

Avignon vs. Rome: Dante, Petrarch, Catherine of Siena

THOMAS RENNA

Saginaw Valley State University

ABSTRACT

In the fourteenth century the image of ancient Rome as Babylon was transformed into the positive idea of Rome as both a Christian and a classical ideal. Whereas Dante disassociated Augustine's Babylon from imperial Rome, Petrarch turned Avignon into Babylon, a symbol of an avaricious papacy. For Catherine of Siena Avignon was not evil, but a distraction which prevented the pope from reforming the Italian clergy, bringing peace to Italy, and launching the crusade.

“There is only one hope of salvation in this place! Here, Christ is sold for gold!”¹

And so Francesco Petrarch denounced the Avignon of the popes as the most evil place on earth since the days of ancient Babylon. This view of the Holy See should have disappeared when the papacy returned to Rome in 1377, but it did not. On the contrary, the castigation of the sins of pontiffs intensified, as subsequent ages used this profile to vilify the papacy, the clergy, the French monarchy, and the French nation.² Not to be outdone, some French historians in the twentieth century sought to correct this received tradition by examining the popes' worthy qualities.³ It is curious that this depiction of Avignon as the Babylon Captivity has enjoyed such longevity, even in college textbooks.⁴

“Corruption” is of course a value judgment as much as a description of actual behavior. Doubtless Pope Clement VI did not think of his curia as “corrupt.” Contemporary citizens of Mongolia do not see Genghis Khan as the monster of the medieval Christian chronicles. It serves little purpose to take Petrarch's “Babylonian Captivity” literally in the search to understand the Avignon era of European history. The more relevant question is why some contemporaries preferred to think of Avignon as the place where Christ was sold for gold. The *de facto* goings-on at the curia notwithstanding, what do these criticisms tell us about the critics themselves? How did the historical period shape the image? Were Dante, Petrarch, and St. Catherine of Siena – the best-known opponents of the Avignon papacy – in some sense *products* of their times, whatever their influence on later perceptions of the popes? In the main, the historiography of the Avignon papacy operates on three planes: (1) the actual functioning of the curia and its ties with the rest of Europe, (2) the theories of the critics, especially Petrarch, and (3) the theoretical controversies of the era, such as poverty, pope and empire, papal primacy, and the responses to Marsilius of Padua, not to mention William of Ockham.

The historical context of the designation of papal Avignon as the new Babylon is the fourteenth-century emphasis on the positive aspects of Rome, both classical and Christian, and the Roman people. The image of Rome prior to 1300 was, after all, never completely negative. There

were plenty of literary reminders of the past glories of Rome, not to mention the extensive physical remains and inscriptions. And even Augustine's famous portrayal of Rome as the (implied) City of Man was partially offset by his acknowledgment of the Roman empire⁵ as the creator of peace and concord, preconditions for a just society. Augustine's notion of political authority as the result of the primordial Fall had many dissenters in the high Middle Ages. Then too, the accelerated discussions of the Donation of Constantine (such as the origin of imperial power, the basis of papal authority over temporals, the pope and the transfer of empire, the pope's claims to Rome and the patrimony) since the eleventh century kept alive the issue of the place of Rome in providential history, even if only symbolic, since the empire was now German (or Greek, depending on how one viewed the emperor in Constantinople). However one interpreted the meaning of the Donation and the transfer of empire, the pivotal role of Rome seemed assured. Speaking of the Donation, we should not forget that the ideal of world empire – always linked conceptually in some sense to the *Roman* empire – continued to be debated in the early fourteenth century. Witness the treatments of world monarchy (read: empire) in Engelbert of Admont, Dante, and William of Ockham. If the idea of Rome could be so elevated, it would be convenient, if need be, to think of an opposite, such as Avignon.

The increase in anti-clericalism and anti-papalism after 1300, moreover, would represent a paradigm shift from Rome (if one chose a positive view of the Eternal City) to another place. The popes unwittingly provided these critics with a target, the curia at Avignon. It would not take much imagination to transfer Babylon, with its memories of the two destructions of Jerusalem, to Avignon. Given the heavy emphasis on the primitive church at the time of the Avignon papacy, it was perhaps evitable that some literary genius, such as Petrarch, would seize upon the biblical Babylon as the new antichrist. Petrarch's anti-clerical sentiments and devotion to ancient Rome completed the identification of Rhone and Euphrates.

It is argued here that Petrarch's rhetoric of Babylon was to some extent the outcome of: (1) Dante's vision of a restored Roman empire, and (2) an apocalyptic anticipation of a new age, taken unsystematically from Dante and some Spiritual Franciscans, such as Ubertino of Casale and Peter Olivi. Catherine of Siena, at the close of the Avignon era, restored the Christian side of the Rome vs. Babylon polarity, while diminishing the imperial dimension (Dante) and the classical/humanist conception (Petrarch) of Rome.

In the writings of Dante the notion of Avignon as Babylon is barely noticeable. The poet was of course familiar with the patristic, especially Augustinian,⁶ exegesis of Babylon as a symbol of the world (and "worldliness"), confusion, the flesh, the transient, the material, and the ancient Roman empire. It was the antithesis of Jerusalem, the heavenly city of peace.⁷ The usual meaning of Rome was pagan Rome, less often as the post-Constantinian Christian City and empire. But in the centuries after Jerome and Augustine, the idea of Christian Rome had acquired several designations, both positive and negative. As Petrine primacy gained acceptance in the West, the Roman Church increased in jurisdiction as well as sanctity, being the resting place of Saints Peter and Paul. The Fisherman's City was gradually subsumed into the imperial and universal traditions of the church. Following the Investiture Controversy, however, the less attractive side of Christian Rome became more evident, as critics accused the popes of excessive involvement in worldly affairs. Bernard of Clairvaux, who was often cited by fourteenth-century antagonists of Avignon, advised Pope Eugene III to concentrate on matters of the spirit.⁸ The most severe criticisms came from the Cathars, Waldensians, and, later, Spiritual Franciscans.⁹ The Fraticelli were to have a

major influence on the depiction of popes as agents of the antichrist.

Thus when Dante, who seems to have been familiar with the ideas of Ubertino of Casale and Peter Olivi,¹⁰ began searching for a literary image which would express his desire for a renewed Roman empire, there were several traditions of the idea of Rome available to choose from. Dante had his own reasons for attributing the sins of simony and nepotism to Popes Nicholas III, Boniface VIII, and Clement V, whom scholars generally recognize as the villain-popes in *Inferno* 19, *Purgatorio* 32, and *Paradiso* 27.¹¹ Recent scholars – C. T. Davis,¹² N. Havely,¹³ G. Holmes,¹⁴ M. Reeves,¹⁵ A. Vasina¹⁶ – have emphasized the apocalyptic elements in Dante's view of papal Rome. The poet's array of images about Christian Rome seems consistent with his vision of a revived Roman empire, which in some sense is integrated into a renewed Christian Rome. In his *Monarchia*, now often seen as a later work (1316–18)¹⁷ there is at least the implication that the return of a *pax Romana* will coincide with a reformed church, to be centered in Rome, not Avignon. The inconsistencies in the *Monarchia* on these ideas of Rome may be due to the possibility that he wrote parts of the work in 1311–12, when Henry VII was in Italy.

