

The Pope under Pressure: Papal Propaganda in Times of Severe Crisis 1494-1549¹



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Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
Introduction	4
Approach	6
In gravissimo summi periculi momento	10
Una barba longa sanuda	19
Biblical Precedents	22
Papal Predecessors	25
Papal Ceremonial	33
Penance	42
Crusader and Martyrdom Rhetoric	49
The effect and ineffectiveness of papal propaganda	54
Conclusion	61
Archival Sources	65
Published Sources	66
Online Sources	67
Secondary Literature	67
Appendix	76

List of Abbreviations

Alberi, <i>Relazioni</i>	Eugenio Albèri (ed.), <i>Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato</i> (Florence 1839-1863) 15 vols.
ASV	Archivio Segreto Vaticano, Vatican City.
Arch.	Archivio.
Arm.	Armadio.
BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.
Barb. Lat.	Codices Barberiniani Latini.
Ott. Lat.	Codices Ottoboni Latini.
Urb. Lat.	Codices Urbinates Latini.
Vat. Lat.	Codices Vaticani Latini.
Du Bellay, <i>Memoires</i>	Bellay, Martin du, <i>Les Memoires de Messire Martin dv Bellay, Seigneur de Langey</i> (Paris 1586).
Burckhard, <i>Diarium</i>	Johannis Burchardi, <i>Diarium sive Rerum urbanarum commentarii (1483-1506)</i> , Louis Thuasne (ed.), 3 vols. (Paris 1883-1885).
CSPSpa	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Spain</i> , http://www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/cal-state-papers--spain
CSPVen	<i>Calendar of State Papers, Venice</i> , http://www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/cal-state-papers--venice
<i>Letters and Papers</i>	<i>Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII</i> . Ed. J. S. Brewer. Vol. 4: Part II: 1526-28 http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/mss/i.do?id=GALE MC4301100130&v=2.1&u=leiden&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Calendar
Milanesi, <i>Sacco</i>	Carlo Milanesi (ed.), <i>Il Sacco di Roma del MDXXVII: narrazioni di contemporanei</i> (Milan 1867).
Pastor	Ludwig Pastor, <i>Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters</i> (Freiburg 1886-1909) 16 vols.
Sanuto	Marino Sanuto, <i>I Diarii, MCCCXCVI-MDXXXIII</i> (Venice 1879-1903).
<i>State Papers</i>	<i>State Papers Published under the Authority of His Majesty's Commission: King Henry the Eighth, 1830-1852</i> , vol. 6, part V, Foreign Correspondence, 1473-1527. http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/mss/i.do?id=GALE MC4318000149&v=2.1&u=leiden&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Transcript

“The French, and all who live in distant countries, imagine that a Sovereign Pontiff is not of the same material as other mortals, but is like one that has been sent down from Heaven.”²

Introduction

The Renaissance papacy has always been a fruitful field for historians, although, admittedly, some historians have been unable to shed themselves of the very same preconception that the French had before their encounter with the infamous Borgia Pope, Alexander VI, according to Sigismondo de' Conti.³ The inherent paradoxes of the papacy that each Renaissance pontiff struggled with – spiritual leadership and temporal power; set above the Christian princes but waging war with and against them; a medieval heritage of papal supremacy and the blatant weakness of the pontiff's position vis-à-vis emperor, king, conciliarism and reformatory ideas – have both amazed and appalled these historians, regardless of their denomination. These incongruities arguably became most evident during the period discussed here, the Italian Wars, which raged on the peninsula between 1494 and 1559.⁴ Contrary to the belief later held by historians such as Francesco Guicciardini and Paolo Giovio,⁵ the preceding era had seen several wars waged between the Italian potentates. But the emergence of trans-Alpine European powers on the stage, possessing superior resources and manpower, transformed these local rivalries into the destructive flux of events that was to succumb Italy during the first half of the sixteenth century.

Simultaneously, for the papacy in Rome the period was one of the most prosperous and has left behind an incredible heritage. Especially during the periods between the disastrous wars waged on the Italian peninsula the reinvigorated papacy became the most affluent Maecenas of Renaissance Europe. So far, research on Renaissance papal propaganda has tended to focus on periods of stability. Of course, in terms of what remains – architecturally, artistic and literary – these periods of stability have yielded an unparalleled amount of works of art and architectural wonders that is still visible throughout the extensive Vatican Palace and the rest of Rome. Despite experiencing several disastrous military struggles throughout the era, some of the papal works of art show a surprising continuity in terms of papal supremacy over temporal princes. Long after Lorenzo

² Sigismondo de'Conti, *Le Storie de' suoi tempi dal 1475 al 1510* (Rome 1883) vol. II, 86.

³ Much has been written on the Borgias, and a lot of it is flawed or tendentious. Three works are noteworthy: Mary Hollingsworth, *The Borgias: History's Most Notorious Dynasty* (London 2013); Volker Reinhardt, *Alexander VI. Borgia: Der unheimliche Papst* (Munich 2011) and Carla Alfano (ed.), *I Borgia* (Milan 2002); Peter de Roo's monumental 5 volume *Material for a History of Pope Alexander VI, his Relatives and his Time* (Bruges 1924) has to be mentioned for its abundance of primary source material. Many historians have eschewed the work, due to its apologetic nature, which is made clear in the introduction, where De Roo argues that “[t]he final conclusion of our researches and studies was that Roderic de Borgia, pope Alexander VI, has been a man of good moral character and an excellent Pope.” vol. I, xi.

⁴ Only recently has an English survey been published, which is an excellent introduction: Michael Mallett & Christine Shaw, *The Italian Wars, 1494-1559: War, State and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow 2012); See also, Marco Pellegrini, *Le Guerre d'Italia 1494-1530* (Bologna 2009) and J.-C. Zancarini & J.-L. Fournel, *Les Guerres d'Italie: Des Batailles pour l'Europe (1494-1559)* (Paris 2003); Ludwig von Pastor's monumental history of the papacy is still indispensable for historians of the period. I have used volumes 1 to 6, published as: Ludwig Pastor, *Geschichte der Päpste seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Freiburg 1886-1909) 16 vols. (Henceforth: Pastor).

⁵ In the light of the atrocities and destruction of the Italian Wars, many came to regard the preceding era as a Golden Age of peace and prosperity between the Italian city-states, brokered by their benevolent princes. Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia* (Turin 1971) 5-9; Paolo Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of our Time*, trans. by Kenneth Gouwens (Cambridge 2013) 37-39.

Valla had refuted the authenticity of the Donation of Constantine, it remained a popular theme together with similar donations such as those made by the Frankish King Pepin the Short or by Peter II of Aragon. Pope Leo X de' Medici could hardly have been ignorant of Valla's work, nor of the previous popes' difficulties with temporal princes. He nevertheless decided to have the Donation of Constantine depicted by two painters from Raphael's workshop. During the short pontificate of Adrian VI Boeyens work on the project was halted, but Clement VII de' Medici subsequently revived the program of his cousin for the Hall of Constantine.⁶ The painting anachronistically shows the interior of the old Saint Peter's Basilica. At the center we see the Pope, modeled on Clement VII, seated in full regalia on a throne. Before him is a person, presumably Emperor Constantine, kneeling and presenting the Pope with a statuette of a female warrior, representing Rome and its temporal lordship.⁷ Early in his pontificate Pope Clement VII could not yet foresee how his temporal lordship would be tested and almost destroyed entirely. Nevertheless, papal propaganda showed a surprising continuity even after the disasters of the Sack of Rome of 1527, which historians traditionally have regarded as a big watershed in the Roman Renaissance.⁸ Clement's successor, Pope Paul III Farnese, chose remarkably similar exaltations of papal supremacy over temporal princes for the decoration program of the Sala Regia, as if the Sack of Rome had never taken place.⁹

Scholars of papal propaganda have often delighted in juxtaposing these preposterous claims with the exposed pontiff's weakness during moments of crisis and emphasized their incongruity. Thus far, however, they have ignored papal propaganda precisely during these perilous moments. During these crises, the vulnerable nature and some or most of the inherent paradoxes of the Renaissance papacy became exposed and a different papal rhetoric had to be adopted or adapted to ensure survival of the pope's institution and person. Although, for obvious reasons, the popes were not keen to depict these embarrassing events and often consciously manipulated their memory for the sake of posterity, many sources still survive that allow us to reconstruct their rhetoric as well as their gestures during these events. Although shaped by the actuality of contemporary events, this new rhetoric was no *creatio ex nihilo*. In fact, it was firmly embedded in contemporary uses and historical precedents. I have made a distinction between two different types of propaganda adopted by the troubled popes, although the types are sometimes interconnected. First of all, popes referred to historical precedents to shape the perception of the contemporary events. This comparison

⁶ On the Medici's troubled history both in Rome and Florence, see Marcello Simonetta, *Volpi e Leoni: I Medici, Machiavelli e la rovina d'Italia* (Milan 2014).

⁷ Jan de Jong, *The power and the glorification: papal pretensions and the art of propaganda in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries* (University Park 2013) 83.

⁸ André Chastel, *The sack of Rome, 1527* (Princeton 1983); Eamon Duffy, *Saints & sinners: a history of the popes* (New Haven 2006) 206-207; Judith Hook, *The sack of Rome, 1527* (New York 2004) 181-191; Volker Reinhardt, *Blutiger Karneval: der Sacco di Roma 1527: ein politische Katastrophe* (Darmstadt 2009) 117-135; for a contrasting view: Kenneth Gouwens & Sheryl Reiss (eds.), *The pontificate of Clement VII: history, politics, culture* (Aldershot 2005); for the humanist narratives on the sack as a break with the past: Kenneth Gouwens, *Remembering the Renaissance: humanist narratives of the Sack of Rome* (Leiden 1998); Massimo Miglio, *Il Sacco di Roma del 1527 e l'immaginario collettivo* (Rome 1987); Augustin Rodondo, *Les discours sur le sac de Rome: pouvoir et littérature* (Paris 1999).

⁹ De Jong, *The power and the glorification*, 77-90; Clare Robertson, "Il gran cardinale": Alessandro Farnese, patron of the arts (New Haven 1992) 53-69; Bernice Davidson, "The Decoration of the Sala Regia under Pope Paul III", *The Art Bulletin: An Illustrated Quarterly* 58 (1976) 395-423; For the continuations under Paul III's successors in the Sala Regia, see Angela Böck, *Die Sala Regia im Vatikan als Beispiel der Selbstdarstellung des Papsttums in der zweiten Hälfte des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim 1997); Alexandra Herz, "Vasari's 'Massacre' Series in the Sala Regia: The Political, Juristic, and Religious Background", *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 49 (1986) 41-54.

enabled them to distinguish between who was wrong and who was right, thereby steering the mnemonics of the events. Two subtypes of precedents were particularly attractive to use or refer to, which are the misfortunes of their papal predecessors, and comparisons with Holy Scripture. Secondly, the popes had recourse to three elements of Renaissance court and society that I have grouped together as politico-religious theater. An essential role in this theater was played by papal ceremonial, especially during meetings between popes and temporal leaders. Furthermore, the Renaissance popes, and Alexander VI and Clement VII in particular, could use a sacrament that was deeply embedded in contemporary culture: penance. During the medieval era the sacrament of penance slowly became regarded as one of the most important.¹⁰ As sin was almost inevitable, virtually everyone was familiar with and had performed penance, thus ensuring recognizability when adopted by the pontiff himself. Finally, as a last resort, the popes could appeal to crusader or martyrdom rhetoric, or at least appear to be prepared to face a martyr's death. The implications of a murdered martyr pope were unforeseeable and although some popes had good reason to fear for their lives, all managed in the end to survive their crises. Nevertheless, during these crises, exile and imprisonment loomed for the pope or, in the case of Clement VII, actually were enforced on him. Yet historian Judith Hook claims that the events surrounding the Sack of Rome confirm the *dictum* that a pope is never as powerful as in captivity, a statement she refuses to substantiate.¹¹ Here, an attempt will be made to investigate whether this statement is tenable.

Approach

First some justifications have to be made. For reasons of time and space this thesis had to be limited in its length and breadth as well as in the period discussed. I have deliberately chosen to focus on the period of the Italian Wars, excluding, although not ignoring, most of the earlier troubles that several pontiffs were confronted with. During this period the papacy was, arguably, faced with its greatest difficulties, being caught up in the international torrent of war and the struggle for dominance between Spain, France and the Holy Roman Empire, reaching its zenith with the infamous Sack of Rome in 1527. I have consciously included the pontificate of Paul III as well, as his cardinalate spanned the entire era, and, as an eye-witness of most of the crucial events of the age, he seems to have used the gained experience to his benefit during his long and troubled pontificate. I have however excluded the pontificates of Julius III del Monte and Paul IV Caraffa for reasons of space. Three moments stand out due to their gravity: the military expedition of King Charles VIII of France of 1494 and his entrance in Rome; the ambush of Rome and the Pope by the Colonna of 1526; and the epitome of papal crisis, the *Sacco di Roma*. Due to the abundance of source material for the latter, the Sack of Rome receives relatively more attention than the other events engulfing the Renaissance papacy.

Furthermore, before the methodological approaches to the diverse array of sources used are discussed, it is important to make some remarks on terms used throughout this thesis. First of all a discussion on the use of the term *magnificenza* is required, as well as of similar terms such as pomp, splendor, self-fashioning and conspicuous consumption. All of these terms are semantic tools for historians to describe and interpret the tendency of the early modern court and its nobility to spend lavishly on seemingly ephemeral outward display. Although the terms gained wide currency

¹⁰ Anne Thayer, *Penitence, preaching and the coming of the Reformation* (Aldershot 2002) 4.

¹¹ Hook, *The sack of Rome*, 195.

especially in the fields of material history and court history, their use remains problematic. The recurrent interpretation is far too often flawed and one-dimensional. It is simply assumed that the purchase, commissioning, or exchange of objects and the display of someone's wealth added to his or her societal status solely because of its economic value.¹² Under the influence of sociological and anthropological research, especially focusing on the culture of gift giving, this assumption had to be altered.¹³ The exchange of gifts transcends a mere economical calculation due to its inherent paradox – it is a sign of generosity, but simultaneously of reciprocity.¹⁴ It becomes a meaningful gesture. Economical calculation has to be augmented with meaning for obtaining and displaying pompous wealth and objects as well. Evelyn Welch has argued that “Renaissance buying practices were a multiplicity of interconnected events and acts, dependent as much on time, trust, social relations and networks as on the seemingly impersonal issues of price, production and demand.”¹⁵ In the Renaissance papacy's context, pontifical pomp thus enabled them to emphasize their supreme status and liberality, but not only because their splendor could be reduced to an economic calculation.

Virtually all of the authors writing on material history, however, have wholly ignored John Jeffries Martin's small but groundbreaking work on Renaissance identity.¹⁶ Nevertheless, I believe Martin is fully correct in asserting that Renaissance identity was regarded as fluid and especially permeable to outside influences. Martin writes that,

“the culture of the Renaissance never fostered a sense of a clearly bounded self. To the contrary, Renaissance identities (no matter which particular form they assumed) were almost always anxious identities, uncertain about the nature of the boundaries between what not only well-known writers and artists but also ordinary men and women viewed as a kind of wall between the inner and the outer ‘self’.”¹⁷

In fact, that early modern authors on art and architecture fully agree that material surroundings can exert a positive or negative influence on their beholder, is an important element that has only been

¹² Mary Hollingsworth, *The cardinal's hat: money, ambition, and everyday life in the court of a Borgia prince* (Woodstock 2005); Mary Hollingsworth, “Coins, Cloaks and Candlestick; The Economics of Extravagance” in Michelle O'Malley & Evelyn Welch (eds.), *The Material Renaissance: Studies in Design and Material Culture* (Manchester 2007); Mary Hollingsworth, “A Taste for Conspicuous Consumption: Cardinal Ippolito d'Este and his Wardrobe, 1555-1566”, in Mary Hollingsworth & Carol Richardson (eds.), *The Possessions of a Cardinal: Politics, Piety, and Art 1450-1700* (University Park 2009); Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (London 1996); Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand For Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Baltimore 1993); Peter Burke, “Conspicuous Consumption in Seventeenth-Century Italy” in Peter Burke (ed.), *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge 1987).

¹³ The most important work in this field is the classic by Marcel Mauss: *The gift: forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies* (London 1954).

¹⁴ Nathan Miczo, “Hobbes, Rousseau, and the ‘gift’ in interpersonal relationships”, *Human Studies* 25 (2002) 207-231; Mark Osteen, *The question of the gift: essays across disciplines* (London 2002) 249-257.

¹⁵ Evelyn Welch, *Shopping in the Renaissance: Consumer Cultures in Italy 1400-1600* (New Haven 2005) 303; see also, Paula Findlen (ed.), *Early modern things: objects and their histories, 1500-1800* (London 2013); Renata Ago, *Gusto for things: a history of objects in seventeenth-century Rome* (Chicago 2013); Barbara Furlotti, *A Renaissance Baron and his Possessions: Paolo Giordano I Orsini, Duke of Bracciano (1541-1585)* (Turnhout 2012).

¹⁶ Only Furlotti mentions Martin, but only as someone critical of the concept of self-fashioning, which is central to her and all other works mentioned on material history. The concept was first introduced in Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning from More to Shakespeare* (Chicago 1980).

¹⁷ John Jeffries Martin, *Myths of Renaissance Individualism* (Basingstoke 2007) 13.

noted by a few scholars.¹⁸ Paolo Cortesi, for example, wrote in his *De Cardinalatu* (1510) that beauty can “calm the citizens and persuade the unruly to seek order.”¹⁹ According to art historians Kathleen Weil-Garris and John d’Amico, Paolo Cortesi “stated far more explicitly and emphatically [than Leon Battista Alberti] that painting [and art in general] can have powerful, direct effect on the actions as well as the thoughts of men” and writers such as Baldassare Castiglione, the famous author of *Il Libro de Cortegiano*, agreed with him.²⁰ Papal pomp, therefore, was multi-dimensional: not only did it negotiate status in a hierarchical society by outward splendor, simultaneously it was a papal tool to obtain a virtuous self, and a virtuous surrounding. It is a bit rash to argue that this was the singular reason why reformatory criticism of the worldly and decadent Roman court never hit home, but it certainly contributed to the continuation of courtly conspicuous consumption in Rome despite short intervals of pious moderation during times of severe crisis.

