

Theocratic Centralism:
The Politics of Boniface VIII during the Thirteenth Century

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Pope [Boniface VIII](#); statue by [Arnolfo di Cambio](#), in the Opera del Duomo Museum in [Florence](#), Italy. Circa 1298. Source: Wikipedia
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Opera_del_duomo_\(FI\)_arnolfo_di_cambio,_Bonifacio_VIII_,_1298_circa,_03.JPG](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Opera_del_duomo_(FI)_arnolfo_di_cambio,_Bonifacio_VIII_,_1298_circa,_03.JPG)

I

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the conflict between secular states and the papacy was a central issue to the development of nations. This paper intends to outline how Pope Boniface VIII (1294-1303), in his struggle with King Philip IV le Bel of France (1268-1314), had an ultimate objective to create a theocratic government under which all other nations existed, essentially creating a Christian nation without borders, as God is everywhere and should not be limited to temporal sovereign limitations. The role of church influence in national affairs had reached its apex under the feudal system, however feudalism was beginning to decline with the changes in economy, trade and commerce, urbanization, population growth and included a change in mentality. An idea of an independent Christian kingdom, which was anathema to the papacy, had begun to grow. The battle of King Philip and Pope Boniface emphasized the growing concept of state versus church.

The policies of Boniface were primarily focused on putting the French monarch squarely under the power of the spiritual authority of the pope. However, it backfired and caused criticism towards the papacy that led to Boniface's conflict with Philip leading to his deposition as pope by an army led by Guillaume of Nogaret, Philip's chief minister, and Sciarra Colonna, who was a member of a major clan that opposed Boniface in the church. After he died in captivity on October 11th 1303, he was posthumously tried for heresy and subsequent excommunication by the French prime minister. What were Pope Boniface's goals in this struggle? Was Boniface seeking to satisfy his personal desires to dominate or was his ultimate objective to revive the Catholic Church as the supreme power over all of Christendom, both temporal and spiritual? The various actions that Boniface took outline some of his more prominent ideologies on what the role the church should be in relation to itself, but also earthly affairs, specifically the issuing of

his three most famous bulls. The struggle between Philip and Boniface shows that nation building is not just a battle of words, but economic and political consolidation of national interests. However, an important link is missing between the rise of Benedict Caetani and his anti-secular policies and his attempt to expand the ultimate power of the church to every corner of the Christian world. The struggle between France and the pope helps us to get some perspective on the rising proto-nationalism on the part of some European kingdoms.

II

The early experiences of Benedict Caetani may shed some light on how he viewed the role of the church. Benedict's contact with France began as early as 1264 on a mission to negotiate at the French court between the conflicting claims of Aragon, Castille and Naples over Sicily. At this point, perhaps some of the ideas of what the role of church was began to take root in his mind. Benedict saw first-hand what papal negotiations were like as he served under the soon to be Pope Martin IV, Simon of Brie. Benedict's experience of 1264 surely influenced his later endeavors for centralizing the spiritual authority of the pope. Further exposure to foreign affairs took place when he was sent to England to support the zealot king, Henry III (1207-1272). Pope Clement IV (1265-68) sent Cardinal Ottoboni Fieschi (1205-1276) to England to aid the English king in his struggle as he was an ally of the church. Ottoboni arrived in France in 1265, upon where Benedict was added to his entourage. Clearly, the authority of the papacy was impressed upon Benedict as he saw kings bow to the might of Peter's spiritual descendant.

Later, he was assigned to the collection of a papal tithe in France in 1276. There is a bit of irony that his first supervisory position was dealing with taxation in France. Benedict was

heavily involved with economic issues, papal notaries and was an ally of many Angevin influences, including Martin IV (1281-85) and was described by him as “fervid in zeal for the honor of Anjou and the exaltation of the Kingdom.” This may have been his ideas as a middle-aged man, but they were soon to change. When Benedict stated that “As a cardinal, I was a Gallican, so that often my Roman brothers rebuked me,” he was saying that to succeed he needed not to be a Roman, but a Gallican to use his allies to achieve greatness. When he achieved the pontificate, his priorities were to strengthen the church not only for himself, but for the Caetani clan. Benedict was seeing the universal endeavors of the church beginning to bend towards the will of secular state, as a great amount of influence came from the French cardinals. His neutrality during the elections of Celestine shows that he had realized that furthering French influence in the papacy was having a negative effect on the universal nature of the church. The control of the papacy was slipping from the hands of the pope into those of kings.

