

Master Amalric and the Amalricians: Inquisitorial Procedure and the Suppression of Heresy at the University of Paris

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On November 20, 1210, one day after the annual fair, ten heretics were burned in the field named Champeaux just outside the walls of Paris. Four others were incarcerated. The group of fourteen had been uncovered and captured through the aid of a spy. In the chronicles they are identified as Amalricians (*Almarici*, *Almariciani*, *[A]mauri*, and *Almariciani*), named after Master Amalric of Bène, who reportedly stood at the origin of their heresies. Master Amalric himself had been condemned around 1206, shortly before his death.¹ His case is the earliest documented instance of academic censure at the University of Paris.

The execution of the Amalricians was decided at a council held at Paris in 1210. The council also determined that Amalric should be excommunicated and his body removed to unconsecrated ground. In addition the council took three other actions, not necessarily related to the two previous decisions. It ordered the burning of the quires (*quaternuli*) of Master David of Dinant. It prohibited the teaching of Aristotle's works on natural philosophy. And it ordered the surrender to local bishops of certain theological works written in French.

Evidence of the trial of Master Amalric and the Amalricians has come down to us in the form of two official records and a number of almost contemporary narrative sources. The most important official document is the text of the conviction of Master Amalric and the Amalricians. Martène and Durand, the eighteenth-century editors of this record, claimed that it was issued by a provincial synod held at Paris in 1210.² Their conclusions have been generally followed in

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¹ The date of the judicial proceedings against Master Amalric can be inferred from a chronicle. See n. 17, below.

² The document has been published under the following title by E. Martène and U. Durand in their *Thesaurus novus anecdotorum*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1717), 4:166: "Decreta magistri Petri de Corbolio Senonensis archiepiscopi, Parisiensis episcopi et aliorum episcoporum Parisius congregatorum super haereticis comburendis et libris non catholicis penitus destruendis." The edition of Martène and Durand was reproduced in Heinrich Denifle and Emile Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1889–91), henceforth cited as CUP, 1:70–71, under a different title: "Decreta magistri Petri de Corbolio Senonensis archiepiscopi, Parisiensis episcopi atque aliorum episcoporum Parisiis congregatorum super haereticis comburendis et super libris Aristotelis aliorumque."

the scholarly literature.³ Unfortunately, Martène and Durand did not indicate how they dated the synod and established its nature and location. Yet a reexamination of the evidence allows a reconstruction of what must have been their line of reasoning and also shows that the conclusions they reached seem plausible.

The text itself of the document implies that the decisions laid down were taken at a council, more specifically a provincial, rather than a diocesan, council.⁴ Probably because the conciliar actions recorded in the document have a bearing on the University of Paris, Martène and Durand concluded that the council was held at Paris.⁵ The date of the meeting must have been inferred from the source that the editors used. In the medieval manuscript the undated record of the provincial council is preceded by two documents dated 1210.⁶ In sum, then, it is highly likely that the document edited by Martène and Durand concerns a provincial council held at Paris in 1210. As a consequence, it seems only logical to assume that the meeting was presided over by Peter of Corbeil, archbishop of Sens (1200–1222) and one-time teacher of the future Pope Innocent III, and that it was attended by Peter of Nemours, bishop of Paris (1208–19). Here follows a translation of this record:

Let the body of Master Amalric be removed from the cemetery and cast into unconsecrated ground and the same be excommunicated by all the churches of the entire province.

Bernard; William of Arria the goldsmith; Stephen, priest of Old Corbeil; Stephen, priest of Cella; John, priest of Occines; Master William of Poitiers; Dudo, priest; Dominicus de Triangulo; Odo and Elinans, clerks of St. Cloud—these are to be degraded and left to the secular court. Urricus, priest of Lauriac; Peter of St. Cloud, now a monk

³ This document is the only one to attest that a provincial synod took place in Paris in 1210. It is reproduced in J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, 31 vols. (Florence, 1759–98), 22:810–11; Charles-Joseph Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après des documents originaux*, rev. H. Leclerq, 21 vols. (Paris, 1907–52), 5:1303–5; and most recently in Bernard Plongeron, ed., *Le diocèse de Paris, 1: Des origines à la révolution* (Paris, 1987), pp. 132–33.

