The secular/mendicant conflicts at the University of Paris in the thirteenth century provided a new phase in the relations between the two parties, as, for the first time, the friars would have to take the offensive themselves in order to justify the novelty of their life. Resistance to the mendicant orders and their interpretation of the apostolic life before 1250 was isolated and sporadic and usually resolved by papal intervention. The mendicants had hitherto solicited and procured papal letters for support and recommendation for their orders and, in particular, their pastoral activities. Within a thirty-five year period, the papacy directed some 580 bulls to the friars; 347 of these were from Pope Innocent IV (1243–1254) alone. Yet the papal support which the mendicants requested only seemed to estrange the secular clergy. As the mendicants became competitors with the secular clergy in matters of pastoral care, and as oblations, alms, bequests, and mortuary legacies were increasingly diverted from the parochial clergy to the friars, relations between these two groups steadily deteriorated.

Complaints by the secular clergy against the mendicants’ ministry arose intermittently, but these grievances had no coherent focus until the 1250s. At the University of Paris, the secular masters of theology first assailed the role of the mendicants within the university structure and then broadened the quarrel by challenging the friars’ right to perform pastoral functions and by denouncing their conception of the religious life as a dangerous innovation. This change of tactic placed the mendicants in a position where they could no longer simply request papal intervention. Rather, it forced them to explain in systematic terms the

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purpose of their religious life, its conformity to evangelical doctrine, and their ability to teach and undertake the care of souls. This chapter examines how the mendicants attempted to defend themselves against assaults by the secular masters of theology during two periods of conflict at the University of Paris: the first during the years 1255–1256 and the second from 1268–1271.

The University of Paris had initially welcomed the friars into their consortium; however, conflict soon emerged, as the seculars later claimed, when the Dominicans failed to observe the academic cessatio, the university strike measure to seek amends for the violation of an academic privilege, during the Great Dispersion of 1229–1231. The University voted to suspend lectures following an altercation with the Parisian bourgeoisie; in the ensuing mêlée, one student was executed and the provost of Paris and his guards arbitrarily incarcerated several others. The majority of the academic community quit Paris and taught at other universities in France, such as Angers and Orléans, and bolstered the incipient University of Toulouse. In 1231, Pope Gregory IX successfully lured the masters and students back to Paris by issuing his famous bull, the so-called magna carta of the University of Paris, Parenscientiarum.

Despite the secular theologians’ later assertions to the contrary, other masters and students also remained at Paris and taught during the Great Dispersion, including at least one secular theologian, John of St. Giles. Furthermore, the cessatio, although an oft-repeated academic action, only became a recognized university right in Parenscientiarum. Adherence to the university strike measure before 1231 took the form of moral persuasion; the academic community did not have a confirmed privilege by which it could officially cancel classes and thus had no mechanism by which it could compel dissenters to comply. In Parenscientiarum, Gregory gave the University the right to discipline anyone who did not obey...