



Edited by Irene Bueno

# Pope Benedict XII (1334–1342)

## The Guardian of Orthodoxy

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

Pope Benedict XII (1334–1342)

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*Edited by  
Irene Bueno*

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# Abbreviations

<i>Acta Aragonensia</i>	H. Finke, <i>Acta Aragonensia: Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II. (1291–1327)</i> (Berlin/Leipzig, 1908)
<i>Acta Benedicti XII</i>	<i>Acta Benedicti XII (1334–1342)</i> , ed. A. Tăutu (Rome, 1968)
AHP	<i>Archivum Historiae Pontificiae</i>
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano
BXII: <i>Communes</i>	<i>Benoît XII, 1334–1342: lettres communes analysées d'après les registres dits d'Avignon et du Vatican</i> , ed. J.-M. Vidal, 3 vols (Paris, 1902–11)
BXII: <i>France</i>	<i>Benoît XII (1334–1342): lettres closes, patentes et curiales se rapportant à la France, publiées ou analysées d'après les registres du Vatican</i> , ed. G. Daumet, 3 vols (Paris, 2003)
BXII: <i>Pays autres</i>	<i>Benoît XII (1334–1342): lettres closes et patentes intéressant les pays autres que la France</i> , ed. J.-M. Vidal and G. Mollat, 2 vols (Paris, 1913–50)
Baluze, <i>Vitae</i>	Étienne Baluze, <i>Vitae Papparum Avenionensium, hoc est, Historia Pontificum Romanorum qui in Gallia sederunt ab anno Christi 1305 usque ad annum 1394</i> , ed. G. Mollat, 4 vols (Paris, 1914–27), available online at: <a href="http://baluze.univ-avignon.fr/read_index.html">http://baluze.univ-avignon.fr/read_index.html</a> (last accessed on 4 February 2017)
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana
BF	<i>Bullarium franciscanum: sive romanorum pontificum constitutiones, epistolae, diplomata tribus ordinibus Minorum, Clarissarum, Penitentium [...] a sancto Francisco institutis ab eorum originibus ad nostra usque tempora concessa</i> , ed. C. Eubel (Rome, 1902)
BL	British Library
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
Bueno, <i>Defining Heresy</i>	I. Bueno, <i>Defining Heresy: inquisition, theology, and papal policy in the time of Jacques Fournier</i> , Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions, 192 (Leiden, 2015)
CF	Cahiers de Fanjeaux
COD <sup>3</sup>	<i>Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta</i> , ed. J. Alberigo <i>et al.</i> , 3rd edn (Bologna, 1973); the same text, with the same pagination, is available with an English translation: <i>Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils</i> , ed. N.P. Tanner, 2 vols (Georgetown DC, 1990)



<i>DHGE</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques</i> , 32 vols (Paris, 1909–2016)
<i>DthC</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de théologie catholique</i> , 30 vols (Paris, 1902–50)
Duvernoy, <i>JF</i>	J. Duvernoy, <i>Le registre d'inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318–1325)</i> , 3 vols (Toulouse, 1965)
Ehrle, <i>Historia bibliothecae</i>	F. Ehrle, <i>Historia bibliothecae romanorum pontificum, tum Bonifatianae tum Avenionensis</i> (Rome, 1890)
Eubel	C. Eubel, <i>Hierarchia catholica Medii Aevii sive summorum pontificum S.R.E. cardinalium ecclesiarum antistitum series</i> , 3 vols (Münster, 1898–1914)
Guillemain, <i>Cour pontificale</i>	B. Guillemain, <i>La cour pontificale d'Avignon (1309–1376): étude d'une société</i> (Paris, 1962)
Guillemain, <i>Papes d'Avignon</i>	B. Guillemain, <i>Les papes d'Avignon, 1309–1376</i> (Paris, 1998)
<i>HLF</i>	<i>Histoire littéraire de la France</i> , 43 vols (Paris, 1733–2008)
<i>Images and Words</i>	<i>Images and Words in Exile: Avignon and Italy during the first half of the 14th century</i> , ed. E. Brill, L. Fenelli, and G. Wolf (Florence, 2015)
<i>Jean XXII: lettres communes</i>	<i>Jean XXII (1316–1334): lettres communes analysées d'après les registres dits d'Avignon et du Vatican</i> , ed. G. Mollat, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 3rd Ser., 16 vols (Paris, 1904–47)
<i>JEH</i>	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
Le Roy Ladurie, <i>Montaillou</i>	E. Le Roy Ladurie, <i>Montaillou, village occitan: de 1294 à 1324</i> (Paris, 1975)
<i>Lettres secrètes et curiales du pape Jean XXII</i>	<i>Lettres secrètes et curiales du pape Jean XXII, 1316–1334, relatives à la France</i> , ed. A. Coulon, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 3rd Ser., 1, 4 vols (Paris, 1900–72)
<i>Liber pontificalis</i>	<i>Le Liber pontificalis</i> , ed. L. Duchesne, Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, 2nd Ser., 3, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Paris, 1955–7)
Maier, <i>Ausgehendes</i>	A. Maier, <i>Ausgehendes Mittelalter: gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geistesgeschichte des 14. Jahrhunderts</i> , 3 vols (Rome, 1964–77)
<i>MEFRM</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen Âge</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica, inde ab anno Christi quintesimo usque ad annum millesimum et quingentesimum</i> (Hanover/Berlin, 1824–)
<i>MGH SS</i>	<i>Scriptores</i> (in folio), 32 vols in 34 (Hanover/Leipzig, 1826–1934)