III

In the conflict between Aragon and the French Benedict undertook his first diplomatic mission as leader. With the removal of the Hohenstaufens from Sicily and Naples, Charles of Anjou, brother of the French king Philip IV, assumed the Guardianship of the city of Rome. However, due to Charles’ poor leadership quality of Sicily inspired a popular revolt at Palermo on Easter of 1282. The French in Palermo were slaughtered. Before Charles could land his fleet in Messina, Pedro III of Aragon (1239-1285) landed and decreed Sicily for his wife, Constance, the daughter of Manfred and rightful claimant to the island. Pedro was excommunicated and Aragon given to Charles. In the negotiations Benedict played a grand role, being praised by Martin IV again when

he said that Benedict was “a man of deep counsel, a man of trust, secret, industrious, circumspect”. These traits run counterpoint to his attributes later in life, which may point to a change in his personality, perception of world view or even a church not based in the power of the French nation that he was involved in forwarding such an agenda.

By the end of the 1280's, Benedict had reached the apex of his cardinal power. He had become a frequent advisor to Pope Nicholas IV (1288-1292). Benedict furthered his political power with the death of the Bishop of Paris, a member the Conti family and linked to the Caetani, turning the posthumous affairs to aid fellow Anagnites and reinforce his own powerbase. In 1291, his brother, Roffred had been selected as a senator in Rome and on October 3rd Benedict was ordained as priest, and then appointed by Nicholas IV as Cardinal of St. Martin in Montibus. All of these signs of ascending power would be put on hold by the death of Nicholas IV on April 4th. During the papal election that followed, Benedict was neutral in every aspect. Through the plague and riots, Benedict had removed himself in 1292 not to Rieti with the other cardinals, but to his country estate in Sismano in Viterbo. At this point, there is a notable change in the policies of Benedict, as previously they were generally in support of his French allies, but now they shift from that to quite neutral, if not slightly hostile.

The election of Celestine is the closing chapter in the ascendancy of Benedict. Celestine was a novice in the capacity of diplomatic relations, appointing the worst people and in general was naïve with his benevolence, although the pope did give strong support to his own sect, now called the Celestinians.¹ Celestine was an extremely pious man, but sometimes piety and the demands of politics do not mesh. By August of 1292, Celestine had been elevated from hermit to pope and immediate problems arose. Hoping to directly control to the pope, the cardinals moved Celestine to Naples, where with the support of Charles of Naples, the pope would essentially

¹ T.S.R. Boase, *Boniface VIII* (London: Constable, 1934), 44-45.

become a prisoner of his own pontificate. Celestine, as devout as he was, he refused to be the man to lead the Catholic Church. He was out of his element and was unqualified in the art of politics and bureaucracy. An amateur in the papal world, he longed for a return to his simple life as a hermit in the caves on Mount Murrone. Celestine was said to be very trusting and would apply honors and benefices upon people simply just by their asking. This was a problem because it allowed for anyone who gained access to the pope to encourage the old hermit to give them something. In many cases, it was either money or a position. The cardinals were panicked because their puppet was becoming their nightmare.² The consensus of the cardinals by 1296 was that holiness does not always make a good pope. In December of that year, Celestine decreed the right of a pope to abdicate from a pontificate, which had never been done before. One account places Benedict as questioning the legality of the matter, while another shows that he may have mentioned it to the floundering hermit.³ Celestine then left Naples, where the cardinals had hopes to control him in a secure area to return to his former life. Benedict pursued Celestine and arrested him, believing he would evolve into a real threat based on those that supported him.

