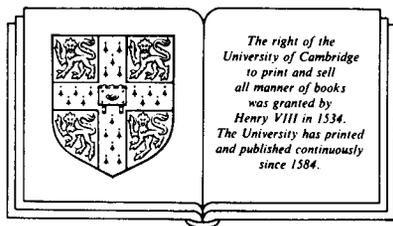


CLEMENT VI

The Pontificate and Ideas of an Avignon Pope

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INTRODUCTION

When fourteenth-century writers described the appointment of a pope they sometimes observed that a change of name meant a change of man: he who before had been pure man had now become the vicar of God on earth. Much of the interest which Clement VI, formerly Pierre Roger, has occasioned concerns the official and unofficial sides of him – the man and the office – and leads to a questioning of the extent to which he managed to separate the two in the challenging circumstances of the fourteenth century. Did he ever allow his private affections and interests to predominate over the rigid dictates of the office he filled?

This question arises partly because historians have hailed Clement as the forerunner of the Renaissance popes and have emphasised his 'humanism'. Indeed, as early as the fifteenth century he won the approval of the humanist papal biographer Bartolomeo Platina (d. 1481), who described him as 'liberal in all things, kind, and very humane – *perhumanus*'.¹ In our own century, Fournier, for example, has written:

Lui-même humaniste, entouré de savants, de lettrés et d'artistes, Clément VI ressemble par de nombreux traits au papes du XVe siècle et en est comme le précurseur.²

Anneliese Maier endorsed this nearly thirty years later by referring to Clement as 'der Humanistenpapst des 14. Jahrhunderts',³ while for Lenzenweger in 1983 he was 'der prächtige Papst' (the magnificent pope).⁴ Wrigley's verdict was that the life of Pierre Roger exemplified the spirit of humanism, and that Clement was 'the first modern pope' and 'a pope too modern for his time'.⁵ Burnham wrote that 'although Clement pursued his career entirely within the Church, he thought and acted in terms that were thoroughly humanistic'.⁶ The

¹ Bartolomeo Platina, *Liber*, pp. 272–3.

³ Maier, 1964, p. 99.

⁵ Wrigley, 1965a, p. liii.

² Fournier, 1983b, p. 220.

⁴ Lenzenweger, 1983, col. 2144.

⁶ Burnham, 1978, p. 373.

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only biography of Clement to be published this century is by Antoine Pélissier (Brive, 1951). He too recognised Clement's Renaissance characteristics and enshrined them in the title he chose: *Clément VI, le magnifique*.

The question of Clement's 'Renaissance humanism' is closely related to the theme of man and office, for one of the hallmarks of the Renaissance popes was that they did not succeed in making the necessary separation between the two. For them, a change of name did not always mean a change of man. Writing about the late-fifteenth-century papacy, Walter Ullmann observed that 'It was no longer the impersonal office with its powers that was determinative, but the personal character of the pope – his "humanity"'.⁷

One of the problems in deciding whether or not Clement VI was a humanist pope is the uncertainty about both the definition and provenance of Renaissance humanism.⁸ In general, humanism focused attention on the *humanity* of man, his human nature. It gave a positive value to all his purely natural, human abilities and potentialities, including his powers of natural reasoning, and encouraged him to use them to the full. This being so, the manifestations of humanism were many and various. In political terms it was to lead eventually to the liberation of the layman from his hitherto passive role in a universal Christian society dominated by the priesthood, and to his recognition as a citizen, one who had a claim, indeed, a natural right, to participate actively in government. But such developments could take place only if the whole nature of the community were altered: if society were to be viewed as a natural creation, the product of men's desire to associate with one another, and if it catered for natural human needs. They could not occur within the confines of a universal Christian society orientated towards a divine purpose. Unlike the Christian society, the basic principles of which could lead logically only to a monarchic structure of government, the community which emphasised the natural human rights and abilities of man and aimed at fulfilling merely terrestrial needs tended to stress man himself as the source of political power. Such ideas owed much to the natural law concepts which the renewed interest in Roman law, followed by the reintroduction of

⁷ Ullmann, 1972b, p. 318.

⁸ For example, Burckhardt, tr. Middlemore, 1878; Ullman, 1941; Campana, 1946; Ferguson, 1948; Weinstein, 1972; Skinner, 1978, pp. 3–65; and Ullmann, 1977, pp. 1–13 where further bibliography is given.