Mollat, <i>Papes d'Avignon</i>	G. Mollat, <i>Les papes d'Avignon (1305–1378)</i> (Paris, 1950)
PL	<i>Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina (Patrologia latina)</i> , 221 vols, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1841–64)
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
Riezler, <i>Vatikanische Akten</i>	S. Riezler, <i>Vatikanische Akten zur Deutschen Geschichte in der Zeit Kaser Ludwigs des Bayern</i> (Aalen, 1891)
Rollo-Koster, <i>Avignon</i>	J. Rollo-Koster, <i>Avignon and its Papacy, 1309–1417: popes, institutions, and society</i> (Lanham MD, 2015)
SBO	<i>Sancti Bernardi Opera</i> , ed. J. Leclercq, H. Rochais, and C.H. Talbot, 8 vols (Rome, 1957–77)
Schäfer, <i>Ausgaben</i>	K.H. Schäfer, <i>Die Ausgaben der apostolischen Kammer unter Benedikt XII., Klemens VI. und Innocenz VI.</i> (Paderborn, 1914)
Theiner	A. Theiner, <i>Codex diplomaticus domini temporalis S. Sedis</i> , 3 vols (Rome, 1861–2)
Theis, <i>Gouvernement</i>	V. Theis, <i>Le gouvernement pontifical du Comtat Venaissin: vers 1270–vers 1350</i> , Collection de l'École française de Rome, 464 (Rome, 2012)
Trottmann, <i>La vision</i>	C. Trottmann, <i>La vision béatifique des disputes scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII</i> (Rome, 1995)
Villani	Giovanni Villani, <i>Nuova cronica</i> , ed. G. Porta, 3 vols (Parma, 1991)



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# Introduction: Benedict XII, the Guardian of Orthodoxy

*Irene Bueno*

## Abstract

Benedict XII (c.1334–1342) was a key figure of the Avignon papal court. He was renowned for rooting out heretics, and distinguished himself as a refined theologian. During his reign, he faced the most significant religious and political challenges in the era of the Avignon papacy: theological quarrels, divisions, and schisms within the Church, conflicts between European sovereigns, and the growth of Turkish power in the East. This book offers a unique overview of his career and pontificate, bringing together nine chapters that discuss the existing literature and address original perspectives based on new research. In spite of its diminished political influence, the papacy, which had recently moved to France, emerged as an institution committed to the defence and expansion of the Catholic faith in Europe and the East. Benedict made significant contributions to the definition of doctrine, the assessment of pontifical power in Western Europe, and the expansion of Catholicism in the East: in all these different contexts he distinguished himself as a true guardian of orthodoxy.

**Keywords:** Benedict XII, Jacques Fournier, Avignon papacy, medieval Church history, orthodoxy and heterodoxy

On 13 December 1334, a few days after the death of John XXII (1316–1334), twenty-four cardinals gathered in conclave in Avignon. By the end of the week, the majority – according to some, all – of the assembly elected as John’s successor the Cistercian cardinal Jacques Fournier (c.1285–1342). Born in Saverdun in the Ariège region, he ascended the

papal throne on 8 January 1335 with the name of Benedict XII, and died in Avignon.<sup>1</sup> According to the Florentine chronicler Giovanni Villani, the election was arduous and Fournier's name was proposed 'almost as a dare, believing that it would not be done' (*quasi per gara, non credendo venisse fatto*). The choice of one 'regarded as the lowest of the Cardinals' (*il più minimo de' cardinali*) thus astonished many, probably on account of the new pontiff's political inexperience. Villani further remarks: 'And once he was elected pope, everyone was surprised, and he himself, who was present, said: "You have elected an ignoramus" (*Avete eletto uno asino*)'.<sup>2</sup>

Regardless of Villani's report, Jacques Fournier's pontifical election does not appear as something completely unexpected when considering his former career, as well as the influence of his maternal uncle Arnaud Novel – doctor of law, Cistercian abbot of Fontfroide, cardinal, and candidate to the papal throne after the death of Clement V. If Jacques seems to have had modest origins – he was said to have been the son of a baker or miller from the region of Toulouse – it was Arnaud Novel who made the most profound impact on his career. Following in his uncle's footsteps, Jacques took the Cistercian habit at the monastery of Boulbonne and replaced Arnaud as abbot of Fontfroide upon his elevation to the cardinalate in 1310. Probably under his influence, in the following years Fournier undertook theological studies at the Cistercian Collège Saint-Bernard in Paris, obtaining the degree of *magister* in 1313–1314. This training played a fundamental role in assuring his subsequent reputation as one of the leading theologians of the papal Curia. The ground was thus prepared for his rapid assumption of important duties, first as bishop of Pamiers (1317) and then of Mirepoix (1326). During this phase, he undertook rigorous campaigns against heretics, obtaining public recognition from John XXII for the reputation he had gained through his activities. Transcripts of Fournier's inquisitorial inquiries are recorded in MS lat. 4030 of the Vatican Library – a real treasure trove of information on the religion, mentality, economy, and society of the late medieval Pyrenees, which has never ceased to fascinate modern scholars.