Fanatics and hostile elements had moved to support Celestine for they had hopes he would have ushered in a Golden Age of revival having been disenfranchised by the depravity of the church. A poet by the name of Jacopone da Todi, had expressed hopes that Celestine would have brought a return to the apostolic life the spiritual Franciscans enjoyed.⁴ After having been captured by Benedict, he was imprisoned within the castle of Fumone near Anagni. On May 16th 1296, Celestine V died, supposedly of natural causes. However as the tale spread of the capture

² Ibid., 49.

³ Giovanni Villani, "The Unscrupulous Accession of Boniface VIII" in Charles T. Wood, ed., *Phillip the Fair and Boniface VIII: State vs. Papacy* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 20-23.

⁴ Sir Maurice Powicke, *The Christian life in the middle ages and other essays*, (London: Clarendon Press, 1976), 55.

of the former pope and his untimely death at the hands of his successor, Benedict Caetani now was quietly accused of his murder. Unfortunately for Benedict, Celestine was a far more dangerous man dead than alive. In the papal elections of 1297, Benedict was the third choice, but a clear choice as even the Colonna supported him with at least two votes.⁵

IV

During the first year or so of Boniface's pontificate, he first had to repair the damage that Celestine V had done with his irresponsible benevolence and pious ignorance. With one swift act, Boniface revoked all of Celestine's dispensations and appointments. Only the highest seats of investment could not be repealed. What this indicated is two things; the election of a non-capable figure had damaged the church's political authority and Boniface was willing to attempt to wrest control of the church back into the hands of one singularly strong pope. These repeals are not just correcting the errors, but more of an attempt to revive the papacy from the machinations of those who sought to create a puppet pope.

Beyond the realm of repairing the papal infrastructure, England and France continued to wage war. The pope sought to interject himself between France and England, perhaps to end the fighting long enough for England to defeat the Scottish rebellion that was brewing on the northern border. This is not to say that Boniface favored Edward Longshanks over Philip IV, but Boniface did have an interest in maintaining many smaller nations rather than one empire. Boniface would be more able to exert control over minor states, however, Boniface was not in a

⁵ For fuller details see Boase, *Boniface*.

position to exert actual physical force upon the kings of France and England, but would be able to effect their war efforts in other ways.⁶

The medieval church was a financial tyrant as it controlled many estates throughout Europe and was diverse in its ability to produce goods for market. The church also had the right to move money across national lines without molestation by kings. This gave the church a financial monopoly over most of Europe. Originally, taxes could be levied against monasteries, churches and convents in times of a crusade to help assist in deferring the cost of battling non-Christians. However, this practice had become common and therefore had gone unregulated. As these monies from taxes made it much easier to wage war, their removal would seriously hamper a nation's ability to conduct military operations.⁷ The clerical tax had become a staple of the kingdom's revenue scheme. To obtain these tithes, they would be authorized by the regional bishop of said territory, and therein lays a problem for the church. If these bishops were to be appointed by the lay government and not the pope, then the allegiance of the bishop would be in question. Obviously, if a church official were to be appointed by a king, he would have an obligation to that king. This is what had been happening in many European kingdoms for quite some time and had been a constant thorn in the side of the papacy. To this extent, Boniface, in addition to revoking the privileges of kings to dip into ecclesiastic coffers, the pope also had to weaken the lay invested church officials.

The last crusader stronghold, Acre, had fallen in May of 1291 to the Muslims and effectively ended all military operations in the Holy Land. The continuation of these crusading payments to the states needed to be corrected, if not for simple administrative purposes, but would show who had control. If Boniface would be able to repeal the freedoms the kings had, it

⁶ Edgar Boutaric, "The Importance of Italian Affairs" in Wood, ed., *State vs. Papacy*, 29-33.

⁷ Charles-Victor Langlois. "*The Power Politics of France*" in Wood, ed., *State vs. Papacy*, 34-41.

would help revive the universal nature of the church. The economic power of the church would then be unsurpassed with economic and political strongholds in every kingdom with the ability to refuse or support kings at will, making the papacy the most important ally in all of Christendom. Allies are something that every ruler needs, but more importantly a secure physical region from which they can operate from creates a viable kingdom, without this, allies become enemies. Boniface knew this and had a plan.