⁴ The document contains two indications that the decisions laid down were taken at a provincial synod. First, one of the decrees orders Master Amalric's excommunication by all the churches of the entire province ("totius provincie"). Secondly, the document closes with the order to hand certain books over to the diocesan bishops ("episcopis diocesanis"). See the text below, n. 7. Note that the document lacks the characteristic formulas that many other synodal statutes show at the beginning and end. On the other hand, the kind of disciplinary decisions laid down in the document are typical of *synodalia*, and it is not unusual for them to be placed among other texts. See Odette Pontal, *Les statuts synodaux* (Turnhout, 1975), pp. 29, 33–34, and 70; and Joseph Avril, "L'évolution du synode diocésain, principalement dans la France du Nord, du Xe au XIIIe siècle," in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Medieval Canon Law*, ed. Peter Linehan (Vatican City, 1988), pp. 315, 318, and 321, for the difference between provincial and diocesan synods.

⁵ Paris is also mentioned in the narrative sources as the location of the council. See n. 40, below.

⁶ The original manuscript used by Martène and Durand once belonged to the Premonstratensian monastery of Vicoigne and is now lost. The two other dated manuscripts were also edited in CUP 1:71–73. One is a letter by King Philip ordering that clerics arrested for crimes by the secular arm be transferred to ecclesiastical courts, unless the crimes are serious ones, such as, for instance, homicide or adultery. The other manuscript is an anonymous fragment of a chronicle that lists the errors attributed to the Amalricians.

of St.-Denis; Guarinus, priest of Corbeil; and Stephen, a clerk, are to be degraded and imprisoned for life.

The quires of Master David of Dinant are to be brought to the bishop of Paris before the Nativity and burned, and neither the books of Aristotle on natural philosophy nor their commentaries are to be taught at Paris in public or privately, and this we forbid under penalty of excommunication. He in whose possession the quires of Master David are found after the Nativity shall be considered a heretic beforehand.

As for the theological books written in French we order that they be handed over to the diocesan bishops, and also the *Credo in Deum* and the *Pater noster* in French, but not the lives of the saints, and this before the Feast of the Purification, because he on whom they are found shall be considered a heretic.⁷

The second important official record is a fragment of the report of the interrogation of four Amalricians, discovered and edited by Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny in 1950.⁸ The names of the four heretics who were interrogated also occur in the statutes of the provincial council. This document will be discussed below.

Valuable information is added by over twenty narrative sources, which have been conveniently collected by G. C. Capelle in the appendix to her influential study of Amalric's doctrine.⁹ Since the publication of her study in 1932, this body

⁷ CUP 1:70–71: "Corpus magistri Amaurici extrahatur a cimeterio et projiciatur in terram non benedictam, et idem excommunicetur per omnes ecclesias totius provincie. Bernardus, Guillelmus de Arria aurifaber, Stephanus presbyter de Veteri Corbolio, Stephanus presbyter de Cella, Johannes presbyter de Occines, magister Wilhelmus Pictaviensis, Dudo sacerdos, Dominicus de Triangulo, Odo et Elinans clerici de S. Clodoaldo, isti degradentur penitus seculari curie relinquendi. Urricus presbyter de Lauriaco et Petrus de S. Clodoaldo, modo monachus S. Dionysii, Guarinus presbyter de Corbolio, Stephanus clericus degradentur perpetuo carceri mancipandi. Quaternuli magistri David de Dinant infra natale episcopo Parisiensi afferantur et comburantur, nec libri Aristotelis de naturali philosophia nec commenta legantur Parisius publice vel secreto, et hoc sub penae [sic] excommunicationis inhibemus. Apud quem invenientur quaternuli magistri David a natali Domini in antea pro heretico habebitur. De libris theologis scriptis in Romano precipimus, quod episcopis diocesanis traduntur et *Credo in Deum*, et *Pater noster* in Romano preter vitas sanctorum, et hoc infra purificationem, quia apud quem invenientur pro heretico habebitur." The text's division in paragraphs is mine. A slightly different translation of this text is provided by Lynn Thorndike, *University Records and Life in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1949), pp. 26–27, reprinted in Edward Grant, ed., *A Source Book in Medieval Science* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), p. 42.

