

# CLEMENT V

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## CONTENTS

<i>List of maps</i>	<i>page</i>	xi
<i>Foreword</i>		xii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>		xiv
Introduction		I
I Clement V		6
Bertrand de Got's early ecclesiastical career		6
The election to the papacy		13
Rome or Avignon?		23
A personal portrait		30
2 Church policy		35
The papal curia		40
The Church of England		54
The Church of France		81
3 Crusade and mission		101
<i>De recuperatione Terrae Sanctae</i>		101
The crusade at the Council of Vienne		112
Charles de Valois and the crusade against Constantinople		119
The <i>Reconquista</i>		121
The borders of Christendom and mission		125
4 Italy		129
The Papal State		132
Clement V and Henry VII		152

## Contents

5	France	174
	Flanders	180
	The trial of Boniface	191
	The canonisation of Pietro da Morrone	199
	The trial of the Templars	205
6	England	247
	Papal support in domestic affairs	249
	The Gaveston affair	256
	Relations with France	267
	Scotland	269
	The canonisation of Thomas de Cantilupe	275
7	The Council of Vienne and the <i>Clementinae</i>	279
	The Council of Vienne	281
	Church reform	284
	The <i>Clementinae</i>	288
	Afterword	306
	<i>Bibliography</i>	309
	<i>Index</i>	344

## MAPS

1	Clement's sojourn in Languedoc	<i>page</i> 24
2	Dioceses of England and Wales	57
3	Dioceses of France	94
4	Italy in the fourteenth century	131

## INTRODUCTION

The meeting point between past and new patterns of political behaviour makes the pontificate of Clement V (1305–14) an ideal case-study for research concerning the papacy and attitudes towards it in an era of transition. Of the many changes characteristic of the early fourteenth century, it is worth noting the consolidation of the western monarchies and the consistent involvement of the bourgeoisie in the political process. This evolution called for a re-assessment of past norms, first and foremost of the priorities of contemporaries as Christians and as members of the body politic. The choice was no longer between two universal factors, papacy and empire, but between apparently harmonious but actually conflicting loyalties; between a pope with universal claims journeying in southern France and national monarchs who, especially in France and England, were attempting to strengthen their respective standing as *advocatus ecclesiae*. Such a designation, especially for Philip the Fair and Edward I, hints at their status as equals, if not superiors, to the pope in the ecclesiastical affairs of their respective kingdoms. The expansion of the political arena to embrace the emerging bourgeoisie and the changing balance of power between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* turned appeal to propaganda into an integral part of the political process. From the perspective of papal leadership, it created new challenges with which to contend.

Notwithstanding the many studies devoted to Clement's pontificate, much remains to be done in order to find a suitable basis for analysing papal policy and the reactions to it. Generations of historians have fallen easy prey to some of the difficulties faced by fourteenth-century chroniclers in perceiving, let alone supporting papal policy. Many of the available studies actually echo a biased approach to Clement V and his policy. The trials of the Templars and of Boniface VIII, coupled with the pope's absence from Rome and what appeared to be a growing reliance on France and its king, often acquired the weight of unquestionable proof in turning Clement's pontificate into a main factor in the collapse of the

## Introduction

medieval papacy. In contrast to Gregory VII and his proud successors, Clement V is often accused by historians of having submitted the papacy – whether willingly or not – to the boundless ambition of Philip the Fair. The criticism of papal policy, though most acute with regard to Clement V, touched his successors to the pontifical throne, as well. Thus, any historian who attempts to study the popes and the papal court during the so-called ‘Avignon period’ must deal frequently with their scandalous reputation, a characterisation that Petrarch encapsulated in his well-known expression ‘Babylonian captivity of the papacy’.<sup>1</sup> Jean Christophe pointed to the national factor as the main catalyst for the prevailing negative, stereotyped attitudes towards the Avignon popes – French historians usually apologetic and Italians critical.<sup>2</sup> Historical research of the past 150 years, however, shows that a critical attitude towards Clement V goes beyond national boundaries. In this regard, James Muldoon represents a new, more moderate approach that has developed in recent years:

As research into the Avignon papacy continues, this era appears less and less as an aberration in the history of the papacy. More and more, the popes of Avignon can be seen as fitting within the mainstream of papal development during the Middle Ages. By continuing to employ and develop the institutional structure inherited from the thirteenth-century pontiffs, the Avignon popes automatically cast themselves in the same role that their predecessors had assumed. As a result, although it is common to view these popes as the antithesis of the reforming popes of the Gregorian era, it is important to realise that they saw themselves as continuing in that tradition.<sup>3</sup>