The time was now right for Fournier to take further and even more ambitious steps in his career. In 1327, he was created cardinal priest of Santa Prisca, once again following in the steps of his late uncle (who had held

1 For Benedict XII's biography, see J. Paul, 'Jacques Fournier (Benoît XII)', in *HLF*, xxxvii, 174–209; L. Jadin, 'Benoît XII', in *DHGE*, viii, 116–35; X. Le Bachelet, 'Benoît XII', in *DThC*, xi, 653–704; Mollat, *Papes*, 48–63; Guillemain, *Papes d'Avignon*.

2 'E lui eletto papa, ciascuno s'ammirò, e elli medesimo ch'era presente disse: "Avete eletto uno asino"', Villani, iii, 1246–7 (xii.21).

the same title until his death in 1317) and the ‘white cardinal’ – as Fournier was called because of the Cistercian habit that he continued to wear after his election – rapidly became one of the key figures of the papal court. Not only was he renowned in Avignon for rooting out heretics in the region of Ariège, but also he had already distinguished himself as a refined theologian, advising John XXII on sensitive doctrinal matters from the first years of his episcopate.<sup>3</sup> Fournier had offered his expertise on the heretical nature of magical practices as early as 1319.<sup>4</sup> In the ensuing years, he returned to drafting new opinions at the request of John XXII. The pope asked him to examine the works of key figures in the theological debate of the 1320s and early 1330s – including Peter John Olivi<sup>5</sup> and Meister Eckhart<sup>6</sup> – and tenacious adversaries of the pope on the poverty of Christ and the Apostles, such as William of Ockham and Michael of Cesena.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Fournier was asked for his advice on the dogmatic definition of the Beatific Vision, one of the burning topics of the last years of John XXII’s pontificate, in pursuit of which he confronted the opinions of Durand de Saint-Pourçan.<sup>8</sup> Besides contributing to an assessment of these ideas, Fournier also distinguished himself through his important homiletic and exegetical production. It is worth mentioning his lengthy sermons *de tempore* and the *Postilla super Matheum*, a monumental commentary on the Gospel of Matthew in six volumes.<sup>9</sup> The ‘white cardinal’ had thus become John XXII’s official theologian

3 See J. Koch, ‘Der Kardinal Jacques Fournier (Benedikt XII) als Gutachter in theologischen Prozessen’ (1960), in idem, *Kleine Schriften*, 2 vols (Rome, 1973), ii, 368–86. See also Bueno, *Defining Heresy*, 151–64; and S. Piron, ‘Avignon sous Jean XXII, l’Eldorado des théologiens’, in *Jean XXII et le Midi*, CF, 45 (Toulouse, 2012), 357–91.

4 On this consultation, see *Le pape et les sorciers: une consultation de Jean XXII sur la magie en 1320* (manuscrit B.A.V. Borghese 348), ed. A. Boureau (Rome, 2004).

5 Jacques Fournier took part in the last phase of the trial against the *Lectura super Apocalypsim* by Peter John Olivi († 1298). See S. Piron, ‘Censures et condamnation de Pierre de Jean Olivi: enquête dans les marges du Vatican’, *MEFRM*, 118 (2006), 313–73.

6 W. Senner, ‘Meister Eckhart’s Life, Training, Career, and Trial’, in *A Companion to Meister Eckhart*, ed. J.M. Hackett (Leiden, 2013), 7–84.

7 A. Pelzer, ‘Les 51 articles de Guillaume Occam censurés à Avignon en 1326’, *RHE*, 18 (1922), 240–70; *Nicolaus Minorita, Chronica. Documentation on Pope John XXII, Michael of Cesena and the poverty of Christ with summaries in English: a source book*, ed. G. Gál and D. Flood (Allageny NY, 1996).

8 I. Iribarren, ‘Consensus et dissidence à la cour papale d’Avignon: le cas de la controverse sur la vision béatifique’, *Revue des Sciences Religieuses*, 82 (2008), 107–26; Trottmann, *La vision*.

9 Fournier’s sermons are preserved in Vatican City, BAV, MS Vat. lat. 4006, fols 316ra–475ra (summary at fols 11a–15rb). On the manuscript tradition of his Matthew *Postilla*, see A. Maier, ‘Der Kommentar Benedikts XII. zum Mattheus-Evangelium’, *AHP*, 6 (1968), 398–405; and Bueno, *Defining Heresy*, 164–72. See also I. Bueno, ‘False Prophets and Ravening Wolves: biblical Exegesis as a tool against heretics in Jacques Fournier’s *Postilla* on Matthew’, *Speculum*, 89 (2014), 35–65.



(*magister sacri Palatii*), distinguishing himself at the papal court as a major point of reference for the defence of doctrinal orthodoxy.

The reputation he had acquired in Avignon as an eminent theologian played a fundamental role in assuring Fournier's election to the papacy. Indeed, most fourteenth-century biographies of Benedict XII underscore the personal devotion and intellectual stature of the new pope. These characteristics are emphasized in several *vitae* of the Cistercian pope, which were compiled soon after his death and subsequently collected by Étienne Baluze (1630–1718), the erudite seventeenth-century librarian of Jean-Baptiste Colbert.<sup>10</sup> In light of these accounts, Fournier thus appeared to the 1334 conclave as the candidate best prepared to address the most pressing matters of the Church and of Western Christianity at that time. What issues mattered in particular?