Another of these flawed terms, nevertheless used here as in other works on the period, is the word propaganda. It carries connotations of the oiled machinery of twentieth-century totalitarian state propaganda and therefore runs the risk of becoming an anachronism.²¹ We must therefore bear in mind that Renaissance papal propaganda reached a relatively small group of peers. Furthermore, its intricate messages were sometimes only interpretable by the learned élite of Church and court.²² Its small intended public notwithstanding, in the early modern era these men – kings and emperors, princes and ambassadors, cardinals and clerics – were the ones that possessed the power to alter events. Pleas to the Roman populace seem to have had a mixed reception and were extremely exceptional, and, in any case, transmitted in a form that has left few archival traces. Nevertheless, if we consider propaganda to be the intentional manipulation of information for posterity combined with the endeavor for its dissemination it is possible to apply the term in the context of the early modern era. The papal propaganda described in the second part of this thesis can perhaps better be described as a politico-religious theater. Propaganda is often the controlled dissemination of information from the center. Regarding papal courtly politics as theater also gives spontaneity and inventivity a role, as in the case of deviations from ceremonial practices. There was a clearly defined and sometimes meticulously controlled space in which the theater took place that functioned as more than just the background, but, like the stage in a theater, was an essential part of the play. By using the term theater it also becomes evident that there was interaction: there could be multiple actors on the stage, for example when Clement VII and Cardinal Colonna met in Castel Sant’Angelo shortly after the Sack of Rome.

Throughout this thesis I am using a broad array of source material. Two types of sources stand out because of their abundance. The first are histories and diaries written by contemporaries.

¹⁸ Opher Mansour quotes Fabio Albergati, who argues that art, architecture, and objects “can confirm a man in his virtues”, in his “Cardinal virtues: Odoardo Farnese in his *camerino*”, in Mary Hollingsworth & Carol Richardson (eds.) *The possessions of a cardinal: politics, piety, and art 1450-1700* (University Park 2010) 226-248; for a longer theoretical survey on Christian materialism and art, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian materiality: an essay on religion in late medieval Europe* (New York 2011) 15-34.

¹⁹ Cited in: Jan Bialostocki, “The power of beauty”, in L. Möller & W. Lotz (eds.) *Studien zur Toskanischen Kunst: Festschrift für L.H. Heydenreich* (Munich 1964) 13-19.

²⁰ Kathleen Weil-Garris & John d’Amico, “The Renaissance Cardinal’s ideal palace: a chapter from Cortesi’s *de cardinalatu*”, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 35 (1980) 45-119; the idea goes back to Aristotle, *The poetics* (Cambridge 1995) 35-39.

²¹ This is discussed in John Adamson, “Introduction: The Making of the Ancien-Régime Court 1500-1700”, in John Adamson (ed.), *The Princely Courts of Europe: Ritual, Politics and Culture Under the Ancien Régime 1500-1750* (London 1999) 7-41.

²² De Jong, *The Power and the Glorification*, 3.

Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia* and Stefano Infessura's *Diario della città di Roma* are the more famous published ones.²³ But I also use lesser known histories and diaries such as those of Marcello Alberini or Jacopo Buonaparte.²⁴ Some histories such as Patrizio de' Rossi's *Historia del Sacco di Roma* or Cornelius de Fine's *Ephemerides Historicae* only survive in manuscript editions in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.²⁵ Other manuscripts are, for example, diaries of papal masters of ceremonies, such as the diary of Biagio da Cesena, barone di Martinelli, or contain copies of letters.²⁶ The diary of Marino Sanudo stands out because it contains copies of many original letters sent by Venetian envoys.²⁷ Other letters are published and sometimes even digitized such as the *Calendar of State Papers, Spain* or the correspondence of Emperor Charles V.²⁸ All material found in the Archivio Segreto Vaticano are letters, papal correspondence as well as letters between individuals preserved in family archives such as the *Carte Farnesiane* or the *Archivio Della Valle – Del Bufalo*. Finally, I also make use of poems and literary works.

One thing that historians always have to be conscious about is who wrote his sources, when, and why. This is especially true for our period, as most of the commentators of the era were involved personally in the events they recorded for posterity. Bonds of patronage often decidedly shaped the histories written, so we have to keep in mind that for example Paolo Giovio received papal patronage from Clement VII during the period and later on was actively looking for a patronage relationship with the Farnese, when Cardinal Alessandro Farnese succeeded Clement VII as Roman pontiff.²⁹ The same is true for Girolamo Borgia, whose *Historia de bellis italicis* was dedicated to the Farnese Pope, Paul III.³⁰ Also, many of the works have been written much later than the events they describe and have therefore been influenced by the time they were written in. But political empathies could also play a role. Stefano Infessura was a notorious Roman republican and therefore lukewarm in his support for Pope Alexander VI.³¹ Historians Francesco Guicciardini and his brother Luigi, on the other hand, were generals in pay of the papal army and through their Florentine family connections closely related to Pope Clement VII.³² These examples show the importance of being aware of who wrote what all too well.

²³ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*; Stefano Infessura, *Römisches Tagebuch* (Jena 1913).

²⁴ Marcello Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma* (Rome 1997); Jacopo Buonaparte in Carlo Milanese (ed.), *Il Sacco di Roma del MDXXVII: narrazioni di contemporanei* (Milan 1867) (Henceforth: Milanese, *Sacco*).

²⁵ BAV Codices Urbinates Latini 1678; BAV Codices Ottoboni Latini 1613.

²⁶ The diary is BAV Barb. Lat. 2799.

²⁷ Marino Sanuto, *I Diarii, MCCCXCVI-MDXXXIII* (Venice 1879-1903)(Henceforth: Sanuto).

²⁸ *Calendar of State Papers, Spain*, (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/cal-state-papers--spain> Last accessed on 31-06-2015)(Henceforth: *CSPSpa*); Karl Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.* (Leipzig 1844-1846) 3 vols.; Carlos V, *Corpus documental de Carlos V*, vol. II (Salamanca 1973-1981) 5 vols.

²⁹ T.C. Price Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio: The Historian and the Crisis of Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Princeton 1995) 60-85, 164-199.

³⁰ Books XIII-XXI are preserved as BAV Codices Barberiniani Latini 2621, books I-XII and XVI-XVIII are in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice, MS Lat. 3506; the dedication is in ASV Carte Farnesiane, 8, ff. 89^r-91^v. "Girolamo Borgia augura lunga e felice età a Paolo III Sommo Pontefice, e dedica al medesimo la storia di quell'epoca."; see also Elena Valeri, "Carlo V e le guerre d'Italia nelle *Historiae* di Girolamo Borgia (1525-1530)", in Francesca Cantù & Maria Antonietta Visceglia (eds.), *L'Italia di Carlo V: Guerra, religione e politica nel primo Cinquecento* (Rome 2003) 139-170; Elena Valeri, *Italia dilacerata: Girolamo Borgia nella cultura storica del Rinascimento* (Milan 2008).

³¹ Arjo Vanderjagt, "Civic Humanism in Practice: The Case of Stefano Porcari and the Christian Tradition", *Antiquity Renewed: Late Classical and Early Modern Themes* 4 (2003) 63-78.

³² ASV Fondo Pio, 53, ff. 112^v-113^v; ASV Armadio XL, 12, f. 44^r; BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 69^r.

Different source material requires different approaches, but simultaneously it is possible to use different methods to analyze the same source material. In several instances historical events had to be recreated by constructing historical facts from sources such as diaries and letters. To analyze the language used by the popes and their adversaries, critical discourse analysis was applied in establishing the structure of the text and its persuasive content, the context in which it was constructed as well as establishing its dominant discourse. This triple analysis of texts makes it possible to investigate first how they are used for justification and persuasion of the reader, thus for what goal the pope or his contemporaries wrote these texts. Secondly, by regarding the text as a collection of discursive activities it is possible to analyze the context in which the text was made and which helped to shape its specific meaning. Many texts were written in interaction with or in reaction to other written or spoken words and must be regarded as such, rather than as an isolated product. Finally, by analyzing the text as a collection of social activities it is possible to establish the dominant discourse, for example in the case of crusader rhetoric. The categorization was reached through induction and reflects the different types of papal propaganda or political theatre found in the sources. A comparative approach may yield valuable information, which is why I have chosen to use both a broad array of sources, which includes authors from different political, social and cultural backgrounds. Because of the relative abundance of sources on the Sack of Rome, as well as the difference in nature of these sources, this event receives relatively more attention. The abundance of sources also make the statements made in this thesis easier to substantiate. In the following sections I therefore hope to provide a new, historically justifiable and valuable insight into the different approaches adopted by the Roman pontiffs during periods of severe crisis. But let us first take a look at what constituted these crises.

In gravissimo summi periculi momento

To understand the extent of the crises we must first look at some of the inherent paradoxes and weaknesses of the Renaissance papacy. The most ardent of crises were both pernicious to papal spiritual authority as well as temporal power. But they all took shape during the military struggles that engulfed the Italian peninsula that are known as the Italian Wars. The Italian Wars were a period in which foreign monarchies, namely those of France, Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, fought in Italy over claims on the Kingdom of Naples and the Duchy of Milan. The Italian states were forced to participate and did so in ever changing alliances that reflected the contemporary divisions of the Italian system. The popes, as temporal leaders of their own state, also participated, sometimes reluctantly, sometimes with ardor. In 1493 Pope Alexander VI had allied with the King of Naples, Ferrante II, precisely at the time Charles VIII, King of France, renewed his Angevin claim on the throne of Naples. In 1494 Charles invaded Italy with a large army, leaving the Pope in the precarious situation his alliance with Naples had created. In the retinue of Charles there were several cardinals that opposed Alexander VI such as Cardinal della Rovere, Cardinal Savelli and Cardinal Colonna, who pressed for a council that would depose the Pope. King Charles requested an entrance in Rome and a meeting with Alexander, who was in no position to refuse after his escape routes had vanished due to his indecision, despite his fear for losing his pontificate or his life. On 1 January 1495, a day his astrologers deemed suited, Charles VIII entered Rome and Pope Alexander hurried from the Castel

Sant'Angelo to the Vatican, determined to do whatever was in his power to save his position and placate the bellicose King.³³

In 1510 Alexander's successor, Pope Julius II della Rovere, faced a similar situation. In 1508 Julius had formed the League of Cambrai, consisting of the Papal States, France, the Emperor, and Spain, to break the dominance of Venice in mainland Italy. The League was a grandiose success, virtually annihilating Venetian power on the mainland, but greatly strengthening French power in northern Italy – the French had already succeeded in conquering the Duchy of Milan in 1499. Thus Julius allied with Venice in an attempt to curb French military power. Despite initial victories, the Romagna was soon overrun by a French army under Charles d'Amboise, and King Louis XII, supported by Emperor Maximilian I, initiated a council in Pisa that investigated several allegations that, once proven, would have been sufficient to depose the Pope, leaving Julius vulnerable to both military and conciliar attack.³⁴

Where Julius II had succeeded in reconciling the Roman barons, temporarily suspending the danger of local revolts, Clement VII saw himself confronted with uprisings close to and even inside the Eternal City. Fearing imperial dominance of Italy in the wake of the wars waged between King Francis I of France and Emperor Charles V, who had also inherited the possession of the Spanish and Neapolitan kingdoms, Clement sided with France precisely at the moment their military might had been broken. The powerful Colonna family in Rome were notorious for their Ghibelline stance and Cardinal Pompeo Colonna cherished ambitions to become pope himself. Supported by the Emperor, the Colonna launched an assault on Rome in 1526 and with help from inside the city walls managed to capture the city and sack the Vatican and its surroundings. Although Clement managed to survive this crisis, it turned out this episode was only the prelude to greater disaster. An imperial army under the command of the Duke of Bourbon and Georg von Frundsberg, heavily underpaid, suddenly moved towards Florence. As Florence was Clement's native city he ordered his entire army to the defense, leaving Rome dangerously exposed. The imperial army, acknowledging the futility of attacking such a well-fortified place as Florence, suddenly marched with astonishing speed first to Siena, thereafter entering the Patrimonium Petri near Lake Bolsena, leaving their artillery and baggage train behind but determined to wrest a huge bribe from the Pope in Rome. Clement VII quickly realized the precariousness of his situation and negotiated an armistice with Charles de Lannoy, viceroy of Naples. Lannoy, however, failed to convince either Bourbon or his army of the validity of the armistice. As the money demanded by Bourbon and his army steadily rose from 240.000 scudi to 400.000 scudi as they neared Rome, Clement refused to negotiate further. On 6 May 1527 the army assaulted Rome's walls and succeeded in breaching them. Because their commander Bourbon was killed in the assault, the attack instigated a period of savage plunder and destruction. Pope Clement was once again forced to flee to Castel Sant'Angelo, the great fortress overlooking the Tiber. Although the castle held out for a while an agreement was signed on 5 June effectively making the Pope prisoner in his own fortress. Clement was to remain prisoner for several months and although released on 6 December, remained exiled in Orvieto and Viterbo until October 1528.³⁵

The Sack of Rome and its aftermath effectively established imperial dominance in Italy, to great detriment of many, amongst whom Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, who would succeed Clement

³³ Pastor, III, 381-406; Mallett & Shaw, *The Italian Wars*, 6-32.

³⁴ Mallett & Shaw, *The Italian Wars*, 88-115; Christine Shaw, *Julius II: The Warrior-Pope* (Oxford 1993) 245-315.

³⁵ Mallett & Shaw, *The Italian Wars*, 155-163; Hook, *The sack of Rome*, 93-180.

VII as Pope Paul III in 1534. Early in his pontificate a crusader army of Emperor Charles V moved through Italy to capture the important port of Tunis in North Africa from the Turks. After the successful capture of Tunis the army made a victorious tour back through the Italian peninsula and Charles V insisted on entering Rome. Paul III initially wanted to pursue a policy of strict neutrality and was taken aback by the prospect of a powerful emperor and his army in Rome less than a decade after the sack, but decided to stay put and staged an elaborate and theatrical entry. His policy paid off and a year later the engagement was announced between Paul's grandson, Ottavio Farnese, and Margaret of Austria, Charles's daughter. Although Paul and his family later reversed their stance and allied with France, for the moment his position was secured.³⁶

Much has been said about the apparent weakness and military inability of the Italian city-states, who were notoriously unstable in their allegiance, especially by historians attempting to explain how the Sack of Rome of 1527 came about.³⁷ Some have argued that the defensive tactics and refusal to shed blood of the Italian generals were the cause of their humiliating defeat by the 'barbarian' hordes of the north.³⁸ Others have argued that there was an idea of Italian unity, but that it was undermined by a Colonna Ghibelline fifth column within Italy.³⁹ Marco Gentile argues specifically for Lombardy that,

"[s]e, infatti, 'la *koinè*' guelfo-ghibellina ancora in pieno XV secolo fornisce agli idiomi politici locali un collante linguistico adeguato a stabilire raccordi intercittadini, interprovinciali e interstatali, l'antico binomio designa però entità di natura diversa dai raggruppamenti verticali e talvolta istituzionalizzati attivi nelle città e nei territori, che spesso utilizzano denominazione di corso locale."⁴⁰

The question remains whether the *koinè* Guelph-Ghibelline still functioned as an effective adhesive during the fifteenth and certainly the sixteenth century in Rome. Roman politics created divisions within factions that identified with Guelphism and Ghibellinism, as well as within families, and

³⁶ Pastor, VI, 154-174; Walter Friedensburg, *Kaiser Karl V. und Papst Paul III. (1534-1549)* (Leipzig 1932).

³⁷ Judith Hook, "Clement VII, the Colonna and Charles V: a study of the political instability of Italy in the second and third decades of the sixteenth century", *European Studies Review* 2 (1972) 281-299; Chastel, *The sack of Rome, 1527*; Gouwens & Reiss, *The pontificate of Clement VII*; Maurizio Gattoni, *Clemente VII e la geo-politica dello Stato Pontificio (1523-1534)* (Vatican City 2002).

³⁸ An idea that was already recurrent in Italy during the Italian Wars. Especially the reluctance to interfere of the Duke of Urbino was criticized fiercely by contemporaries: Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 267-268; Luigi Guicciardini in Milanese, *Sacco*, 220; ASV Fondo Pio, 53, 100^r; it is reiterated in, for example, Cecil Clough, "Clement VII and Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino", in Gouwens & Reiss, *The pontificate of Clement VII*, 75-108; for an opposing view, see Mallett & Shaw, *The Italian Wars*.

³⁹ Judith Hook divides Italy in an Orsini and a Colonna bloc that extended throughout Italy through marriage alliances. She is, however, wrong in supposing the Savelli were allied to the Orsini, and in reality the Caetani were archenemies of the Colonna instead of allies. See ASV Arm. XL, 17, f. 149^r. Also, even within the Orsini and Colonna families, *condottieri* are found fighting on different sides. The presupposition that Italy was divided in two monolithic blocs therefore must be refuted. Hook "Clement VII, the Colonna and Charles V", 282.

