

What common features can be discerned in the careers of tanchelm, henry of le man...



The 12th century is characterised by an "evangelical awakening," stimulated by the Gregorian assault on ecclesiastical corruption. 1 These reforms, however, were not wholly implemented, and when they were it was often inadequate. Wandering lay preachers were a consequence of the Gregorian attempt at Church reform. 2 Often orthodox many, however, not only criticised clerical morals, but also the sacraments, doctrine, and the authority of the church. 3 Tanchelm<sup>4</sup>, Peter of Bruys, Henry Le Mans and Arnold of Brescia are significant examples of such individuals who felt the church did not meet their needs for religious life and leadership: 5 "... one great stimuli of popular dissent... [was] the failure of the church to meet the high expectations of moral renewal which were aroused by Gregorian reformers." 6 Peter of Bruys is a shadowy figure and little is known about his origins. 7 It is believed, however, he was a parish priest to the village of Bruys in the French Alps. 8 From c. 1112 Peter is expelled from his benefice to become a wandering preacher in the Alpine foot hills, criticising the church. 9 After 20 years Peter emerges from the mountains to preach in south west France, 10 and at some point he forms an alliance with Henry of Le Mans before his murdered at St Gilles in c. 1131. 11 Henry Le Mans also known as Lausanne<sup>12</sup> and the Monk<sup>13</sup> preached in northern and especially southern France. The first detailed account<sup>14</sup> of his activities is in 1116 when he preaches in Le Mans. Bishop Hildebrand before he leaves for Rome gives Henry permission to evangelise as he believes him to be a penitential preacher. 15 Henry, however, preaches against the materialism of the church inciting the populace to rise against the clerics of the city, and when Hildebrand returns he has great difficulty regaining his authority. 16 After being expelled from Le Mans Henry's career for the next 20 years is obscure.

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It is suggested, however, through Henry's alliance with Peter of Bruys, sometime before c. 1133, that Henry takes on a more heretical stance. 17 Henry is arrested by the bishop of Arles and brought before the Council of Pisa in 1135, where he is ordered to give up his itinerant preaching and re-enter a monastery. 18 Whether Henry initially obeyed this order or not is not known because in 1145 he is the object of Bernard of Clairvaux's mission against heresy. After this time, however, Henry is not mentioned again in the sources. 19 Tanchelm preached against the materialism of the church in the low countries for about five years before his death in c. 1115. 20 The portrait presented of him in the sources<sup>21</sup> describes him as a libertine and a political agitator, arousing the masses to reject the church. In recent scholarship, however, Tanchelm is re-presented as a priest or a monk, who as a wandering preacher attempted to further the Gregorian reforms. 22 It is suggested Tanchelm was accused of heresy because he was an agent of Count Robert of Flanders a supporter of the Gregorian reforms. The truth about Tanchelm is not clear as there are hostile sources independent to that of The Canon's of Utrecht. It is suggested, however, that it is safe to assume that Tanchelm was at least a Gregorian priest who slipped into Donatism. 23 Tanchelm was murdered in c. 1115 whilst in a boat, by a priest hitting him over the head. 24 Arnold of Brescia an Augustine abbot, born in or near the Italian city of Brescia, 25 is described as : "... a vehement preacher against the vanities of the world." It is not clear whether Arnold was involved in the urban revolt against Manfred Brescia's bishop<sup>26</sup> from 1135, but in 1138 Manfred leaves Brescia for Rome and John of Salisbury<sup>27</sup> alleges that Arnold rouses the dissident populace against the bishop. 28 Consequently, Manfred secures the condemnation of Arnold in 1139 and his banishment from Italy.