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Aristotelian learning into Western Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, had nourished.⁹

By the late-medieval period an entirely new wind was blowing, destroying the old emphases on divinity and authoritarianism and scattering seeds of independence and individualism, of secularism and humanism, on every aspect of life. Society was indeed changing: what had been in theory a universal and corporate Christian society, united under the sovereign sway of the pope, was gradually becoming a collection of separate, national churches, whose loyalty and obedience to the papacy was often imperfect. The imperial authority, traditionally seen, like the papacy itself, as an expression of the unity and universality of that society was being eroded and was fragmenting into a group of independent sovereign states, whose lay rulers would acknowledge no temporal superior. New and dangerous, and, above all, anti-papal political ideas were emerging, such as those propounded by Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham. Demands were being made for participation, for representation, even for consent to decisions at different levels of society, both in the secular and the ecclesiastical spheres, from members of the Sacred College at the top to humble lay people at the bottom. All this profound political turmoil and theoretical change formed the background to Clement's pontificate. But this is not to suggest that the time was right for the appearance of a 'humanist' pope. The fifteenth-century popes, by allowing their own personalities to predominate over the dictates of their divinely ordained office, by their lifestyle, and by embroiling themselves in local Italian politics, in effect, dragged themselves down to the level of merely secular rulers and so contributed to the destruction of the universal character of the papal office. But by then the gradual changes in the nature and purpose of society were more advanced. By then too the papacy had suffered the loss of prestige caused by the Great Schism of 1378-1417 and the conciliar movement. Clement VI, however, ascended the papal throne only forty years after Boniface VIII's reaffirmation of the universality of papal authority in *Unam Sanctam* (1302), which declared it absolutely necessary for salvation to be achieved that every human creature should be subject to the Roman pontiff.¹⁰

Political humanism was just one aspect, for humanism could reveal itself in anything which emphasised or glorified human nature

⁹ Ullmann, 1977, pp. 118-48 and 1967, pp. 99-151.

¹⁰ *Extrav. Comm.*, I, xiii, 1.

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or catered for natural needs. On a trivial level it was demonstrated in the self-indulgent lifestyle of Renaissance princes. It was manifested more seriously in literature, especially in the rediscovery of classical writing; in fine arts, where the emphasis was on the realistic representation of nature and on portraiture and sculpture from life; and in music, where religious polyphonic techniques were applied to secular works. It emerged too in the empirical study of natural science and in medical research. This stimulating cultural atmosphere also formed part of the background to Clement's pontificate. Renaissance popes such as Nicholas V and Sixtus IV were to be great patrons of humanist culture and scholarship, and in this sense it is possible that Clement, by anticipating them, could be termed a 'Renaissance pope'.

Clement himself was an enigma – a puzzling combination of the secular and the ecclesiastical. Antoine Pélissier, despite the Renaissance title of his biography, recognised the dichotomy in Clement's attitude and was able to emphasise a different side of him: Clement VI followed in the footsteps of Innocent III (1198–1216) in trying to preserve papal power, and in the defence of the prestige of the Church.¹¹ More recently, in 1978, Kurt Huber confessed himself puzzled by Clement's apparent lack of consistency. For him, the Pope's worldliness and Renaissance traits did not square with his theological commitments and his insight into mystical literature. He went on to question how sincere Clement was in the performance of his official duties, and how far motivated by true Christian charity when he acted generously.¹² In addition to the questions posed by Huber, there is that raised by the disagreement between Lenzenweger and Guillemain about Clement's thought. Lenzenweger writes that Clement 'combined knowledge with eloquence and original thought',¹³ while Guillemain considers that he was not an original thinker.¹⁴

Even in his own century opinions about Clement were polarised, usually following nationalistic lines, with the French eulogising and the others condemning him. In France, clearly, the warmth of his personality, coupled with his undoubted abilities, had 'brought golden opinions from all sorts of people'. These were conveniently summarised by one of his biographers, probably Jean la Porte

¹¹ Pélissier, 1951, p. 137.

¹² Huber, 1978, p. 108.

¹³ Lenzenweger, 1983, col. 2144.

¹⁴ Guillemain, 1982, p. 216.