Surveys of the history of the Avignon papacy have highlighted the important events that marked this rather short pontificate.<sup>11</sup> After guiding the Church for more than eighteen years, John XXII left the newly elected Benedict XII a complex and difficult legacy. The religious and political divisions experienced during John's reign had attracted heated debates and acts of open rebellion against the Apostolic See, forcing Benedict to pursue the difficult task of reconciliation and to look for uneasy compromises between continuity and rupture with his predecessor's course of action.

His first concern was the resolution of the Beatific Vision controversy, which remained unresolved at the time of John XXII's death and demanded dogmatic clarification. To this aim Benedict promoted a consultation, which resulted in the bull *Benedictus Deus* (1336), the document defining the official doctrine of the Church on this highly contentious matter. From the first years of his pontificate, Benedict also engaged in a reform of the Curia and of the secular clergy which aimed at suppressing abuses and nepotism in the granting of benefices and containing the greed for gain among the clergy. His major reforming effort was, however, directed at the religious orders. In 1335–1336 the Cistercian pope undertook a reform that is still regarded as one of the landmarks of his pontificate. Not only

10 Baluze, *Vitae*; see also G. Mollat, *Étude critique sur les Vitae Papparum Avenionensium d'Étienne Baluze* (Paris, 1917). See also J. Chiffolleau, 'Baluze, les papes et la France', in *Étienne Baluze, 1630–1718: érudition et pouvoir dans l'Europe classique*, ed. J. Boutier (Limoges, 2008), 163–246; G. Lobrichon and P. Payan, 'Quelle écriture de l'histoire des papes d'Avignon?', in *Liber, gesta, histoire: écrire l'histoire des évêques et des papes, de l'Antiquité au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. F. Bougard and M. Sot (Turnhout, 2009), 179–98.

11 Mollat, *Papes d'Avignon*, 48–63; Guillemain, *Cour pontificale*, 134–6; and, more recently, Rollo-Koster, *Avignon*, 56–61.

did he regulate the admission of novices, the details of discipline, and the organization of convents, but he also issued various deliberations on higher education, in an attempt to assert control over the organization of studies within the religious orders. As Jacques Paul summed it up, ‘faith and reform: these are, in the government of the Church, his major concerns’.<sup>12</sup>

Benedict’s international diplomacy reflects the multiple strains affecting European politics in the period during which the papacy was in Avignon. His project of transferring the Holy See back to Italy failed as a result of insufficient security and the general political instability of the peninsula. This did not, however, prevent Benedict from developing an alternative strategy. By conferring on Avignon the status of official papal residence and undertaking the construction of the new pontifical palace, he thereby contributed to a fundamental transformation of the new papal city and was the first to give a long-term character to the papacy’s settlement in Provence. Yet, while he instigated these major changes, Benedict was also aware of the importance of maintaining and consolidating papal authority in Italy and, most importantly, in Rome – as testified, for example, by his artistic patronage in the city of Peter.<sup>13</sup>

Benedict’s registers of correspondence testify to a challenging conjuncture in the relations among European powers. First, he had to face the split with the Empire, which began in the 1320s with the enmity between John XXII and Louis of Bavaria and resulted in the election of an antipope. This conflict was intertwined with the activities of Italian ‘rebels’ of various kinds, including political adversaries and ‘dissident’ Franciscans, who opposed John’s decrees on poverty. At the same time, a range of conflicts was undermining the peace among the Christian sovereigns in various regions, and Benedict attempted to contain the rivalry not only between Castile and Portugal but also among Scotland, England, France, and the Empire. Besides destabilizing the West at the preliminary stages of the Hundred Years’ War, these conflicts exerted an impact on the papacy’s Eastern policy by limiting interventions in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Modern scholars have often evaluated Benedict’s initiatives in the wider international arena as ultimately ineffective. Indeed, his diplomatic exchanges with the German emperor hardly produced any significant results. Despite intensive exchanges with the French and English Crowns,

12 ‘La foi et la réforme, telles sont, dans le gouvernement ecclésiastique, ses deux préoccupations capitales’, Paul, ‘Jacques Fournier’, 182.

13 C. Bolgia, ‘Images in the City: presence, absence and legitimacy in Rome in the first half of the fourteenth century’, in *Images and Words*, 381–400.

he failed to prevent the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War. Likewise, Benedict did not succeed in organizing a new crusade; nor did his negotiations with Byzantium and Armenia contribute much to the cause of Church union. Overall, Benedict's international diplomacy was hardly effective, demonstrating to a certain extent the very limits of pontifical authority in the first half of the fourteenth century. However, a closer look at his activities testifies at the very least to his determination to act as a mediator of peace and an arbiter of controversies in very diverse contexts, from Iberia to the Near East and from England to Italy. Whether successful or not, Benedict's individual contribution should thus be reconsidered against the backdrop of the serious tensions that were affecting the Holy See, Europe, and the Mediterranean during his pontificate.

As shown by this biographical survey, Benedict's career and work open a window onto a fundamental period of transformation of both the Western Church and of European history. Not only does his individual trajectory call for further attention to be paid to a key personality in fourteenth-century Church history, but it also sheds light on major cultural and political developments and changing balances between centre and periphery which marked the period of the Avignon papacy. Indeed, Benedict's course of action testifies at one and the same time to the symbolic and material transformation of the city of Avignon into a new Rome, and to its growing role as a chief cultural hub of the European Trecento. Moreover, it underlines the tensions that were being manifested all over Europe and in the East at the dawn of the Hundred Years' War, and the Curia's reactions to the opening of new Oriental horizons.

