonne has been divided into many different rubrics, each rubric contains many sub-clauses relating to the topic of the rubric.

Rubric I: Entering the Order

The First rubric are the rules for entering the order, basically the Franciscan Order only accepts faithful individuals who gives up all of their properties, seeking for the poverty and not younger than 18, in addition these people needs to be free status, which means they should not have marriage, debts or penalty of excommunication. After the been accepted by the Order, the novitiate period will be guide by a devout and prudent member of the order, to make sure the new member will confess sincerely and not breaking any rules [8].

Rubric II: Quality of Dress

Since the Franciscan Order are seeking for the poverty, therefore dressing regulations can not be avoided. The dressing of Franciscan Order should be as simple and cheap as possible, which is been said in the first sub-clause very clearly, they can only wear poor cloths. The members of the Order should not have excess of cloths, and members should be able to go about barefoot, also extra or some certain cloths needs permission to wear. In addition belts and any excess use of all sorts of dressing should not be seen because its obeying the original idea of Franciscan Order [9].

Rubric III: Observance of Poverty

The third Rubric in my perspective is the most important one, since it's the definition of Poverty for the Franciscan Order Members. Something that all of these believers are seeking for in their entire life.

The Third Rubric clearly explains the definition of poverty for Franciscans, in conclusion is that no members of Franciscans Order can receive money for any reason, not only money were not allowed, also anything received in order to sold, also members dwell in places should not be asking or begging money from ordinary people, instead they can ask for bread and wine. Furthermore there should not be any valuable articles of gold, silver, gems or precious materials deposited for safekeeping in places of Franciscan Orders, except for books, and the members of Franciscan Order should not be keeping money on their own or spending money out for buying properties. At last the most important thing, all churches are not allowed to have valuable decorations except for image of the Crucified Lord, the Lady, Saint John, Saint Francis and Saint Anthony [10].

5 Terminology

Custodians; a person with responsibility for protecting or taking care of something [11]

Advowson; Penalty, the word came from “in mercy” [12].

Apostate; people who left religious order or who returned to a heresy having once renounced it [13].

Canon; A law or body of laws of a church. Member of a clerical group living according to a canon or rule.

Excommunication; Exclusion from the membership of the church or from communion with faithful Christians.

Glebe; Land granted to a clergyman as part of his benefice. Used to provide his food or an income.

Indenture; A form of contract between the two parties in which each kept a half cut along and indented line; hence indentured retainer, one who is retained in service by means of such a contract.

6 Conclusions

Part 1: What have I learn.

The basic rules of the Franciscan Orders and the brief history of the Franciscan Order, the most important was that the definition of Poverty for the Franciscan Order.

Part 2: How does the text revise my existing knowledge?

The Franciscans did changed my thoughts of the Medieval religious groups and also their morality, and while researching about the primary source, I found that Medieval was not that dark and ignorance, and our stereotype was definitely incorrect, because it was a time period when people were trying out new things and everything we have later were still under a development during medieval, it was a conversion period from Romans dominance to Europe now.

Part 3: Further question from myself.

After reading the Constitution of Narbonne and comparing the end of the Franciscan Order, or maybe just the late stage of Franciscan Order, I start to think is the end of Franciscan Order potentially caused by the strict rules and the members found the live

in poverty is much harder than they expected before entering the Order which led to an overindulgence?

There is no doubt that Constitution of Narbonne is an ideal morality of human, and apart of is something we still should be seeking for in modern days, which is also impossible to achieve in modern days, it's too harsh and also obeying the main ideology of modern people: Freedom and Independence. Looking at it, my first impression was that, it is too strict, but I have to say that I really admire these people in Franciscan Order, I respect they are taking actual action to show their faith and brings them in to the real world by sacrificing lots of their own properties, personal independence and else, just for creating an ideal society, which they did success in the early stage.

Reading through the Constitution again and again, a question comes to my mind. What made Franciscan Order dismiss? Or what cause the Franciscan Order became no longer popular?

The answer to the first question is obvious, obviously shown in the history. Lots of people joins the Franciscan Order with different reasons, and a large part of these people are not faithful enough or prepared to serve the god and seek for the poverty, the life inside the Franciscan Order are tougher and much worse than their expectation, so these part of people start to desire a better living quality and lifestyle, by using the property inside the Order, which is something strongly obeys the original idea of Franciscan Order; not only these problems occurs, the rest of Franciscan followers who seeks for poverty also splits into smaller groups because of the controversy on questions of poverty, which finally lead to a separation of the Franciscan Order in 14th century. Since the separation the former members of the Franciscan Order forms into different smaller groups, these group members usually have much similar ideas and relations comparing to the Franciscan Order after the death of Bonaventure.

The answer to the second question in my personal point of view is the change of society over time. Medieval and Renaissance were the time period when the most revolutionary inventions and theories were been produced, and this era changes quickly, the Constitution of Narbonne published in 1260 might just not fits the society of 1300s and later, the world changes, in other words the world evolutes day by day, there is nothing that is eternal, the faith of the Franciscan Order was been admired and respected in 1200s doesn't mean they will still be popular in the future, people in 1300s and later could be seeking for something new instead of something that Franciscans in 1200s spent their whole life on. Take Modern society 21th century as an example, most people now days desires freedom and equality, which is something that people in 13th century would never thought about, and in modern world you just simply can not live without money in this world, which is sort of different in the past, like what is said in the Constitution of Narbonne, the members of Franciscan Order were able to ask for simple foods or barter with ordinary people, this is something that you would hardly see now days. At last, the most important difference between Medieval and Modern Society is that people now days would never abandon their properties and wish to have a life in poverty, in such a society, everybody wants more money or property to satisfy their desire or just to entertain themselves, if you are really following the Constitution of Narbonne, people wouldn't respect or admire you, instead most people would just think that you're are a psychotic, most of the rubrics in the constitution seems to be a too

strict from a 21st century's view, not like 13th people would admire and support the Franciscans because of their valuable spirit, therefore the Franciscan Order can not really survive through time.

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