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d'Annonay (Ardèche), writing c. 1367.¹⁵ Not only was he the mirror of clemency, the dispenser of charity, the father of mercy, the disciple of piety, and the minister of liberality, but he was also a fighter for justice, an athlete of equity, an author of concord, and a lover of peace.¹⁶ Many writers echo the play on Clement's name:¹⁷ indeed, he himself suggested that he had been twinned with mercy from his mother's womb and wedded to clemency.¹⁸ His love of peace was equally well known,¹⁹ while his generosity was legendary. Apparently the 'general grace' which he issued at the beginning of his pontificate²⁰ occasioned such a shower of petitions from poor clerics that the following year he complained about the danger of stones wrapped in petitions being thrown at him in consistory, or worse, when he was out riding.²¹ The Pope was a frequent and lavish almsgiver,²² and subscribed to the imperial motto that no one should leave the presence of the prince dissatisfied.²³ Jean went on to hail him as the norm of modesty, the pattern of religion, the basis of faith, and the flower of eloquence.²⁴ His outstanding ability as an orator and his academic brilliance did in fact win him universal acclaim. The French preacher of his funeral oration marvelled at the breadth of his knowledge, his fluent eloquence, the depth of his wisdom, and the charm of his conversation, renowned throughout the world.²⁵ The Englishman Walter Burley praised his teaching skill, his oratory, and his memory – an opinion shared by Thomas Walsingham.²⁶ An Italian chronicler described the magnetism of his preaching, and how in his pre-papal days at Paris the whole city would rush to hear him whenever he prepared to preach.²⁷ A

¹⁵ Baluze-Mollat, *Tertia Vita*. On Jean's probable authorship see Mollat, 1917, pp. 36–40.

¹⁶ Baluze-Mollat, *Tertia Vita*, p. 288, lines 33–5.

¹⁷ Baluze-Mollat, *Prima Vita*, p. 260, lines 5–6; *Secunda Vita*, p. 272, line 18; *Tertia Vita*, p. 275, lines 18–20 and p. 276, line 28.

¹⁸ Clement VI, sermon 34, Ste-G. 240, fol. 360v: 'Et ideo licet ab infantia creverit mecum miseratio et de utero matris meae egressa sit mecum, et licet clementiam desponsaverim . . .' Cf. Job, xxxi. 18.

¹⁹ Baluze-Mollat, *Prima Vita*, p. 259, lines 17–21; Henry of Diessenhoven, *Chronica*, p. 86. See also n. 16 above.

²⁰ Déprez, no. 162.

²¹ Déprez-Mollat, no. 329.

²² Baluze-Mollat, *Prima Vita*, pp. 260–1.

²³ Baluze-Mollat, *Tertia Vita*, p. 275, lines 22–4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 288, lines 35–7.

²⁵ Jean de Cardaillac, MS BN, lat. 3294, fol. 267r. On him see Mollat, 1974.

²⁶ Walter Burley, *Epistola dedicatoria*, pp. 95–6; Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, p. 254.

²⁷ *Historiae Romanae Fragmenta*, ch. 12, p. 344.

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German also remarks on his great knowledge and outstanding eloquence.²⁸

Clement's detractors tended to be his political opponents, and were therefore most likely to be German, Italian, or English. The issues which aroused the most passion were his promotion of Charles of Moravia as king of the Romans, his alleged partiality for France during the Hundred Years War, and his reluctance to take the papacy back to Rome from Avignon. In general, he was censured for extravagance, extortion, and misappropriation of the Church's wealth, for nepotism in the promotion of his ill-qualified friends and relations to high office, and for fornication. Matthew of Nuremberg, for example, depicts him as greedy for women, for honour, and for power, and reports how he gave both himself and the curia a bad reputation for simony.²⁹ Henry of Diessenhoven reports on Clement's 'generosity' to friends and relations, and how he promoted several of them to the cardinalate despite their insufficient age and knowledge.³⁰ Even one of his French biographers echoes this criticism.³¹ Henry Taube of Selbach comments on the 'new and unheard of' reservations of benefices which Clement made, and the hurried and uncanonical way in which he conferred holy orders.³² From Italy, Petrarch and Matteo Villani, both of whom felt passionately about the Roman question, delighted in perpetrating scandals about the Pope's private life,³³ while Cola di Rienzo compared him with Mahomet, who had seven wives.³⁴ William of Ockham accused him of procreating illegitimate children whom he subsequently promoted to ecclesiastical dignities. This was not, as Ockham censoriously observed, according to the doctrine of the Apostles.³⁵ The smear campaign reached a crescendo by the end of

²⁸ Henry of Diessenhoven, *Chronica*, p. 86.