What is significant for our purposes is that Dante's Babylon-Rome contrast is never without ambiguity. Rome in Dante's time is a figure of speech for Babylon insofar as some recent popes (Clement V and John XXII) have dishonored the Roman Church by their avarice. But then the notion of Avignon the fallen never attains prominence in Dante's writings.¹⁸ The poet's Babylon does not become the great whore who fornicates with the kings of the earth, as some later papal enemies would have it. To be sure, Dante has little good to say about Avignon, where Clement V had lived since 1309. But Dante seems uninterested in pursuing the figure of Babylon in terms of the Books of Revelation and Daniel. The reason for this reticence may simply be that the residence of the Holy See on the Rhone was too recent to have had sufficient time to develop as a defined symbol, one that was suitable for invective. (It might be added parenthetically that the prolonged stays at Viterbo in the thirteenth century never conjured up images of Babylon.) The Tuscan poet's complaints about Avignon are less about what goes on in the place, or even what it represents, but rather more about what it *prevents*, namely, the return of the emperor to Rome and the beginning of a new age for Italy and Christendom. Perhaps Avignon for Dante was a potential Babylon, but for the present was relatively innocuous. While he was furious with Clement V for abandoning Henry VII, he refused to give up hope in the appearance of a more accommodating occupant of the chair of Peter.

The point is that Dante's concept of Babylon – whether Christian Rome or Avignon – was conditioned by then current notions of the normative primitive church and its companion, apostolic poverty. The patristic Babylon-Jerusalem archetype was not widely used in the early fourteenth-century polemics. Given his commitment to a revived Roman empire and, to some extent, a form of Franciscan apocalypticism, it should not be surprising that Dante adapted the Augustinian Jerusalem-Rome model to a new prototype: Rome and Avignon. In the end, historians should be careful not to exaggerate Dante's identification of Avignon with Babylon.

In the decades following the *Monarchia* a fairly new genre flourished: panegyrics to Francia and Italia. Should the holy pontiffs reside in France or Italy? In the heat of these polemic exchanges, the notion of Babylon often got lost in the praises of the motherland. The intensity of these debates, which might seem quaint and effusive to modern readers, served to promote national sentiments in both France and Italy. Doubtless Petrarch's eulogies to Italia and the Italians

or the Romans were influenced by these barbarian (i.e., French) insults.¹⁹ It is hard to tell if the praises for the wonders of the land of the French in writers such as Jean de Hesdin²⁰ were really aimed at the curia in Avignon, or were rhetorical flourishes intended to idealize the splendors of the *patria*. Were the French writers assailing the actual papal Avignon or using it as a convenient literary device to celebrate their own nation? Certainly Petrarch took their barbs seriously. How dare these descendants of the Gauls denigrate the City of the Caesar who conquered them!

It might be added that the image of Babylon need not be restricted to Rome or Avignon. The metaphor was also extended to other cities, such as Florence²¹ and Naples.²² In the biblical culture of medieval Europe, scriptural allusions came easily.

If Avignon as Babylon is implicit in Dante, it is explicit in Petrarch. One must be cautious, however, in attributing a single view of Avignon in Petrarch, since he, like his Tuscan predecessor, expressed different opinions over time. Much more than Dante, moreover, Petrarch's demonization of Avignon²³ had a considerable impact on attitudes toward the papacy in later centuries.²⁴ Later censors of the papacy, from the Hussites to the Lutherans, from the Italian humanists to the Zwinglians, often cited Petrarch in support of their denunciations of the Roman Church. The appeal of Petrarch's Babylonian Captivity extended down to the twentieth century. Avignon became a metaphor for the corruption of the Catholic Church. Somehow the figure of Avignon had merged into that of Rome. Surely Petrarch would have been dismayed to have seen the foibles of the "Avignon Church" – as he was wont to label the curia in Avignon – extended to his beloved City on the Tiber. One presumes that Petrarch believed that once the papacy had returned to Rome and reformed itself, the use of Avignon as a symbol would be forgotten.

As with Dante there is both a positive and a negative side to Petrarch's Avignon as Babylon. The negative is much the same, if more virulent, as in Dante: the presence of the Holy See in France (technically in the Angevin empire of Naples; Clement VI purchased it in 1348) prevents the German emperor – Louis of Bavaria, then Charles IV²⁵ – from restoring the Roman empire and the historic mission of the citizens of Rome. The unnatural residence of the pontiffs in Avignon, however temporary, remains an obstacle to the establishment of peace in Italy, and the restoration of spiritual values to the Roman Church. Although Petrarch places more emphasis on temporal peace and concord, the recovery of the ideals of the evangelical church is never forgotten. It might be noted parenthetically that neither Dante nor Petrarch could accurately be described as church reformers, in the sense of proponents of well-defined institutional changes in the Church Militant. Neither questioned the validity of the institution of the See of Peter or the hierarchical structure of the *ecclesia*. They are moralists who exhort the church's leaders to a change of heart, without giving much thought to how to go about reforming the organizational church. Their common assumption is that Christendom needs a transformation of behavior, particularly in that of the higher clergy, who are consumed with wealth and position. Finally, Dante's apocalyptic-like critique of the recent popes finds no counterpart in Petrarch, who seems to have had no interest in Joachimite ages of history or cosmic battles.

During the period of Cola di Rienzo, 1343–54, Petrarch is angry with the popes (Clement VI and Innocent VI) for asserting their episcopal rights in Rome at the expense of the tribunes and senators of the Roman Republic.²⁶ The popes, Petrarch believes, could have done more to restrain the Roman nobility, while permitting Cola a freer hand in reforming Rome. So too, Petrarch is upset with Clement VI for allowing the French to guide his foreign affairs, not to mention curial and clerical appointments. No French petitioner leaves Avignon empty-handed. By remaining

outside Italy, Romans and Italians are prey to unruly barons and foreigners. Petrarch was not impressed with the efforts of Gil Alvarez Carillo Albornoiz to recover the Papal States, since this intervention is yet another example of papal over-involvement in temporal affairs. It seems strange that Petrarch the humanist seems oblivious to the cultural activity at the curia in Avignon.²⁷ He sees in the papal absence the impairment of literary progress in Rome and Italy. As is well known, Dante showed little interest in the ancient buildings and inscriptions in Rome.

More positively, Petrarch's portrayal of Avignon as a Babylon on the Rhone is considerably more hostile than that of Dante. Petrarch's Avignon is a dreadful place, inhabited by despicable folks and putrid back alleys. Even the food is terrible. His most trenchant criticisms of the curia and the city can be found in his *Familiar Letters* and especially his *Book without a Name*, which became a set piece for anti-papal diatribes down to the eighteenth century. Although the principal failings of the Avignonesse clergy have to do with avarice, Petrarch manages to include all the deadly sins. Avignon is, quite simply, an inferno empty of faith, charity, honesty, and justice.²⁸ While historians have suggested various explanations for Petrarch's distaste for this not unpleasant town, such as his perceived lack of sufficient recognition for his talents,²⁹ it remains true that Petrarch's Avignon is, at least in his *Book without a Name*, a place utterly without merit, virtually separated from its rhetorical twin, Rome, the quasi-Jerusalem.