⁴⁰ "If, in fact, the *koinè* Guelph-Ghibelline still during the entire fifteenth century provides to political and local idioms a linguistical adhesive suited to stabilize connections between citizens, between provinces and between states, the old binary describes instead the diversity of nature of vertical groups and sometimes institutionalized activities in the city and communes, that often used distinctly local denominations." Marco Gentile, "Guelfi, ghibellini, Rinascimento: Nota introduttiva", in Marco Gentile (ed.), *Guelfi e ghibellini nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Rome 2005) vii-xxv; Marco Gentile, "Casato e fazione nella Lombardia del quattrocento: il caso di Parma", in Anna Bellavitis & Isabelle Chabot (eds.), *Famiglie e poteri in Italia tra medioevo ed età moderna* (Rome 2009) 151-187.

allegiances could change suddenly when new circumstances arose.⁴¹ Still others have regarded the domination of Italy by French, Spanish or imperial outsiders as the inevitable victory of the stronger modern centralized nation-states over a divided country, a notoriously positivistic stance.⁴² Most of these theories have been substantially refuted. What is evident, however, is that Italian politics were highly unstable and rivalry between the different states was often of lesser importance than divisions that ran through each individual state and city. One family's grasp to power often led to the exile of their political enemies, which in turn provided fertile ground for subversion to Italian or foreign powers.⁴³ Family name notwithstanding, marriage alliances and *condotte* often resulted in divisions within clans, as well as adding extra bonds of mutual obligation that extended past the formal borders of family, city and state.⁴⁴ Only this can explain how in 1527 Stefano Colonna of Palestrina and Alessandro Colonna of Castelnuovo waged open warfare against the Colonna of Paliano, or how Ranuccio Farnese, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese's son, fought in the papal armies and was imprisoned inside Castel Sant'Angelo, while simultaneously his brother Pier Luigi was an imperial general.⁴⁵ Furthermore, there is no doubt that these internal divisions were tactfully exploited by Italy's invaders.⁴⁶

The danger of internal division was especially imminent for the Renaissance popes. Nominally they were temporal lord of the Papal States, which extended from the Kingdom of Naples in the south up to Ferrara and later Piacenza in the north. During the Avignon Papacy, however, many local *podestà* had succeeded in institutionalizing their hold on power in the cities, and the fertile areas around the Eternal City were under control of several major baronial families such as the Colonna, Orsini, Savelli, Caetani and Conti.⁴⁷ As historian Pierre Savy argued for Lombardy, but equally

⁴¹ Amedeo de Vincentiis, "La sopravvivenza come potere: Papi e baroni di Roma nel XV secolo", in Sandro Carocci (ed.), *La Nobiltà Romana nel Medioevo* (Rome 2006) 551-613; Alessandro Serio, "Pompeo Colonna tra papato e 'grandi monarchie', la *pax romana* del 1511 e i comportamenti politici dei baroni romani", in Maria Antonietta Visceglia (ed.), *La Nobiltà Romana in Età Moderna: profili istituzionali e pratiche sociali* (Rome 2006) 63-88; for a contrasting view, see Christine Shaw, "The Roman barons and the Guelph and Ghibelline factions in the Papal States", in Gentile, *Guelfi e ghibellini nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, 475-494.

⁴² Helge Gamrath, *Farnese: Pomp, Power and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (Rome 2007) 12-14.

⁴³ Christine Shaw, *The Politics of Exile in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge 2000).

⁴⁴ Stanley Chojnacki, "Families in the Italian Cities: Institutions, Identities, Transitions", in Bellavitis & Chabot, *Famiglie e poteri in Italia tra medioevo ed età moderna*, 33-50; Christine Shaw, *Barons and Castellans: The Military Nobility of Renaissance Italy* (Leiden 2014); for a contrasting view, see Marco Gentile, "Casato e fazione nella Lombardia del quattrocento", in Bellavitis & Chabot, *Famiglie e poteri in Italia tra medioevo ed età moderna*, 151-187 and Dale Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence, 1426-1434* (Oxford 1978).

⁴⁵ ASV Arm. XL, 12, f. 85^r-85^v, 93^r; Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of our Time*, 109; Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 264; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1787, 1960; BAV Codices Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 66^r; the Colonna of Palestrina had, through marriages and *condotte*, been inimical of their namesakes at least since 1482. Infessura, *Römisches Tagebuch*, 76.

⁴⁶ Illuminating and buttressing this presupposition are the attempts of bribing persons very close to the pope of the French Kings Francis I and Henry II, which appear in the correspondence of Cardinal Jean du Bellay. As early as 1535 the French King Francis I paid a yearly stipend to Pope Paul III's own son, Pier Luigi Farnese. Similarly, Niccolò Orsini, Conte di Pitigliano, Pier Luigi's brother-in-law was bribed. Rémy Scheurer (ed.), *Correspondance du cardinal Jean du Bellay. Tome II* (Paris 1973) 11; Idem, *Tome V* (Paris 2012) 168-169; on Cardinal du Bellay, see Cedric Michon & Loris Petris (eds.), *Le Cardinal Jean du Bellay: Diplomatie et culture dans l'Europe de la Renaissance* (Rennes 2014); Emperor Charles V likewise sought the support of his former general and offered him the Marquisate of Novara in Lombardy and its income, although Pope Paul III initially opposed it. Ferdinand de Navenne, *Rome, le Palais Farnèse et les Farnèse* (Paris 1914) 215-232; *CSPSpa*, vol. V, part 2, 426-445.

⁴⁷ During the Avignon papacy the pope's authority in Italy was greatly reduced, "quo imperante in plevisque italie urbibus novi tyranni extitere, qui postea ducum et marchionum titulis."; BAV Codices Vaticani Latini 6160, f. 37^r.

justifiable for Rome, “on voit au terme de cette presentation rapide ce qu’a de contestable l’expression, pourtant si courante dans l’historiographie et dans le langage courant, ‘la città e il suo contado’ (...) faudrait presque dire ‘il contado e la sua città!’”⁴⁸ In this highly feudalized context central papal power was virtually absent while simultaneously the influence of the Roman nobility in the city was considerable.⁴⁹ The idea that the Italian Wars offered the popes, especially Alexander VI and Julius II, the chance to rid themselves of their unreliable vassals has long held sway.⁵⁰ Not only is this misleading, it shows ignorance of the subsequent events that engulfed several popes. Irene Fosi has argued that it was only after the Italian Wars that the slow process of subduing the Roman nobility started.⁵¹ In fact, the old Roman nobility played an important role in the Spanish and French domination of the papacy until well into the seventeenth century, constantly intermarrying with and being supplemented by newer papal families.⁵² In general, the pope’s position was precarious and the diplomatic play of the exchange of gifts or threats and violent warfare or marital alliances with the Roman and Italian nobility were part of almost every pontificate of the sixteenth century. This was reinforced by the inherent character of the papal monarchy, which was, unlike that of most of its contemporary counterparts, not hereditary. Elections during papal conclaves could often last for prolonged periods during which central power was diminished. Because the death of a pontiff and the accompanying temporary vacancy generally instigated a period of lawlessness, these periods

⁴⁸ “one can see after this quick representation that the contestable expression, yet so commonplace in historiography and current language, ‘the city and its contado’ (...) should instead be called ‘the contado and its city!’” Pierre Savy, “Entre monde urbain et pouvoir ducal: l’identité sociale de quelques familles aristocratiques dans la Lombardie du XV^e siècle”, in Bellavitis & Chabot, *Famiglie e poteria in Italia tra medioevo ed età moderna*, 131-187; see also Sandro Carocci, “Vasalli del papa. Note per la storia della feudalità pontificia (XI-XVI)”, in G. Barone, L. Capo & S. Gasparri (eds.), *Studi sul Medioevo per Girolamo Analdi* (Rome 2001) 55-90; Guido Castelnuovo, “L’identità politica delle nobiltà cittadine (inizio XIII – inizio XVI secolo)”, in R. Bordone, G. Castelnuovo, G.N. Varanini, *Le aristocrazie: dai signorie rurali al patriziato* (Rome 2004) 195-243; for the aptness of comparing the Roman context with the broader Italian, see Igor Mineo, “Nobiltà Romana e Nobiltà Italiana (1300-1500): Parallelismi e contrasti” in Carocci, *La Nobiltà Romana nel Medioevo*, 43-70.

⁴⁹ For example, Leo X and Lorenzo de’ Medici were unable to refrain Francesco Maria della Rovere from reconquering his Duchy of Urbino. Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, 1295-1306; for the influence of the Orsini, see Christine Shaw, *The political role of the Orsini family from Sixtus IV to Clement VII: barons and factions in the Papal states* (Rome 2007); for an early seventeenth-century uprising of the Farnese, Orsini, Caetani, Conti, and Cesarini, see Roberto Zapperi, *Der Neid und die Macht: die Farnese und Aldobrandini im barockem Rom* (Munich 1994).

⁵⁰ The idea goes back to Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe* (Oxford 1891) 251-252; it can be found in Paolo Prodi, *The papal prince: one body and two souls: the papal monarchy in early modern Europe* (Cambridge 1987) 48-51; Henry Dietrich Fernández, “The papal court at Rome: c. 1450-1700”, in Adamson, *The Princely Courts of Europe*, 141-164; Gamrath, *Farnese*, 49; De Vincentiis, “La sopravvivenza come potere”, in Carocci, *La Nobiltà Romana nel Medioevo*, 551-613.

⁵¹ Irene Fosi, *Papal Justice: Subjects and Courts in the Papal State, 1500-1750* (Washington 2011) 77-81.

⁵² Thomas Dandele, *Spanish Rome, 1500-1700* (New Haven 2001); Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *Roma papale e Spagna: diplomatici, nobili e religiosi tra due corti* (Rome 2010); Miles Pattenden, “Rome as a ‘Spanish Avignon’? The Spanish Faction and the Monarchy of Philips II.” in Piers Baker-Bates & Miles Pattenden (eds.), *The Spanish Presence in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Farnham 2015) 65-84; Christoph Weber, *Senatus Divinus: Verborgene Strukturen im Kardinalskollegium der frühen Neuzeit (1500-1800)* (Frankfurt am Main 1996); The correspondence of Cardinal Mazarin on papal and Italian matters with Roman noble families such as the Colonna, Orsini, Della Valle, Del Bufalo, Barberini, and Guistiniani is extensive and offers insight into the French scheming in Roman politics during the seventeenth century. *Appendice di lettere di sua Eccellenza, scritte a diversi*, Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 2217 and *Registro di lettere di sua Eminenza, scritte a diversi nella sua ritirata dalla corte*, MS 2218; a French agent in Rome tellingly argued that “la nobiltà Romana possa capitar à moti e solleccationj.” *Discorso congetturale intorno al presente Conclave dell’anno 1644* in the correspondence of Pierre Séguier, Chancelier de France, Bibliothèque Nationale Paris MS Français 17382, ff. 99^r-105^r.

often saw the return of rebellious vassals to their ancient seats of power.⁵³ Furthermore, the obeying relative of one pope that had obtained the temporal leadership of part of the Papal States could turn into a stubborn adversary for his successor.⁵⁴ Both the recalcitrance of the Orsini of early 1527 and the Colonna raid on Rome of 1526 show us that the Roman nobility was far from subjected.⁵⁵ In fact, of all popes between Nicolas V Parentucelli (elected in 1447) and Paul IV Carafa (died in 1559), only Pius III Piccolomini and Marcellus II Cervini, who were both blessed with a pontificate of less than 30 days, did not have a military struggle with rebellious vassals. When Clement VII was absent in Orvieto and Viterbo after his release from Castel Sant'Angelo during 1528, the political vacuum in Saint Peter's Patrimony soon filled with armies of the Orsini, Caetani and Colonna, struggling for control of the disputed territories around the still petering ashes of the Eternal City.⁵⁶

One of the paradoxes that seemed unsolvable at the time was the fact that papal authority depended as much on its temporal force, or so it was believed, as on its spiritual leadership.⁵⁷ Many historians have anachronistically assumed that these were two separate spheres. There were indeed a handful of adherents of that idea in the imperial camp during the Renaissance, and Secretary Alvaro Pérez, one of the agents of Charles V residing in Rome, wrote that Pope Clement VII should limit himself to his pastoral duties.⁵⁸ However, for the Emperor Charles V himself both spheres were equally intertwined and at several points he attempted to intervene in spiritual matters. Thus, when he attempted to meddle into ecclesiastical affairs during the Council of Trent, Cardinals Del Monte and Sforza wrote angrily of these infractions in the "*giurisdizione ecclesiastica*."⁵⁹ Similarly, in the eyes of most contemporaries, the spiritual and temporal were closely related, if not indiscernible. They certainly were for the popes themselves. Alexander VI, Paul III, and initially Clement VII were all three ruthless in their revenge on the recalcitrant Colonna, who as rebellious vassals were particularly perilous to papal authority. Arguably, the Sack of Rome could have been averted had not Clement been unbending in his lust for vendetta against the Colonna and actually pursued a peaceful policy. Obstinate cities and their ruling families such as Perugia and the Baglioni, or Bologna and the Bentivoglio, were forced into obedience with a military perseverance that hardly had its equivalent in spiritual matters against the reformatory movements of transalpine Europe. It is ironic that the

⁵³ Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Morte e elezione del papa: Norme, riti e conflitti. Il Medioevo* (Rome 2013); Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *Morte e elezione del papa: Norme, riti e conflitti. L'Età Moderna* (Rome 2013); Laurie Nussdorfer, "The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome", *The Sixteenth Century Journal: A Journal for Renaissance and Reformation Students and Scholars* 18 (1987) 173-189.

⁵⁴ Research into the way papal nepotism was an early modern political tool in papal policy is limited to the period of institutionalized nepotism of the early seventeenth century and conducted by a group of scholars around Wolfgang Reinhard. See also: Antonio Menniti Ippolito, *Il tramonto della Curia nepotista: Papi, nipoti e burocrazia curiale tra XVI e XVII secolo* (1999). For nepotism in the Middle Ages, see Sandro Carocci, *Il nepotismo nel medioevo: Papi, cardinali e famiglie nobili* (Rome 1999). Further research into the structures of nepotism of the fifteenth and sixteenth century and their usefulness and disadvantages for the papacy is still a necessity. Miles Pattenden in his analysis of the process against the Carafa nephews of Pope Paul IV has shown that contrary to widespread belief, nepotism *an sich* was neither controversial, nor rejected during the early Counter-Reformation. Miles Pattenden, *Pius IV and the fall of the Carafa: nepotism and papal authority in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Oxford 2013).

⁵⁵ For the rebellious Napoleone Orsini, abbot of Farfa, see Cornelius de Fine, *Ephemerides Historicae*, fol. 88r, which is BAV Ott. Lat. 1613; Sanuto, XLIV, 34; Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 213; Christine Shaw, "The exemplary career of a rogue elephant: Napoleone Orsini, abate di Farfa", *Viator* 39 (2008) 343-362.

⁵⁶ BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, ff. 121^v-122^v; ASV Arm. XL, 17, f. 149^f.

⁵⁷ Sandro Carocci, "The Papal State", in Andrea Gamberini & Isabella Lazzarini (eds.), *The Italian Renaissance State* (Cambridge 2012) 69-89.

⁵⁸ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 204-211.

⁵⁹ ASV Carte Farnesiane, 1, ff. 405^f-407^v.

popes regarded not the spiritual rumblings that would in the end cost them half of their flock of faithful believers as the most pressing matter at hand, but rather the Italian military threats as the most pernicious to their authority.

The Avignon Papacy and the Western Schism had not only left the pope vulnerable to military threat; it also undermined their spiritual authoritative status. The yawning gap between the papacy's medieval inheritance, including brusque claims of preeminence and superior authority, and their relatively powerless position vis-à-vis kings and emperors even in spiritual matters left the papacy dangerously exposed to the threat of conciliarism. Although there were precedents of popes deposing kings and emperors, the same was true the other way around. Furthermore, to solve the crisis of the Western Schism, a General Council was called at Constance that deposed all three claimants to St. Peter's throne in 1414, thus usurping the pope's supreme power.⁶⁰ The threat of a General Council therefore was the papacy's Sword of Damocles, and the recurrent use of threats by papal adversaries to convoke a council during the fifteenth and sixteenth century certainly contributed to the reluctance of many a pope to support the endeavor. No wonder, then, that worldly princes made thankful use of this stick to beat self-confident and in their eyes recalcitrant popes into submission. The threats of general and national councils are abundant during our period and the idea that so-called power-hungry pontiffs who did not want to initiate them to retain their power were the sole reason of resistance against councils must be refuted. If anything, it is fully clear that these councils were part of a political, and not only a religious tug-of-war, despite the many sincere calls for a council from the concerned princes of the Holy Roman Empire, Poland and Portugal.⁶¹

At the start of our period the threats were part of the French political pressure on Alexander VI to allow them passage through the Papal States and abandon his alliance with the King of Naples.⁶² Several cardinals joined the entourage of the French king and were some of the fiercest advocates of a council. During the pontificate of Alexander's successor, Julius II, he too was confronted with conciliar threats by King Charles's successor, Louis XII. The French initiated the Council of Pisa and cardinals López de Carvajal, Borgia, de Prie, Amboise, Sanseverino, d'Albret, and Briçonnet abandoned Rome to join the King and investigate accusations of simony and sodomy.⁶³ Louis XII wanted to gain support from Emperor Maximilian I as well, who, during Julius's period of severe illness in 1511, played with the idea of having himself elected pope and started borrowing money for his election.⁶⁴

Emperor Charles V was equally relentless in his appeals to a general council and put Clement VII under heavy pressure during 1526 and 1527.⁶⁵ Charles even attempted to circumvent the pope by

⁶⁰ See Louise Ropes Loomis, *The Council of Constance: The Unification of the Church* (New York 1961); Phillip Stump, *The Reforms of the Council of Constance (1414-1418)* (Leiden 1994).

⁶¹ Francis I said to Nuncio Rodolfo Pio da Carpi in 1535 that Charles V his idea for a council was no more than a measure for political control. See the letter of Monsignor da Faenza of 25 December 1535 in ASV Carte Farnesiane, 11, ff. 15^r-22^v; earlier Patrizio de' Rossi remarked that Charles "voleva un Concilio a suo modo, né quale il Pontefice non avesse autorità niuna." BAV. Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 180^v; "che'l Papa dubito che Cesare no chiami un Concilio a sua ruina." Sanuto, XLVI, 558; the Bishop of Chironen, Dionysius Grecus, apparently even called Charles V a tyrant in Greek after discussing conciliar matters. ASV Carte Farnesiane, 4, ff. 51^r-52^v.