²⁹ Matthew of Nuremberg, *Chronica*, ch. 69, p. 188.

³⁰ Henry of Diessenhoven, *Chronica*, p. 86.

³¹ Baluze-Mollat, *Prima Vita*, p. 261, lines 5ff.

³² Henry Taube of Selbach, *Chronica*, p. 70.

³³ Matteo Villani, *Istorie Fiorentine*, bk iii, ch. 42, cols. 186-7, where the Pope's name was linked with that of Cécile, countess of Turenne. Petrarch attacked Clement's way of life in *Eclogues VI* and *VII* (see Francis Petrarch, ed. Piur, 1925, pp. 56-7; Wilkins, 1955, p. 48). For vindication of Clement's reputation see Mollat, 1961 and 1964, pp. 96-7; and Wrigley, 1965b.

³⁴ 'Il commento di Cola di Rienzo alla *Monarchia* di Dante', p. 698.

³⁵ William of Ockham, *De Electione Karoli VII*, ch. 4, p. 352. Commentators have doubted Ockham's authorship of this work since it is extant only in Conrad of Meigenberg's *Tractatus contra Wilhelmum Occam*, and Conrad himself (p. 11) allows only that it was attributed to Ockham. For discussion see Miethke, 1969, pp. 133-6. Baudry, 1949, p. 237, endorses Ockham's authorship and this view has been followed here.

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the century, when Thomas Burton, the chronicler of Meaux, sympathised with Clement's confessor, to whose pleas for sexual abstinence Clement would retort that what he did was *ex consilio medicorum* – on the advice of his doctors. He then went on to advance the bizarre notion that Clement used to keep a little black book in which he recorded the names of all promiscuous popes in order to show that they had been better governors of the Church than the celibate ones.³⁶ If this were true it would add a new and interesting dimension to the political theory of the medieval papacy, but in fact twentieth-century scholarship has vindicated Clement's moral reputation.³⁷

Different facets of Clement's life and personality – the ecclesiastical or the secular, the official or the unofficial – were emphasised according to the political sympathies or the nationality of the appraiser. It does seem, however, that in his earlier career Pierre Roger had benefited equally from ecclesiastical and secular influences, and had been as much at home in royal Paris as in papal Avignon. He was born at Maumont, in Corrèze, in 1291 or 1292, the second son of a family of the lesser nobility. He was to have two brothers and two sisters. The family seems to have been a close-knit and expanding one – his elder brother had thirteen children – and its members were to reap many advantages from Pierre's success. At the age of ten he was sent to the Benedictine abbey of Chaise-Dieu, in the Auvergne, where he was to make his profession as a Benedictine monk.³⁸ At fifteen, due to his unusual promise, he was sent to the University of Paris. There he studied arts, philosophy, and finally theology,³⁹ and excelled both as a scholar and as a preacher. In his mid to late twenties he started to attract attention. On the basis of two fragments from an early work of his on papal power, Anneliese Maier has deduced his involvement in the controversy surrounding the views of the Paris theologian Jean de Pouilli,⁴⁰ who opposed the privileges of the Mendicant Orders, especially their right of hearing confession in competition with the secular clergy. The debates soon widened to embrace the whole question of papal authority, and one

³⁶ Thomas Burton, *Chronicon Monasterii de Melsa*, iii, pp. 89–90.

³⁷ See p. 6, n/ 33 above.

³⁸ On his profession as a monk see Baluze-Mollat, ii, p. 342. On his early life see Wrigley, 1970. On his career and influence in general see Mollat, 1953, and 1964, pp. 89–103; Fournier, 1938b; Pélissier, 1951; Huber, 1978; Guillemain, 1982; Lenzenweger, 1983.

³⁹ Baluze-Mollat, *Secunda Vita*, p. 264; *Tertia Vita*, p. 274.

⁴⁰ MS Vat. Lat. 14606, fols. 131v, 194v; Maier, 1967, pp. 510–16. On the controversy see Sikes, 1949; Fournier, 1938a, pp. 46, 62–71.