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29 Returning to France Arnold is later expelled due to his criticism of the church and Bernard of Clairvaux. Returning to Italy after a visit to Bohemia he is invited to Rome by Pope Eugenius III to undergo penance. 30 Arnold, however, is incensed by papal corruption and as a result by 1146 Arnold is involved in the conflict between the communal movement of Rome and the papacy. 31 The pope is made to leave Rome on more than one occasion, and Arnold's political agenda is clear when he calls upon the Emperor to re-assert his temporal authority, in order for the church to return to its spiritual occupations. Arnold, however, is victim to the fickle political loyalties of the time. Arnold was executed in 1155 for political rebellion. 32 The overwhelming similarities between the careers of Tanchelm, Peter of Bruy, Henry of Le Mans and Arnold of Brescia are that they felt the church did not meet their needs for religious life and leadership. The consequences of which caused serious social problems that they attempted to combat. They could be described as radical Gregorian reformers, but having taken matters into their hands they cross the ambiguous lines between orthodoxy and heresy. The careers of both Henry and Peter began in rural obscurity, and moving into the urban areas they have more success. Henry and Peter formed an alliance at some point as they were both active in south western France. This is considered particularly important as these areas were later strongholds of the later Waldensian and Cathar heresies, Henry and Peter's criticism of the church having prepared the ground for them. 33 Arnold and possibly Tanchelm (depending on whether he started preaching in Zealand or Antwerp) began preaching in urban areas, and particularly with Tanchelm this might have accounted for his early death? 34 The criticism of the church emanating from all four heretics was received with enthusiasm by the laity

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and some of the minor clergy. In Brescia, Le Mans, and Rome, for example, the urban communities were struggling to set up communes to gain some political and social independence from their ecclesiastical overlords. Arnold at both Brescia and Rome involved himself in situations where the church was seen to intolerably dominant. In Rome especially, the church held de facto power, therefore everything was subject to its control. 35 Arnold's dissent, however, can be described as more political than religious. In this context Arnold objected to the temporal authority of the church, as this authority belonged to the secular rulers. As a fusion of religious and political ideals Arnold's aim, was for a renewed apostolic church without temporal power and Roman independence from the latter. 36 The political nature of Arnold's teaching if carried out would have made significant social as well as ecclesiastical changes. 37 Henry's teaching, at Le Mans was also particularly social as it went beyond heresy to provide the people with a means to challenge economic dominance of the church: 38 " The 'new dogma' which Henry pronounced... was to deny the authority of ecclesiastical innovations whose social consequences were disastrous for those who listened to him As with more orthodox churchmen Henry concerned himself with the reconstitution of fallen women. In Le Mans after these women were purified he ordered the young men to marry them. Henry particularly objected to the interference of the church in the life of the people, and as such he broke social codes by sweeping away the Gregorian reforms on marriage to ease the burdens placed on the laity by the church. 39 Henry believed the church had no right to control marriage and with this in mind he declared it was not a sacrament, the only requirement being the consent of two individuals.

Henry also preached that dowries were not to be exchanged and if necessary  
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people could marry incestuously, as opposed to the new Gregorian prohibited degrees of consanguinity. 40 Similarities also arise in theological beliefs among the four heretics that is mainly a consequence of their objections to the materialism and corrupt nature of the church. Peter of Bruys, for example rejected the church as he believed all accretions should be stripped away to reveal its true simple nature. Henry's underlying belief too was a desire to return to apostolic simplicity. For example, Peter asserted that church's were not necessary for prayer and should be pulled down, Henry is also suspected of this view. 41 Peter and Henry also placed an emphasis on personal responsibility for salvation. They both for differing reasons rejected infant baptism, 42 also the efficaciousness of good works and prayers on behalf of the dead: " No good works helps the dead for as soon as men die they are either utterly damned or are saved..." 43 Henry also rejected the right of priest to hear penance as it had no scriptural warrant, 44 and Henry unlike Peter also stressed the right to preach freely on the basis of the command of Christ to preach the Gospel. 45 Peter denied the mass through a literal reading of the Bible. 46 Henry, Tanchelm and Arnold, however, are all described as believing the immorality of the clergy to invalidate the sacraments: "... the efficacy of the sacrament depends on the merit and sanctity of the minister". 47 Henry's anticlericalism in this respect was so extreme he advocated a wandering clergy with no wealth or benefice and no sacramental functions, their only task being to preach and extol. 48 It is proposed Tanchelm also held the view that the corruption of the church destroyed its apostolic mandate. 49 Tanchelm, Peter and Henry also went further to dismiss the Eucharist entirely. Arnold's attack on the moral unworthiness is considered the most extreme. 50 He believed that all priests