⁶² Infessura, *Römisches Tagebuch*, 275; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 114.

⁶³ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 880, 948.

⁶⁴ Idem, 872, 913-914; Mark Häberlein, *The Fuggers of Augsburg: Pursuing Wealth and Honor in Renaissance Germany* (Charlottesville 2012) 62.

⁶⁵ Charles V to Clement VII 17 September 1526, published in: *Letters and Papers, Foreign and Domestic, of the Reign of Henry VIII*. Ed. J. S. Brewer. Vol. 4: Part II: 1526-28, p. 1111.

directly appealing to the College of Cardinals, exhorting them to convocate a general council without papal approval.⁶⁶ Pope Clement VII was furious and the messenger of the letter, Alvaro Pérez, was subsequently banned from court.⁶⁷ The last pope of our period, Paul III, was well aware of the pressing need for a council, and Charles's less than subtle efforts to convince him surely made their impact.⁶⁸ In the end the Council of Trent was convocated and held its first meeting in 1545. Its location would once again be subjected to a stand-off between Paul III and Charles V, who were at the brink of war over the disputed papal possessions Parma and Piacenza and the murder of their first Duke, Pier Luigi Farnese, Paul III's son, on 10 September 1547 on instigation of Charles V.⁶⁹ In fact, between June 1546 and March 1547 Charles V even refused the translation of the Council when Trent was hit by a sudden outbreak of the plague, leading to desperate pleas by Cardinals del Monte and Santa Croce.⁷⁰ Thus the Council remained part of the political tug-of-war between the pope and temporal powers between 1494 and 1549. It is probably at the end of this period that the letter was composed in which Paul III fulminated against the Emperor and his wish to convoke a national council instead. Paul III argued that only a pope, the Vicar of Christ and successor of St. Peter, could rightfully convoke a council and that, taking Charles's efforts into account, they should rather call him "*Imperator Carolus Lutheranus!*"⁷¹ Five decades of threats and abuse on one hand, and ignorance of the necessity or sheer reluctance on the other, had heated the debate.

Reformatory rhetoric, both by fierce Protestants as well as critical Catholics, further reduced the pope's authority by criticizing the incongruity between the pope's outward worldly splendor and *magnificenza* and the sobriety recorded in Holy Scripture, especially the New Testament. In their efforts to reestablish their preeminence amongst other princes, papal ceremonial, art, architecture, banqueting and civic spectacle became more elaborate during the fifteenth and sixteenth century.⁷² The culmination of these efforts was the rebuilding of one of most important sites in Christianity, Saint Peter's Basilica. Financed partly by indulgences, the project, together with the extensive building projects of the Vatican Palace, was the epitome of the refurbished and reinvigorated

(<http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4301100130&v=2.1&u=leiden&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Calendar> Accessed via University Library Leiden on 18-9-2014: *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2014) (Henceforth: *Letters and Papers*).

⁶⁶ Charles V to the College of Cardinals 6 Oktober 1526, Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, 221-222; *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 952-968.

⁶⁷ Pérez to Charles V 15 December 1526 in *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 1038-1060.

⁶⁸ ASV Carte Farnesiane, 8, ff. 1^r-4^r, 39^r-40^v; see also Francesco Gui, "Carlo V e la convocazione del Concilio agli inizi del pontificato farnesiano", in Cantù & Visceglia, *L'Italia di Carlo V*, 63-96.

⁶⁹ See the letters between Charles and his son Philip II in Carlos V, *Corpus documental de Carlos V*, vol. II, 125-166; letters by Cardinals Del Monte and Santa Croce on moving the council to Bologna and subsequently Rome, and in the end suspending the Council entirely in fear of Imperial politics, are preserved in ASV Carte Farnesiane, 1, ff. 290^r-290^v, 387^r-387^v, 405^r-407^v.

⁷⁰ ASV Carte Farnesiane, 9, ff. 361^r-362^r.

⁷¹ BAV Vat. Lat. 10253, ff. 22^v-26^v.

⁷² Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *La città rituale: Rome e le sue cerimonie in età moderna* (Rome 2002) 122-123; on Martin V and Eugene IV, see Elizabeth McCahill, *Reviving the Eternal City: Rome and the Papal Court, 1420-1447* (Cambridge 2013); see also Machtelt Israëls & Louis Waldman, *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors* (Florence 2013) 2 vols.; On the use of Carnival, see Fabrizio Cruciani, *Teatro nel Rinascimento, Roma 1450-1550* (Rome 1983); Anthony d'Elia, *A Sudden Terror: The Plot to Murder the Pope in Renaissance Rome* (Cambridge 2009) 1-39; On the use of food and banqueting culture, see Peter Rietbergen, *Bij de paus aan tafel: culinaire cultuur in de Renaissance en Barok* (Amersfoort 2011); Ken Albala, *The Banquet: dining in the great courts of late Renaissance Europe* (Urbana 2007); Ken Albala, "Food and Feasts as Propaganda in Late Renaissance Italy", in Diane Kirkby & Tanja Luckins (eds.), *Dining on Turtles: Food, Feasts and Drinking in History* (Basingstoke 2007) 33-45.

Renaissance papacy. But the means of financing the reconstruction as well as the *superbia* of aspiring to such a magnificent edifice subsequently became one of the focal points of reformatory attacks on the papacy. Caught up in this insuperable split, the Renaissance popes tended to oscillate between the two extremes, depending on the security of their office and authority. Times of crisis asked for an apparent awareness of criticism regarding papal sumptuousness, whereas times of stability allowed popes both financially and ideologically to spend elaborately.

The most dangerous situations for the papacy during our period were those that combined several or all of these weaknesses. Often the crisis started as a military struggle, and so it did in 1494 at the start of our period. Matters of war and peace were surrounded with religious ceremony: for example, when peace was declared between the Kingdom of Naples and the Papal States a few years earlier *Te Deum laudamus*, *Kyrie eleison*, and *Christe eleison* were sung.⁷³ Furthermore as historian Stephen Bowd argues, “[t]he arrival of King Charles VIII in Italy to claim his Italian inheritance was a religious no less than a political phenomenon, for it was heralded by prophecies.”⁷⁴ Prophets repeatedly appeared during the Renaissance, often but not always influenced by millenarian ideas. The Florentine Niccolò Machiavelli wrote in his *Discorsi*:

“How it comes about I know not, but it is clear both from ancient and modern cases that no serious misfortune ever befalls a city or a province that has not been predicted either by divination or revelation or by prodigies or by other heavenly signs.”⁷⁵

Surely, the Florentine had seen his fair share of prophets in Florence, the friar Savonarola being the most notorious.⁷⁶ Yet Rome seems to have produced several prophets as well.⁷⁷ In their prophetic eschatological timetables, the invading armies functioned as the *flagellum dei* – the just chastiser – of the papal court, often portrayed as the new Sodom and Gomorra. They would instigate a period of prayer and penance that would lead to the renewal of the Church. These millenarian prophecies clearly resonated with the Apocalypse of St John, in which the destruction of Babylon prefigured the coming of the New Jerusalem.⁷⁸ In a similar way, the destruction of Rome was regarded as the prefiguration of the New Jerusalem. Often these prophecies centered on natural disasters, as natural occurrences were deemed to be portents of imminent troubles. On 3 July 1493, for example, Infessura noted that lightning struck the house of Orsino Orsini, Giulia Farnese’s cuckolded husband, and destroyed a fireplace, which was deemed a bad omen.⁷⁹ Not much later in August the Tiber flooded the city and plague erupted.⁸⁰ Floods were always regarded as particularly powerful portents of God’s displeasure. The biblical tale of Noah and the Arc was widely known and by reading Holy Scripture it was obvious that God made use of the cleansing abilities of water when he deemed

⁷³ Johannes Burchardi, *Diarium sive Rerum urbanarum commentarii (1483-1506)*, Louis Thuasne (ed.), 3 vols. (Paris 1883-1885) vol. I, 208 (Henceforth: *Diarium*).

⁷⁴ Stephen Bowd, *Reform before the Reformation: Vincenzo Querini and the religious Renaissance in Italy* (Leiden 2002) 29.

⁷⁵ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Discourses*, trans. Leslie Walker (Harmondsworth 1974) 249-250.

⁷⁶ The literature on Savonarola is extensive. To name but a few: Donald Weinstein, *Savonarola: The Rise and Fall of a Renaissance Prophet* (New Haven 2011); Stefano Dall’Aglia, *Savonarola and Savonarolism* (Toronto 2010); Lorenzo Polizotto, *The Elect Nation: The Savonarolan Movement in Florence, 1494-1545* (Oxford 1994).

⁷⁷ In 1491 a prophet appeared in Rome, according to Infessura, *Römisches Tagebuch*, 246; in 1527 there was a naked prophet in the Campo de’ Fiori. Buonaparte in Milenesi, *Sacco*, 177-178.

⁷⁸ Bowd, *Reform before the Reformation*, 183.

⁷⁹ Giulia Farnese was the mistress of Pope Alexander VI. Infessura, *Römisches Tagebuch*, 271.

⁸⁰ Idem, 273; Burchardi, *Diarium*, vol. II, 85-86.

mankind too depraved. After the Sack of Rome, the river again began to overflow and, ironically, now cleansed the city of the remains of the imperial army that still resided in the city.⁸¹ This time the famine and flood were again accompanied by another scourge of God, pestilence, which helped to reinforce the eschatological perception of the events.⁸²

It became even more perilous for the pontiff when the invading army adopted these eschatological narratives and began to regard themselves as the justice-bringing hands of God that would cleanse the Augean stables that they thought the papal court was. King Charles VIII ordered his men to add the words *Voluntas Dei* (God's Will) and *Missus a Deo* (Send by God) to the French banners.⁸³ According to Francesco Guicciardini, the French commander, Gaston de Foix, told his men during the French campaign against Julius II that they could enrich themselves in Rome, "where the boundless riches of that wicked court, extracted for so many centuries from the bowels of Christians, will be sacked by you." De Foix called for "divine justice to punish (...) the pride and enormous vices of that false Pope Julius."⁸⁴ If anything, these ideas were even stronger in the Duke of Bourbon's invading army in 1527, as the army consisted partly of Lutheran *lanzknights*, who would prefer not so much to renew the Roman Catholic Church, as to overthrow it entirely. But the Catholics in the army were also persuaded they were going to reform the metaphorical body of the Church, starting at its head.

Large difficulties thus loomed on the European horizon for the Renaissance popes and closer at home, in the Eternal City itself, because during each of the crises there were always rebellious Roman barons used as subversive elements within the Papal States, thus providing monarchs with a Trojan horse within the city walls. With the barons remaining on the verge of deflecting or rising up throughout the entire period, even during the pontificate of Paul III, who was regarded as one of them,⁸⁵ local political, factional and dynastic struggles became inevitably embroiled with the larger European military and religious struggles of the era to form the great crises of the papacy. Verily, the Renaissance popes had reason to be concerned. Yet, in the gravest moment of extreme danger,⁸⁶ they had several measures at their disposal, as we will see.

Una barba longa sanuda

The importance of allusions to biblical and historical precedents can hardly be overestimated. In early modern Europe precedents played a key role in jurisprudence and historical precedents were often highly charged with moral values. Alluding to precedents that carried clearly crystallized ideas on who was morally justified or damnable in the eyes of posterity ensured that the contemporary flux of events could also be framed in the same terms. These allusions formed a perfect propagandistic medium for the Renaissance popes, because they enabled them to steer public opinion in the preferred direction. By framing the events into carefully constructed rhetoric or gesture these discursive practices could shape the perception of events, often placing the pope in a favorable light

⁸¹ Buonaparte in Milenesi, *Sacco*, 390; Sanuto, XLVI, 42; BAV Barb. Lat. 2621, f. 221^v.

⁸² Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1871-1873; Sanuto, XLVI, 141, 297; Buonaparte in Milanesi, *Sacco*, 388-389; BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, ff. 112^v.

⁸³ Pastor, III, 394.

⁸⁴ Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Italy*, trans. by Sidney Alexander (Princeton 1984) 244.

⁸⁵ Guido Rebecchini, "After the Medici: The new Rome of Pope Paul III Farnese", *I Tatti Studies: Essays in the Renaissance* 11 (2007) 147-200; "[Farnese] è conligato o per consaguinitate o per affinate [con gli Orsini, i Colonna e i Caetani]." Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 430.

⁸⁶ "in gravissimo summi periculi momento" Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of our Time*, 92.

by demarcating who was wrong and right. By doing so the Renaissance popes gained some influence in the outcome of events or were able to successfully request foreign help. One of the most long-lasting and peculiar allusions, in clear defiance of prescriptions, gained a lasting appreciation. It appears in Erasmus's *Julius Exclusus*, where Julius mumbles that his "situation was very nearly desperate, and I was growing a white beard."⁸⁷ That his example of growing a beard was imitated, initiated widespread discussion, and subsequently became a fashion vogue shows that the simple act of growing a beard could be a powerful propagandistic tool.

Pope Julius II grew a beard in 1511 to express his mourning over the loss of Bologna and used it as an expression of his determination to rid all Italy of the treacherous Frenchmen. An anonymous Bolognese chronicler records that Julius supposedly argued that he wore "*la barba per vendicarsi et diceva che non la voleva più rasar et insino a tanto che non aveva anco fuora scazato el re Ludovico de Franza d'Italia.*"⁸⁸ His act did not go unnoticed and Julius received some criticism for growing a long white beard. Not only Erasmus, but also François Rabelais ridiculed the bearded pope and wrote in his *La vie de Gargantue et de Pantagruel* (1532) about Pope Julius II, who "screamed out pasties, but lost his long lousy beard."⁸⁹ In fact, the beard was highly controversial in Western Europe, and it was explicitly forbidden for members of the Church since a prohibition was included in Catholic canon law by Gregory IX Conti (1227-1241).⁹⁰ Pulling someone's beard was regarded as a grave offense and Sanuto recalls an incident at a banquet in Bologna on 26 December 1510 where a clerical beard led to a fight between two cardinals. Sanuto writes: "*Pavia branchò per la barba el cardinal Corner, chome se fosse stato un ragazzo, e lui non li disse niente.*"⁹¹ The decision to grow a beard then, was highly unusual, despite the fact that the growing – or shaving off – of a beard had a long history as a sign of mourning.

The propagandistic nature of Julius II his beard has not gone unnoticed and some historians have argued that the adoption of a beard by Julius II was an allusion to his namesake Julius Caesar, who, according to Suetonius, vowed not to shave his beard, nor cut his hair, before the massacre of some of his men in Gaul was avenged.⁹² But the allusion to Julius Caesar is probably influenced too much by Erasmus's writings and not something Julius II himself propagated.⁹³ The beard appears in several frescos that were painted by Raphael as well as on a state portrait, currently at the National Gallery in London, that at a later stage became normative for subsequent portraits of popes. But once the war was over Julius got rid of the beard. Although Julius's act seems unusual, there are contemporary examples of people growing a beard to express their mourning. In fact, one of his adversaries, Cardinal Ippolito I d'Este, did exactly the same to express his mourning, but was ordered

⁸⁷ Levi, *Collected works of Erasmus*, vol. II, 173.

⁸⁸ "the beard for revenge and said that he did not want to shave it and in any case he would not do so before evicting Louis of France out of Italy." Cited in: Pastor, III, 339.

⁸⁹ I am using the Dutch translation. "Paus Julius schreeuwde pasteitjes uit, maar zijn lange luizenbaard was hij kwijt"; François Rabelais, *Gargantua en Pantagruel* (Amsterdam 1980) 288.

⁹⁰ Reginald Reynolds, *Beards: an omnium gatherum* (London 1950) 120; the condemnation of the beard was not universal. Burchardus de Belleaux wrote his *Apologia de barbibus* in the twelfth century, which mentions several biblical beards such as those of Aaron and David. Published as Burchardus de Belleaux, *Apologia de barbibus*, Ernst Goldschmidt (ed.) (Amsterdam 1979).

⁹¹ "Pavia pulled the beard of Cardinal Corner, as if he were a boy, and he did not say a word." Sanuto, XI, 670; See also David Chambers, *Popes, Cardinals and War: The Military Church in Renaissance and Early Modern Europe* (London 2006) 149.

⁹² Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *Divvs Ivlivs* (Oxford 1966) 29.

⁹³ Mark Zucker, "Raphael and the beard of Pope Julius II", *The Art Bulletin* 59 (1977) 524-533; Shaw, *Julius II*, 299.

to shave after the French King Louis XII took offence during Ippolito's embassy in France.⁹⁴ The predecessor of Louis XII, Charles VIII, had similarly ordered Duke Lodovico Sforza to shave off his beard, which he wore as a sign of mourning⁹⁵ – perhaps ingenuously as he was the one who profited most by the death of his cousin Duke Gian Galeazzo Sforza.⁹⁶ Art historian Mark Zucker provides several examples of historical precedents that might have influenced Julius's decision to grow a beard, although arguing

“[t]hat these historical Juliuses or Julians were bearded at one time or another in their careers may, of course, be no more than coincidence. Their examples, on the other hand, may not have escaped the attention of the only pope since the eleventh century who was self-conscious enough about his Christian name to have retained it only slightly altered in form.”⁹⁷

Although we may never find out which historical precedent moved Julius II to imitation – it might even have been Saint Peter himself – he himself set a historical precedent that was imitated sixteen years later when the Sack of Rome formed an apt motive for public mourning.