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of de Pouilli's main themes was that bishops and priests, as successors of the Apostles and disciples, held their authority directly from Christ, rather than through the medium of the papacy. Pope John XXII not surprisingly took exception to this, and after a trial which lasted on and off for four years, he condemned de Pouilli's views in *Vas electionis* (24 July 1321). Among those who supplied John with theological ammunition to use against de Pouilli at his trial was the Dominican Pierre de la Palu. Significantly Pierre Roger copied much of the Dominican's *De Potestate Papae*, written in this connection, into the commonplace book he kept at Paris.⁴¹ His own involvement has attracted far less attention. The first manuscript fragment analysed by Maier implies that the Pope had asked him for his opinion on de Pouilli's first defence (July 1318), while the second, which was apparently to be read out in consistory, refuted de Pouilli's views on the origins of priestly power.

Concurrently with the de Pouilli affair, in 1320–1, Pierre was participating in a series of spectacular university disputations on the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard. His chief, but not sole, opponent was the Franciscan François de Meyronnes, and this part of the debate has been edited.⁴² The arguments were on trinitarian theology, and the Benedictine adopted a 'Thomist' viewpoint in opposition to that of the more *avant garde* 'Scotists', who tried to apply the theory of formal distinction to the three persons of the Trinity. Pierre maintained the indivisibility of the Trinity.⁴³ Of the two standpoints, Pierre's was the more orthodox, and this orthodoxy was to be reflected later, during his pontificate, when he condemned the nominalist opinions (partly based on those of Ockham) of the Paris theologians Nicholas of Autrecourt (1346) and John of Mirecourt (1347).⁴⁴ Pierre's admiration for Aquinas was also to be demonstrated in three sermons he preached in his honour in 1324, 1326, and 1340, and in the catalogue of his works which he compiled.⁴⁵

Pierre's prominent role at Paris was soon to be rewarded, for he benefited from both royal and papal favour. When, on 12 May 1323, John XXII commanded the Chancellor of the University to confer

⁴¹ MS Vat. Borghese 247, fols. 13r–16v; Maier, 1967, pp. 308, 509–10.

⁴² François de Meyronnes-Pierre Roger: 'Disputatio', ed. J. Barbet (Paris, 1961). For discussion see introduction, pp. 22–35; Ruello, 1965.

⁴³ Barbet, 1961, p. 29.

⁴⁴ H. Denife and A. Chatelain, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, ii, nos. 1124, 1147, pp. 567–87, 610–13.

⁴⁵ Laurent, 1931.

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the mastership in theology, a chair, and the *licencia docendi* (licence to teach) upon Pierre it was partly as a result of a supplication from Charles IV of France. These honours were to be bestowed despite the fact that he had not read the *Sentences* for the statutory six years, as the Pope pointed out. He was also younger than other masters, for the customary age for the mastership to be conferred was thirty-five, and Pierre was only thirty or thirty-one.⁴⁶

As a master, the Benedictine lectured on canon law as well as theology.⁴⁷ Soon after his promotion, probably in 1325, he composed a postill (commentary) in support of John XXII's bull *Quia quorundam mentes*.⁴⁸ This had been issued against the 'Spiritual' wing of the Franciscan Order in 1324 on the vexed issue of the poverty of Christ and his Apostles, the issue which had earlier split the Order. John denied that Christ and the Apostles had practised poverty or that they had been devoid of legal rights. He also reaffirmed the pope's absolute right to define matters of doctrine. Pierre strongly supported John. Drawing on Gratian he explained that while Christ and the Apostles had not possessed estates, fields, and houses, they had possessed the price of them – in legal terms they had possessed movable rather than immovable goods. They had not wanted to be encumbered with immovables because they foresaw that the future of the Church lay elsewhere, with the Gentiles, but this did not mean that they had abdicated their right to use such goods.⁴⁹

Pierre was to return to this theme at the Council of Vincennes in 1329. This council was summoned by Philip VI to try to settle disputes which had arisen in France about the respective spheres of jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical and the civil courts. Pierre acted as spokesman for the bishops, defending them against the opposing views of Pierre de Cugnières, and preached on the theme 'Fear God and honour the king' (I Peter, ii. 17).⁵⁰ Using arguments from divine, natural, civil, and canon law, and appealing also to custom

⁴⁶ Denifle and Chatelain, ii, no. 822, pp. 270–1. For the age at which the mastership was conferred see Powicke and Emden, 1936, i, p. 472.

⁴⁷ As witnessed by the canonist Johannes Gaufredi (see Fournier, 1938b, p. 526, n. 2) and the poet-chronicler Aegidius li Muisis, *De Domino Papa Clemente Sexto*, p. 308, lines 35–9.