V

Perhaps most telling of Boniface's goals of centralizing the church comes from the conflict with the Colonna family. After the death of Celestine V, Boniface was elected as third choice with the support of two votes from Colonna cardinals. The Colonna knew that the new pope had been disconnected prior to his appointment, but now was consorting with the Orsini family. This presented a problem for the Colonna as it meant that their support of Boniface was not going to be returned. Their position within the church quickly became tenuous because of the installment of many relatives of the pope. Nepotism had always played a major role in papal politics and Boniface wanted to ensure that the Caetani family would benefit from his pontificate. The shrewd legal mind of Boniface also ensured that every action taken was to be done so legitimately and legally as not to be questioned. His family and allies were pushing the once influential Colonna clan out of power. This angered the Colonna because Boniface owed them his position. The issue with the Colonna came to a head after a negotiation had been made between Boniface and the Annibaldi family, from whom he was seeking to purchase a number of estates. What is interesting about these transactions is that they were all located along the road to

Rome and also connected Anagni and his other estates, effectively creating a ring of friendly territories. In a brazen attempt to halt Boniface's purchase of these legal acquisitions, on May 3rd 1297, the caravan moving the payment for the estates was seized by the Colonna. Within a week, the swift vengeance of Boniface was upon them, demanding the restoration of the stolen treasure. Stephen Colonna was to be given over to the pope as a criminal and as a punishment; the estates of Zagarolo, Colonna and Palestrina were to be handed over to the church. The loss of these estates left the Colonna without a base from which to operate from and gave the Caetani clan control over all of Campagna.

The response of the Colonna was equally as swift and speaks to one of the core problems that Boniface was dealing with: fracturing. On May 10th, the Colonna responded by stating that they did not believe Boniface to be the true pope. To remedy this, Boniface stripped two Colonna cardinals from the college and claimed in the bull *In excelso throno* that the Colonna were a vile lot as their ancestor plotted against Pope Gregory XI with his enemies. The pope responded by further removing four generations of the Colonna from Christendom. This battle of words culminated on May 23rd as the Colonna were declared schismatic and were permanently excised from the church. The issue with the Colonna now was not the simple acquisition of lands to create a network of strongholds encompassing Rome. Now the Colonna threatened his goal of creating a centralized Christian government. The Colonna then appealed for outside assistance from France, furthering the need for Boniface to crush them. To this end, Boniface called for a crusade against the Colonna on December 14th. This was an extreme measure, but Boniface was never known for his subtlety. By the summer of 1299, the last strongholds of the Colonna were laid to ruins. The interaction with the Colonna created this physical territory in which the pope was able to dominate and gave him the ability to look outwardly towards his foes more readily as

he had vanquished a major opponent within Italy. Boniface may have been acting opportunistically, but even in that frame of mind, it still shows that the pope was endeavoring to create a centralized state from which his theocracy could operate from.

VI

On February 25th, 1296, Boniface issued the *Clericis Laicos*, translated as “priests of the laity”, referring to non-priestly figures controlling the church. This bull was specifically aimed at the secular states that gathered taxes from church lands within their sovereign borders. This bull also brought the sovereignty of kings into question.⁸ The language of this bull is generally hostile towards the actions of individuals or states against the church and affirms that anyone who takes money from the church will be excommunicated immediately. In addition, the bull states that any church official that does give money to secular authorities when pressured will face the same penalty. Further, the *Clericis Laicos* places the ability for any taxation of church estates to be granted only by the will of the pope. The goal of this document was to increase the funding to the church while weakening that of the secular leaders. The *Clericis Laicos* is not specifically regarding lay investiture, but it is a prevalent thought of the time.⁹

The response to Boniface’s bull was generally accepted by the smaller states, but only France and England had the ability to resist the papacy at this point. The issue that was taken by the two secular powers was the language used in the bull and the attitude exhibited that may have indicated a strict interpretation. The modern general conception of this bull is that Boniface was attempting to interject himself between the two most prominent nations of his pontificate,

⁸ Brian Tierney. *The Crisis of Church & State, 1050-1300*. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1964), 173.

