



# Roger Bacon and the Defence of Christendom (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series)

By Amanda Power

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The English Franciscan, Roger Bacon (ca.1214-92), holds a controversial but important position in the development of modern science. He has been portrayed as an isolated figure, at odds with his influential order and ultimately condemned by it. This major study, the first in English for nearly sixty years, offers a provocative new interpretation of both Bacon and his environment. Amanda Power argues that his famous writings for the papal curia were the product of his critical engagement with the objectives of the Franciscan order and the reform agenda of the thirteenth-century church. Fearing that the apocalypse was at hand and Christians unprepared, Bacon explored radical methods for defending, renewing and promulgating the faith within Christendom and beyond. Read in this light, his work indicates the breadth of imagination possible in a time of expanding geographical and intellectual horizons.

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## **Roger Bacon and the Defence of Christendom (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series) By Amanda Power Bibliography**

- Rank: #461573 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Cambridge University Press
- Published on: 2012-11-19
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.98" h x .79" w x 5.98" l, 1.30 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 312 pages

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"... a meticulous revisiting of the list and thoughts of the thirteenth-century Minorite friar Roger Bacon ... By leaving the beaten track and rereading Bacon's works the author has indeed made a positive contribution towards restoring his thoughts to their historical context and to his intellectual patrimony."

Benedict Vadakkekara, *Collectanea Franciscana*

"Amanda Power's convincing account emphasizes the depth of Bacon's commitment to an ideal of reform in line with the ideology of his religious order. Her book convinces the reader with a clear historical reconstruction and a rich display of bibliographical references, which help us to appreciate the doctor mirabilis as a scientist and a friar and to realize how rich and innovative the connection between his spiritual and intellectual horizons was."

Cecilia Panti, *Speculum*

"Roger Bacon and the Defence of Christendom constitutes an excellent companion to celebrating Bacon's legacy. Bacon, an all-round scholar who studied and taught in both Oxford and Paris, has left a lasting mark in the history of Western philosophy and science and has, accordingly, been studied extensively during the centuries. Yet, Power manages to open up a novel insight into the life and thinking of Bacon, dispelling some myths accumulated around him and thus contributing invaluable to building a more balanced picture of the Doctor Mirabilis ... an unequaled book. Power certainly offers - citing her own words - a "fresh reconstruction" of the life of a man who remains a character of great interest even eight hundred years after his birth."

Juuso Loikkanen, *The Journal of Religion*

"To hear Amanda Power tell it, and she tells it convincingly, Roger Bacon is all too often the odd man out ... she is a wonderfully inventive and close reader, teasing out hints of personality from the dry details of Bacon's scientific observations ... Power reveals a Bacon who is less innovative, but certainly more interesting."

Dallas G. Denery, II, *American Historical Review*

"... offers a fresh and unified picture of this friar's life and thought ... [Power's] arguments are clear and cogent; they quietly buttress the principles of her approach. It is a good and objective account that makes ample use of illustrative quotations to explain the thought of one of the exceptional minds of the thirteenth century."

Michael Robson, *Church History*

"Power's monograph is a well-written account of Roger Bacon's work and thought and suggests an original argument, which opens up the historical dimension and socio-political connections of this important Franciscan thinker. The descriptive character of some sections along with references to contextual evidence will make this book useful reading for both scholars and students in the field."

Barbara Bombi, *English Historical Review*

#### About the Author

Amanda Power is a lecturer in medieval history at the University of Sheffield.

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