⁴⁸ Brussels 359, fols. 25r–67v. For discussion of John's bull (*Extrav. J. XXII*, xiv, 5) see Leff, 1967, pp. 241–6; Tierney, 1972, pp. 171–204.

⁴⁹ Brussels 359, fol. 63r. Cf. Gratian, II, C.xii, q. 1, c. 15. On the poverty dispute in general, see Douie, 1932; Leff, 1967, pp. 51–255; Lambert, 1961, and 1977, pp. 183–206.

⁵⁰ Pierre Roger, sermon 15. For analysis of the proceedings see Martin, 1909. See also Posthumus Meyjes, 1978, where the influence of Pierre Roger's discourse upon Gerson is examined.

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and privilege, he proved the total competence of the Gallican Church to hear not just cases involving the Church, but also personal suits between laymen. In so doing he rehearsed all the traditional papal arguments to demonstrate the superiority of the priesthood over the laity, and to show that the priests possessed both spiritual and temporal jurisdiction. Probably his promotion to the archbishopric of Rouen the following year was in recognition of the considerable abilities he had shown at Vincennes.

It is difficult to know how much of Pierre's success to attribute to papal favour and how much to royal: doubtless it was a combination of the two. The young monk's first promotion had been to the priory of St Pantaléon (1316), followed by that of Savigny, in the diocese of Lyons (1323), and finally that of St Baudil, in Nîmes (1324). These houses were all dependents of Chaise-Dieu. His next promotion came in 1326 to the abbacy of the major house of Fécamp. His most dramatic rise in the ecclesiastical hierarchy, however, was in the years immediately following the accession of Philip VI Valois in 1328. He became successively Bishop of Arras (3 December 1328), Archbishop of Sens (24 November 1329), and finally Archbishop of Rouen (14 December 1330).⁵¹

Ecclesiastical responsibilities also entailed involvement in secular politics. Immediately after Philip's coronation Pierre was sent to England to demand Edward III's homage for Aquitaine, and later that year supervised the confiscation of the revenues of the Duchy, which Philip had decided to seize.⁵² About the same time he was appointed to the *Chambre des Enquêtes*. Since this dealt with judicial inquiries it was unusual to find someone with theological rather than legal qualifications being appointed to it, and it may well indicate that Pierre had some expertise in civil as well as canon law.⁵³ Two years later he became *Président* of the *Chambre des Comptes*.⁵⁴ It seems unlikely, however, that he became Chancellor of France, as is sometimes suggested. The most likely explanation of a puzzling passage in Jean la Porte's *Vita* is that the Archbishop of Rouen held the office of *garde des sceaux* (in effect that of Vice-Chancellor) for a few weeks early in 1334.⁵⁵ What is certain is that he was one of the King's most valued councillors: indeed, his biographers reported

⁵¹ Baluze-Mollat, *Secunda Vita*, p. 263; *Tertia Vita*, p. 274.

⁵² Wrigley, 1970, pp. 456-65; Déprez, 1902, pp. 39-43.

⁵³ Cazelles, 1958, p. 345.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Wrigley, 1970, p. 462; Péliissier, 1951, p. 26, on the basis of Baluze-Mollat, *Tertia Vita*, p. 274. For correction see Tessier, 1957, pp. 362-4.

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that so great was Philip's affection for him, and so unwilling was the King to lose his counsel and his agreeable conversation, that he deliberately blocked Pierre's promotion to the Sacred College by John XXII.⁵⁶ During the 1330s the Archbishop continued to be employed on vital diplomatic missions in connection with Anglo-French affairs. He was also heavily involved in promoting the projected crusade to the Holy Land, and made three visits to Avignon in connection with it. On the third occasion, in July 1333, his eloquent preaching persuaded John XXII to confer the leadership of the expedition on Philip VI.⁵⁷ The Pope then authorised Pierre to preach the crusade officially.