Nonetheless, the achievements of Benedict's career and short pontificate still need to be re-evaluated in the light of a fresh and attentive reading of the available sources. Despite the major events that marked his life and work, a comprehensive monograph on Jacques Fournier has yet to be produced. Several scholars have examined specific aspects of his career and pontificate, including areas such as his relations with the Franciscan order, his role in the Beatific Vision controversy, his reform of the religious orders, his international diplomacy, and his judicial, theological, and political commitment against heretics.<sup>14</sup> While key transformations connected to Benedict's reign

14 C. Schmitt, *Un Pape réformateur et un défenseur de l'unité de l'Église: Benoît XII et l'ordre des Frères Mineurs (1334–1342)* (Quaracchi, 1959); Trottmann, *La vision*; J.-M. Vidal, *Le tribunal d'inquisition à Pamiers* (Toulouse, 1906); J. Ballweg, *Konziliare oder päpstliche Ordensreform: Benedikt 12. und die Reformdiskussion im frühen 14. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 2001); H. Jenkins, *Papal Efforts for Peace under Benedict XII (1334–1342)* (Philadelphia, 1933); Bueno, *Defining Heresy*.

have been addressed elsewhere, there exists no comprehensive overview of the third pope of Avignon.<sup>15</sup>

One reason for this situation is that the figure of Benedict XII has often been overshadowed by the stronger personalities of his predecessor, John XXII (1316–1334), and his successor, Clement VI (1342–1352).<sup>16</sup> As a result, Benedict has either appeared as a moderate continuator of John's energetic pontificate or as a scrupulous reformer, but a rather inactive sovereign, who could not equal Clement's enhancement of the cultural life and magnificence of the Curia. Another reason can be found in the role played by Fournier's inquisitorial registers, which have attracted great scholarly attention, thus obscuring his wider activities and legacy. Transcripts of Fournier's inquiries in the diocese of Pamiers have been the subject of numerous studies, while modern historians have paid less attention to the wider impact of his cardinalate and pontificate.<sup>17</sup> Thus, while individual studies have examined important aspects of Benedict's career, a complete full-length overview of the life and work of this pope has yet to emerge.

This volume aims not only to meet the challenge of offering a comprehensive overview of Benedict's life and reign but also to address specific facets of his pontificate which have not yet received the attention they deserve. Nine experts in their individual fields of research reconsider Fournier's inquisitorial involvement, analyse his theological contribution, and examine the major political, religious, administrative, and artistic contributions of his reign. Each one focuses on different geographic contexts, ranging from the region of Avignon, the city of Rome, and Western Europe, to the

15 Apart from the outdated K. Jakob, *Studien über Papst Benedikt: 20. Dezember 1334 bis 25. April 1342* (Berlin, 1910).

16 Published volumes on John XXII include: *Jean XXII et le Midi*, CF, 45 (2012); S. Zanke, *Johannes XXII, Avignon und Europa: das politische Papsttum im Spiegel der kurialen Register (1316–1334)* (Leiden, 2013); *Papst Johannes XXII: Konzepte und Verfahren seines Pontifikats*, ed. H.-J. Schmidt and M. Rohde (Berlin, 2014). On Clement VI, see D. Wood, *Clement VI: the pontificate and ideas of an Avignon pope* (Cambridge, 1989); R. Lützelshwab, *Flectat cardinales ad velle suum? Clemens VI. (1342–1352) und sein Kardinalskolleg: ein Beitrag zur kurialen Politik in der Mitte des 14. Jahrhunderts* (München, 2007); A. Péliissier, *Clément VI le magnifique, premier pape limousin (1342–1352)* (Nîmes, 2008); É. Anheim, *Clément VI au travail: lire, écrire, prêcher au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 2014).

17 The transcripts of Pamiers (Vat. lat. 4030) were edited in Duvernoy, *JF. Studies of these records include Le Roy Ladurie, Montaignou*; G. De Llobet, 'Variété des croyances populaires au Comté de Foix au début du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle d'après les enquêtes de J. Fournier', in *La religion populaire en Languedoc du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle à la moitié du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, CF, 11 (Toulouse, 1976), 109–26; M. Benad, *Domus und Religion in Montaignou: katholische Kirche und Katharismus im Überlebenskampf der Familie des Pfarres Petrus Clerici am Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1990); J.-P. Albert, 'Croire et ne pas croire: les chemins de l'hétérodoxie dans le Registre d'Inquisition de Jacques Fournier', *Heresis*, 39 (2003), 91–106.

Eastern Mediterranean and the Mongol Khanates. Far from examining solely Fournier's individual trajectory, the volume seeks to clarify the complexity of relations that existed between the Holy See and its various interlocutors, and to reconstruct the wider religious, cultural, and political context of Benedict's time. In so doing, the book aims to explore the peculiarities of the papacy at Avignon and to address questions related to what it meant to defend and expand Roman orthodoxy from the new location that the papacy came to occupy in the first half of the fourteenth century.