Petrarch, who knew some of the writings of Augustine, was aware that his beloved Rome was the patristic archetype of perdition. He transformed Augustine's Rome as the implicit Roman empire – transient, godless, arrogant, worldly – into the decadent Avignon, a latecomer in the pantheon of demiurges. He set up new foci of good and evil, while changing one of the focal points, Rome, into an ideal. Dante would be a reliable guide at the start of the journey, but, like Virgil, could not accompany Petrarch the entire way to paradise. But the axis of Babylon and Rome could serve as a useful beginning for Petrarch's paradigm.

But how seriously are we to take Petrarch's fulminations, which can sometimes sound self-righteous (and self-serving?), against the brothel on the Rhone? Are we naively being taken in by a later quasi-hagiographical idealization of the great poet? Can we take his supposed refusal to accept a bishopric or a papal secretariatship as proof of the purity of his intentions?³⁰ In terms of the history of ideas, does it really matter if Petrarch was genuinely sincere or that his descriptions of the curia were in fact accurate? It has been said that Petrarch's distaste for Avignon was "due to its being the home of the papacy."³¹ It is even claimed that the papacy would have been cleansed of its nepotism and simony if only the pontiffs had listened to the criticisms of Dante, Petrarch, and Catherine of Siena.³² Now, assessing the intentions of someone who lived long ago is always a risky business. At any rate, the historical significance of Petrarch's designation of Avignon as Babylon lies not in its alleged accuracy, but in its use as a rhetorical *topos*. Babylon as a figure of speech is, after all, a counterpoise to Rome, itself a kind of inverted Jerusalem; one is the opposite of the other, like the two faces of Janus. In a letter to Cola as the "prince of the Romans" Petrarch personifies Avignon as an arrogant, ungrateful servant who snubs her "mistress."³³ The implication is that Avignon is a recent upstart, who will soon be put in her place, once mighty Rome recovers her former power. (Clearly for Petrarch Rome is a [universal] concept in addition to being a place and the city of the ancient Romans.) Avignon is a symbol and a metaphor for the world, which will soon return to its senses by "returning" to Rome, now on the verge of recovering its lost glory; Rome will lead humankind to a new age. (Such is Petrarch's plan for Cola.) Petrarch

seems to take for granted that the supreme pontiff and the curia will return to their place of origin, and that this temporary home-away-from-home will quickly be forgotten. What drives Petrarch's hatred of the "new" Babylon is his utopian vision of a revived Roman empire, centered in the Rome of old and the new (the present), and in a purified Roman Church.³⁴ Avignon is the fifth labyrinth, and the worst of the five.³⁵

The current presence of the pope in Avignon, furthermore, is an obstacle to this desired restoration of humankind. Certainly Petrarch, whatever his formal status as a Franciscan friar, was no reformer with a program for a reconstructed holy see as the instrument for saving souls, his love of the poor Christ notwithstanding. But perhaps it is artificial and unhistorical to separate his beloved Rome from its Christian heritage. While he seems not to have given much thought to what a post-Avignon Roman Church would look like, Petrarch views the two cities – classical Rome and Christian Rome – as symbiotic and complementary. When Rome will be restored to its rightful place, Babylon, or rather the latest one, will fade away, its historical mission finished.

It must be emphasized that Petrarch's Avignon-Babylon prototype was shaped by his visions of classical Rome, as well as his understanding of Franciscan poverty. His antichrist, Avignon, is the reverse of his Christ, Rome; similarly the antichrist in the Book of Revelation is a parody of Jesus. Modern scholars have perhaps overstated Petrarch's emotional response to the physical city in the Comtat-Venaissin. For Augustine, Babylon was as much a concept as it was a place or a community; it was also historical in that Babylon had a beginning (fall of the bad angels) and an end (second coming of Christ). For Petrarch the evil city is – in addition to being a symbol of the decadent curia – a real place, here and now; as a conceptual construct, it will presumably disappear once the Vicar of Christ returns to the eternal city. Although the town on the Rhone is the latest Babylon, the papacy itself is not evil; it is the hapless victim of recent circumstances, beginning with the transfer (actually not a transfer, since Clement V never got to Rome) of the papacy to Avignon. It is possible that Petrarch, although it cannot be proven, believed that the cardinals at the curia were in some sense "products" of their absence from Rome; their avarice is a manifestation of their "unnatural" residence. To a point Petrarch considers the Avignon popes "captives" of the French monarchy, although perhaps not to the extent of the modern stereotype of the Babylonian Captivity.³⁶ To be sure, Petrarch professes to have little admiration for the French people and all things French.³⁷ The relevant issue is the way he often refers to the past and current "slavery" of Rome, now about to be "freed" by either Cola or the German emperor.³⁸

But what about those critics of the Avignon popes who aimed their rebukes less at the curia than against individual popes and their specific actions or non-actions? The most famous of these is St. Catherine of Siena (1347–80), who appears at the end of the Avignon era. In modern historiography she is sometimes portrayed as a dreamer who proposed "spiritual" solutions to every problem.³⁹ Recent studies, however, reveal that the daughter of the Benincasa, with its *popolo minuto* associations, was in fact deeply immersed in Italian political life. Catherine's views of Rome and Avignon were expressions of her political objectives, particularly with the Salimbini.⁴⁰ As F. T. Luongo puts it: "there was no Catherine of Siena without the War of Eight Saints."⁴¹ In her fervent letters to Pope Gregory XI she urges him to hurry to Rome in order to reform the church, end the wars in central Italy, and launch the crusade against the Turks.⁴² Her idea of "reform" is the improvement of the moral behavior of the clergy everywhere. With regard to Avignon, she actually had little to say about the curia or the city.⁴³ During her visit to Avignon she had every chance to confirm the unspeakable corruption which Petrarch sees in Babylon.⁴⁴ For

Catherine, Avignon is, for the most part, a detour, a wrong turn on the way to Rome – where all roads lead – which desperately requires the holy father’s presence. One result of the pope’s triple mission – reform, pacification, crusade – will be the unification of Christendom, and a return to its spiritual foundations.⁴⁵ Too often the Catherine of hagiographical lore – based mainly on her *Dialogues*, letters of advice, and Raymond of Capua’s biography – pays too little attention to her letters to popes, prelates, and princes. While many of her proposals were, to be sure, not always realistic, they reveal a strong leader well connected to the Salimbeni and various Siennese factions. Catherine was uninterested in catchy rhetorical paradigms, such as the Petrarchian Rome-Babylonian, which might have appeared to her bookish and abstract.⁴⁶ Significantly she cared nothing for the Rome of classical antiquity. She stands within the tradition of Christian Rome, where the Rock of Peter belongs. The bishop of Rome’s first responsibility is to the people of Rome and Italy.⁴⁷ He can be an effective reformer and peacemaker only in the city of Peter and Paul. Another link with Dante and Petrarch is her implicit love of Italy, and of course her native Siena. Not for nothing did the church later declare Catherine the (third) patron saint of Italy.