Sometimes Pierre's loyalties must have been divided. This was true, for example, of the affair of the English Dominican Thomas Waleys, who preached against John XXII's provocative view on the Beatific Vision. In two sermons John had declared that the souls of the blessed do not enjoy the vision of God after death, but must await the Day of Judgement and the reunion of soul and body.⁵⁸ John expected the Archbishop of Rouen to explain the scriptural basis of his view to Philip and his Queen. Pierre failed to do this, for he too disagreed with the Pope's view, and at the examination which took place at Avignon in 1333 he did what he could to prevent, or at least delay, Waleys's condemnation. He subsequently attended a meeting of French theologians convoked by the King which condemned John's teaching.⁵⁹ Pierre Roger seems to have been in an even more difficult position during the early years of Benedict XII's pontificate. On the one hand he was expected to promote the cause of France in the war against England for Philip, while on the other he was expected to promote the cause of peace for Benedict. This was made no easier by Philip's wish to divert the tenths collected for the crusade, which had been cancelled, into his war coffers. He expected Pierre to plead his case at Avignon.⁶⁰ It says much for the Archbishop that he retained the esteem of both Pope and King. He was created Cardinal-priest of St Nereus and Achilleus in 1338,⁶¹ and in this role continued to exercise a special responsibility for Anglo-

⁵⁶ Baluze-Mollat, *Secunda Vita*, p. 263; *Tertia Vita*, p. 274. On Pierre as a councillor see Cazelles, 1958, pp. 91, 137.

⁵⁷ Wrigley, 1970, p. 261. The text of the sermon is in Ste-G. 240, fols. 289v-305r; and 495v-505v.

⁵⁸ For a summary of John's views, Offler, 1956b, pp. 20-2.

⁵⁹ Käppeli, 1936, pp. 22-9. On Waleys see Smalley, 1954.

⁶⁰ Wrigley, 1970, pp. 462-4; Déprez, 1902, pp. 142-3.

⁶¹ Daumet, no. 540 (19 December 1338).

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French affairs. On Benedict's death in April 1342 Philip sent his son John, Duke of Normandy, to press for Pierre's election as pope – needlessly as it turned out, for by the time the Duke reached Avignon, Pierre Roger was already recognised as Pope Clement VI.⁶²

No pope could have ascended the papal throne at a more exciting or difficult time. Quite apart from the long-term challenge to the traditional papal conception of the universal Christian society, Clement was beset by specific problems. To name but a few: he was confronted with an imperial 'usurper' in the shape of the heretical Louis of Bavaria, whom it was impossible to recognise or approve, and to whom there appeared to be no suitable alternative candidate; the growth of the lay spirit and nationalism in the regional kingdoms, accompanied by incessant warfare among them; a climax in the Anglo-French struggle; turmoil in Naples under his ward, the defiant but inexperienced Queen Joanna; popular revolution in the papal city of Rome, led by the flamboyant demagogue Cola di Rienzo, coupled with demands that the papacy should leave Avignon and return there, further complicated by Clement's declaration of 1350 as a jubilee year; the failure of the crusades to check Islamic expansion or heal the Greek Schism; the social tensions generated by plague and economic uncertainty; and, at the end of the reign, an unprecedented show of 'constitutionalism' among the Pope's closest advisers, the cardinals, who staged a palace revolution. All these troubles, and many more, had to be surmounted at a time of growing financial hardship for the curia.

Such eventful years give ample scope for assessing Clement's pontificate and ideas, and the extent to which the person predominated over the office. But of course the historian is always dependent upon evidence, and in this case there are many imperfections. The glaring problem is the lack of any *magnum opus* containing the Pope's views. In the absence of this there are only registers and sermons, neither of which is ideal. The papal registers appear particularly unpromising: heavy with traditional formulae, and often drastically abbreviated ones at that, they do not seem likely to convey Clement's personal views.⁶³ Indeed, there are at least two instances in the

⁶² Déprez, 1902, pp. 389–91.

⁶³ For a table giving the distribution of the Vatican Registers for the pontificate see *Sussidi per la consultazione dell'Archivio Vaticano*, I, pp. 61–4. On alterations in the arrangement of the secret letters during the pontificate see Opitz, 1938–9; Bock, 1941, p. 43. From c. 1350 the *communes* and *de curia* letters gradually ceased to be copied from RA to RV: see Bock, esp. pp. 8–11; Boyle, 1972, pp. 114–23.