The papacy's seventy-year residency in Avignon has been the focus of increasing scholarly attention. The opening of the Vatican Archives in 1881, followed by significant editorial endeavours – in particular those of the *École française de Rome* – have been major landmarks in the effort to produce diplomatic, political, financial, and cultural reconstructions of the fourteenth-century Curia based on fresh archival evidence.<sup>18</sup> Yet, it can also be noted that modern historiography on the Avignon papacy has suffered from an enduring divide between French and Italian perspectives. Whereas French scholars have generally been prone to favourable views of the Avignonese phase, Italians have often perceived it as a period of transition, awaiting the return of the popes to their natural seat – Rome. In a kind of continuation of Petrarch's anti-Avignonese polemics, the latter tendency has been marked by enduring representations of the papal period on the Rhône River as a new 'Babylonian captivity' which was detrimental to the history of the Church.<sup>19</sup> Conversely, positive accounts have characterized the fundamental overviews of the Avignon period, such as those offered by Guillaume Mollat, Yves Renouard, Bernard Guillemain, and Joëlle Rollo-Koster.<sup>20</sup>

While this dualistic scenario has now been abandoned, significant new works on the Avignon papacy have only recently appeared. Recent studies, based on the scrutiny of documents from the Vatican Archives, have increasingly shed light on the political, institutional, and cultural dimensions of the papacy in Provence. Following these accounts, the fourteenth century

18 As pointed out by Rollo-Koster, *Avignon*, 1–22, particularly at 4. Guillaume Mollat offered further support for Avignon studies through his erudite works and editions; see, among others, his contribution in Baluze, *Vitae*.

19 See D. Waley, 'Opinions of the Avignon Papacy: a historiographical sketch', in *Storiografia e storia: studi in onore di Eugenio Duprè Theseider* (Rome, 1974), 175–88; E. Duprè Theseider, *I papi di Avignone e la questione romana* (Florence, 1939), vii–xl; see the more recent discussion on related topics in *Images and Words*, xv–xix.

20 Mollat, *Papes d'Avignon*; Y. Renouard, *La papauté à Avignon* (Paris, 1954; repr. 2004); Guillemain, *Cour pontificale*; Rollo-Koster, *Avignon*.

can now be seen as a fundamental period not only for the institutional and administrative evolution of the papal government but also for the affirmation of the papal court as a key cultural space of late-medieval Europe, one which contributed in a decisive manner to the promotion of learning, theological meditation, and artistic production.<sup>21</sup>

Stimulated by these contributions, the chapters collected in this volume take into account multiple aspects of Fournier's career and pontificate. Elizabeth Sherman reconsiders Fournier's inquisitorial activity as bishop of Pamiers in the light of a close comparison with earlier inquisitorial material. Sylvain Piron and Christian Trottmann concentrate especially on Fournier's theological accounts, relying on vast quantities of unpublished material. Piron identifies new theological advice given by Jacques Fournier against Peter John Olivi's *Lectura super Apocalypsim*, compiled at the request of John XXII.<sup>22</sup> Trottmann offers instead an overview of the Beatific Vision controversy, highlighting Fournier's definitive contribution to the debate, both as cardinal and as pope. The remaining chapters deal with different aspects of Benedict's pontificate, drawing from the registers of the Apostolic Chancery and other materials ranging from the Chancery records of the English Crown to local chronicles, lists of errors, and artistic artefacts. Valérie Theis examines Benedict's strategies, which led to the lasting implantation of the Curia into the region of Avignon. Benedict's attempt at consolidating papal authority in Rome lies at the core of Claudia Bolgia's study of a revealing, half-length portrait of the pope. Sylvain Parent analyses Benedict's Italian policy, while Barbara Bombi reconsiders the pope's role as an international mediator on the occasion of the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War. Finally, Mike Carr and Irene Bueno concentrate on Benedict's Eastern policy. Whereas Carr reconsiders Benedict's crusading strategy,

21 J. Chiffolleau, *La comptabilité de l'au-delà: les hommes, la mort et la religion dans la région d'Avignon à la fin du Moyen Âge, vers 1320–vers 1480* (Rome, 1980; repr. Paris, 2011); M.-H. Jullien de Pommerol and J. Monfrin, *La bibliothèque pontificale à Avignon et à Peñíscola pendant le grand schisme d'Occident et sa dispersion*, 2 vols (Rome, 1991); *La vie culturelle, intellectuelle et scientifique à la cour des papes d'Avignon*, ed. J. Hamesse (Turnhout, 2006); F. Manzari, *La miniatura ad Avignone al tempo dei papi, 1310–1410* (Modena, 2006); *Offices, écrit et papauté, XIII<sup>e</sup>–XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, ed. A. Jamme and O. Poncet (Rome, 2007); V. Theis, *Le gouvernement pontifical du Comtat Venaissin: vers 1270–vers 1350* (Rome, 2012); Anheim, *Clément VI au travail*; S. Parent, *Dans les abysses de l'infidélité: les poursuites judiciaires contre les ennemis de l'Église, entre rébellion et hérésie (Italie, v. 1310–1330)* (Rome, 2014). In English, see among others P. Zutshi, 'The Avignon Papacy', in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vi, c.1300–c.1415, ed. M. Jones (Cambridge, 2000), 653–73; and Rollo-Koster, *Avignon*.

22 The importance of this discovery calls for a translation of Piron's article into English, originally published as 'Un avis retrouvé de Jacques Fournier', *Médiévales*, 54 (2008) 113–34.

Bueno focuses on his confrontation with the Eastern Churches, as well as on the missionary input of the Avignonese Church throughout Asia.