Catherine’s use or non-use of Avignon as Babylon should caution historians in attributing too much to the Petrarchian prototype. While Catherine had lots of motives to exploit the image for her own purposes, she chose to emphasize Rome as the proper place of the papal residence. And even then, not for any theological or theoretical reasons, but simply because Rome is the only place where the pope could carry out the pressing need to improve the clergy in Rome (and become a beacon for reform elsewhere), bring peace to central Italy, and expel the Turks from Christendom. Catherine exemplifies the enduring legacy of Christian Rome and the slow pace of the integration of Virgil’s Rome with that of Peter.

Conclusion

The textbook cliché of papal Avignon as a hellhole which merited the criticisms of Dante, Petrarch, and Catherine of Siena, and countless others, should be left under the St. Bénézet Bridge. The extraordinary duration of the image of Avignon as a Babylonian Captivity has persisted down to the twentieth century, when some French scholars, such as Mollat, Guillemain, Fayard, and Renouard, felt obligated to “defend” the Avignon papacy, as if any historical phenomenon needs defending. While bad popes always make good press, it might be more constructive to think of the literary *typus* of Avignon as Babylon as, to some extent, an outcome of three historical phases of the Avignon era: beginning, middle, end. While the big three – Dante, Petrarch, Catherine – have some things in common in their views of Rome and Avignon, they differ in their perception of the “new” Rome (or anti-Rome), Avignon. Their views of Avignon were conditioned by what they expected from the popes and Rome. Dante and Petrarch wanted a savior to rescue Rome from the ills of Christendom. This liberator was the emperor for Dante; Cola and later the emperor for Petrarch, who would look to a revived Roman empire to cure the distress of Christendom. All three writers (Catherine claimed to have dictated her letters) envision a church revitalized on the basis of the primitive church. Whereas Dante set up the Babylon/Avignon – Rome/Jerusalem dichotomy as a prod to entice the German king or emperor (Henry VII, Louis of Bavaria) to go to Rome and impose a *pax ghibellina* in Italy, Petrarch emphasized the choice between Avignon as Babylon and Rome as the vehicle of the return of the Roman empire, to the benefit of the Christian West and

indeed the world.

It might be asked why other contemporary papal critics, such as William of Ockham and Marsilius of Padua, did not revile Avignon as did Petrarch. For his part, Ockham did not, rhetorically speaking, “need” an Avignon, since the issue for him was not the papal residence, but the pope’s heresy and what to do with a heretical pope. For Marsilius, the pope’s sin was his interference in the temporal affairs of the empire and Italy. The clergy in general and the pontiff in particular should limit their actions to spiritual matters, in the manner of the apostolic community. What the cardinals did at Avignon was of little concern to the Paduan. Interestingly many of the papal defenders during the early Avignon period do not dwell on the evangelical poverty of the first bishop of Rome. Indeed some of the Augustinian and Carmelite papalists prefer to stress historical development and the usefulness of church possessions in the clergy’s salvific work. It is possible that Petrarch, who knew many Augustinians, was familiar, at least indirectly, with the treatises of Giles of Rome, James of Viterbo, and Augustinus Triumphus.⁴⁸

We would do well not to accept literally the dual image of the Babylonian Captivity as the epitome of avarice and the captive of the French monarchy. For by focusing on the alleged accuracy of the critics of the curia we are apt to miss the historical significance of their complaints: the criticism was the projection of contemporary ideas of what the papacy and the clerical church should be, namely, a near-replica of the primitive church, with its concentration on poverty and spiritual matters, especially in matters of pastoral care. The then-current discussions about the ideal nature of the church served to mold the notion of the alter-Rome: Avignon. The turmoil of the times influenced the depiction of the church’s mirror-opposite. The early fourteenth century was an age of intense discussion of ecclesiology, authority of the pope vis-à-vis prelates, polemics about poverty, primitive church, wars in Italy, the Hundred Years War, the Ottoman threat, and the imperial-papal disputes. What exactly should popes and princes do? Avignon was an accessible target for those who required a negative image with which to contrast their ideal society.

Thus in the wider sense the denigration of papal Avignon as Babylon should be assessed in two ways. Negatively, this symbolic use of Avignon epitomizes the contemporary, particularly Italian, hostility toward the clergy, especially prelates, curial clergy, and popes; the hostility toward the hierocratic writings which extend papal rights over temporals; the hostility to the pope’s interference in ecclesiastical affairs everywhere, particularly Italy and France. The papacy intervenes in imperial elections, with their repercussions in Italy. It should be noted that this resentment is directed at the *clergy* and not at the institutional church or Christian doctrine. Positively, the choice of Avignon as the alter-Rome served to raise the importance of the city of Rome as the focus of an interest in antiquity. Indirectly the image of a counter-image elevated the imperial ideal, in the sense of practical policy (to make the German emperor an arbiter of disputes in Italy) and a philosophical paradigm. The Babylon myth helped to solidify the current enthusiasm for the apostolic community as a model for church renewal. To demonize another place, Babylon, was indirectly a pointer to the failures of papal leadership and, at the same time, was a reminder to the supreme pontiff of his responsibility to provide such guidance. Avignon was not a permanent or near-permanent symbol, unlike Augustine’s City of Man, but a transient abode of sin, soon to be rendered obsolete by a regenerated Vicar of Christ in the city of Peter.

Petrarch’s choice of a set of opposites – Rome and Babylon – suited his search for ways to idealize ancient Rome. Avignon proved a convenient foil with which to elevate his true concern, a revived Roman empire. His new typology replaced the former model of Rome and Jerusalem, then

an exegetical, homiletic, and liturgical commonplace. The Italian trinity – Dante, Petrarch, Catherine – should be seen in the context of the wider “crisis”⁴⁹ of the church and papacy in the fourteenth century. The conceptual frames of their criticisms of the Avignon curia are firmly within the contemporary disposition to make the gospel community a reality. The received patristic paradigm (Rome and Jerusalem) needed some reworking to adjust to the times. If there were no Avignon, the papal foes would have had to invent one.