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printed correspondence where Clement seems to have appropriated letters written by Benedict XII (1334–42), his predecessor, and reissued them under his own name, sending them to different recipients.⁶⁴ So impersonal are some of the letters that there has been confusion in their registration. One of Clement's registers, *RV* 216, has turned out to contain nine folios of letters belonging to Benedict XII.⁶⁵ Yet some minutes thought to be those of Innocent VI (1352–62) were shown by Renouard to belong to Clement VI.⁶⁶ Despite their impersonal character, there are occasional indications that Clement was at least partly responsible for the contents of his registers. Some of the letters are marked by references to secret *cedulae*. These were documents written in the Pope's own hand, and contained confidential material which he did not wish to be registered. They were then enclosed with the official letters, the contents of which Clement must obviously have known. Needless to say the information contained in the *cedulae* would have been invaluable to the historian.⁶⁷ Occasionally the letters contain personal details, which argue for Clement's authorship, as when he described the agonies of having a tooth out to Queen Joan of France,⁶⁸ or when he gave details of his parlous state of health to various royal correspondents.⁶⁹

The Pope's participation in the composition of at least some of his letters makes the loss of all his Year I secret letters particularly frustrating. His first year, when he was relatively inexperienced, and still in reasonably good health, is the time when he might have been expected to take a personal interest in the workings of the curia. Later, curial business might have become routine, and his almost constant illnesses might well have disposed him to let the bureaucratic machine run itself.⁷⁰ Almost certainly these letters

⁶⁴ Cf. Déprez, no. 94 (31 May 1343) with Benedict XII's letter of 23 June 1337, Daumet, no. 305, and Theiner, *Mon. Pol.*, i, no. 713, which repeats Benedict's letter in Theiner, *Mon. Hung.*, i, no. 958: cited by Knoll, p. 152, n. 34.

⁶⁵ Kyer, 1978a.

⁶⁶ Renouard, 1935.

⁶⁷ Mollat, 1956–7. See also Clement's sermon 13, Ste-G. 240, fol. 545v, where he admits to having written letters in his own hand to the rebel Archbishop of Milan, Giovanni Visconti: '... nos per multiplicatas litteras et bullas apostolicas et postmodum per litteras *manu nostra scriptas* voluissimus eum a tam nefando opere retrahere'.

⁶⁸ Mollat, 1957.

⁶⁹ See, for example, Déprez, no. 500 to John of Normandy; Déprez–Mollat, no. 2565 to Peter of Aragon and his Queen. See also Léonard, 1932, ii, p. 328; Wrigley, 1964, pp. 621–4.

⁷⁰ On Clement's precarious health see Waquet, 1912; Déprez, 1900; Wrigley, 1964.

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would have contained the initial negotiations in his plan to engineer the election of Charles of Moravia as king of the Romans, and also valuable material on his early efforts to mediate between England and France in the Hundred Years War. The loss is all the more tantalising because St Clair Baddeley gives a reference to 'Arch. Secr. Vatic. f. 147, Anno I', which implies that the secret letters for that year were available at the end of the nineteenth century when he was writing.⁷¹ The chance discovery by Déprez of a register containing letters Clement wrote in connection with Anglo-French affairs between his election and his coronation, although full of interest, is scant compensation.⁷²

The greatest compensation, however, is provided by Clement's sermons, which are an exceptionally rich source.⁷³ The fact that there are nearly 120 sermons extant (although admittedly not all of them complete), and that they are distributed in some ninety manuscripts throughout Europe bears witness to their popularity. Among them are university sermons, preached in the 1320s, sermons preached while he was in the service of the King of France, sometimes at Paris, sometimes at Avignon, and often in connection with either the Anglo-French war or the crusade, and both the political *collationes* he preached as pope in consistory and occasional pulpit sermons dating from the pontificate. Obviously the papal sermons are the most valuable to the historian, but sometimes Pierre Roger's early theological and political views can be gleaned from the Paris sermons, which enable comparisons to be made with the attitudes he expressed later as pope. The consistory sermons, however, expand on the formulae of the papal letters. Sometimes they will provide the odd personal 'aside', but their greatest value is that they enable the historian to assess Clement's political principles and motives and to follow the interplay between political theory and practice. Clement seems to have been especially keen to preach in consistory, and there are about thirty *collationes* preached on important political occasions. Some, but by no means all, have been edited.⁷⁴ There are several sermons connected with the deposition of Louis IV of Bavaria and the election of Charles IV. There are pieces

⁷¹ St Clair Baddeley, 1897, p. 269.

⁷² Déprez, 1903.

⁷³ On Clement's sermons see Mollat, 1928; Schmitz, 1929 and 1932; Schneyer, 1972, pp. 757-69; Fournier, 1938b; Wood, 1975. For discussion of MS Innsbruck Universitätsbibliothek 234, containing sermons of Pierre Roger and Richard FitzRalph, see Walsh, 1981b.

⁷⁴ See app. 3, pp. 211-15 below.