It is the thesis of this book that the papacy, though relying in the main on divine will and canonical exegesis for its justification, actually depended on the attitudes of its contemporaries and their acceptance of papal guidance. By the fourteenth century, the papacy was largely recognised as a vital institution, but any attempt to assert papal supremacy was regarded as a sign of greed and worldly ambition. What most contemporaries wanted from the pope – a vague spiritual leadership in most cases – appeared to be lacking in the gigantic bureaucracy characterising the papal curia. The growing gap between the papacy and the expectations that its contemporaries had of it provides a new viewpoint, and even a challenge, for a reconsideration of Clement V. This book thus attempts to re-evaluate the pontificate of Clement V in order to offer a more bal-

<sup>1</sup> D. Williman, ‘Summary Justice in the Avignonese Camera’, p. 437. On the factors behind Petrarch’s adverse view of the Avignon papacy, see M. Bishop, *Petrarch and His World*, pp. 304–19.

<sup>2</sup> J. Christophe, *Histoire de la papauté pendant le XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, vol. 1, pp. iv–v. Cf. B. Guillemin, ‘Punti di vista sul papato avignonese’, pp. 181–206. See also the excellent historiographical survey provided by D. Waley, ‘Opinions of the Avignon Papacy’, pp. 175–80.

<sup>3</sup> J. Muldoon, ‘The Avignon Papacy and the Frontiers of Christendom’, pp. 126–9.

## Introduction

anced picture of papal policy. Analysis has been carried out from complementary but not always congruent viewpoints, namely, those offered by official documentation (both ecclesiastical and secular) and by narrative sources. A third perspective has been provided by modern research, which has been considerable for the last two centuries. Special emphasis was placed on the different sources of inspiration for the pope's image, while an attempt was made to be most attentive to the attitudes of contemporaries and the different factors behind their views. This integrated approach raises some methodological problems that call for clarification.

An initial question focused on the prevailing approach to Clement V as inaugurating the Avignon period. Bernard Guillemain has rightly pointed out that neither in his intentions nor in his behaviour should Clement be considered the first pope of Avignon.<sup>4</sup> Yet Guillemain's own detailed analysis of Clement V in a book concerning the papal curia in Avignon reflects a rather ambiguous approach or, perhaps, the reluctance to change a historiographical trend that had reached the status of tradition. This book follows the example of fourteenth-century authors, who refer to Clement's absence from Rome without characterising it in terms of a permanent exile, much less such an exile in Avignon.

The attempt to analyse contemporary reactions to papal policy encountered not a few problems. Rather obviously, the common religious background left its mark on fourteenth-century chroniclers and the vocabulary they used. Reference to the same thesaurus of beliefs, idioms, and symbols made it extremely difficult to pinpoint significant ideological differences among the various sources. An attempt was made to identify contemporary authors and their political affiliation in order to determine the groups they represented and the popularity of their ideas. It soon became evident, however, that conventional categories, such as papalists and anti-papalists or Guelphs and Ghibellines, are rather problematic. The papalists and the so-called anti-papalists had more in common than not; such differentiation, moreover, was quite irrelevant to the pragmatic attitudes evinced towards papal policy on a particular issue. The classical categories of Guelphs and Ghibellines also proved to be quite obscure. Clement's policy in Italy weakened party differences and brought about a constant pendulum in the attitudes of the city-states and the chroniclers reporting them. The attempt to differentiate between *culture savante* and *culture populaire* also demanded much caution. The political tracts and a large proportion of the chronicles in one way or another expressed the ideas of the intellectual elite, and there is no clear indication as to the prevalence of their arguments in the lower social

<sup>4</sup> Guillemain, *La cour pontificale d'Avignon*, p. 77.



## Introduction

strata. The use of geographical criteria was of some help in overcoming certain of these problems. In many cases, the various reactions to papal policy could be classified according to location, making it possible to speak of prevailing attitudes in some areas of France, England, Aragon, and Germany. Here too, however, most generalisations were found wanting. The prevalent local patriotism, which in Italy assumed significant political weight, presented serious obstacles to any attempt at a prosopographical classification of the sources according to 'national' criteria. I have attempted to balance such impediments by constant reference to and comparison between theory and practice; that is, between reactions to the papal policy as reported in contemporary sources and developments in the political arena.