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should live like monks. His extremist views, however, led him to cross the lines from heresy to rebellion. 51 He taught that the church had apostatised from its calling, and that clerics with property would not be saved: " He... denounced the cardinals saying that their collage, by its pride, avarice, hypocrisy and manifold shame was not the church of God". 52 The climax of Arnold's teaching, however, emphasising its political content was the belief that the pope was not whom he professed to be, therefore, neither obedience nor reverence was due to him. 53 Unlike Peter, Henry and Tanchelm, Arnold did not reject the mass, or the validity of the penitential system, 54 as he did not object to the relationship between God and man the church presented. 55 Also Arnold unlike Tanchelm did not object to the churches right to tithes or freewill offerings. 56 Tanchelm and Peter, both advocated violent attack upon the visible images of Catholicism. 57 Henry also sponsored the violation of images although except in Le Mans his career was not characterised by violence. Peter's beliefs, however, were carried out by practical demonstrations<sup>58</sup> and perhaps the most idiosyncratic was the burning of crosses. Peter believed the Cross not worthy of adoration as it was the instrument of Christ's death, therefore it was dishonoured it by being hacked to pieces and burnt. 59 Whilst burning crosses in St. Gilles, however, Peter was pushed into the fire by an outraged citizen: "... the destruction of Peter of Bruys, whom the zeal of the faithful at Saint-Gilles punished by burning in the flames from the wood of the Lord's Cross which he had set afire..." 60 Due to a social need for holy individuals to live among the people all four heretics were subject to devotion, 61 as Henry, Peter, Tanchelm and Arnold were all renowned for their holiness of life: " He [Arnold] had disciples who imitated his austerities and won favour with the populace through

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outward decency and austerity of life..." 62 Devotion was also derived from their oratory skills, as Tanchelm, for example, is described as having a powerful dramatic talent that held the people in awe. The accounts of both Henry and Tanchelm are standard heretical reports designed to discredit them, coloured by accusations of libertinism and promiscuity: " Matrons and adolescent boys (for he [Peter] enjoyed the pandering of both sexes), attending him at different times, avowed openly their aberrations and increased them, caressed his feet, his buttocks, his groin, with tender hands." 63 Henry is also accused by the Bishop Hildebert of being an impostor and a charlatan after he is tested on the offices of the church, 64 and Tanchelm is charged with the most sensational acts, for example, of betrothing himself to the Virgin Mary and giving his bath water for his followers to drink in mockery of the sacraments. 65 Arnold on the other hand even though he is described as converting pious women to his cause is not accused of any sexual misconduct. Even his bitterest enemy Bernard of Clairvaux does not reproach him. 66 Arnold, Peter and Henry are also described using the biblical metaphor as wolf's in sheep clothing, which is suggestive of their humble and saintly exterior disguising their heretical opinions: " He hid the madness of a ravening wolf under sheep's clothing." 67 To conclude, the common features discernible from the careers of Tanchelm, Henry of Le Mans, Peter of Bruys and Arnold of Brescia is that they all objected to the church because of its preoccupation with materialism and clerical corruption, which led to serious social consequences. All four tried in their own way to combat these problems by providing spiritual leadership and example to the laity. In doing this, however, all crossed the ambiguous line between criticism of the church and heresy. Arnold, however,

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went one step further by trying to further his religious aims through political rebellion, emphasising the close relationship of the church with the political situations of the time.