Endnotes

1. Petrarch, Letter 10, in *Francesco Petrarca, Sine nomine, lettera polemiche e politiche* (Bari: Laterza, 1973), 113; Norman P. Zacour, trans., *Petrarch's Book without a Name* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies 1973), 73.
2. See Robert Coogan, “Petrarch’s *Liber sine nomine* and a vision of Rome in the Reformation,” *Renaissance and Reformation*, N.S. 7.1 (1983): 1–12; “The Nature, Artistry and Influence of Petrarch’s ‘*Epistolae sine nomine*,’” *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Turonensis* 1 (1980): 109–23.
3. In particular, the works of Guillaume Mollat, such as *Les Papes d’Avignon (1305–1378)*. 10th ed. (Paris: Latouzey et Ané, 1965); 9th ed. translated by Janet Love as *The Popes at Avignon 1305–1378* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965); Bernard Guillemain, *La cour pontificale d’Avignon, 1309–1376* (Paris: de Boccard, 1962); “Il papato ad Avignon,” in *La crisi del trecento e il papato avignonese (1274–1378)*, ed. Diego Quaglioni, *Storia della chiesa* 11 (Turin: San Paolo 1994), 233–80; Jean Favier, *Les papes d’Avignon* (Paris: A. Fayard, 2006); Yves Renouard, *La papauté à Avignon* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954); translated by Denis Bethell as *The Avignon Papacy 1305–1403* (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1970). See Daniel Waley, “Opinions of the Avignon Papacy: A Historiographical Sketch,” *Storiografia e Storia: Studi in onore di Eugenio Duprè Theseider* (Rome: Bulzoni 1974), 175–88.
4. See, e.g., John P. McKay et al., *A History of Western Society*, vol. 1 (2nd ed.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 407; the popes, controlled by French kings, excluded “spiritual objectives.” Philip IV persuaded Clement V to “rule from Avignon”; the popes were concerned only with secular matters: Dennis Sherman and Joyce Salisbury, *The West in the World*, vol. 1 (Boston: McGraw Hill 2006), 307. The Wikipedia entry (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Avignon_papacy; modified 9/10/09) for “Avignon Papacy,” known everywhere of course as the Babylonian Captivity, repeats the same clichés about the near-universal outcry about the degradation of the new capital. One wonders if Petrarch would have been flattered by the lasting effect of his typology, or dismayed by this emphasis on the “secular” concerns of the curia. The Babylon metaphor never seems to lose its appeal. It is often used today to castigate the greed and secular character of American society. See Richard J. Neuhaus, *American Babylon: Notes of a Christian Exile* (Philadelphia: Basic Books, 2009); and Peter Fearon, *Hamptons Babylon: Life among the Super-Rich in America’s Riviera* (Secaucus: Citadel, 1998). American evangelical Christians are fond of using the image to condemn the pursuit of mammon. Examples: Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons* (1903; repr. Ontario: Chick, 1998): the Catholic Church (or “papal worship”) is a cover for a revived paganism; R. A. Coombes, *America, the Babylon: America’s Destiny Foretold in Biblical Prophecy* (Overland Park: Leathers, 1998) sees biblical prophecy fulfilled; Steve Gallagher, *Intoxicated with Babylon: The Seduction of God’s People in the Last Days* (Dry Ridge: Pure Life, 2007); the popular series by Tim LaHaye et al., *Babylon Rising*. 4 vols. (New York: Bantam, 2003–08).

5. See Book 4 of *De civitate Dei*. Ed. Bernard Dombart and Alphonse Kalb. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 47–48 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1955).
6. See Frederick Van Fleteren, “Babylon,” in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans 1999), 83–84; Johannes Van Oort, *Jerusalem and Babylon: A Study into Augustine’s “City of God” and the Sources of His Doctrine of the Two Cities* (Leiden: Brill 1991); E. Lamirande, “Babylon,” in *Augustinus-Lexikon*, vol. 1., ed. Cornelius Mayer (Basil: Schwabe 1986), 566–69.
7. Frederick Van Fleteren, “Jerusalem,” in *Augustine Through the Ages*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald et al. (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans 1999), 462–63.
8. John D. Anderson and Elizabeth T. Kennan, trans., *Five Books on Consideration: Advice to a Pope*. Bernard of Clairvaux, vol. 13. Cistercian Fathers 37 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1976); J. Leclercq and H. Rochais, ed., *Sancti Bernardi Opera* 3 (Rome: Ed. Cisterciensis, 1957), 379–494.
9. For the Spirituals, see David Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), chaps. 1–3. Also Nicolò Mineo, *Profetismo e apocalittica in Dante* (Catania: Università di Catania, 1968), and “Gli Spirituali francescani e l’Apocalisse di Dante,” *La Rassegna della letteratura italiana* 102 (1998): 26–46 at 36–44; Paul Amargier, “Pétrarque et la polémique contre la curia,” in *Franciscains d’Oc: Les Spirituels ca. 1280–1324*. Cahiers de Fanjeaux 10 (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1975), 355–69.
10. See Nick Havely, *Dante and the Franciscans: Poverty and the Papacy in the ‘Commedia’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Maria Grazia Blasio, “Petrarca e il dibattito religioso fra Due e Trecento,” *Archivio storico italiano* 166.616 (2008): 183–214.
11. See Charles T. Davis, “Rome and Babylon in Dante,” in *Rome in the Renaissance: The City and the Myth*, ed. Paul A. Ramsey. Papers of the Thirteenth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1982), 19–40. The cowardly soul who made the great denial (*Inferno* 3: 57) is usually taken to mean Celestine V.
12. Charles T. Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1957), easily the most comprehensive study of the topic. Davis stresses the multilayered use of Rome in Dante. For a study of the earliest precedents in Dante, see Raffaello Morghen, “La lettera di Dante ai cardinali italiani e il conclave di Perugia del 1305,” in *Civiltà medioevale al tramonto. Saggi e studi nella crisi di un’età* (Bari: Laterza 1971), 119–44; Arsenio Frugoni, “Dante tra due conclavi la lettera ai cardinali italiani,” *Lecture classensi* 2 (1969): 71–91. For the replies of Guido Vernani, Dante’s first respondent, see Anthony K. Cassell, *The Monarchia Controversy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2004), 242–48 and *passim*.
13. In addition to n. 10, see “The Blood of the Apostles: Dante, the Franciscans and Pope John XXII,” *Italian Studies* 52 (1997): 38–50; “Poverty in Purgatory: From *Commercium* to *Commedia*,” *Dante Studies* 104 (1996): 229–43; “From Assisi to Avignon: Dante, the Franciscans, and the Papal Inquiry of 1309–12,” *Journal of the Institute of Romance Studies* 3 (1994–95): 43–52; Paola Nasti, “The Amorous Bride and Her Lovers: Images of the Church in the Heaven of the Sun,” in *Dante and the Church*, ed. Paolo Acquaviva and Jennifer Petrie. WCD Foundation for Italian Studies (Portland/Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 93–125.
14. George A. Holmes, “Dante and the Popes,” in *The World of Dante: Essays on Dante and his Times*, ed. Cecil Grayson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 18–43; “*Monarchia* and Dante’s Attitude to the Popes,” in *Dante and Governance*, ed. J. R. Woodhouse (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 46–57. Satires on