⁸ Marie-Thérèse d'Alverny, "Un fragment du procès des amauriciens," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* 18 (1950–51), 325–36. In addition there are two other official records, but they are not very informative. One is a statute of the University of Paris, promulgated in August 1215 by the papal legate and cardinal Robert of Courson (d. 1219). With regard to Amalric it merely orders: "non legantur . . . de doctrina . . . Almarici haeretici." It has become famous among intellectual historians because of the insight it provides in the teaching practices and curriculum at the University of Paris and for the ban it placed on certain texts of Aristotle. See CUP 1:78–79. This statute has been translated by Thorndike, *University Records*, pp. 27–30. The other record is the constitution *Damnamus* of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. The origin of this document was, indirectly, also due to Robert of Courson, for he was the person who in 1213 became papal legate to France in order to prepare for the ecumenical council Innocent III had summoned to meet at the Lateran in 1215. See *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo et al., 3rd ed. (Bologna, 1978), p. 233: "Reprobamus etiam et damnamus perversissimum dogma impiii Amalrici, cuius mentem sic pater mendacii excaecavit, ut eius doctrina non tam haeretica censenda sit, quam insana."

⁹ G. C. Capelle, *Autour du Décret de 1210: Amaury de Bène. Étude sur son panthéisme formel* (Paris, 1932), pp. 89–111.

of evidence has not been substantially augmented.¹⁰ The majority of the evidence collected by Capelle consists of passages taken from medieval chronicles. The following four are the most important for reconstructing the trial of the Amalricians: (1) The *Chronologia* by the Premonstratensian canon Robert of Auxerre (1156–1212), a universal chronicle extending from the beginning of the world to 1211. The chronicle was continued until the year 1227 by William of Nangis. (2) The *Chronicle of Laon*, written by an anonymous canon of Saint-Martin of Tours and finished in 1227. According to the editor of the *Chronicle of Laon*, the first part, from the beginning of the world until 1220, derives much of its material from Robert of Auxerre's *Chronologia*. The part that covers the years 1221–27 is characterized as an eyewitness report of high quality. (3) The *Gesta Philippi II Augusti*, which narrates events that occurred during the reign of King Philip Augustus. It was begun by Rigord of Saint-Denis and finished by William the Breton, the latter covering the years 1209–22. William the Breton was acquainted with King Philip, and his narrative is assumed to be based upon personal recollections. (4) The *Dialogus miraculorum* by the Cistercian Caesarius of Heisterbach (c. 1180–c. 1240), finished in 1223. The work is not a chronicle, but rather an exhortation supported by exempla and stories to lead the reader to a perfect Christian life, written in the form of a dialogue between a monk and a novice.¹¹

The case of Amalric and the Amalricians has not failed to attract the attention of scholars, but that attention has been chiefly doctrinal and the conclusions have often been contradictory. In brief, the heresies attributed to the Amalricians can be grouped around three themes: pantheism, the attainment of spiritual perfection here on earth, and the antinomian and antisacramental implications of the Amalricians' views on the preceding two topics. Within that framework, however, modern interpretations of their views show a wide variety.¹² My own

¹⁰ Paolo Lucentini, "L'eresia di Amalrico," in *Eriugena redivivus: Zur Wirkungsgeschichte seines Denkens im Mittelalter und im Übergang zur Neuzeit*, ed. Werner Beierswaltes (Heidelberg, 1987), p. 176, n. 5, has added a few more medieval reports about the Amalricians—reports by John of Victring (Victoriensis), Henry of Herford, Albert Bezani, and the *Annals of Erfurt*—but since these are all identical with the report in the *Chronicon pontificum et imperatorum* by the Dominican Martin Polonus (or Martin of Troppau, d. 1278), they can be discarded here. Lucentini also deserves credit for clarifying the conflation that arose in the chronicles between the views of Scottus Eriugena and the views attributed to the Amalricians.