By focusing on the entire career of Jacques Fournier, the volume not only takes into account different sets of sources, both published and unpublished, but also offers new interpretations, thereby widening our understanding of the historical conjuncture during which the Cistercian pope was active. Several authors evaluate Benedict's response to and interpretation of inquisitorial models, theological trends, and major political developments. As Sherman demonstrates, even Fournier's well-studied trial proceedings still deserve attention. She argues that the extremely innovative character of these documents is attributable not only to Fournier's inquisitorial personality or to alleged changes of the heretical paradigm adopted by inquisitors, but rather to a transformation of the very nature of the 'heresy of Good Men' in the fourteenth century. Once the actual *boni homines* became fewer than before, inquisitors such as Fournier needed to adapt their line of questioning, which resulted in lengthy depositions touching upon the simple believers' moral and doctrinal deviances. As the author puts it, the new character of interrogations was therefore 'a practical solution to the changing nature of heterodoxy'.

The contributions by Piron and Trottmann provide an in-depth discussion of aspects of Jacques Fournier's theological thinking which have so far received scant attention, especially from Anglophone scholarship.<sup>23</sup> It is well known that Fournier quickly became one of the closest and most trusted theological advisors of John XXII. Yet, the content of his theological assessments, most of which have been lost, often remains uncertain. Piron's discovery of new advice given by Fournier during the last phase of the trial against Peter John Olivi for his commentary on the Apocalypse adds valuable information not only to the Cistercian's individual evaluation of this work (particularly with respect to Joachimite eschatology), but also to the very history of the trial. Indeed, it appears that this assessment – the lengthiest of those preserved on the same matter – played a fundamental role in the pronouncement of the 1326 sentence against Olivi. Similarly, Fournier's intervention was definitive for the solution that Trottmann calls 'the crisis of the Beatific Vision' – a complex theological controversy which involved not only the court of Avignon but also major intellectual and political centres such as Paris, Oxford, Naples, and Munich. Fournier's engagement

23 Among the few exceptions, see I. Iribarren, 'Ockham and the Avignon Papacy: the controversy with John XXII, Benedict XII and Clement VI', in *A Companion to Responses to Ockham*, ed. C. Rode (Leiden, 2016), 334–64; Bueno, 'False Prophets and Ravening Wolves'.

in the debates was twofold, first as advisor to John XXII and then as pontiff. However, his contribution as a private theologian did not correspond exactly to his later deliberations as a pope. As Trottmann highlights, the newly elected pope diplomatically left aside his most original positions on the subject matter in order to resolve the crisis in a definitive manner.

In fact, appeasement and reconciliation have often been highlighted as landmarks of Benedict's pontificate after the turbulent scenario of John XXII's reign. The actual connections between the two pontiffs, however, deserve further attention. If Fournier's assessments illustrate the distinctive role he played as a theologian at the court of John XXII, the relationship between the two pontificates still needs clarification. Several contributions in this volume evaluate Benedict's reign by discussing patterns of continuity or rupture with his predecessor's course of action. According to Sylvain Parent, as far as Italian policy is concerned, the continuity between the two reigns was more pronounced than has generally been appreciated. This is what emerges from a study of papal interventions aimed at resolving political instability, restoring orthodoxy, and enforcing papal sovereignty in the peninsula. Parent remarks, for example, that a process for the rehabilitation of the Italian 'rebels' or 'heretics' had already been inaugurated by John XXII and was subsequently continued by Benedict XII. Further evidence of prevailing patterns of continuity between the two pontificates surfaces in the similarity of vocabulary used in the documents of the two popes regarding 'tyrannical excesses in Italy'. Just as in John's reign, Benedict's attempts at reconciliation with Italian dissidents were ultimately aimed – although with little success – at consolidating papal sovereignty in the territories of the peninsula.

Benedict's contribution to the consolidation of papal sovereignty is also evaluated by Valérie Theis, who focuses on the local context of the city of Avignon and the surrounding region. Against prevailing views of the Cistercian pope as a prudent sovereign, Theis sheds light on his perspicacity in creating the conditions for the enforcement of the papal institution in this area. It was Benedict, as she underscores, who officially transformed Avignon into the new pontifical seat, assuring the opportunity for the stabilization of the papacy in the city and in the Comtat Venaissin. This fundamental transformation resulted in both the creation of a pontifical palace in Avignon and effective local provisions aimed at controlling space and populace in the region. Distinctive features of Benedict's policy and marked divergences from his predecessors thus emerge when looking at his local administration and its overall impact on the stabilization of the papacy in Provence. From then on, the papal presence in Avignon was no longer perceived as an accidental, transitory situation, and the way opened



for the magnificent works of renovation of the pontifical palace, which Clement VI brought forward with renewed ambition.

While Avignon was being transformed into a second Rome, the evolution of the Eternal City during the lengthy absence of the popes also deserves further attention. In her analysis of papal visual policies in the first half of the fourteenth century, Claudia Bolgia demonstrates how artistic patronage and iconographic choices fit perfectly with the ambition of enforcing papal authority in Rome. In particular, her study of Benedict's sculpture portrait – a replica of Arnolfo di Cambio's monument of Boniface VIII – and of the original location of these two busts offers new insights into the symbols that conveyed the reassertion of papal leadership despite the absence of the popes themselves from the city. By focusing on the different contexts of the new and the old Rome, Theis and Bolgia thus shed light on complementary facets of the symbols connected to the reassertion of the power of the pontiff during the Avignon papacy.