- Rome were commonplace. See John A. Yunck, "Economic Conservatism, Papal Finance, and the Medieval Satires on Rome," in *Changes in Medieval Society*, ed. Sylvia Lettice Thrupp (New York: Appleton Century-Crofts, 1964), 72–85.
15. Marjorie Reeves, "Dante and the Prophetic View of History," in Grayson, 44–60. See also Kalikst Morawski, "Le Mythe de l'Empereur chez Dante," *Révue des études italiennes* 12 (1965): 280–301. James of Viterbo, one of the best-known papal hierocrats, makes Jerusalem the *regnum Christi*, and Babylon the *regnum diaboli*, citing Augustine and Isidore; R. W. Dyson, ed., *James of Viterbo: De regimine christiano* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2009), 20. Significantly for James *only* the church is the kingdom of Christ. Thus all other kingdoms are in some sense "Babylons."
 16. Augusto Vasina, "Dante di Fronte ad Avignone (1 marzo 1980)," *Lecture classensi* 9–10 (1982): 173–89; "Il papato avignonese nella storiografia degli ultimi decenni," in *Aspetti culturali della società italiana nel periodo del papato avignonese*, 15–18 ott. 1978. Centro di studi sulla spiritualità medievale (Todi, 1981), 11–48. See also Paolo Brezzi, "Chiesa," in *Enciclopedia Dantesca* 1 (1970): 960–68; and "Dante e la Chiesa del suo tempo," in *Dante e Roma. Atti del Convegno di studi di Roma*, 8–10 aprile 1965. Comitato Nazionale per le Celebrazioni del VII Centenario della nascita di Dante (Florence, 1965), 97–113; and Brezzi's excellent introduction to Dante and the idea of Rome and the simoniac popes, "L'idea e la realtà di Roma nel medioevo," in *Roma Constantinopoli Mosca. Da Roma alla terza Roma*, Studi 1, aprile 1981 (Naples: Ed. Scientifiche Italiane, 1983), 87–134. Also Matthew S. Kempshall, "Accidental Perfection: Ecclesiology and Political Thought in *Monarchia*," in Acquaviva and Petrie, 127–71; Nicola Longo, *I papi, Roma e Dante: L'idea e le immagini di Roma nella Commedia dantesca* (Rome: Bulzoni 2004), with biblio.
 17. See Richard Kay, introduction to Dante's *Monarchia*. Studies and Texts 131 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1998), xv–xliii.
 18. See Charles T. Davis, "Rome and Babylon in Dante," in *Rome in the Renaissance* (n. 11 above). Dante's Avignon as Babylon derives in part from *Lamentations*. See Ronald I. Martinez, "Lament and Lamentations in the *Purgatorio* and the Case of Dante's *Statius*," *Dante Studies* 115 (1997): 45–8. For Dante and Augustine see Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome*, 4–73. Dante specialists generally agree that the flight of the giant and the harlot into the woods (*Inferno* 32) signifies Clement V's move to Avignon. Indeed all the references to the sins of the popes, including Canto 19 on the damned popes, are implicit allusions to Avignon. Dante's most severe criticisms of the pontiffs are reserved for Clement V, whose way of life was at least as bad as his betrayal of Henry VII. See Kenelm Foster, "The Canto of the Damned Popes," *Dante Studies* 87 (1969): 47–88. Dante's Letter 11 is in effect an indictment of Avignon, where pope and cardinals live in sin; they have abandoned their true home, Rome; C. E. Honess, trans., *Dante Alighieri: Four Political Letters* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2007), 83–97. I might add that Dante often uses images of himself as opposed to the pilgrim in the *Commedia*. Danteans often distinguish between Dante the poet and "Dante-character" in the poem. See, e. g., Stephen Bemrose, *A New Life of Dante* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000), 122 and *passim*.
 19. See, e.g., Petrarch's letter to Charles IV: Aldo S. Bernardo, trans., *Francesco Petrarch: Letters on Familiar Matters*, vol. 3 (Books 17–24) (NY: Italica Press, 2005), Fam. 18.1, 36–43. See also vol. 1, Fam. 23.2, 257–65. Also vol. 2 (Books 9–16), Fam. 11.16, 120–27; Fam. 15.9, 275–79 (cf. Rome as "another Babylon," 277); vol. 1 (Books 1–8) Fam. 6.2, 290–95. See Angelo Mazzocco, "Un'idea politica italiana in Petrarca?" in *Petrarca politico. Atti del convegno*, Roma-Arezzo, 19–20 marzo 2004. *Nuovi studi storici* 70 (Rome: Nella Sede dell'istituto storico italiano, 2006), 9–25. See also Letter 4 to the Roman People on behalf of Cola in Dotti, ed., *Sine nomine*, Ep. 4, 37–65. Cf. Dante's

- letter to the princes and peoples of Italy: Paget Toynbee, ed., *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae*, (2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), Ep. 5, 42–62.
20. See Jean de Hesdin, Jean de Roquetaillande. Henry Cochin, “La grande controverse de Rome et Avignon au XIVe siècle,” *Etudes italiennes* 3 (1921): 85–94. J. E. Wrigley is not convinced that the papacy’s return to Rome was a cause of the Schism: “Pétrarque, Avignon et Rome: une interprétation,” in *Genèse et débuts du Grand Schisme d’Occident*, Avignon, 25–8 sept. 1978. Colloques internationaux du centre national de la recherche scientifique (Paris: Éditions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique 1980), 233–38. Dante’s view of the French was generally, although not always, negative. See Richard Cooper, “The French Dimension in Dante’s Politics,” in *Dante and Governance*, ed. John Woodhouse (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 58–84. Also: Grover C. Furr, “France vs Italy: French Literary Nationalism in Petrarch’s Last Controversy and a humanist dispute of ca. 1395,” in *Proceedings of the Patristic, Medieval and Renaissance Conference* 4 (1979): 115–25.
 21. See Joan M. Ferrante, “Florence and Rome: the two Cities of Man in the Divine Comedy,” *Early Renaissance. Acta* 5 (1978): 1–18. Paris too was a Babylon. Constantinople likewise did not escape criticism. While the medieval *itineraria* to the Holy Land contain many hostile remarks about Jerusalem – bad food, unsafe streets, dishonest innkeepers, hucksters – none, as far as I know, refer to the City of David as Babylon.
 22. See Roberto Mercuri, “Avignone e Napoli in Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio,” in *Avignon and Naples: Italy in France-France in Italy in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Marianne Pade et al, *Analecta Romana Istituti Danici* (Rome: L’erma di Bretschneider, 1997), 117–29. It was unusual to designate a surrogate the actual city being satirized. Boccaccio often uses cities other than Florence to heighten the humor of the satire. In *Decameron*, Day 1, Story 2, Abraham of Paris converts to Christianity upon experiencing the wickedness of the clergy of Rome. Doubtless Boccaccio’s readers would have thought of both Rome and Avignon with this reference.
 23. See, e. g., Zacour, trans., *Petrarch’s Book without a Name*, Letters 5, 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 18, 19.
 24. In addition to n. 2 above, see Franco Suitner, “L’invettiva antiavignonese di Petrarca e la poesia infamante medievale,” *Studi Petrarqueschi* 2 (1985): 201–10.
 25. See *Letters on Familiar Matters*, vol. 2, Book 10, Letter 1, and Book 12, letter 1; vol. 3, Book 18, Letter 1.
 26. See in particular letters 2 and 4 to Cola: Dotti, ed., *Sine nomine*, 17–18, 37–65, and Dotti’s introduction, vii–xlvi. Some of the Petrarch–Cola letters are in Mario E. Cosenza, ed., *Petrarch: The Revolution of Cola di Rienzo* (New York: Italica Press, 1986); Ronald G. Musto, ed. (2nd ed.). For Petrarch and the idea of Rome see Innocente Toppani, “Petrarca, Cola di Rienzo e il mito di Roma,” *Atti dell’Istituto Veneto di Scienza, Lettere ed arti* (1976–77) 85 (1977): 155–72; Giuliana Crevatin, “Roma aeterna,” in *Petrarca e Agostino*, ed. Roberto Cardini and Donatella Coppini (Arezzo: Bulzoni, 2004), 131–51; and “L’idea di Rome,” in *Motivi e forme delle Familiari di Francesco Petrarca*, Gargnano del Garda, 2–5 ott. 2002 (Milan: Cisalpino, 2003), 229–47 (analysis of the Familiar Letters and precedents in Augustine); Roberto Weiss, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Blackwell 1969).
 27. See Jacqueline Hamesse, ed., *La vie culturelle, intellectuelle et scientifique a la cour des papes d’Avignon*. Textes et études du moyen âge 28 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); Birger Munk Olsen, “L’étude des classiques à Avignon au xive siècle,” in Pade et al., 13–25 (n. 22 above).
 28. Ep. 14 in *Liber sine nomine*, 86.