⁹ Brian Tierney, *The Middle Ages* (New York: Cornell University, 1999), 287-90.

namely to increase the power of the church, but at the same time satisfy his personal goals of domination. However, in this case, the *Clericis Laicos* might be seen as a precursor to the papal supremacy. As England had two issues, namely France across the channel and the Scottish rebels to the north, their objections would be quashed. However, further diplomatic endeavors were put on hold as Boniface had to deal with many cardinals who protested, many with other interests within their respective nations. King Philip's bureaucracy made quick work of the language in the bull and put Boniface on the defensive. Finding a common enemy with the Colonna in the new pope, Boniface was made to explain his position. In addition to this, Philip banned the movement of gold out of France following the issuing of the *Clericis Laicos*. Anyone found to be doing so would be charged with treason. By sealing the borders, Philip appears to circumvent the pope's decree. A great deal of the church's income came from these estates in France and being cut off from them would be just as bad as if Philip were taxing them heavily.¹⁰

The pope was up against a wall. With the negative response from the Curia, he was forced to make concessions that taxes were able to be levied without the consent of the pope in the case of national emergencies. The bull *Esti de Statu* was issued to give the French king less of a reason to ally with the beleaguered Colonna, whom emissaries had already met with the rebel friars. This was used by Peter Flotte, Philip IV's prime minister, as a bargaining chip to encourage Boniface to revoke the *Clericis Laicos*. The Colonna felt betrayed, having their potential ally removed, but the French king was the ultimate winner as he defeated the pope, permanently reducing his authority with secular rulers. This is not to say that other kingdoms did not adhere to the will of the pope, but many of the kingdoms did not become involved with the struggle between the French king and the pope. Defeated as Boniface was, this blow did not

¹⁰ See Rose Graham. "A Petition to Boniface VIII from the Clergy of the Province of Canterbury in 1297", *The English Historical Review*, vol. 37, no. 145 (1922): 35-46.

reduce his tenacity. The French court, content that they had swiftly rebuked the foolish pope continued on with its affairs as planned. Boniface however was not deterred and his plans to subjugate the temporal authorities to the spiritual were only slowed. The pope's focus was firmly on Philip as he has resisted. If France were to capitulate, the Christian theocracy with Boniface at its head would succeed. The flexing of political wills had subsided for now, Philip having been victorious, but shortly the struggle for supremacy would resume.

VII

Following the generally successful *Clericis Laicos* and the Jubilee of 1300, the struggle for power between Philip and Boniface resumed. It came in the form of questioning who had the ultimate authority to judge bishops, which judgment was solely in the hands of the pope. In 1301, Philip ordered the arrest of Bishop Bernard Saisset of Pamiers (1232-1314) on charges of heresy, blasphemy and treason. He was brought before the king, tried and sentenced to prison. Following the trial, the king had a transcript of the events sent to Boniface in Rome. Within the letter sent to Boniface, Philip ordered the pope to acknowledge and agree to these proceedings. It was a basic ploy, if the pope would agree to this, it would set a precedent for secular authorities to try, convict and imprison church officials without the consent of the pope. This would be blatantly against the policies of Boniface as they would weaken the position of the pope, while at the same time giving precedent for an expansion of lay investiture by secular authorities. The response was an absolute deadlock of wills. The pope ordered that all cardinals report to Rome for a discussion of France and its role within the Christian world, all the while papal bulls

commanded the release of Bernard Saisset and annulling all benefices given to the French king. Counter to this, Philip demanded that no French cardinal attend this meeting.

On the subject of King Philip, he was a secretive king and hid quite well behind a screen of skilled diplomats and cunning ministers. The court of Philip was ruthless and efficient and protected its interests with great ferocity. Generally, Philip was a constitutional king, abiding by the laws that had been set forth. However, even as Philip followed the law closely, the methods employed were less than scrupulous. One of the major charges against Bernard Saisset was that he practiced black magic, leading one to assume that when all legal methods fail to indict an individual, applying the charge of devil worship or black magic nearly always ensures that the trial ends in the desired conclusion.