It is recorded by Sanuto that Clement VII grew “*una barba longa sanuda*” and also Jacopo Buonaparte, a Florentine close to the Pope, wrote of his escape from Castel Sant’Angelo while having “*nascosta la barba*.”⁹⁸ This time, his example was followed by Cardinal Enckevoirt, who also grew a beard to express his mourning.⁹⁹ That Clement's beard was not just a personal expression for his grief either, but an intrinsic element of his propaganda, is sustained by the fact that depictions of Clement with a beard started appearing. In a portrait of Clement VII painted by Sebastiano del Piombo in 1526, which is currently in the Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, he still appears clean-shaven. However, in a later portrait by the same artist that was made around 1530 Clement VII appears with a full beard.¹⁰⁰ With Julius II being the obvious historical precedent emulated, Clement's beard was less controversial. His refusal to shave even initiated a theological debate on the nature of the clerical beard. Piero Valeriano dedicated his *Apologia pro sacerdotum barbibus* (Rome 1533) to Ippolito de' Medici, cardinal-nipote of Clement VII. In this work Valeriano argued that “[*q*]uod si probum & honestum virum barba decet, sacerdoté quoque, cui totius probitatis & honestae vitae exemplar esse debet, ante alios addecere non temerè forsan opinamur.”¹⁰¹ It was the man that the beard adorned who should be judged on the basis of his moral conduct. The beard, however, in itself was neither wrong nor right and, provided its owner wore it to express his piety, could even signify his devoutness. Valeriano buttresses his argument by providing examples of biblical beards, such as those of Aaron (Psalm 133:3) and David (1 Samuel 21:13; 2 Samuel 10:5; 1 Chronicles 19:5). In a short time span the beard became commonplace at the papal court. Clement VII never shaved his beard,

⁹⁴ Sarah Bradford, *Lucrezia Borgia: Life, Love and Death in Renaissance Italy* (New York 2004) 309.

⁹⁵ Priuli, *I Diarii*, 5.

⁹⁶ Georgius Valla to Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, BAV, Vat. Lat. 3537, ff. 164^r-165^r.

⁹⁷ Zucker, “Raphael and the beard of Pope Julius II”, 527.

⁹⁸ “hidden his beard.” Sanuto, XLVIII, 226; Buonaparte in Milanese, *Sacco*, 405.

⁹⁹ Cartwright, *Isabella d'Este*, vol. II, 313; on Enckevoirt, see Jetze Touber, “Willem van Enckevoirt (1464-1534): Ons-kent-ons aan het pauselijke hof, in Jetze Touber (ed.), *De kaper, de kardinaal en andere markante Nederlanders: Een nieuwe blik op het verleden in dertien levensverhalen* (Hilversum 2010).

¹⁰⁰ This portrait is in The Getty Center Los Angeles.

¹⁰¹ “if a beard adorns a good and honest man, even a priest, who should be the model of a totally upright and honest life, it is perhaps fitting for others to not blindly judge.” Piero Valeriano, *Apologia pro sacerdotum barbibus* (Rome [1533] 1558) 5.

instigating a papal fashion vogue as his successors well into the seventeenth century all retained a beard. And although not many were able to observe the papal portrait, copies were disseminated in miniature form to reach a larger public. Yet there were more possibilities to reach the wider public than through painting. Coins were one of the preferred propagandistic media as they circulated quickly, being indispensable for daily transactions. This is why the papal mint issued a coin with Clement and his beard. The other side showed Saint Peter, an angel, and the text: *misit Dominus angelum suum*.¹⁰² The coin was a key allusion to the suffering of the bearded Clement VII by juxtaposing it with the suffering of the first of all his predecessors, Saint Peter. But more importantly, this was an allusion to a historical precedent recorded in the most venerable text in the Christian world: the Bible.

Biblical precedents

Comparison of their situation with that of biblical precedents carried an enormous weight and was used very effectively to their advantage by the Renaissance popes during times of severe crisis. The Christian Bible, containing both the Old Testament and the New, was considered largely to be a truthful tale of the historical past. More important, however, were its moral, allegorical and eschatological levels of interpretation. Renaissance biblical exegesis stressed these multiple dimensions, making it attractive for the popes to make comparisons with Bible passages that were open to interpretation and deemed to contain several layers of meaning. According to Debora Kuller Shuger "in Renaissance practice the biblical narratives retained a certain (if limited) flexibility: not necessarily a theological flexibility but a sort of extradogmatic surplus of undetermined meaning – or rather meaning being determined in various ways."¹⁰³ This flexibility made the biblical tales especially suited to provide meaningful comparisons. Furthermore, because the Bible was the most holy text in Christendom, biblical allusions always carried a moral weight that was difficult to refute. There were other reasons troubled popes used biblical comparison in their efforts to secure their position, their institution, or calls for foreign help. A simple explanation could be that the pope was immensely well-versed in the content of the Bible. After a long clerical career a pontiff must have read, rehearsed and recited the Bible numerous times. Furthermore, in the end it was the pope who carried enormous weight in the explanation of certain passages. Also, the public that the Renaissance popes were keen to address was to a large extent equally familiar with the content of Holy Scripture, especially the clerics. This meant that the target audience would easily recognize and internalize papal propaganda that made use of biblical precedents. Trying to grasp the unexpected flux of events that suddenly succumbed unwary popes in their times of peril meant trying to grasp the working of God's providence. With an invading army arguing they were God's actors in his providential plan, the place to look for any comforting information on what could have been God's plan with the world would be Scripture, where God's workings in the world were contained and saved for posterity. Furthermore, the Bible offers an account of the way God's providence worked in history that left absolutely no room for doubt on who in the Bible was morally correct or damned in the eyes of God. To the men in the Renaissance, the Bible made perfectly clear which character was a saint, and which one a sinner.

¹⁰² Pastor, V, 326.

¹⁰³ Debora Kuller Shuger, *The Renaissance Bible: Scholarship, Sacrifice, and Subjectivity* (Berkeley 1994) 5.

Let us return then to Clement's coin. The text – "*misit Dominus angelum suum (Acts 12:11)*" – is a biblical allusion that has escaped thorough scholarly investigation. A more lengthy citation of the Bible, however, clarifies more:

Nunc scio vere, quia misit Dominus angelum suum: et erupuit me de manu Herodis, et de omni expectatione plebis Judaeorum.

Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.

Suddenly it becomes clear why the Lord had sent an angel to Saint Peter. It was for the deliverance of the most venerable of apostles from the hands of the Emperor Herod. The reference to Clement's captivity at the hands of Emperor Charles V could not have been more obvious. Because these words were part of the liturgy every year on August 1st when the feast for the first bishop of Rome, Saint Peter, was celebrated, they would have struck a chord with many Roman citizens. Furthermore, the Roman populace would recognize these words because they also appear in an inscription above the reliquary with the chains of the very first pontiff in the church San Pietro in Vincoli, the church that also contains the monument of Julius II. Notably, it was Julius II who had ordered the construction of this edifice and he had ordered Antonio Pollaiuolo to make the doors of gilded bronze that show reliefs depicting the imprisonment of Saint Peter and his subsequent release by an angel.¹⁰⁴ Thus, what we have here then is a propaganda medium that could easily reach large parts of the Roman population and which at the same time would have been recognizable to many. The fact that the coin contained a multi-layered allusion not only to two bearded predecessors of Clement VII, Julius II and Saint Peter, but also to a Biblical passage of utmost importance, shows the level of subtlety that papal propaganda could achieve.

Another example of allusion to biblical precedents can be found in a letter from Cardinal Giovanni Salviati, a close relative of Clement VII, to Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio dated 14 March 1528. Cardinal Lorenzo Campeggio was the papal legate to the city of Rome at the time and therefore a crucial intermediate between the Pope and his city.¹⁰⁵ If there was anyone in the position to communicate the perilous situation of Clement VII to the citizens of Rome, it was Cardinal Campeggio. According to Salviati, in Orvieto the Pope found himself in dire need and was, just like the biblical King David, reduced to eating the showbread (1 Samuel 21:6).¹⁰⁶ The bread of the presence was an old Jewish tradition with a dual meaning. It stipulated that only bread could be used as a sacrificial edible tradition within the Jewish religion and could be presented "before YHWH" on a sacrificial altar or table. At the same time it presumed the presence of the deity in a way comparable to the Christian belief that a church is 'the house of God' and that God must therefore be present inside.¹⁰⁷ Only during periods of the utmost necessity and dearth was it allowed to devour the showbread. However, the allusion to David carried a moral component as well. In the Bible the priest Ahimelek of the temple first asks the biblical king whether the men have kept themselves clear from women. David answers affirmatively and says that the women have been kept away as usual and the men's bodies are pure, even though their missions might not be (1 Samuel 21:4-5). Only then were

¹⁰⁴ Guglielmo Matthiae, *S. Pietro in Vincoli* (Rome 1960) 25-57; Shaw, *Julius II*, 190.

¹⁰⁵ *CSPSPA*, vol. III, part 2, 545-553.

¹⁰⁶ Cited in: Pastor, V, 333.

¹⁰⁷ Roy Gane, "'Bread of the presence' and Creator-In-Residence", *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (1992) 179-203.

David and his men allowed to devour the showbread. Salviati in his letter, therefore, not only referred to the dearth at Orvieto, but also implicitly argued that Clement exhibited a biblical abstinence and piety that metaphorically legitimized the hypothetical consummation of the showbread. As we will see below, abstinence, fasting and prayer played an important role in papal propaganda, and Salviati's biblical remark helped to reinforce the message.

Doing nothing is of course central to abstinence – or, in fact, of growing a beard - but remaining tranquil and indifferent in matters political could be a biblical act as well. After all, did not Jesus Christ himself argue in the Bible that “if someone hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also. And whoever takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt either.” (Luke 6:29-30, Matthew 5:39-40). These and other pacifistic passages became central to early Christianity. Part of Rome's religious heritage and essential to its centrality in Catholic faith was the blood-soaked earth of the murdered martyrs refusing military service to the Roman Empire. The difficulty of transcending the paradox between an *imitatio Christi* and the papal temporal power and the accompanying military responsibilities must have been torturous. Nevertheless, as we have seen above, this arduous task was even accomplished by the restless warrior-pope Julius II, who, according to Vettori, succeeded in ending his pontificate in peace and piety.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, the anti-papal Infessura admired the reluctance for retribution of Innocent VIII in the final years of his papacy and complimented him on his biblical behavior. He argued that “it was all the more laudable, since he [Innocent VIII] imitated the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, for the sake of his people, endured the bitterest injustice that had been done to him.”¹⁰⁹ And what biblical figure better to emulate than the son of God himself?

Thus Clement VII adopted the same approach as well after the Sack of Rome. Shortly after he had surrendered and provided hostages amongst whom some of his family members were present and who were held captive in Palazzo Colonna, he was asked in June 1527 whether Pompeo Colonna could be appointed legate to the city of Rome. He answered that the imperial army was his master and he would do nothing, neither approving nor rejecting the offer.¹¹⁰ Similarly, he refused to enter negotiations to join the League of Cognac against the Emperor, due to a lack of cardinals to discuss matters with. In fact, Clement VII refused to attend to any matter at all except for his daily pastoral business.¹¹¹ After months of being pressurized into paying substantial amounts to the imperial army, which kept increasing its demands gradually, negotiations reached breaking point. The German soldiers stormed the Palazzo Colonna, disregarding Cardinal Colonna, took the papal hostages and in a mock procession led them to the Campo de' Fiori where a scaffold was erected. Fearing for their execution, the captured cardinals promised to do everything to arrange for the payments due.¹¹² The Pope, however, hearing the news and acknowledging that his relatives were among the hostages, exclaimed that “[w]ere they to hurt any of these [hostages] he declares that he will not abide by the treaty he has signed, but will rather remain a prisoner at Sanct Angelo, commending himself to God, and waiting for what His Imperial Majesty may wish to do with his person.”¹¹³ Clement was not easily forced into submission by blackmail, but continued his propagandistic show of indifference. Furthermore, his appeals to a general peace further helped to shape the papal pacifistic

¹⁰⁸ Milanesi, *Sacco*, 459.

¹⁰⁹ “es ist vielmehr von allen zu loben, weil er gehandelt hat nach dem Beispiel Unseres Herrn Jesu Christi, der zum Heil seines Volks all das bitterste Unrecht ertragen, das man ihm selbst angetan hat.” Infessura, *Römisches Tagebuch*, 202; see also Vettori in Milanesi, *Sacco*, 449-450.

¹¹⁰ Abott of Najera to Charles V 23 June 1527, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 245-261.

¹¹¹ Alvaro Pérez to Charles V 26 June 1527, *ibidem*.

¹¹² *Idem*, vol. III, part 2, 460-477.

¹¹³ *Ibidem*.

perception.¹¹⁴ Still, his rhetoric and conduct appear quite bleak if they are contrasted with the military preparations simultaneously undertaken for his defense and that of his state. The appeals to a general peace made by Clement, like those made by his allies, Emperor Charles V, or by King Henry VIII of England, were uttered so often that they were empty promises.¹¹⁵ In fact, in a *volte-face* Clement in the end allied with the Emperor to subject the rebellious city of Florence to Medici rule to great consternation of his many Florentine adherents, a move that seems to have signaled a return to the *status quo ante*.¹¹⁶ Despite the initial show of love for peace during times of crisis, Clement's stance changed radically once his position became secure. Times were not yet ripe for a truly pacifist pontiff.

Papal predecessors

*"E per quello io estimi, con ogni sollecitudine e con ogni ingegno e con ogni arte mi pare che il vostro pastore e per conseguente tutti gli altri si procaccino di ridurre a nulla e di cacciare del mondo la cristiana religione, là dove essi fondamento e sostegno esser dovrebbero di quella."*¹¹⁷

Allusions and comparisons with their predecessors were some of the best suited propagandistic tools used by the popes during times of severe crisis. The analogies were obvious enough to be understood by those who had been schooled and possessed the appropriate historical knowledge. Furthermore, because the contest between pontiffs and temporal princes had had many precursors by the end of the fifteenth century, there were ample precedents to appropriate. Before our period, Alexander VI's immediate predecessor, Innocent VIII Cybo, already invoked a precedent, namely that of Boniface IX, to justify his actions against the King of Naples, Ferrante I.¹¹⁸ The tactic was therefore not new, but always had to be readjusted as situations changed and required different comparisons. Furthermore, careful choice of papal predecessors was a necessity, because often enough the preceding events were as unintelligible as those engulfing the Renaissance papacy. Some events, which in the eyes of papal adherents were clearly regarded as victories for or outrages against the papacy, did not have the same resonance at the courts of temporal princes opposed to the pontifical *plenitudo potestatis*. Nevertheless, allusion to predecessors remained a powerful tool at the disposal of the popes and Clement VII used them in a manner entirely befitting a court as theatrical as the Roman.

When Rome was suddenly attacked by an armed band led by Vespasiano Colonna, Cardinal Pompeo Colonna and the Spanish ambassador, Ugo de Moncada, on 10 September 1526, Clement VII reacted in a manner wholly unexpected.¹¹⁹ As if preparing for an official occasion, Clement put on his

¹¹⁴ Marco Foscarini cites the pope, who asked "questo non è buen principio di voler pace?" Albèri, *Relazioni*, vol. III, 154; see also the letters of 15 April 1527 from Clement VII to Charles V, ASV Arm. XLIV, 9, ff. 499^r-500^r.

¹¹⁵ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 545-553.

¹¹⁶ Guicciardini, 2024-2048.

¹¹⁷ "To the best of my judgment, your Pope, and by consequence all that are about him, devote all their zeal and ingenuity and subtlety to devise how best and most speedily they may bring the Christian religion to nought and banish it from the world." Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Decamerone* (Prima Giornata, Novella Seconda: 25) (Digitalized by Brown University, http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/index.php Accessed on 14-7-2015).

¹¹⁸ BAV. Vat. Lat. 6169, f. 354^r;

¹¹⁹ ASV Arm. XL, 13, f. 197^r; BAV, Barb. Lat. 2799, f. 124^v; BAV Ott. Lat. 1613, ff. 77^r-77^v; Paolo Giovio, *Historiarum sui temporis* (Paris 1553) 234^v-235^r; See also the letter by Domenego Venier of 21 September

most lavishly decorated pontifical garment and had his most valuable tiara fetched. He then seated himself on a throne and proceeded to wait.¹²⁰ As most of his court had already fled to the Castel Sant'Angelo through the corridor linking it with the Vatican Palace, the few who remained behind were staggered by Clement's diffidence. Begged to follow the example of his courtiers, Clement remained steadfast, until Cardinal Farnese finally convinced him to seek cover in the fortified former funerary monument rather than sacrifice his life. The Colonna, unable to capture the Pope, proceeded to sack the Vatican Palace and the Borgo.¹²¹ But what exactly moved Clement to put up this grotesque and seemingly careless show of splendid motionlessness?

It was because the act was neither careless, nor moved by indifference to the danger of the situation. In fact, it was a carefully orchestrated reenactment of an event that had taken place over two hundred years earlier in a town just to the south of Rome, Anagni. Three Conti popes and one Caetani were born in or near Anagni. The town, however, is remembered not so much for its presumptuous pontiffs, as for its famous outrage against one of them. Of all Anagni popes, Boniface VIII surely was the most outspoken, and his policies led to inevitable conflict with the King of France, Philip IV. In 1304 a French and Italian army, led by Guillaume de Nogaret and Sciarra Colonna, took the town by surprise during a visit by the Pope. The pontiff, in his full papal garments, remained seated on a throne awaiting his adversaries. According to legend, Colonna hit Boniface, the famous *Schiaffo di Anagni*, and was only impeded by the French commander from killing the Pope on the spot after Boniface had offered his neck and his head. Although Boniface was released after three days of imprisonment, he never fully recovered, dying shortly afterwards, to the consternation of many pious Christians.¹²² The outrage of Anagni was widely condemned throughout Europe – although, understandably not at the French court¹²³ – and, together with the subsequent rebelliousness of the Colonna played a major role in Roman collective memory.¹²⁴

Although Clement's reenactment never reached its grand finale, the allusion was clear and memorable enough. Still, we should be wary of attributing the widespread condemnation of the Colonna solely to Clement's actions in the Vatican Palace. In fact, even the outrage observable in various letters should not make us forget that it was help from inside the Roman city walls that

1526, Sanuto, XLII, 700-701; Charles V was clearly involved in the plot, despite his subsequent denial. Charles wrote to Ugo de Moncada on 11 June 1526: "Despues de scritto lo suso dicho pos ha parecido bien de a parte y en secreto os dar aviso, como el sollicitador del cardenal Colonna estando aqui en nuestra corte nos dixo tres dias ha, que el dicho cardenal su amo le havia mandado que nos dixesse de su parte, que el tenia bueno disposicion para echar (=evict) el papa de Rome y resolver Sena y aun Florencia y algunas tierras de la jglesia contra su santidad. (...) el dicho cardenal querria poner en execucion su intencion (=would like to execute his intentions)." Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, 216.