29. See Ernest H. Wilkins, "Petrarch's Ecclesiastical Career," in *Studies in the Life and Works of Petrarch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 3–32; Georges Barthouil, "Petarcarca a Avignone," in *Francesco Petrarca. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Roma-Arezzo-Padova-Arquà Petrarca, 24–7 aprile 1974, Atti dei Convegni Lincei* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1976), 205–31; Angelo Mazzocco, "The Antiquarianism of Francesco Petrarca," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 7 (1977): 203–24. The book on Avignon that Petrarch promised to write for Francesco Nelli apparently never got written; *Book without a Name*, Letters 6 and 17).
30. So argues Robert Coogan in *Babylon on the Rhone: A Translation of Letters by Dante, Petrarch, and Catherine of Siena on the Avignon Papacy* (Potomac MD-Madrid: Studia Humanitas, 1983), 7f.
31. Coogan, *Babylon on the Rhone*, 113. I assume this means that Petrarch's indignation was the result of actual conditions he claims to have experienced at Avignon. Coogan assumes that this anger was directed at the "papacy." But Petrarch, it seems to me, in his *Book without a Name* and his *Familiar Letters* aims his tirades more at the way of life in the curia, and by extension the city of Avignon. Clearly Petrarch does not believe that this life-style at Avignon would suddenly improve and the church universal would be rejuvenated if only Clement VI would change his ways. Petrarch often refers to the city of Avignon as the "foulest of cities" (Letter 18, *Book without a Name*, 111). It would be simplistic to reduce Petrarch's use of Avignon as Babylon to just the person of the pope.
32. Coogan, *Babylon on the Rhone*, 10. Perhaps this kind of moralizing could lead to injecting modern values into the fourteenth century, and "presentizing" the past. Further, is it realistic to assume that individual popes could fundamentally change the way of life Petrarch is attacking? Should we take Petrarch's "sermons," for that is what they are, no more literally than we would the sweeping generalizations of Ubertino of Casale? It is easy to confuse the reality with the city as a *topos*.
33. Letter 2, *Book without a Name*, 38; *Liber sine nomine*, 21: "O Rodano che rodi tutto intorno! Così riconoscete il Tevere? Così onorate il signore? O Avignone, la cui vigne, se qualche fiducia meritano gli interpreti, produrrà grappoli amarissimi e cruenta vendemmia, così porgi ornaggio alla signoria di Roma [...]" "Rome" does not condemn "Avignon" for her corruption, but for her hesitation to recognize her as "signora," who is planning great things for the world.
34. Avignon is the "western" Babylon, following in time the Babylons of Assyria and of Egypt; Letter 8 (to Ildebrandino), *Book without a Name*, 67. This latest Babylon is Nimrod (see also Letter 10, *Book without a Name*, 71). The two previous Babylons were on the Nile and the Euphrates. The Third Babylon is on the Rhone; Letter 10, *Book without a Name*, 72. This last Babylon (Avignon) is the worst of the three, because it is obsessed with gold; Letter 10, *Book without a Name*, 73. Avignon is the newest of the three Babylons, which surpasses its predecessors in faithlessness, fraud, shamelessness, pride, lust, greed, ambition, impiety; Letter 17, *Book without a Name*, 97f. Petrarch would probably have known that the Book of Revelation refers to Rome as the Babylon which destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE, the first time the City of Seven Hills was designated as Babylon, a reference to the first destruction in 586 BCE. Avignon, then, by this count, would be the third Babylon.
35. Letter 8, *Book without a Name*, 67; Letter 9, *Book without a Name*, 69; Letter 10, *Book without a Name*, 72 ("The labyrinth of the Rhone, the most confusing and by far the worst of all."); "[...] con l'oro si tesse il filo della salvezza. [...] Con l'oro si fa mercato di Cristo"; Ep. 10, *Liber sine nomine*, 113. Note that Babylon, Petrarch assures us, is *not* Rome, as "some of our authors" (Augustine?) would have it; Letter 10, *Book without a Name*, 71. Indeed, Rome is our "holy mother, queen of cities": Letter 10, *Book without a Name*, 71.