¹¹ I have used the following editions of these works: *Gesta Philippi Augusti*, in *Oeuvres de Rigord et de Guillaume le Breton, historiens de Philippe-Auguste*, 1, ed. Henri F. Delaborde (Paris, 1882), pp. 230–33 (reproduced in Capelle, *Autour*, pp. 99–100); *Chronologia Roberti Altissiodorensis*, in *Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, ed. M. J. J. Brial, rev. Léopold Delisle, 24 vols. (Paris, 1869–1904), 18:279 (Capelle, *Autour*, pp. 104–5); *Chronica Anonymi Laudunensis canonici*, in *Recueil*, 18:714–15 (Capelle, *Autour*, p. 98); *Caesarii Heisterbachensis monachi Dialogus miraculorum*, ed. Joseph Strange (Cologne, 1851), pp. 304–7 (Capelle, *Autour*, pp. 101–3). Caesarius's report has been translated in Walter L. Wakefield and Austin P. Evans, *Heresies of the High Middle Ages* (New York, 1969), p. 260.

¹² The following is a selection of the literature that tries to interpret the doctrinal views of Master Amalric and the Amalricians: Herbert Grundmann, *Studien über Joachim von Fiore* (1927; repr. Darmstadt, 1966), and *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter* (1935; repr. Darmstadt, 1977); Capelle, *Autour*; Herman Ley, *Studien zur Geschichte des Materialismus im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1957); Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, rev. ed. (London, New York, and Oxford, 1970); Karl Albert, "Amalrich von Bena und der mittelalterlichen Pantheismus," in *Die Auseinandersetzungen an der Pariser Universität im XIII. Jahrhundert*, ed. A. Zim-

view is that the term “pantheism” encapsulates the Amalricians’ focus on the immanence of God in the world and their tendency to ignore the radical distinction between God and creation.¹³ The Amalricians claimed that God was everywhere and that he worked in everything. In this way they emphasized the identity between the divine and the created and brought the deification of man, the unification with God in this life, within reach. Moreover, the Amalricians accorded themselves a definite place in the plan of salvation. They maintained that the third age, the final stage of spiritual progress, had arrived and that they had been granted a special gift of understanding. As Sprituels, the Amalricians did not need grace or the sacraments to achieve salvation.¹⁴ I intend to discuss the doctrinal views and background of the Amalricians’ heresies more fully elsewhere.

My concern here is with judicial procedures and canon law. Taken together the actions of the council represent an attempt by the ecclesiastical authorities to suppress the teaching of theological error and prevent the spread of heresy. But why did they proceed as they did? What was the significance of the posthumous excommunication of Amalric and the removal of his body from consecrated ground? What was the legal context for the manner in which the authorities acted against the Amalricians?

The canon law foundations of Master Amalric’s posthumous excommunication and the condemnation of the Amalricians have not been previously examined in any depth.¹⁵ The canonistic background of the excommunication of the deceased Master Amalric will be elucidated by a discussion of some hitherto unnoticed passages (edited below in the Appendix) of the theological *Summa* by Robert of Courson (d. 1219), one of the most prominent of the cast of characters involved in the events of 1210. The reconstruction of the trial procedure of the Amalricians will show that the sources concerning their prosecution and condemnation collectively constitute the earliest body of evidence for the applica-

mermann (Berlin, 1976), pp. 193–212; Gary Dickson, “Joachism and the Amalricians,” *Florensia* 1 (1987), 35–47, and “The Burning of the Amalricians,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40 (1989), 347–69. See further n. 10, above, with regard to the doctrinal background of the Amalricians.

¹³ The most important source for our understanding of the Amalrician views is the treatise *Contra Amaurianos*. See n. 47, below. My brief presentation is mainly based on this source.

¹⁴ See especially Robert E. Lerner, “Ecstatic Dissent,” *Speculum* 67 (1992), 33–34 and 55–56, who convincingly presents the Amalricians as a “textual community” that took recourse to what he has coined the “ecstasy defense.” The term “textual community” is derived from Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, N.J., 1983), esp. pp. 88–92 and 145–51. See further Jeffrey B. Russell, *Dissent and Order in the Middle Ages: The Search for Legitimate Authority* (New York, 1992), pp. 26, 35, and 76–79.