Boniface's second bull, *Asculta Fili*, clearly reveals his idea of theocratic centralism. The *Asculta Fili*, literally translated as "Listen, my son", opening with an appeal to the French king, who is describes him as a wayward sinner and admonishes him to return to the fold of the church to gain salvation. This bull outlines how the pope is the spiritual successor to Peter, the one and true judge of God and that there can be only one ultimate authority within the church. In contrast to the *Clericis Laicos*, the language of the first half of the bull is less brutal, less ascorbic and more a reasoned declaration that the pope is right. The other half of the bull seems to be written in anger and by popular accounts more closely reflects his personality. Much more aggressively, the bull reads the litany of things that Philip has done in opposition to the church. The goal of this bull is clear, reduce the power of the French king and encourage him to submit to the legal and spiritual authority of the pope.¹¹

The call of the pope for a meeting on the October 30th, 1302 in Rome to discuss the issue with France was an abysmal failure. Philip forbade the French bishops from attending and many

¹¹ Tierney, *Crisis*, 185-86

listened. Only thirty-six bishops from France attended out of seventy-eight and none who did were from the north. In addition, only four archbishops attended; Bernard of Got, archbishop of Bordeaux, Reginald of Montbason, archbishop of Tours, Giles of Bourges, resident of Rome and the Archbishop of Auch.¹² The meeting amounted to nothing. This shows the weakening power of the pope as the church officials are more inclined to adhere to the wishes of a secular ruler over that the spiritual. It should be said at this point that King Philip was not active vindictively towards the bishops within France, but the letter of the law was to be applied to the bishops. Philip was following the policies set forth to ensure a legal government, attempting to secure itself from domination from an extra national entity.¹³ This aspect will be explored more fully later. However, the anger of Boniface was now raised to such a height that the ultimate response was necessary to finish this matter and with it, the will of the French king.

VIII

On the 18th of November 1302, Pope Boniface issued one of the most well-known papal bulls of all time specifically regarding the issue of church and state: the *Unam Sanctam*. The *Unam Sanctam*, translated as “one church”, opens with a definitive statement: “That there is one holy, Catholic and apostolic church we are bound to...” and “that outside this church there is no salvation or remission of sins...” The goal of the *Unam Sanctam* has been greatly discussed over the years. Did Boniface want temporal as well as spiritual authority in national affairs or was this a personal struggle? At first glance, the *Unam Sanctam* reads as an admonition of Philip. It adduces to scriptures to liken the French king and his court to the Greeks who doubted Peter and

¹² Boase, *Boniface*, 316.

¹³ See Joseph R Strayer. “Philip the Fair: A “Constitutional King””. *The American Historical Review*, vol. 62, No. 1 (1956): 18-32.

states that the pope does not make errors as he is the will of God, but humans are prone to err and thus should be judged accordingly. However, there is nothing new in the *Unam Sanctam* regarding the supremacy of the spiritual over the temporal. This document claims that domination of temporal authority comes from the scriptural statement, “Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations and over kingdoms.” Even portions of the document have been reworded versions from Thomas Aquinas. The papal policy of Boniface at this point begins to aim towards a maintaining universality. The issue now is that the pope needs to define with ultimate clarity what the role between state and papacy would be. This document pertains to three important issues: the failed meeting of the bishops in Rome, the struggle for the Church to remain universal and the personality of the pope.¹⁴

Giles of Rome, in his *De Ecclesiastica Potestate*, discussed the meaning of what the *Unam Sanctam* was trying to communicate. The goal of the bull was to prevent chaos from reigning, specifically by restoring the order of God. The chaos that would occur if the will of princes and kings were to rival that of the pope is expressed by Giles. Giles does not say either is evil, but rather it is the natural law that must be observed. The concept of the Two Swords is discussed, asserting that it is rightly the will of God, not the pope that guides the spiritual sword and if the temporal is not subject to the spiritual, then the temporal is not following the will of God since the temporal is not ordained by God. This simple logical argument explains the position of Boniface much more clearly as the *Unam Sanctam* uses metaphor and indirect language. Giles speaks directly to the problem and clearly states that the issue here is that the recognition of the will of God by the temporal is why the pope is pushing this agenda. Without the subservience to the will of God, then all that the kings of the world, who attained their kingdoms by “invasion and usurpation...” then “kingdoms without justice are great bands of