Reliance on narrative sources created further problems as to the originality of the authors, the extent of imitation, and even direct copying.<sup>5</sup> The monasteries of St Albans and St Denis still enjoyed historiographical pre-eminence, but their inherently monarchist attitude increases uncertainty about the prevalence of the opinions they voiced.<sup>6</sup> The 'Merton' *Flores* and the 1307–26 continuation, for example, were actually official histories, the latter covering the reign of Edward II to whom the original manuscript was presented.<sup>7</sup> It is highly doubtful whether the quantitative solution offered by Bernard Guenée – i.e., the number of manuscripts of each chronicle – can provide a satisfactory answer about the diffusion of ideas or the climate of opinion on specific issues.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the use of traditional idioms raises questions about the validity of paraphrases that were borrowed from the historiographical vocabulary of the past. In regard to England, for instance, it was rather easy to trace the influence of Matthew Paris, especially when the pope and his detrimental policy towards the Church of England were concerned.

Other methodological considerations related to the use of specific terms. During Clement's pontificate, the legatine system followed the tripartite classification defined by Guillaume Durant, namely, *legati a latere* (cardinals), *legati nati* (primates, with less authority than the former), and *nuncii* (all other categories, inclusive of papal collectors).<sup>9</sup> The officials of the papal curia were consistent in their different use of these terms. A

<sup>5</sup> On the extent of imitation in medieval chronicles, see R. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing', pp. 77–82. For the Avignon period, the most important contribution is that of Guillaume Mollat, *Etude critique sur les Vitae*; for Clement's pontificate, see pp. 1–30. Cf. W. Otte, 'Der historische Wert der alten Biographien des Papstes Clemens V', pp. 3–73. <sup>6</sup> G. Spiegel, 'Political Utility in Medieval Historiography', p. 314.

<sup>7</sup> A. Gransden, 'The Continuations of the *Flores Historiarum*', pp. 487–9.

<sup>8</sup> B. Guenée, *Histoire et culture historique dans l'Occident médiéval*, pp. 248–58.

<sup>9</sup> G. Durandi Episc. Mimatensis, *Speculum juris* or *judiciale*, bk 1, pt 1, 'de legato', vol. 1, pp. 28–30.

## Introduction

cardinal who was dispatched as a vicarial representative of the pope – i.e., as a *legatus a latere* – was addressed as a *legatus sedis apostolice*. As such, he was not allowed to receive a portion of the cardinals' revenue, though a *nuntius* was. Most of Clement's envoys were actually nuncios, while legates were used for very important missions, such as the imperial coronation or the Hospitaller crusade. On the other hand, Johannes Andreae used the designation of *legatus* to refer to any kind of papal representative, while *nuntius* meant envoys or messengers. Chroniclers very often did not differentiate among the different categories, making indiscriminate use of the terms *legatus* and *nuntius*.<sup>10</sup> This book follows the nomenclature of the papal registers, which distinguishes between legates and nuncios. The term 'envoys' is used only in those cases in which no clear indication of their status appears in the text. Similar considerations concern the appellation of papal documents. Although outside the papal curia the term 'bull' was frequently used to describe papal documents, this form was not in use in the records of the chamber and in the chancery registers before the second half of the fourteenth century. It did gain in popularity in the fourteenth century as a description of documents issued under the leaden seal (for the leaden seal is what the word *bullā* means) as opposed to those issued under a wax seal.<sup>11</sup> The term *littere apostolice* remained the official term in the curia and the one most frequently used, thus justifying reference to 'papal letters' throughout this book. The attempt to follow coetaneous nomenclature also dictated reference to 'Assemblies', instead of 'Estates', during the reign of Philip the Fair. Contemporary chroniclers referred to the Assemblies as either *parlamentum* or *consilium* and did not use the term *Etats* until 1316. Thomas N. Bisson has noted that it is preferable to speak in terms of 'men of estates', whose traditional number, three, also appears to be inaccurate. Sometimes both theologians and lawyers were summoned, and contemporaries referred to them as separate groups.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the text, the Christian names of kings and popes have been anglicised while other names kept in their vernacular forms. For coinage, the *librae*, *solidi*, and *denarii* or their French equivalents, the abbreviations *l.*, *s.*, and *d.* have been used. Where there was a question of a particular kind of currency, the vernacular term was used.

<sup>10</sup> C. I. Kyer, 'Legatus and Nuntius as Used to Denote Papal Envoys', pp. 474–7.

<sup>11</sup> *Original Papal Letters in England*, p. xlvi.

<sup>12</sup> T. N. Bisson, 'The General Assemblies of Philip the Fair', pp. 558–64. Sicard's approach maintaining the continuity of the *Etats Généraux* since 1302 seems, therefore, questionable. See G. Sicard, 'Les *Etats Généraux* de la France capétienne', p. 59.