¹⁵ Although Henri Maisonneuve, *Etudes sur les origines de l’inquisition* (Paris, 1960), pp. 166–68, mentions the Amalricians, he did not discuss or analyze the judicial procedures but merely reproduced information from some of the chronicles mentioned above. Jürgen Miethke, “Papst, Ortsbischof und Universität in den Pariser Theologenprozessen des 13. Jahrhunderts,” in *Die Auseinandersetzungen*, ed. Zimmermann, pp. 53–56, includes the Amalricians in his study of the balance of forces between pope, bishop, and theologians in the exercise of teaching authority but at the same time notes (p. 54) that the trial of the Amalricians belongs in the context of the prosecution of popular heresy. His observation (p. 53, n. 5) that the juridical procedure of the condemnation of the Amalricians has received little attention still holds true.

tion of important new criminal procedures introduced or formalized by Pope Innocent III during the first twelve years of his pontificate (1198–1210). Particularly illustrative in the trial of the Amalricians are the employment of the inquisitorial procedure in an ecclesiastical court for the suppression of heresy (based upon *Licet Heli* and *Qualiter et quando* no. 1), the application of Innocent's new legislation concerning the ecclesiastical treatment of heretics (*Vergentis in senium*), and the delivery of criminous clergy to secular justice (*Novimus*). These decretals and many more that were issued during the first twelve years of Innocent's pontificate were collected on the pope's initiative by his notary Peter of Benevento and published in 1210 as the *Compilatio tertia*.

THE EVENTS OF 1205–6

The scanty information we have about Amalric's prior career and censure are found in the *Gesta Philippi II Augusti*. Amalric, a cleric from Bène in the diocese of Chartres, had spent a long time in the schools of logic and the other liberal arts before joining the faculty of theology at the University of Paris. He had "his own method of teaching and learning," his own opinions, and judgments distinct and separate from those of others.¹⁶ When, for this reason, he was contradicted "by all Catholics universally," he applied to the pope. Innocent III, however, having heard Amalric and the contrary views presented by scholars of the university, decided against him. Upon his return to Paris, Amalric was required by the university to recant his views, which according to the *Gesta* he did "by mouth but not in his heart." Amalric is said to have been so affected by this humiliating experience that he died shortly thereafter. He was buried close to the Monastery of Saint-Martin-de-Champs.¹⁷ In sum, it seems that some members of the faculty of theology initiated a case against Amalric at Paris. Amalric appealed to the pope but lost, and as a consequence he was made to recant those views that he had probably refused to recant when the case was still adjudicated at the local level, at the university.

Although the surviving evidence is admittedly fragmentary, it appears that the

¹⁶ *Gesta Philippi*, pp. 230–31: "Fuit igitur in eadem sacra facultate studens quidam clericus, Amalricus nomine, de territorio Carnotensi, villa que Bena dicitur oriundus; qui cum in arte logica peritus esset, et scholas de arte illa et de aliis artibus liberalibus diu rexisset, transtulit se ad sacram paginam excolendam. Semper tamen suum per se modum docendi et discendi habuit et opinionem privatam et iudicium quasi sectum et ab aliis separatum." Some scholars have maintained that Amalric was a product of the schools of Chartres, but this is not confirmed by the sources. Alexandre Clerval, *Les écoles de Chartres au moyen âge* (Chartres, 1895), p. 347, probably was the first to put forward this thesis.