¹²⁰ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1786-1787.

¹²¹ Francesco Vettori uses the euphemism 'ripulsi da' Colonnese e don Ugo', which literally translates as a cleansing by the Colonnese and Don Ugo. Vettori in Milanese, *Sacco*, 434; see also BAV Urb. Lat. 1640, f. 51^r-52^r.

¹²² The account is published as Henry Beck, "William Hundley's Account of the Anagni Outrage", *The Catholic Historical Review* 32 (1946) 190-220.

¹²³ King Francis I of France mentions Philip IV, Boniface VIII and the *Schiaffo* in 1530 in an enumeration of historical actions by French kings that he regarded as beneficial to the Papal See. BAV Vat. Lat. 3890, f. 16^r.

¹²⁴ For the plot of the Colonna during the first year of Alexander VI's pontificate, see Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 20-22; see also A. Rehberg, "Alessandro VI e i Colonna: motivazioni e strategie nel conflitto fra il papa Borgia e il baronato romano", in M. Chaibò, S. Maddalo, M. Miglio & A.M. Oliva (eds.), *Roma di fronte all'Europa al tempo di Alessandro VI. Atti del convegno, Città del Vaticano, Roma 1-4 dicembre 1999* (Rome 2001) 347.

enabled to Colonna to enter the city in the first place.¹²⁵ With the diffusion of ideas from Classical Antiquity, Roman republicanism became reinvigorated and the fifteenth century had seen several republican rebellions and attempts at murder against several popes, the most notorious by the Colonna against Pope Eugene IV.¹²⁶ After their entrance in Rome, Pompeo Colonna went to the Campidoglio, the old seat of the republican Senate, sent for his trumpeter, and had it proclaimed on each piazza that he had took up arms for no reason other than the liberation of the Roman people from the tyranny of the pope.¹²⁷ A poem by Marco Antonio Casanova preserved in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana further attests that the plot of 1526 received admiration as an act against tyranny. In the 'Elegia ad divum Pompeium' contemporary events were equated with the struggle between Gaius Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus.¹²⁸ Tears are shed for the downfall of the ancient republican senate, and by using the term 'Caesar Opt. Max.' it is clear that Casanova refers to Pope Clement VII, who is also named explicitly earlier in the poem. Furthermore, because Pompeo Colonna was one of the accomplices of the plot of 1526, the equation between the Colonna and Pompeius Magnus was easily constructed.¹²⁹ The comparison was apt. In 1526 the Colonna were victorious and Clement VII surrendered, although they were once again restrained by a foreign commander from killing the Pope.¹³⁰ Soon afterwards, Clement VII took his revenge.¹³¹ In the end his

¹²⁵ There is an interesting letter of 6 March 1526 from a Pistro or Pietro Banolo to Lelio della Valle, one of the accomplices, in which he speaks in veiled terms of the security of a gate, and of the corridor "da castello al palazzo" preserved in ASV Archivio Della Valle-Del Bufalo, 34, ff. 152^r-153^r.

¹²⁶ For the plot to murder Pope Paul II as well as earlier plots see D'Elia, *A Sudden Terror*, 1-2, 40-76; in contrast to Florence, Renaissance republicanism in Rome has received relatively few attention, despite the Florentine connections of especially the Porcari, who plotted against Pope Nicolas V together with Infessura and the Orsini: Vanderjagt, "Civic Humanism in Practice", 63-78; Massimo Miglio, "'Viva la libertà et popolo de Roma'. Oratoria e politica: Stefano Porcari", in *Palaeographica, diplomatica et archivistica: studi in onore di Giulio Battelli* (Rome 1979) 381-430; Anthony d'Elia, "Stefano Porcari's Conspiracy against Nicolas V in 1453 and Republican Culture in Papal Rome", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 68 (2007) 207-231; Charles Stinger, *The Renaissance in Rome* (Bloomington 1985) 85, 96-97. Stinger is wrong, however, in asserting that the Porcari plot "was the last republican challenge to papal dominance of local government."; the entire plot is almost fully ignored in Anna Modigliani, *I Porcari: Storie di una famiglia romana tra Medioevo e Rinascimento* (Rome 1994) and only shortly touched upon in Anna Modigliani, "La famiglia Porcari tra memorie repubblicane e curialismo", in M. Miglio, F. Niutta, D. Quaglioni & C Ranieri, *Un pontificato ed una città. Sisto IV (1471-1484). Atti del convegno, Roma 3-7 dicembre 1984* (Vatican City 1986) 317-353.

¹²⁷ "Pompeo mandò un trombetta su per i canti e sulle piazze a far bandire che nessuno avesse paura, perchè non avevano prese l'armi per altra cagione, se non per liberare il popolo romano dalla tirannia del papa." Buonaparte in Milanese, *Sacco*, 277.

¹²⁸ For more comparisons between Colonna and Pompey, see also Piers Baker-Bates, "A Portrait of Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, Rival and Imitator of the Papal Caesars", *Papers of the British School at Rome* 76 (2008) 183-199.

¹²⁹ BAV Vat. Lat. 5227, ff. 11^r-20^v.

¹³⁰ The historian Patrizio de' Rossi uses the euphemism "nuovo accidente" in his *Historia del Sacco di Roma*. BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 68^r; the terms of surrender are preserved in BAV Barb. Lat. 2347.

¹³¹ As early as 11 November Fabio Colonna requested assistance of Fabritio della Valle in Paliano, ASV Arch. Della Valle-Del Bufalo, 34, f. 165^r; four days later Marcantonio Colonna explained to Lelio della Valle the precarious situation of his house, and their allies. Cardinal Cesarini, another ally of the Colonna, had already been 'plundered', idem, 166^r-166^v; see also: Giovio, *Historiarum sui temporis*, 236^r; Sanuto, XLIV, 33; *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 989-1002; in ASV Arm. XL, 12, f. 193^r there is a letter of 12 November 1526 concerning the capture of Giulio Colonna, brother of Cardinal Pompeo, whereas a letter of 18 November orders a Juliano Comissario to take control of *omnium castrorum oppidorú et locorum Columnensium delinquentiú*, is preserved in Arm. XXXIX, 55, ff. 214^v-215^r; the bull excommunicating the Colonna is published in Pastor, V, appendix 45.

army, led by Vitello Vitelli, ousted the Colonna from most of their castles.¹³² Nevertheless, after the Sack of Rome the question what form of government was most suitable for Rome reappeared, according to Patrizio de' Rossi, and could do so because the Pope was residing in Orvieto and Viterbo.¹³³

Still, despite Clement's reenactment of Anagni, the entire sequence of events of 1526 was hardly becoming of a pope and therefore difficult to use as a propagandistic tool. Clement VII himself only casually mentioned the events that troubled his mind to his confederates, without naming either what happened exactly, or that it were the Colonna who had brought this shame onto him.¹³⁴ To Henry VIII, Clement wrote of his "calamities and ruin", but without naming either perpetrators or the exact nature of their infidelities.¹³⁵ Only in a letter to the uninvolved King of Portugal was he able to elaborate on the crimes perpetrated by the Colonna and the Emperor at length and with prose that was intended to bring the message home. Clement wrote:

"[q]uo [in arcem Sancti Angeli] in spectaculo acerbo et lugubri, quid est quo pro calamitate tanti mali scriber apte possumus, cum oculus n[ost]ris videremus rapi (...) omnia tam sacra q[ue] profana quanq[ue] in cuiusmodi loco quid potuit esse profanim? Cum Templum illud Sanctú et venerabile Beati Petri, quod caput, quod domicilium, quod fundamentum Christiané religionis semper habitum est. Hispanorum et aliud qui cum illis erant manibus cruentis veremus dixipi, aras Sanguiné fedari omnia sacrorum minestrial distrahi et dilamari, nec non antiquum sacrarium in palacio in quo rem divinam perpetuo Romani Pontifices celebrare soliti erant, ita cultu et apparatibus ornatum ut tamen in eo plus reverentie et sanctitatis q[ue] divitiarum esset, omnibus ornamentis nullo sacramento religionis cupiditatem retardante, vidimus spoliatum, quibusq[ue] templis et sacris rebus necq[ue] Gotthorum quondam nimi ferae mentes, neq[ue] Vandalorum Christo non parentium infidelitas cum in haec eadem loca barbarae ille gentis per vim invessissent ullam iniuriam, ullam detrimentum propter reverentiam sanctitatis attulerunt."¹³⁶

¹³² ASV Fondo Pio, 53, ff. 37^r-39^v; Marcantonio, Vespasiano, Pompeo and Ascanio Colonna sent no fewer than 17 letters to Lelio della Valle between 25 November and Christmas exactly a month later with battle reports and requests of assistance: Arch. Della Valle-Del Bufalo, 34, ff. 171^r-171^v, 173^r, 176^r, 183^r, 186^r-186^v, 188^r-194^r, 198^r, 204^r-207^r; see also the letters of Fabritio della Valle to his brother Lelio, idem, 180^r-180^v, 199^r, 202^r and the letter of Ascanio Colonna to Joan Hieronymo Colonna in idem, 201^r.

¹³³ BAV Urb. Lat. 1678 f. 124^v.

¹³⁴ A letter of 18 September 1526 to the mother of the French King is preserved in ASV Armadio XLIV, 9, f. 472^r; similarly the letter to the French King of 28 September and that to the King of England written a day later contain similar concealed language. Idem, ff. 474^r-474^v, 476^r.

¹³⁵ Clement VII to Henry VIII 22 September 1526, *Letters and Papers*, vol. IV: Part 2, 1116.

¹³⁶ "where [in Castel Sant'Angelo] we saw the acerbated and gruesome spectacle, which is where we write about the many horrible calamities as aptly as possible, which we have swiftly seen with our eyes, (...) they stole everything sacred and profane, and what at that place could be profane? With that Church of holy and venerable blessed Peter, who is the head, who is the home, who is always considered the foundation of the Christian religion. I will tell with much fear of the blood-stained hands of the Spaniards and others who were with them [the Colonna], who dishonored the altars with blood, scattered and destroyed all sacred monstrances, and we also saw the stripped antique sanctuary in the palace where usually the Roman pontiffs continuously celebrate divine things, which therefore was adorned with veneration and splendors so that there was much of reverence and of sacredness and material objects, through avarice all ornaments of religion were retarded and the sacrament null and void, and of those temples and sacred things of the fathers neither the wild minds of the Goths at one time, nor the infidelity of the Christian Vandals with tribes of barbarians invested the place with violence and wrongdoings in the same way, nor brought forth any damage to revered places of sacredness." Clement VII to King João III of Portugal 28 October 1526, ASV Arm. XLIV, 9, ff. 477^v-478^r.

Reading between the lines, Clement VII seems to exhort the Portuguese King, who as a neutral intermediary with close ties to both Pope and Emperor was especially fit to work on his behalf, to achieve a truce with the Emperor.¹³⁷ By placing extra emphasis on the atrocities committed by the Colonna and their adherents Clement VII made sure that João's reaction could have been no other than shock.

Shock was certainly the reaction of many, even those who had not witnessed the carefully staged reenactment. Uberto Gambarà, papal nuncio in France, wrote of the "*ingiuria fatta à Sua Santità*" and wanted to console Clement VII with the best wishes from King Francis I and Cardinal Wolsey.¹³⁸ The Venetian Marin Poggio likewise speaks of the "*tanta extrema inzia fatta a la Santa Chiesa et a la Beatitudine pontificia*."¹³⁹ Diarists and historians alike were unequivocal in their condemnation of the Colonna, if not necessarily reminded of Anagni, then of the many other conspiracies and plots of the notoriously rebellious family. The Roman nobleman Marcello Alberini, usually a critic of conduct at the papal court, wrote angrily of the actions of the Colonna and of "*Carlo, inimica de Dio et della Chiesa sua (...) contra el pontefice*,"¹⁴⁰ and the Florentine nobles Luigi Guicciardini and Jacopo Buonaparte offer similar remarks in their histories, the latter explicitly noticing that Clement, seeing he was abandoned by all, was inclined to die on his throne.¹⁴¹ Another Florentine nobleman in service of the Pope, the always keen Francesco Guicciardini, recognized the theatrical display as an allusion to the historical event at Anagni two hundred years earlier.¹⁴² Guicciardini wrote how Clement VII "*inclinando a morire nella sua sedia, si preparava, come già aveva fatta Bonifazio ottavo nello insulta di Sciarra Colonna, di collocarsi con l'abito e con gli ornamenti pontificali nella cattedra pontificale*."¹⁴³ Thus Clement's conduct was recorded for posterity and his reenactment remains a meaningful allusion to his predecessor Boniface VIII.¹⁴⁴

But Boniface was not the only predecessor who was well suited for comparison. Pope Alexander III had already been invoked by his namesake Alexander VI, who intended to flee with the College of Cardinals to Venice when the French King was approaching the city of Rome.¹⁴⁵ By making the comparison Alexander VI could hardly camouflage that his decision to leave would merely have been a flight. Nevertheless, the comparison was not simply a jestful play of words. Pope Alexander III had experienced most of the adversities that a pope could encounter during his pontificate. He was forced into exile twice, was imprisoned, waged a battle with none other than Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa, and eventually succeeded in outmaneuvering no less than four anti-popes during his pontificate.¹⁴⁶ In the end, he had gone personally to Venice to be reconciled with Emperor Frederick I

¹³⁷ For the role of the Portuguese ambassador as an intermediary, see *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 870-892, 968-989.

¹³⁸ Gambarà to Clement VII 9 November 1526, ASV Fondo Pio, 53, ff. 33^r-34^r; See also the letter of 27 February 1527 by Sanga, idem, ff. 99^r-100^r.

¹³⁹ Marin Poggio to Francesco Spinelli 21 September 1526, Sanuto, XLII, 703-704.

¹⁴⁰ Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 225-229.

¹⁴¹ "Vedendosi egli abbandonato da tutti, era disposto di morire nella sua sedia" Buonaparte in idem, 277; Luigi Guicciardini in Milanese, *Sacco*, 66

¹⁴² Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 114.

¹⁴³ "inclined to die on this throne, prepared himself, like Boniface VIII had already done at the time of the insult by Sciarra Colonna, to be seated on the pontifical chair in his papal robes and embellishment."; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1787.

¹⁴⁴ The comparison can also be found in Milanese, *Sacco*, vi and Pastor, V, 229.

¹⁴⁵ Pastor, V, 398-399.

¹⁴⁶ For these episodes, see Peter Clarke & Anne Duggan (eds.), *Pope Alexander III (1159-81): The Art of Survival* (Farnham 2012).

and sign a peace treaty.¹⁴⁷ It is therefore hardly surprising that the conduct of Alexander III was regarded as an example to be emulated by his successors.

Pope Clement VII exploited the comparison to an even greater extent than his Borgia predecessor. Imprisoned, exiled, having waged pitched battles with an emperor, and constantly fearing that an antagonistic council would install an anti-pope, the comparison made rather more sense than one based merely on the similarity of name. From the papal point of view, there had not been more dangerous emperors to the papacy than Charles V since the times of the Hohenstaufen. Thus in the Bull *Cum nos* of 15 July 1527 that in itself functioned as a medium for propaganda, Clement VII explicitly made the comparison.¹⁴⁸ The bull was made in Castel Sant'Angelo and dealt with a possible vacancy of the Papal See, were Clement to die in prison or exile and elections could not be held in Rome. It states that "*nihil est certius morte ita hora mortis nil incertius esse.*"¹⁴⁹ Were Clement to die, free elections should be held outside of rebellious Rome, or if necessary, even outside of Italy, as had been the case after the demise of Pope Gregory X Visconti, Pope Clement V de Got and Pope Alexander III.¹⁵⁰ With the bull Clement made it clear that he regarded himself as imprisoned and added a moral component by the comparison to the named "*Pontif[ices] praedecessores no[st]ros.*" But not only did he compare his situation to that of Alexander III, Clement VII had earlier intended, although he later changed his mind, to follow his example. After the sack by the Colonna in 1526, Clement said that he, in a reenactment of Alexander III's voyage to Venice, was thinking of going to France and Spain himself in order to enforce a peaceful solution between their monarchs Francis I and Charles V.¹⁵¹ The comparison is stretched even further in a bull of 1530 in which Clement combined his desire for peace in Europe with his wish to reform the Church, referring to Alexander III as his prime example.¹⁵² Like Alexander III, who went to Venice to establish peace with Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Clement would travel to Bologna not only to crown the Emperor but establish peace in Europe. The comparison thus was an important instrument in the propaganda used by Clement VII to recuperate his status as pious pontiff which was in jeopardy during the crises of his pontificate. But the comparison had its limits as well.

Where Alexander III was faced with anti-popes, the Western Schism initiated an era during which neither popes gained the moral high ground to dismiss the other as an anti-pope. From 1378 to 1417 there were two rival popes: one in Rome supported by the monarchs of The Holy Roman Empire, England, Hungary, Poland, Denmark and Sweden and the other in Avignon supported by the monarchs of France, Castile, Aragon and Scotland. Truly, Europe was divided in its adherence to one of two popes – or three after the Council of Pisa installed a third pope in 1409 – who claimed to be the only true pope. The idea that half of the European population might have supported a false pope, and hence was irreversibly doomed to burn in hell for eternity, was highly unsettling for many both during the Schism and afterwards. Indeed, fear for a new schism remained during much of the

¹⁴⁷ Iain Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven 2007) 120-121.