¹⁴ Tierney, *Crisis*, 188-89

robbers...” and since justice comes from God, meaning that “such rulers are not kings although they are called kings, but rather thieves and robbers.” What Giles is stating is that without the will of God, which is the natural law of things, there can be no clear role within God’s plan without being led by the vicar of God.¹⁵

For the church to remain universal in nature there can only be one church. Without a single, strong, centralized theocratic infrastructure and doctrine, the church cannot be a well defined entity. Therefore, there can be only one leader that the church must follow. As the pope is the spiritual descendant of Peter, anointed by Jesus, son of God, there can be no doubting that the pope is the only one that can effectively rule the church. Division within the church is not acceptable because any church official who does not follow the guiding will of the pope by definition is not part of the will of God. In Boniface’s mind, there was an issue of division that was omnipresent in his mind at the time when this papal bull was written. The events of the last few years have outlined how this is important. Kings many not charge bishops with crimes, then try and imprison them, that is for the pope to decide. Rebels calling for the resignation of the pope are anathema. There should be only one unquestionable authority within the church. This authority is not because the pope wants it, although Boniface was the type of man who may have wanted this, but because division leads to weakness, and weakness leads to collapse. The policies of Boniface all point towards this.

An interesting aspect of the events of 1302 is how France reacted to this decree. Firstly, King Philip refused to listen to the reading of the papal bull. After his ministers read the bull, they responded not directly at first to the pope, but rather disseminated copies of the letter to the cities of France. The ministers released copies of the *Clericis Laicos* that were blatant forgeries with slightly modified language that encouraged the reader to hear the aggressive language as an

¹⁵ Ibid., 198-99.

attack on the French people; thereby Philip would be able to gain popular support for the deposition of the pope and subsequent death and posthumous trial. This may suggest that Philip's ministers had been planning a reaction like this since the receipt of the *Clericis Laicos* in 1296. If that were the case, then it may imply that the political machine of Philip's bureaucracy had a long vision and the capacity to execute long term planning, a hallmark of successful nations. Philip's skillful ministers were able to turn everything that Boniface had gambled for on its head and there was nothing that the pope could do at this point.¹⁶

Though the *Unam Sanctam* has been seen by many historians as a statement of the pope's supremacy over the temporal as well as the spiritual, there are some issues with this statement, when subjected to a closer examination.¹⁷ It was written shortly after the failed conclave with the bishops to discuss the issue with France. The fact that many of the bishops chose not to follow Boniface's summons by not attending the gathering made their allegiances very clear, specifically that they were following commands not of the pope, and therefore they are denying the will of God. This is divisive and cannot be allowed, the temporal authority should never command the spiritual; "temporal authority should be subject to the spiritual." In ecclesiastical terms, this document is attempting to the pope's spiritual authority over the king's temporal power. Philip, forbidding the bishops to attend the conclave in Rome is tantamount to spiritual matters, thus extending the will of the temporal into that of the spiritual. The cause of this transgression is King Philip and Boniface knew this. The pope's ire against the French king was unbridled because every action that Boniface took to create a centralized theocracy was blocked and now even Boniface's own bishops refused to heed his call.

¹⁶ Ibid., 187.

¹⁷ Jean Riviere. "Boniface's Theological Conservatism" in Wood ed., *State vs. Papacy*, 66-70.

VIII

The goal of Boniface was singular in nature. His primary goal was to create a strong, independent church free from the constraints of temporal influence. The primary issues that he faced came from two areas: the influence of the French and repairing the damage done by Celestine V. The reversal of the decrees of Celestine was the first step in creating a centralized theocracy. The total sums of all of Boniface's actions were aimed at restoring the church and setting it above the temporal. Not to dominate, per se, but it is clear that would be a byproduct of the exaltation of the spiritual over the temporal. Boniface's failings were not wholly his to blame, but if account of his personality were correct, he being filled with anger, then letters written in the heat of the moment may have led to the malfunction of his policies. However, the bureaucracy of Philip and his ministers made short work of the papal bulls by creating forgeries to spread as propaganda against the pope. The pope's legitimate attempt to restore the rightful place of the church as spiritual defender of humanity was thwarted not because of an ill intentioned pope, but rather because of the machinations of a blossoming nation, struggling to find its own identity.