¹⁷ *Gesta Philippi*, p. 231: "Cum igitur in hoc ei ab omnibus catholicis universaliter contradiceretur, de necessitate accessit ad summum pontificem, qui, audita ejus propositione et universitatis scholarium contradictione, sententiavit contra ipsum. Redit ergo Parisius, et compellitur ab universitate confiteri ore quod in contrarium predictae opinionis sue sentiret; 'ore' dico, quia corde nunquam dissentit. Tedio ergo et indignatione affectus, ut dicitur, egrotavit, et lecto incumbens decessit in brevi et sepultus est juxta monasterium Sancti Martini de Campis." The Cistercian chronicler Alberic of Troisfontaines (d. after 1251), who otherwise copies the *Gesta* verbatim, adds that Amalric's exhumation, ordered in the decree of 1210, took place four years after his burial. If this testimony is true, Amalric would have died around 1206. See *Chronica Alberici monachi Trium Fontium*, MGH SS 23:890: "post quattuor annos sue tumulationis."

judicial proceedings against Master Amalric did not markedly differ from what we know of subsequent cases of academic censure at the University of Paris. The condemnation of the Amalricians, however, was not a case of academic censure; rather, it involved popular heresy (see below). In two respects cases of academic censure were distinct from proceedings involving popular heresy. First, cases of academic censure were initiated in the institutional context of the university. The defendant was a bachelor or a master who was reported for suspicion of heretical teaching by someone from the audience at a typically academic activity, such as a lecture, a disputation, or a sermon. Charges of false teaching could also arise when university texts were scrutinized for authorization. Second, the judicial proceedings against an allegedly erring academic focused on suspect statements and views, and not on the holder of those views. Although both erring academics and followers of popular heretical movements were tried according to the inquisitorial method, the charges were different. The purpose of the proceedings against academics was correction, rather than punishment. As long as an academic was willing to recant the views that his colleagues and superiors had proved to be wrong, he was not pertinacious. Although his opinions had at one time been considered erroneous or even heretical, he was not a heretic.¹⁸

THE EXHUMATION AND MULTIPLE EXCOMMUNICATION OF THE BODY OF MASTER AMALRIC

When the council of 1210 took place, Amalric had already been dead for about four years. Nevertheless, the council issued the following decision: "Let the body of Master Amalric be removed from the cemetery and cast into unconsecrated ground and the same be excommunicated by all the churches of the entire province." The conciliar action raises three questions: Why was Amalric's body removed from the cemetery? Why was he excommunicated? And why was the excommunication multiple?

Heretics and excommunicates were denied a burial in consecrated ground.¹⁹

¹⁸ Cf. Josef Koch, *Kleine Schriften*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1973); Miethke, "Papst," pp. 52–95; William J. Courtenay, "Inquiry and Inquisition: Academic Freedom in Medieval Universities," *Church History* 58 (1989), 168–82, and "The Preservation and Dissemination of Academic Condemnations at the University of Paris in the Middle Ages," in *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Medieval Philosophy* (forthcoming); J. M. M. H. Thijssen, "Academic Heresy and Intellectual Freedom at the University of Paris, 1200–1378," in *Centres of Learning in Pre-Modern Europe and the Near East*, ed. Jan-Willem Drijvers and A. A. MacDonald (Leiden, 1995), pp. 217–28, and *Censure and Heresy at the University of Paris, 1200–1378* (Philadelphia, forthcoming).

¹⁹ For the prohibition to bury heretics in consecrated ground see constitution 27 of Lateran III in *Conciliarum oecumenicorum decreti*, p. 224: "Si autem in hoc peccato [i.e., heresy] decesserint, non sub nostrorum privilegiorum cuilibet indultorum obtentu nec sub aliacumque occasione, aut oblatio fiat pro eis aut inter christianos recipiant sepulturam." At Lateran IV this was codified in constitution 3, *Excommunicamus*. See *Conciliarum oecumenicorum decreti*, p. 234: "Sane clerici non exhibeant huiusmodi pestilentibus ecclesiastica sacramenta, nec eos christiane praesumant sepulturae tradere." Excommunicates were denied burial in consecrated ground on the basis of the principle "Those with whom we cannot communicate while they are living, we must continue to avoid after death" (Matt. 16.19), incorporated in *Decretum* C.24 q.2 c.1. In the *Decretales Gregorii IX* (henceforth cited as X) 3.28.12 and 3.40.7 it is stipulated that excommunicates buried in consecrated ground should be exhumed because they pollute the church and the cemetery in which they are buried. See further Elisabeth Vodola, *Excommunication in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley, Calif., 1986), pp. 38–39.