¹⁴⁸ J. Sägmüller, *Die Papstwahlen und die Staaten von 1447 bis 1555 (Nikolaus V. bis Paul IV.): Eine kirchenrechtlich-historische Untersuchung über den Anfang des staatlichen Rechtes der Exklusive in der Papstwahl* (Tübingen 1890) 11-12; the bull is in BAV Vat. Lat. 10253, ff. 15^r-16^v.

¹⁴⁹ "Nothing is more certain than death, but nothing is more uncertain than the hour of death." BAV Vat. Lat. 10253, ff. 15^r-16^v; *State Papers*, 1481.

¹⁵⁰ BAV Vat. Lat. 10253, ff. 15^v-16^r.

¹⁵¹ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 937-952.

¹⁵² BAV Vat. Lat. 10253, ff.19^v-20^v.

fifteenth and sixteenth century.¹⁵³ General opinion was that such a crisis should be avoided at all costs, thus providing the Renaissance popes with a powerful deterrent. During 1494 and 1495 even King Charles VIII of France remained adamant in his refusal to depose Pope Alexander VI, despite being pressurized by Cardinals Della Rovere, Colonna and Savelli.¹⁵⁴ He made it sufficiently clear to Pope and populace alike that the objective of his military venture was the Kingdom of Naples, and that he was resolved not to meddle into the affairs of the Church and he "would conduct himself as a devout son towards the highest pontiff and the holy see, in the manner of his predecessors."¹⁵⁵ The idea of a schism remained too appalling. Or did it?

In 1511 Charles's successor, King Louis XII, installed a hostile council in Pisa during his struggles with Julius II, and sought support from Emperor Maximilian I. Several accusations were brought forward against Julius that could, once proven, be sufficient reason to depose the restless warrior-pope. One of them, simony, was ironically one of the accusations Della Rovere as a cardinal had made against his predecessor and archenemy Alexander VI. So was fornication, although at this time incest was supplanted by accusations of sodomy, accusations that seem to have originated during his cardinalate.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, such accusations were common in Rome, and proof seems to have been absent. Furthermore, when Julius II installed his own rival Lateran Council, the efforts of having him deposed seem not to have been pursued aggressively because the prospect of a schism was effectively employed by Julius. Still, the threats were dangerous. Clement VII too had to face the possibility of a council during his pontificate and fear of a schism returned during his moments of crisis, opening up possibilities to him to exploit these.

One of the reasons not to pursue his plans to go to Spain and France to personally pacify Europe in 1526 was Cardinal Farnese's argument that Clement's voyage to France would revive old memories of the Avignon Papacy.¹⁵⁷ Nor was it deemed safe to go to Spain. Farnese was not the only member of the College of Cardinals to fear a schism and, according to the papal nuncio Gambara, Cardinal Wolsey likewise expressed his concern and pressed for the option of, in the event of disaster, holding the next pontifical election outside of Italy.¹⁵⁸ And they were certainly justified in their fear that elements in the Sacred College would pronounce themselves to be the *sanior pars Ecclesiae*.¹⁵⁹ When Clement VII thought of creating cardinals for money, Pérez wrote from Rome to Emperor Charles V that,

"[s]everal good servants of the Empire here think that, to prevent such an abuse, the Pope ought to be admonished and summoned to appear before a council of the Church; which summons, as the aforesaid good-intentioned people say, might be made by any cardinal not residing at Rome."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵³ Peter Howard, "The Fear of Schism", in F.W. Kent & Charles Zika (eds.), *Rituals, Images, and Words: Varieties of Cultural Expression in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Turnhout 2005) 297-323.

¹⁵⁴ Marco Pellegrini, "A turning-point in the history of the factional system in the Sacred College: the power of pope and cardinals in the age of Alexander VI", in Gianvittorio Signorotto & Maria Antonietta Visceglia (eds.), *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700* (Cambridge 2002) 8-30; Maria Antonietta Visceglia, "Factions in the Sacred College in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries", in idem, 99-131.

¹⁵⁵ "devotissimum filium [se] gerere erga summum pontificem et sanctam sedem, suorum primogenitorum more." Burchardi, *Diarium*, vol. II, 193, 212-213; Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 117-119.

¹⁵⁶ Infessura, *Römisches Tagebuch*, 270.

¹⁵⁷ Pastor, V, 233.

¹⁵⁸ ASV Fondo Pio, 53, f. 33^v.

¹⁵⁹ Aldo Landi, *Concilio e papato nel Rinascimento (1449-1516). Un problema irrisolto* (Turin 1997) 262-263.

¹⁶⁰ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 870-892.

Gambara also feared that the council could very well be convoked by Cardinal Colonna after the raid of 1526 on Rome, but emphasized to Clement that Church reform should be “*all’esempio della vita sua*.”¹⁶¹ Fear ran even higher after the Sack of Rome, when Clement VII was held prisoner in the Castel Sant’Angelo at the mercy of the Spanish commanders. For a prolonged period it was not unthinkable that he would be sent to Spain as a captive.¹⁶² When the rumor appeared that Clement VII was taken to the Neapolitan port of Gaeta, the news caused some panic in Rome and the camp of the League of Cognac.¹⁶³ Clement’s attitude remained ambivalent. Pérez wrote to Charles V that “His Holiness is very much afraid of their taking him out of Rome. Others think that he would be rather glad of such violence being persecuted on his person, as it would necessarily result in discredit and shame on His Imperial Majesty. Some even believe that the Germans and he understand each other on that score.”¹⁶⁴

To prevent injury to the Catholic Church, Cardinal Wolsey and the French Cardinals corresponded with the Italian Cardinals Cybo, Gonzaga, Salviati and Farnese in Parma to take measures to prevent a schism. They invited the Italian cardinals to come to the French court where Wolsey also joined Cardinals de Castelnau de Clermont-Ludève, de Bourbon de Vendôme and de Lorraine. This way a small albeit important part of the College of Cardinals would be safe from imperial influence and perhaps more malleable to Anglo-French interests in case Clement VII were to die or was abducted to Spain. In any case, the group was large enough to counter a potential conclave in Rome and elect their own pope, which would inevitably lead to conflict and schism. It is generally assumed that Cardinal Wolsey fostered aspirations for the papal tiara. The prospect of schism functioned as a deterrent both to an abduction of Clement to Spain as well as holding a conclave in Rome under imperial control were Clement to die. The Italian cardinals stayed in Parma to govern the Papal States, but Clement VII’s bull of 1527 containing measures to prevent such a schism helped to shape a perception of imminent danger. The fears certainly had their effect. As late as 1530 when Pope Clement VII made the journey to Bologna to crown Charles V Holy Roman Emperor three years after his release, people still worried about a possible abduction to bring the Pope before a council in Germany.¹⁶⁵

Surprisingly, the fear for schism also infected the imperial court. The scheming of the French cardinals and Cardinal Wolsey worried the Emperor, who could not run the risk of a schism in the Catholic Church while he was simultaneously fighting a military and spiritual struggle against the Lutheran opposition in the Holy Roman Empire. Charles V argued that the efforts of Wolsey, the French cardinals and those Italian cardinals not imprisoned in Castel Sant’Angelo were an attempt to wrest power from the Pope. In reality he feared that his dominant position in Italy and his power over the imprisoned Clement VII would suffer drastically as long as the possibility of a rival council in France electing a new pope remained present.¹⁶⁶ Or worse, were Clement to die, that the cardinals would elect a new pope, thus depriving him of his advantage. Ironically, precisely the measures taken to prevent a schism in the event of an abduction of the Pope or his demise in captivity, led to fear of

¹⁶¹ According to the example of your life”, ASV Fondo Pio, 53, ff. 38^r-39^v.

¹⁶² Cardinal Pisani in Sanuto, XLVI, 205; BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 113^v; ASV Fondo Pio, 53, ff. 113^v-115^v.

¹⁶³ ASV Fondo Pio, 53, f. 120^v; Galleys were prepared to bring Clement VII to Gaeta, see Pierre de Veyre to Charles V 30 September 1527, Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, vol. I, 249; Sanuto, XLVI, 348; see also the letter by Cardinal Wolsey of 5 September 1527 to Henry VIII, *State Papers*, 267.

¹⁶⁴ Pérez to Charles V 2 September 1527, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 359-373.

¹⁶⁵ BAV Barb. Lat. 2621, ff. 248^v-250^r.

¹⁶⁶ The French Cardinals wrote to Clement VII on 16 September 1527 that they would never consent with an election held in Castel Sant’Angelo, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 383-396.

a schism at the imperial court. Charles V wrote to Lope de Soria, imperial ambassador to Genoa but sent to Rome to broker a peace,¹⁶⁷ on 17 November 1527, that

“it is not probable that the cardinals alluded to in his dispatch [Farnese, Cybo, Gonzaga] will go to France, though they may still meet in some [of the] Italian cities for the purpose of providing for the administration of ecclesiastical affairs on the plea of His Holiness’ detention, and that of the cardinals who are with him. This might after all be the origin and cause of a schism through the favour and assistance which the Italian cardinals would give to those assembled in France, the Cardinal of England [Wolsey] having of his own free will, and without any commission from His Holiness, conferred that high dignity [the cardinalate] on the Chancellor of France [Antoine Duprat]: but it is to be hoped that God will overrule this as befits his service and the Holy Catholic Faith, and that all intrigues shall cease the moment the Pope’s liberation is accomplished.”¹⁶⁸

The fear for a rupture within the Catholic Church thus formed one of the reasons that in the end led the Emperor to assent to the liberation of the Pope from his imprisonment, even though it happened without his connivance. Thus the measures adopted against a schism in France and England helped to ensure the liberation of Pope Clement VII and diminished the possibility of a schism, and left both the members of the League of Cognac and the Emperor under the impression that they had been solely instrumental in averting it. Always the shrewd politician, Clement VII carefully exploited the fear of schism and had done all he could to arouse it, knowing that he himself would benefit most.

Papal ceremonial

One of the quintessential elements of papal courtly theater was ceremonial. First I will look at ceremonial proceedings where the spatial setting was controlled by the pope. Secondly I analyze the use of ceremonial in letters, thus without spatial control. Finally, I will describe the effects of the impossibility of upholding ceremonial or the conscious rejection thereof. Papal ceremonial consisted of historical precedents that regulated who had precedence over who and could be used as a means of political language or propaganda as well.¹⁶⁹ During the fifteenth century papal ceremony became more sumptuous, splendid and elaborate, enlarging the already magnificent heritage of the Avignon papacy. Furthermore, early in the fifteenth century the ceremonial tasks had become unified in the single office of *magister cerimoniarum*.¹⁷⁰ Thus, papal ceremonial in the Renaissance had been adjusted and refined and functioned as one of the key means at papal disposal to signify their elevated and sanctified status at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Late fifteenth- and sixteenth-century popes therefore had at their disposal a wide variety of ceremonial practices that included language, visual display as well as gesture. Intricate ceremonies, originating from both Christian and imperial traditions, secured the collation between the pontiff as a spiritual leader, the imperial dignity supposedly inherited from the Roman emperors in the form of donations, and the holiest object of veneration during mass, the Host, which was transformed into the body of Christ

¹⁶⁷ Henar Pizarro Llorente, “Un embajador de Carlos V en Italia: Don Lope de Soria (1528-1534)”, in José Martínez Millán, Jesús Bravo Lozano & Carlos de Carlos Morales (eds.), *Carlos V y la quiebra del humanism político en Europa (1530-1558): congress internacional: Madrid 3-6 de Julio de 2000* (Madrid 2001) 119-155.

¹⁶⁸ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 449-460.

¹⁶⁹ Maria Antonietta Visceglia, “Il Cerimoniale come Linguaggio Politico”, in Maria Antonietta Visceglia & Catherine Brice(eds.), *Cérémonial et Rituel à Rome (XVI^e-XIX^e Siècle)* (Rome 1997) 117-176.

¹⁷⁰ Visceglia, *La città rituale*, 122-123.

through interference of the Catholic priests.¹⁷¹ In the hierarchical society of the Renaissance papal claims had secured their precedence even over kings and emperors.¹⁷² This meant that during moments of severe crisis their authority could be confirmed through the use of ceremony, which required kings and emperors alike to genuflect before the Holy See and even kiss the pope's feet, a theatrical confirmation of power relations. However, interpreting papal ceremony as a fixed set of rules obscures their actual application and ignores the relative flexibility in their use depending on the circumstances.¹⁷³ The diaries of papal masters of ceremony reverberate with tension between their desire to regulate affairs according to preset rules and their irritation at the apparent flexibility of their execution. Furthermore, conscious deviations from official ceremony became significant precisely because they disobeyed expectations. During the visit of King Charles VIII in Rome Pope Alexander VI showed himself especially cunning in constantly changing between thoroughly applying ceremony to stress his authority and showing Charles favor by his desire not to maintain it.

With the French army approaching Rome during 1494 and help from the King of Naples lacking, Alexander VI found himself in a precarious situation that his adherence to an alliance with the King of Naples had produced. In the end, there was no other option left than admitting Charles VIII to the city and prepare for a meeting with the King of France. When the French envoys Pierre de Rohan-Gié, Jean de Ganay and Étienne de Vesc arrived in Rome to prepare the king's entry, Alexander VI already let them disrupt courtly ceremonial in order to placate them, to great consternation of Johann Burchard, papal master of ceremonies.¹⁷⁴ Johann Burchard was subsequently sent to the French king to introduce him to papal ceremonial, which further shows the importance that was attached to upholding courtly ceremonial in the Renaissance. During the actual entrance of Charles VIII in Rome on January 1st 1495 the Pope hurried from Castel Sant'Angelo to receive the French and, as was required by ceremony, "*multi Galli pedem Pape publice sunt deosculati*", first the Duke of Cleve, Ferdinando d'Este and then the Frenchmen in order of precedence.¹⁷⁵ However, when he approached Pope Alexander VI, the King,

"seeing the pope, genuflected twice with correct distances in between, which the pope feigned not to see, but when the king approached for a third genuflection, the pope removed his cap and met the king who was approaching for his third genuflection and held him from genuflecting, and he kissed him. The two walked around with their heads uncovered, and thus the king neither kissed the pope's feet, nor hands; the pope refused to put on his cap before the king covered his head."¹⁷⁶

¹⁷¹ McCahill, *Reviving the Eternal City*, 138-140; Bernhard Schimmelpfennig, *Die Zeremonienbücher der römischen Kirche im Mittelalter* (Tübingen 1973) 132-141; Marc Dykmans, *Le cérémonial papal de la fin de Moyen Âge à la Renaissance* (Brussels 1977-1985) 4 vols.; Bonner Mitchell, *The Majesty of State: Triumphal Progresses of Foreign Sovereigns in Renaissance Italy (1494-1600)* (Florence 1986) 22-27; Fernández, "The papal court at Rome", in Adamson, *The Princely Courts of Europe*, 141-164.

¹⁷² For a survey on medieval precedents, see Achim Hack, *Das Empfangszeremoniell bei mittelalterlichen Papst-Kaiser-Treffen* (Cologne 1999).

¹⁷³ BAV Vat. Lat. 12343, f. 191^r.

¹⁷⁴ Burchardi, *Diarium*, vol. II, 215.

¹⁷⁵ "Many Frenchmen publicly kissed the Pope's feet", idem, 219.

¹⁷⁶ "viso pontifice at spatium duarum cannarum genuflexit bis successive, competenti distantia, quod Papa finxit se non videre, sed cum rex pro tertia genuflexione facienda appropinquaret, Papa deposuit biretum suum et occurrit regi ad tertiam genuflexionem venienti ac eum tenuit ne genuflecteret et deosculatus est eum. Ambo detectis capitibus errant, sicque rex nec pedem nec manum Pape deosculatus est; Papa noluit reponere biretum suum nisi prius se tegetretex." idem, 222.

Thus Alexander VI saved Charles VIII from the potential disgrace of having to kiss his feet. However, by adhering to ceremony when the French nobles prostrated before him, as well as during the promotion of Guillaume Briçonnet to the cardinal's dignity, the deviation from ceremony obtained extra significance as an act of personal favor. Furthermore, it shows Alexander VI was able to use the recurrent distinction between the political and personal body to his advantage.

Theoretically, a distinction was upheld between the monarch's – as well as the pope's – physical body and his political body; the person and the institution.¹⁷⁷ As early as around 1100 an anonymous Norman author already distinguished between the pope's political and physical body.¹⁷⁸ Similarly Emperor Henry IV made a clear distinction between the monk Hildebrand and Pope Gregory VII, when denouncing him during his struggles with the reforming pontiff.¹⁷⁹ In the thirteenth century liturgical kingship – the prince as a Vicar of Christ – was slowly appropriated by the popes alone, and royal and papal theories on their dual nature slowly drifted apart, the former developing into the more familiar kingship by divine right. The latter, however, came to regard the pontiff as the head of the mystical body of the Church.¹⁸⁰ To complicate matters even further, the dual nature of the papacy, with its temporal and spiritual dimensions also incorporated the duality of Christ's nature, human and divine. According to historian Agostino Paravicini Bagliani “[/]a vita del papa è breve e il suo potere è transitorio, ma in quanto papa, egli è universus episcopus e princeps imperatorum, ossia ‘superiore in onore e dignità alla condizione umana.’”¹⁸¹ Papal ceremonial reflected and represented these complexities.¹⁸² Thus, although the pope's political body differs from that of the monarch in some senses, it is also clearly distinguished from the physicality of the man occupying its office. The pope in his political guise as superior in honor and dignity to the human condition required ceremonial genuflections, but it was Alexander who as a person interceded, feigning not to notice the genuflections, and who, by taking off his cap, placed extra emphasis on his personal physicality, thus emphasizing his own perishable body and transitory power while simultaneously refusing the precedence accorded by regulated ceremony.

