IDEAS OF POWER IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES, 1296–1417

Through a focused and systematic examination of late medieval scholastic writers – theologians, philosophers and jurists – Joseph Canning explores how ideas about power and legitimate authority were developed over the ‘long fourteenth century’. The author provides a new model for understanding late medieval political thought, taking full account of the intensive engagement with political reality characteristic of writers in this period. He argues that they used Aristotelian and Augustinian ideas to develop radically new approaches to power and authority, especially in response to political and religious crises.

The book examines the disputes between King Philip IV of France and Pope Boniface VIII, and draws upon the writings of Dante Alighieri, Marsilius of Padua, William of Ockham, Bartolus, Baldus and John Wyclif to demonstrate the variety of forms of discourse used in the period. It focuses on the most fundamental problem in the history of political thought – where does legitimate authority lie?

JOSEPH CANNING is Affiliated Lecturer in the Faculty of History at the University of Cambridge. He taught for many years at Bangor University, where he was Reader in History until 2007, and from 1996 to 2001 he was Director of the British Centre for Historical Research in Germany at the Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichtene in Göttingen. He edited Power, Violence and Mass Death in Pre-Modern and Modern Times (2004) with Hartmut Lehmann and Jay Winter, and his other publications include The Political Thought of Baldus de Ubaldis (1987) and A History of Medieval Political Thought, c. 300 – c. 1450 (1996).
IDEAS OF POWER IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES, 1296–1417

JOSEPH CANNING
For Lucy, Martin, Peter and Polly
Contents

Preface ix
List of abbreviations xi

Introduction 1

1 Ideas of power and authority during the disputes between Philip IV and Boniface VIII 11
2 Dante Alighieri: the approach of political philosophy 60
3 Marsilius of Padua 81
4 Power and powerlessness in the poverty debates 107
5 The treatment of power in juristic thought 133
6 The power crisis during the Great Schism (1378–1417) 165

Conclusion 192

Bibliography 198
Index 212
Preface

This book is the result of my growing fascination with questions of power and authority. This marks something of a change in my attitude to political thought. When I undertook my first research project I was driven on by the idea of consent. Maybe, over time, I have become more sensitive to the realities of political life.

In writing this book I have benefited so much from discussion with other scholars and students, both graduate and undergraduate. Pride of place must go to all my students over the years at Bangor University: those who took my Special Subject, ‘Ideas of Church and State, 1294–1356’, and my course on ‘Medieval Political Thought’, through their highly intelligent and informed discussions, helped me enormously in the development of my ideas. I am grateful to Bangor University for its support in granting me study leave at an early stage of composition.

I should also like to thank Philip Pettit for his gracious invitation to give a paper to the Political Philosophy Colloquium at Princeton University. I was much encouraged by the intense and constructive discussion with colleagues there.

I have found it very stimulating to try my ideas out on scholars from a variety of disciplines: history, politics, law, philosophy and literature. Having to go beyond my intellectual comfort zone helped me make real progress in my understanding – those from other disciplines always posed new and unexpected questions which led me to review my ideas and interpretations. I was especially helped by discussions when I gave papers at a range of universities: Leeds, Sheffield, Southampton, Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin and University College London. In recent years...
Preface

I have also benefited enormously from regular participation in the highly congenial and intellectually demanding ‘Europe, 1150–1550’ seminar at the Institute of Historical Research at the University of London – the benchmark, for me, for medieval history research seminars.

My return to Cambridge in 2007 gave me the time and resources to finish this work. I know of no better place for a scholar to work than Cambridge University Library: the holdings are wonderful, the atmosphere ideal and the staff exemplary in their helpfulness. I have also gained so much from my participation in the History of Christianity research seminar in the Divinity Faculty. But, above all, the Political Thought and Intellectual History research seminar in the History Faculty has provided me with great stimulus. It has been such an intellectually enlivening experience participating each week in the comprehensive range of seminars on both political philosophy and the history of political thought. In particular, I have derived so much from the company of younger scholars, including research fellows and postgraduate students – the future of our subject.

I would like to thank my original editor at Cambridge University Press, Bill Davies, for encouraging me to press on with this book, and my final editor, Liz Friend-Smith, for her invaluable help during the last stages of writing.

Above all, I wish to thank my wife Roberta for putting up with the various forms of ‘authoritis’ which I have exhibited from time to time. If she had not sustained me, I would have got nowhere with this book. But I would also like to thank my wonderful grown-up children for their confidence in me and their support. To them I dedicate this work.
Abbreviations

Auth.  Authentica ad Codicem
Brev. William of Ockham, Breviloquium de principatu tyrannico
c. capitulum
C. Codex Justinianus
CHMPT J.H. Burns (ed.). The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought, c.350–c.1450
Clem. Clementinae constitutiones
col. column
Coll. Collationes Authentici
Cons. Consilium
Const. Constitutio
D. Digesta Justinian
DCD John Wyclif, De civili dominio
Decr. Grat. Decretum Gratiani
DIPP William of Ockham, De imperatorum et pontificum potestate
Dist. Distinctio
DM Marsilius of Padua, Defensor minor
DOR John Wyclif, De officio regis
DP Marsilius of Padua, Defensor pacis
EHR English Historical Review
Ep. Epistola
Extrav. comm. Extravagantes communes
Feud. Libri feudorum
gl. glossa
Inst. Institutiones Justiniani
## List of Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lex</td>
<td>l.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGH</td>
<td>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon.</td>
<td>Dante Alighieri, Monarchia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov.</td>
<td>Novellae Iustiniani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OND</td>
<td>William of Ockham, Opus nonaginta dierum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OP</td>
<td>William of Ockham, Opera politica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OQPP</td>
<td>William of Ockham, Octo quaestiones de potestate papae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>J.P. Migne, Patrologia latina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pol.</td>
<td>Aristotle, Politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qua.</td>
<td>quaestio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reg.</td>
<td>Registrum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sext.</td>
<td>Liber sextus Decretalium Bonifacii P. VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specul.</td>
<td>Gulielmus Durandus, Speculum iuris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>verbum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WS</td>
<td>Wyclif Society (London)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>Decretales Gregorii P. IX seu Liber extra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>