

Notion of Sanctity in Official Catholic Thought (last quarter of XIII century)

Short summary.

The PhD project aims at investigation of the tendency towards rationalization of the understanding of sanctity by an exemplary study of official catholic discourse of late XIII century. The purpose of the research is to find out the causes and the mechanisms of this change in the perception of sanctity by clergy and to put this tendency in the context of scholastic philosophy and development of the canon law. The goal of the project is going to be achieved by means of using text criticism, case studies and some complementary methods such as statistical analysis.

The background of the study

Sainthood, though frequently seen as a personal trait, is actually the product of negotiations between particular individuals and their communities. The abstract notion of sanctity developed by theologians created an image of the “perfect” saint in the mind of the people who ascribed specific “saint” qualities to some of his members and initiated their veneration.

These signs of sanctity and the whole lay notion of sanctity are already deeply analyzed by historians.

The problem statement

While the present study will largely be confined to the *official* catholic thought and to the rationalization of the notion of sanctity in perception of clergy, reflected in the works of representatives of different branches of catholic thought of the end of the XIII century. This subject, that rests virtually unexplored but is however outlined in last works of David d'Avray [3] and Nicole Beriou [8], seems to me the most relevant and deserving a systematic research, because this tendency has not yet found its place in the context of theological and faith-teaching tradition of this period.

I would like to close a gap in the knowledge about official conception of the sanctity by studying it in its development. This subject seems quite important because it can be inscribed in the context of the beginning of rationalization of the perception of the world and of the way of thinking that is traditionally perceived as the foundation for turning from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern Period. Showing the rational nature of thinking about sanctity in the XIII century, I would like to disengage the idea of “rationalization” from its enduring association with Western “Modernity”. What is also important is the fact that during the XIII century the approach of the Medieval Church to the sainthood became more and more pragmatic. With the aid of the cults of saints, and the organizations which supported them, the Church hierarchy could control and oversee a form of religious enthusiasm which might otherwise find more destructive channels.

It should be admitted that it is vital to discriminate between the concept of sanctity and that of sainthood. In common usage these terms are often treated as synonymous but I shall use the term of “sanctity” to indicate an aggregate of some particular qualities of the holy people; “sanctity” is the state of being (or being

perceived as) holy, while the word “sainthood” will be used to describe all the saints as a group and the phenomenon of perceiving somebody as holy. Another terminological aspect is quite important from methodological point of view. I am going to understand “rationalization” in the sense proposed by David d'Avray in his book “Rationalities in History” with Weber's conceptual framework.

The professional significance of the study

The professional significance of the study is to research the dossiers of papal canonization processes as individual and independent historical sources. I will also aim at calling in question the widespread idea of “dogmatism” and “traditionalism” of medieval catholic thought and intellectual tradition and at showing the heterogeneity and pluralism of opinions of Catholic Church’s representatives regarding phenomenon of sanctity in the last quarter of the XIII century.

The literature review

A considerable amount of valuable work in the field of studying sanctity has been done during last 50 years, but the problem that is indicated above is still uninvestigated. Thus, around 1965, scholars began to turn to the legends of the saints in an attempt to breathe new life into a long-ignored body of religious texts. But phenomenon of the sanctity itself didn't get an obvious appeal among the historians up to the end of 1970-s; they preferred to focus on the history of certain saints and on their cults (even Peter Brown who's books has given the greatest impetus to the functionalist tradition on hagiographic studies dedicated himself to the studying of “holy men”). But at the last third of XXth century we can observe that the interest in the history of sanctity has quicken. Probably that was the book “Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages” written by Andre Vauchez who has excited that turn; in this work Vauchez has identified shifts and transformations in the history of who counted as holy, according to what criteria and among which audience. Author has also raised the question of the social identity of the saints. This book can be named the turn-point in the history of sanctity: after its publication the researcher's focus has shifted towards phenomenon of sanctity. Historians started to turn to such problems as the social composition of the saints and their “clients” i.e. those who were touched by the miracles worked by the saints (this problem was brought about by M. Goodich [4], M. Rousche, R. Finucane, J. Ziegler, P.-A. Sigal); the role of the cult of saints in the Latin Christianity (P. Brown) [2]; procedure and mechanism of canonization (O. Kraft, S. Katajala-Peltomaa, T. Wetzstein). But, of course there is no doubt that the history of sanctity has not yet received all the attention it deserves and much remains to be done in that field.

Sources

The analysis is based on a broad corpus of sources. In the set of sources that I intend to use consists the innovation of my inquiry. Scholars studying holiness prefer using narrative sources (hagiographical sources, exempla etc.), almost completely ignoring, for instance, canonic law documents, papal briefs and canonization processes. These documents, containing less information about the life and acts of the saints, then *exempla*, *vita* and martyrologies are traditionally perceived as serial sources that can only be studied within the framework of a large

representative sample and are seldom used by historians as central documents in their researches.

In this study the dossiers of papal canonization processes can serve for the purposes of illustration of the standardizing and organizing intervention of rational reflective model in the medieval reality. I chose the protocols of canonization of St. Stanislaus of Krakow, St. Philippe of Bourges, St. Richard of Chichester, St. Peter of Verona (also known as Peter Martyr) and St. Thomas de Cantilupe. Treating these texts with the methods of textual criticism I figure on finding out the philosophic, theological and may be some cultural background of canonists. Contrary to the historiographical tradition I am not going to approach the dossiers of papal canonization processes as serial sources, so I will almost refuse using of the statistical analysis. I am going to resort to this method only for the purpose of the revelation of the most often encountered terms of different authors.

Rationalization of comprehension of the sanctity was reflected not only in the practical use of canon law; that's why besides indicated above sources I'm going to use writing of Minorite John of Wales (1210(1230) – 1285) “Breviloquium de Philosophia, sive Sapientia Sanctorum (Short treatise about philosophy, or wisdom of the saints)” (Assisi, Sacro Convento, ms. 397). Nowadays are known 23 manuscripts containing this treatise what testify to the high popularity of this text in the Middle Ages; that is why we can consider this text to be a representative reflection of collective ideas of the laity and the clergy of the analyzed period.

The results anticipated The material to be obtained will serve to bring to light the variety of shades of official discourse about sanctity. It might be expected that the facts procured will help to show different tendencies in the rationalization of comprehension of the sanctity in the milieu of the clergy, i.e. those who represented the official religiosity: theologians, canonists (Hostiensis and pope Innocent IV) and Franciscan intellectuals (John of Wales).

Inasmuch as “Short treatise” is almost unknown for historians and will be put in scientific use for the first time, I am going to dedicate to the transcription and commented translation of this treatise a considerable part of my research.

- References***
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