If Benedict's governmental measures in the territory of Avignon proved reasonably efficient, his intervention in Italy and in the international arena was less fortunate. Close attention to different scenarios – ranging from the Anglo-French conflict to the defence and expansion of the Catholic faith in the Near and Far East – demonstrates a patent discrepancy between the pope's intentions in international diplomacy and their overall outcome. Focusing on Anglo-papal correspondence, Barbara Bombi discusses Benedict's arbitration in the period that preceded the outbreak of the Hundred Years' War. If the pope was unable to prevent the outbreak of hostilities, this failure was not necessarily caused by a lack of papal political standing. Bombi argues that preventing the war in those particular circumstances was in fact beyond the power and authority of the papacy. Because contentions and alliances had already acquired an international character by the late 1330s, and involved the agendas of various sovereigns, peace-making had become an impossible task for the head of the Church – regardless of how resolute he was.

Different conclusions are drawn by Mike Carr when focusing on Benedict's crusading policy. Unlike his predecessor, John XXII, and his successor, Clement VI, the Cistercian pope did not commit himself vigorously to the defence of the Christian lands from Turkish advances in the Eastern Mediterranean. As Carr puts it, this lack of action was related more to Benedict's personality and individual choices than to contingent factors such as European conflicts and financial constraints. Indeed, Benedict prioritized internal Church reform and the defence of orthodoxy over the war against the infidels, which ultimately prevented the launching of a crusade to the Holy Land and the Aegean. As a result of dogmatic differences

between Latins and Greeks, all diplomatic negotiations with Byzantium were indeed hindered by what Carr identifies as Benedict's 'inflexibility' and 'characteristic intractability'. Conversely, religious convergence permitted papal support for the holy war elsewhere, as in the case of the anti-Islamic and anti-Mongol campaigns of Catholic rulers in Iberia and Eastern Europe. Far from being circumstantial, the growing distance between the interests of the papacy and those of the Christian East allowed, more generally, a new crusading strategy to emerge, characterized by limited Western involvement and wider local initiatives against the Turks.

Whether related to a general political immobility of the Avignon papacy towards incipient conflicts in Europe or to Benedict's personal attitudes, the suspending of crusading activity did not prevent the pope from promoting engagement with the Eastern regions on different grounds. Church union negotiation, doctrinal scrutiny, and evangelization were the major areas where the papacy could still attempt to exercise authority and control over the territories overseas. Irene Bueno's comparative analysis of Benedict's religious and diplomatic relations with the Greeks, the Armenians, and the Mongols sheds light on the changing responses of the Holy See with respect to different interlocutors, demonstrating the various ways in which they affected the political sphere too. As the papal registers illustrate, the *partes Orientis* were not perceived in a unitary manner at the papal court, but different provisions were adopted towards 'schismatic', formally Catholic, and non-Christian populations. Overall, these initiatives nurtured the papacy's aim to re-launch a universal mission, which was intended to spread from Provence to the furthest boundaries of the known world – regardless of whether such a goal was more rhetorical than realistic. For the same reason that he created a pontifical palace in Avignon, it ultimately served the programme of enforcing the image and authority of the papacy in the West and beyond.

In light of the contributions offered here, a reconsideration of Jacques Fournier's figure and personality is attempted. Most biographers have seen him either as the severe inquisitor of Montailou, as an example of morality and an active reformer, or as a pale sovereign and a timid continuator of John XXII's course of action – yet as one who did not, however, possess the same determination. Several contributions in this volume reassess the equilibrium between Fournier's individual contribution and the general circumstances in which he was active as bishop-inquisitor, theologian, and as pope. What emerges is a more nuanced picture in which each documentary context illustrates the changing balance between continuity and change, tradition and innovation, individual input and external circumstances. More than that, the history of a pontificate always offers a privileged key

to access the cultural, political, diplomatic, and religious tensions that characterized the intimate soul of a historical period. In a fundamental time of transformation for the papacy, now settled far from Rome, and of its international balances in an era of conflicts all over Europe and in the East, Benedict interpreted his role in an original and precise manner. He abandoned his predecessor's confrontational attitude but was capable of pursuing, in a variety of local and international contexts, his major objectives – namely, reform of the Church, the consolidation of papal authority in the new seat of Avignon and elsewhere, and the defence and expansion of orthodoxy. This work does not claim to be complete, but it will hopefully serve as a stimulus for further research on the life and pontificate of Benedict XII, based on published and unpublished sources such as those that have been examined here. In particular, Benedict's reform of the religious orders may deserve closer attention, as well as his policy on the attribution of benefices. As far as his theological writings are concerned, we hope to encourage further studies on works that still remain unedited and largely unexplored, such as the *Postilla super Matheum* and the *Sermones*. The same applies to other important aspects of his pontificate, including the relations between Avignon and the Northern and Eastern regions of Europe.

The session 'Inquisition, crusade, and theological disputes during the career of Benedict XII', organized by the editor of this book at the 2012 International Medieval Conference in Leeds, was an important forum for a preliminary discussion – among experts in various fields – of some of the chapters collected in this volume. The editor wishes to thank all the contributors for their cooperation and patience during the preparation of this book, and Vicki-Marie Petrick for her translation of three of the chapters. Comments by Joëlle Rollo-Koster have been particularly helpful. Recognition is gratefully offered to the Marie Curie Action and the Italian Ministry of University and Research, under the project SIR 'POPLAMA', for their financial support. Special thanks go to Brenda Bolton for encouraging the publication of this volume within the series 'Church, Faith, and Culture in the Medieval West' and for her careful revision of the manuscript.

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