Boniface knew that for the church to be successful, it needed funding. The *Clericis Laicos* was an attempt to retain those monies for the church. The church had no major standing army, but it did have the ability to support kings in their endeavors and therefore it would be important to keep revenues strong, just like any kingdom would. If a kingdom's source of revenue is under attack, then that ruler must protect it as wealth is a cornerstone to a successful society. Boniface understood the importance for a strong network of papal estates as they would provide resources and a sphere of influence from which the church could operate. This influence would allow for the expansion of papal policies without having to contend with solid national

borders. Through the conglomeration of the ring of castles surrounding Rome, Boniface's kingdom had been secured, but the attempts to secure the respect and fear of the temporal leaders is what Boniface's ultimate goal was.

The policies of Boniface all point towards the creation of a centralized theocratic state without borders over all of Christendom. His goal was to create a stronghold in Italy supported by a network of castles to reinforce the physical aspects of the new papal kingdom. Boniface sought to secure the revenues of the church abroad and remove greedy hands that legally had no claim to the monies that rightfully belonged to the church. Boniface endeavored to excise malignant entities within the church as if they opposed him, then the creation of a strong temporal papal state would not come to fruition. All of these actions were aimed at creating a viable state of God on earth to compete with the temporal authorities. Perhaps one of the central tenants that Boniface believed whole-heartedly was that "the spiritual power has to institute the earthly power..."¹⁸ In addition to this, Boniface had to repeal the actions of Celestine V as they were ill-conceived by his handlers and reckless in essence.

X

The days of the papacy as a political dynamo had come to an end. The world was changing and the role of the papacy was changing with it. No longer did states see fit to beg permission to engage in their own pursuits, but rather seek their own destiny according to the temporal, rather than the spiritual. The world of pre-1300's Europe needed the guidance of the church until the nations were able to stand on their own laurels. The failure of Celestine V's pontificate allowed

¹⁸ Tierney, *Crisis*, 188-89.

France to throw off the shackles on papal influence, indeed to the point where King Philip and his cunning ministers subsumed the papacy.

Boniface's political goal was not to control just for himself, but for the next pope as well. It should not be said that Pope Boniface was a philanthropist, far from it in fact, but his intentions were not malicious. Boniface sought only what other temporal rulers were beginning to enjoy, specifically a secure and centralized nation. Truly the kingdom of France and England was central to wherever the king was; this is what the pope wanted. The church was divided among the secular influences all trying to bend and shape the church to serve their own national agendas. Boniface should be seen not as a dominator or a hateful antinationalist, but rather as a provider and a figure of great importance. Boniface's struggle with King Philip inadvertently assisted in the creation of the proto-nation. The lessons that were learned about statecraft in addition to the shrewdness and skill that was employed during the conflict could have far ranging effects on statecraft going forward. Boniface's theory of theocratic centralism was an idea that was outdated, but his attempt to enforce the authority of the Church and God on Europe helped spur Europe into a new era of nationhood free from the constraints of a church dedicated to influencing and scheming to keep the nations of men under its august guidance. Not all mistakes are errors, as the pope was convicted of heresy and excommunicated. When Boniface's tomb was opened in 1605, he was found to be intact, a sure sign of sainthood. Boniface was canonized and his previous crimes were removed. If Boniface was a saint, a true messenger of God, the perhaps everything that he set out to do was part of the God's works and therefore, within the Christian realm, exactly what was intended to happen. The truth of the matter will never be fully understood if that Boniface's goals were selfish in nature or divinely inspired, but the evidence left behind is that the goals of Boniface were to create a temporal bastion of spiritual authority on

earth, allowing for the majesty of the descendant of Peter to rule supremely over both church and state.

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