36. The modern cliché about the popes being puppets of the French kings persists, despite the work of G. Mollat, B. Guillemain, and others. Petrarch's residence at Avignon was by no means unusual. While it was normal for friars to live at a nearby friary when traveling or studying outside their house, itinerant mendicants were common. It is possible that Petrarch had permission to stay at Avignon, but his precise status as a friar minor remains uncertain.
37. In addition to n. 20 above, see Letter 2, *Book without a Name*, 38 (Avignon and Provence produce only bitter grapes and bloody vintage). The French in Avignon are barbarians who mock their queen, Rome (Letter 9, *Book without*, 71). The barbarian French are soft and effeminate (Letter 17, *Book without a Name*, 107.)
38. The notion of slavery comes easily to Petrarch, who freely applies it to both Avignon/Babylon and Rome. He exhorts the Roman people, Cola, and Charles IV to liberate Rome, albeit it is not always clear what Rome is supposed to be liberated from. The idea of *libertas* was of course often used in Republican Rome. See Chaim Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea during the Late Republic and Early Principate*. Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950; repr. 2008). Petrarch the humanist seems at times to conceive of this "slavery" more in symbolic terms, and less in a literal sense, as if some tyrant were oppressing Rome. Sometimes these tyrants are the nobles of the great families. All of his letters to Cola touch on this theme of Rome's slavery, as well as many letters in the *Book without a Name*.
39. Doubtless this historiographical – often hard to separate from the hagiographical – tradition stems from her biographer, Raymond of Capua. One would never know of Catherine's missions to Avignon and her involvement in Siennese and Florentine politics from his work, which dwells on her piety and zeal for souls, which greatly impressed Gregory XI; George Lamb, trans., *Raymond of Capua, The Life of St. Catherine of Siena* (Rockford, Ill.: Tan, 2003), 217. In the preface to the translation of her *Dialogues* we are told that she was motivated by truth fostering love, a typical imaging of Catherine in modern biographies; see Giuliana Cavallini's preface to Suzanne Noffke, trans., *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue* (New York-Mahwah: Paulist, 1980), xiii-xvi. In a standard biography, Catherine is presented as a hard-driving saint among the less spiritually-minded during the War of Eight Saints; Johannes Jorgensen, *Saint Catherine of Siena*. Trans. Ingeborg Lund (London: Longmans, 1944). In the widely known anthology of the three main Avignon critics (Dante, Petrarch, Catherine), the editor, Robert Coogan, portrays Catherine as the righteous outsider who advances "spiritual" proposals to Gregory and the decadent curia; see *Babylon on the Rhone*. Another persistent stereotype is the Catherine who single-handedly persuaded Gregory XI to return to Rome for the salvation of his soul. We are expected to believe that this Dominican *mantellata* exhorted, nay threatened, the pope to flee the cesspool of depravity at Avignon and return to Rome to try to bring the church back to apostolic perfection. That her letters do not support his pious convention is ignored. Fortunately, in the past half-century there has been a revolution in Catherine studies, which attempt to place her and the Benincasa firmly in the political context of central Italy in the 1370s. We should not be surprised that modern writings about famous saints often follow two tracks—one devotional, one scholarly—as if the protagonist were two persons. Witness the historiography of Francis of Assisi.
40. As forcibly argued by F. Thomas Luongo in his *The Sainly Politics of Catherine of Siena* (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2006).
41. *Sainly Politics*, 207.
42. These three pleas occur repeatedly in her letters to Gregory XI. See Suzanne Noffke, trans., *The Letters of Catherine of Siena*, vol. 2. (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), Letters T196 (18), T206 (61), T229 (189), T255 (192), T218 (198), T233 (212), T231 (215),

- T238 (233), T239 (243). This is vol. 2 of a projected 4-volume series. Also the edition by Antonio Volpato in *Santa Caterina da Siena: Opera Omnia*, ed. Fausto Sbaiffoni (Pistoia: Provincia Romana dei Frati Predicatori, 2002). As far as I know, the critical Italian edition of the Letters has not yet been published. Recent scholarship on Catherine is summarized in Luongo's introduction to *Saintly Politics*. The most up-to-date bibliography will soon appear in Luongo, "Catherine of Siena," in *Dictionary of Literary Biography. Italian Literature of the Fourteenth Century*, ed. Zygmunt B. Baranski and Theodore J. Cachey, Jr. (Columbia SC: Brucoli Clark Layman, forthcoming).
43. Catherine cautions Gregory XI about always following the advice of his cardinals, who are the "enemies of all good." If Gregory deems it right to return to Rome, he should do so, whatever their advice; Letter T231, in *Letters*, vol. 2, 216. When Catherine assails the clergy for their vices, she speaks in general terms, and not about the Avignon clergy in particular. See, e.g., Letter T218 (to Gregory XI), *Letters*, vol. 2, 198–202.
 44. For a reconstruction of Catherine's Avignon itinerary, see Suzanne Noffke, trans., *Letters*, vol. 2, 2–4. Interestingly Raymond of Capua does not discuss Catherine's role in getting the pope to return to Rome.
 45. The vicar of Christ belongs in his "proper place," Rome; Letter T196, *Letters*, vol. 2, 21. The question of Rome as the correct residence of the papacy is discussed in Eugenio Dupré Theseider's masterful *I papi di Avignone e la questione Romana* (Florence: Felice le Mounier, 1939). For Catherine's idea of Rome see Giuliana Cavallini, "L'idea di Roma in Caterina da Siena," in *La Roma di Santa Caterina da Siena*, ed. Maria Grazia Bianco (Rome: Ed. Studium, 2001), 1–12.
 46. Nor indeed was Catherine much interested in eschatological or apocalyptic views of the papacy. Angelic popes and last world emperors would have seemed a bit esoteric. See Eugenio Dupré Theseider, "L'attesa escatologica," in *I papi di Avignone*.
 47. See Pietro Palazzini, "S. Caterina corrispondente e consigliere dei Papi," in *S. Caterina da Siena. Creatura dello spirit*, ed. Giacinto D'Urso (Florence: Rivista de ascetica e mistica, 1980), 57–101; Ada Alessandrini, "Il ritorno dei Papi da Avignone e S. Caterina da Siena," *Archivio deputazione romana storia patria* (Rome, 1933–34), 1–132; Paul Rousset, "L'idée de Croisade chez Sainte Catherine de Sienne et chez les théoriciens du XIVe siècle," *Congresso internazionale di studi cateriniani*, Siena/Roma, 24–29 aprile 1980 (Rome: Cura generalizia O.P., 1981), 362–72; Franco Cardini, "L'idea di Crociata in Santa Caterina da Siena," in *Atti del simposio internazionale cateriniano-bernardiniano*, Siena, 17–20 aprile 1980, ed. Domenico Maffei and Paolo Nardi (Siena: Accademia senese degli Intronati, 1982), 57–87; Anthony T. Luttrell, "Gregory XI and the Turks: 1370–1378," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 46 (1980): 391–417; chap. 3 of Paul R. Thibault, *Pope Gregory XI: The Failure of Tradition* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986).
 48. Strictly speaking, the papalist tracts of Giles of Rome (*De ecclesiastica potestate*) and James of Viterbo (*De regimine cristiano*) appeared before 1309, and so could not be classified as "Avignon" writings. But these two authors had quickly achieved quasi-official status within the Hermits of St. Augustine. My sense is that Petrarch would have been familiar with these two works, at least in a general way, while at Avignon, where Augustinians were prominent. So too, the monumental *De potestate ecclesiastica* of Augustinus Triumphus (written c. 1320–26) was certainly available at the curia. I suspect that Petrarch's concept of Babylon was influenced by the claims of all three authors – although very different in their arguments – who would have the pope supreme in temporals, at least in emergency jurisdiction. Petrarch would have considered James of Viterbo's notion of the kingship of Christ as too "unitary;" equally objectionable would have been the arrangement of the church in offices according to states of perfection (Augustinus). He would have read these theories of the

church as a summons to the clergy to live up to a higher state of perfection. Babylon becomes, in effect, the opposite of the clergy living in a state of perfection. Given Petrarch's close relationship with Augustinian clergy, perhaps he thought it prudent and charitable not to cite from the works of the three foremost Augustinian papalists.

49. The title of the volume on this period is the "crisis" in the *Storia della chiesa* series (n. 3 above).