Nevertheless, when Alexander's situation improved and both his personal well-being as that of the pontifical office were secured during the ensuing negotiations the ceremonial was gradually adhered to more strictly.¹⁸³ Three weeks later Alexander VI, wishing to emphasize his magnificence, asked for the “*stola et pluvial inconsutili rubeo precioso per Innocentium facto et mitra precioso*”, and had the King genuflect properly and kiss his feet. And although Alexander granted Charles VIII the honor of assisting him during mass, his role was plainly subservient and auxiliary.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, where Alexander initially insisted on sitting on a similar stool as the King, the King later “*ex commissione Pape sedit in sede nude sive faldistorio nudo*,” whereas he himself took place on the

¹⁷⁷ Another interesting example of the interplay between the two papal bodies is elaborated on in Peter Godman, “Pius II in the Bath: Papal Ceremony and Cultural History”, *The English Historical Review* 129 (2014) 808-829.

¹⁷⁸ Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton 1981) 57.

¹⁷⁹ Idem, 58.

¹⁸⁰ Idem 203-204; for a more extensive work on the papal body, see Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Il corpo del Papa* (Turin 1994).

¹⁸¹ “The life of the pope is brief and his power is transitory, but as pope, he is universal bishop and imperial prince, hence ‘superior in honor and dignity to the human condition.’” Paravicini Bagliani, *Il corpo del Papa*, 95.

¹⁸² Visceglia, *La città rituale*, 119-120.

¹⁸³ “Ali xviii de zener 1494 il x.^{mo} re di Franza, luni in publico consistoro fece riverentia al summo pontifice, cavata la baretta, come bono en fidel cristiano.” Girolamo Priuli, *I Diarii* (Città di Castello 1912) 12.

¹⁸⁴ Vestment and cope decorated with precious rubies made for Innocent VIII and a precious miter.” Burchardi, *Diarium*, vol. II, 227-231.

papal throne.¹⁸⁵ On January 28th in front of the Palazzo San Marco, however, the Pope once again refused to allow the King, who had learned to participate in the play and feigned his attempt, to genuflect, thus showing favor once again with this small gesture, which was nevertheless sufficiently important due to the public nature of the meeting.¹⁸⁶ Probably, only a few keen observers well-versed in papal ceremony, such as Johann Burchard, were able to grasp the significance of these small and hardly noticeable gestures, which nevertheless were such a clear sign of personal favor.

There was another keen observer present that both recognized the significance of and memorized the event. The keen observer, known to contemporaries as the '*Cardinale della gonetta*' or Cardinal Fregnese,¹⁸⁷ the young Alessandro Farnese, was destined to be one of Alexander's successors in the far future as Pope Paul III. In an early stage of his pontificate Paul III also saw himself confronted with an army moving through Italy, this time the imperial army of Emperor Charles V, which returned from its capture of Tunis in 1536. Unsure about its real intentions and intimidated by the German calls for a general council, Paul III first thoughts went to fleeing the scene. Letters from France confirm that Paul was not the only one worried of Charles's intentions.¹⁸⁸ He nevertheless decided to stay put and the description of the entry of Charles V in the diary of Paul's master of ceremonies, Blasius de Martinellis, is a virtual repetition of events forty years earlier, although less conspicuously theatrical:

"[Charles V,] seeing the pope sitting on his throne dressed in liturgical cope and miter, showed his reverence with a first genuflection. In a similar way he made a genuflection before the dais. The third place [where Charles genuflected] was before the throne in order to prostrate before and kiss the feet of the pontiff, who retracted his feet somewhat, thence [kiss] his hand, then rising up a bit to the pope to kiss his face."¹⁸⁹

Perhaps, we must attribute the preservation of these deviations from papal ceremony to the astute memory of the papal masters of ceremony and their scrupulous scribbles that were to form the

¹⁸⁵ "by commission of the pope sat on a bare seat or bare faldstool" idem, 222; 231.

¹⁸⁶ Idem, 236.

¹⁸⁷ 'Cardinal of the Robes.' Fregnese was a contemporary scabrous term for the female genitalia. He owed the nicknames for the role of Alexander VI's mistress Giulia 'la bella' Farnese, Alessandro's sister, in obtaining the cardinal's hat. Eugenio Albèri (ed.), *Relazioni degli Ambasciatori Veneti al Senato* (Florence 1839-1863) 15 vols. (Henceforth: *Relazioni*), vol. II, part 3, 314; that one of the first letters preserved by Alexander VI was to P[ier Luigi] Farnesius, Alessandro and Giulia's father, on 2 September 1492, confirming his privileges and *condotta*, shows that the Farnese were no social upstarts aided by Giulia's promiscuity as is often assumed. ASV Registri Vaticani 772, ff. 7^v-9^v; see also the relations with the Orsini, Cesarini, Caetani and Cybo during the negotiations and marriage of Giulia Farnese and Orsino Orsini in 1489 and 1490 in Danilo Romei & Patrizia Rosini, *Regesto dei documenti di Giulia Farnese* (Rome 2012) 11-21.

¹⁸⁸ The French accuse Charles V of trying to dominate Italy "a poco a poco" and according to the nuncio Rodolfo Pio da Carpi the King argued that Charles "haver il suo disegno de impadronirli del mondo." See the letters of 9 November and 25 December 1535, ASV Carte Farnesiane, 11, ff. 10^r-14^v, 15^r-22^v; in 1527 similar language was used by Caponi, who said that Charles wanted to "impadronisca di tutto Italia", ASV Fondo Pio, 53, f. 129^r.

¹⁸⁹ "vidit Pontificem in sede cum pluviali et mitra sedente, genuflectit exhibendo primam reverentiam. In aliam simile genuflexionem ante gradus solii. 3^o loco apud sedem protratus osculatus est pedem Pontificis etiam aliquantulum retrahentis pedem, inde manum, tum Pontifex consurgens aliquantisper, sublevavit ad osculum oris." The proceedings of Charles's entrance in Rome in the diary of Blasius de Martinellis are also published in Carlo Podestà, "Carlo V a Roma nell'anno 1536", *Archivio della Società romana di Storia patria* 1 (1878) 304-344; for the ceremonial tour through Rome, see the letter of François Rabelais to Geoffrey d'Estissac of 28 January 1536, François Rabelais, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris 1973) vol. II, 963-965.

diaries and documents on which the continuity of pontifical ceremonial depended. In any case, either his own observations, or the continuity that diaries of papal masters of ceremonies provided, enabled Paul III simultaneously to uphold an important precedent as well as showing favor to the mightiest man in Europe. Also, his choice of liturgical dress shows that he wanted to play down the temporal nature of the papal institution by placing more emphasis on papal spirituality, thus preventing a showdown of temporal rivalry. Furthermore, Paul III and his family were aware of the discrepancy between the significance of such small gestures to the Emperor and his honor and the way events were recorded for posterity. Paul III's grandson, also called Alessandro Farnese, even meticulously manipulated the memories of the event, probably inspired by the Borgia's earlier attempt in the Castel Sant'Angelo to do so as well. He assigned Taddeo Zuccari to paint the events in the *Salotto del Concilio* of his villa in Caprarola in a manner wholly different from the proceedings that day. Paul III is depicted neither detracting his foot, nor showing any intention of urging the crawling Charles V to stand up. And instead of his liturgical dress Paul III is depicted wearing the tiara, which symbolizes both spiritual and temporal superiority over the Emperor.¹⁹⁰ We must remind ourselves here that the *Salotto* or *Anticamera del Concilio*, together with the *Sala dei Fasti Farnesi* were part of the public rooms in the enfilade constructed in the Villa Farnese, specifically designed to receive and entertain popes, cardinals and foreign ambassadors.¹⁹¹

The historical memory of the events of 1495 shows a similar lack of awareness of Pope Alexander's refusal of the kiss. Historian Francesco Guicciardini only records the king's genuflections, kiss of the foot, and subsequent subservient role during mass.¹⁹² But Guicciardini can hardly be blamed. Alexander VI had already ordered Pintoricchio to depict the events in a series of frescos in the Castel Sant'Angelo in a manner entirely suitable to papal preferences. Only the aforementioned kiss of the foot was depicted, and anachronistically so, as if it had happened during their first meeting.¹⁹³ Nowhere is there any sign of his initial refusal, or his repeated deviations from papal ceremonial. The inscriptions helped to reinforce the message, reading as follows:

Carolus Sextus [sic] Gallie Rex. Regnum Parthenopes armis occupaturus Romam ingressus Sex[to] Alex[andr]o Pon[tifici] Max[imo] redeunti ex arce Hardianali in orto Pontificio beatos pedes religiose subosculatus est.¹⁹⁴

Just like the Farnese and Borgia, the Della Rovere Pope, Julius II, also participated in the papal rewriting of history, yet choosing to depict his meeting with the French King in stained glass. The glass showed the French King kneeling humbly before the Pope.¹⁹⁵ Thus, memories of these critical events in papal history were not only meticulously manipulated, but the manipulations subsequently

¹⁹⁰ De Jong, *The Power and the Glorification*, 112-114.

¹⁹¹ Loren Partridge, "Divinity and Dynasty at Caprarola: Perfect History in the Room of Farnese Deeds", *The Art Bulletin: an illustrated quarterly* 60 (1978) 494-530.

¹⁹² "e da poi, con la pompa e ceremonie consuete a ricevere i re grandi, ricevè il re nella chiesa di San Piero; il quale, avendogli, secondo il costume antico, genuflesso baciati i piede e dipoi amnesso a baciargli il volto, intervenne un altro giorno alla messa pontificale (...) celebrante la messa, l'acqua alle mani." Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 118.

¹⁹³ De Jong, *The Power and the Glorification*, 38.

¹⁹⁴ Cited in: idem, 43.

¹⁹⁵ Shaw, *Julius II*, 206.

shaped the written historical accounts of the events.¹⁹⁶ In conclusion: the adherence to or deviation from papal ceremony during times of severe crisis enabled the Renaissance popes both to emphasize their authority and magnificence as well as to placate anyone that might be a danger to the Holy See, without significant implications for their own authority or that of the papacy if the records of the events were unaware of the deviations or the information was manipulated consciously.

Receiving due honor in letters, however, proved to be far more problematic for the Renaissance popes as their ability to subtly control gesture and setting was eliminated. Renaissance letters to high Church officials reverberate with niceties and hypothetical courtly gestures.¹⁹⁷ In the hierarchical society of the Renaissance strict regulations existed that regulated how everyone was addressed according to rank. Nevertheless, with the author of the letter having full control over the content, paradoxically, power relations were inverted. Whereas adherence to papal ceremony safeguarded the authority of the pontiff in public and deviation from ceremony provided the pope with a means of showing favor, private letters and the favor expressed in them were wholly controlled by the author. In his consoling letter to Pope Clement VII after the Colonna raid the English King Henry VIII writes: "*Beatissime Pater, post humillimam commendationem ac devotissima pedum oscula beatorum,*" showing due honor to the pontiff.¹⁹⁸ The contrast with the letter of Charles V to Clement VII written a month earlier could not have been greater. That letter contained no niceties and even the affront of an appeal to a general council was included.¹⁹⁹ However, after the Sack of Rome Charles V seems to have realized that further threats and affronts could very well harm his favorable position and further alienate the Pope. Instead Charles V wanted to reconcile himself with Clement, if only because they could benefit mutually, and deployed papal ceremonial to obtain his goals. In a letter dated 22 November 1527 Charles V claims to have had no knowledge of or is in any way to blame for the catastrophic event:

"Tres saint pere. Jai entendu par lettres de France la deliverance de votre saintete (...) Car a vrai dire, de tant plus je fus marry de votre detention, laquelle a ete faite sans que jen sois aucunement coupable, plus grand aussi en est ma joie et allegresse, oyant que vous etes delivre par mon commandement et par le mains de mes ministres et serviteurs, de quoi je rends graces a notre seigneur."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Another example is found in BAV, Vat. Lat. 6160, f. 63^r, where a historian comments that the historian of the papacy Bartolomeo Platina "[o]misit osculationem pedis quam Carolus [Magnus] tullit Pontifici."; see also Stefan Bauer, *The censorship and fortuna of Platina's Lives of the popes in the sixteenth century* (Turnhout 2006).

¹⁹⁷ See for example Odet de Coligny to Jean du Bellay 27-3-1549 published in Scheurer, *Correspondance du cardinal Jean Du Bellay Tome V*, 122; Roberto Borgia, *In Memoria del Cardinale di Ferrara curavit* (2009) 16. (Published online, <http://it.scribd.com/doc/94178646/In-Memoria-del-Cardinale-Di-Ferrara-Curavit-Roberto-Borgia-2009> Accessed on 1-10-2014); see for an interdisciplinary and theoretical approach to the early modern rhetoric of friendship: Daniel Lochman, Maritère López & Lorna Hutson (eds.), *Discourses and Representations of Friendship in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700* (Burlington 2011).

¹⁹⁸ Holy Father, after my humble commendation and most devout kisses of the blessed feet" Henry VIII to Clement VII 23 October 1526, published in: *State Papers Published under the Authority of His Majesty's Commission: King Henry the Eighth, 1830-1852*, vol. 6, part V, Foreign Correspondence, 1473-1527, p. 549 (<http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl:2048/mss/i.do?id=GALE|MC4318000149&v=2.1&u=leiden&it=r&p=SPOL&sw=w&viewtype=Transcript> Accessed via University Library Leiden on 18-9-2014: *State Papers Online*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2014) (Henceforth: *State Papers*).

¹⁹⁹ Charles V to Clement VII 17 September 1526, *Letters and Papers*, vol. IV, Part 2, 1111.

²⁰⁰ "Dear Holy Father. I have received through letters by France the news of your deliverance. (...) Nothing can afford me greater pleasure than to hear that your detention, for which I am in no way to blame, has ended, and

Not only does he negate responsibility for the events, but claims that it was through his machinery that Clement obtained his freedom. Furthermore, Charles V promises to do everything in order to restore “*la grandeur de votre saintete et de leglise du saint siege apostolique et de sa dignite. (...) Faisant fin je baiseraï les pieds et les mains de votre saintete.*”²⁰¹ I will address the question what led to and who was responsible for the liberation of the Pope from Castel Sant’Angelo later. More evident is the blatant lie that Charles V knew nothing of what was going on. Adolphe de Rup, Seigneur de Vaury, secretary of Constable Charles de Bourbon, had already complained about the financial difficulties of the army in 1526.²⁰² Charles V knew very well that an underpaid army could go on a rampage, extracting their pay from the surrounding areas and besieged cities, and he placed confidence in Bourbon to do as he pleased.²⁰³ But even after the Sack of Rome and repeated calls for further financial aid in order to pay the soldiers, nothing seems to have been done in order to make the payments due. Furthermore, in a letter to Ugo de Moncada a year earlier he not only admitted to having knowledge of Cardinal Colonna’s plan to capture Rome and the Pope, but to actually consenting to its execution.²⁰⁴ Charles V nevertheless denied any responsibility even in a letter to his brother Ferdinand and argued that “*tel pillage a este contre mon jntencion et volunte.*”²⁰⁵ Even more surprisingly, in a letter to his secretary Pérez in Rome, Charles even stated that it happened against the will of Don Ugo and the Colonna as well!²⁰⁶

The point I am trying to make is not that Charles V was a deceiving Emperor or is to blame for the events – “*il magistrato fa conoscere li uomini*” is a contemporary saying equally applicable to the office of both pope and emperor.²⁰⁷ Rather that he, while manipulating the truth, effectively employed papal courtly ceremonial – feigning willingness to kiss the feet and hands of his holiness - in his communication with the Pope. Clement’s answer shows that he is fully aware of the rhetorical nature of Charles’ letter, and according to Martin du Bellay’s memoirs, no-one in France believed in his innocence either, nor did they in Rome and Venice, according to Alberini and Poggio.²⁰⁸ But as Charles stuck to his innocence and servitude and continued to “kiss the hands and feet of his holiness,” Clement out of necessity had to comply.²⁰⁹ It was therefore Charles V who decided the extent to which he was willing to show his obedience to the Holy See in his letters, feigning his wish to genuflect and kiss the papal feet at the very moment mutual reconciliation was required. In the end Charles V proved to be a man of his word, although, of course, when it suited his own interests as well. During his entry in Bologna in 1530 for his imperial coronation, Charles prostrated himself

especially because it had been accomplished by commandment and by the hands of my own ministers and servants, for which I thank our lord.” Charles V to Clement 22 November 1527, Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, vol. I, 256.

²⁰¹ “the grandeur of Your Holiness and the Holy Apostolic Church and your dignity (...) finally kissing the feet and hands of Your Holiness.” idem, 257.

²⁰² “Votre majeste scait, que armee ne peult estre aux champs sans payement.” Adolphe de Rup to Charles V 27 July 1526, idem, 218.

²⁰³ Martin du Bellay, *Les Memoires de Messire Martin dv Bellay, Seigneur de Langey* (Paris 1586) f. 110^r; Hook, *The sack of Rome*, 139.

²⁰⁴ Charles V to Hugo de Moncada 11 June 1526, Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, 216.

²⁰⁵ “the pillage has happened contrary to my intention and wishes.” Charles V to Ferdinand of Bohemia 30 November 1526, idem, 227.

²⁰⁶ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 1002-1018.

²⁰⁷ “The office shows the true nature of men.” Francesco Vettori in Milanese, *Sacco*, 415; Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, 2070.

²⁰⁸ Du Bellay, *Memoires*, f. 105^v; Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 317; Poggio in Sanuto, XLII, 730.

²⁰⁹ Charles V to Clement VII 20 February 1528, Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, 262.

before Pope Clement VII, and, according to Marchioness Isabella d'Este, who wrote her nephew's wife, Renée de France, kissed the pontifical feet as prescribed by ceremony, while tears ran down the pontiff's face.²¹⁰ Thus, although rhetoric could be used by Charles V in his letters to Clement to placate or to defy the Medici Pope according to his intention, even the most powerful emperor of the early modern era could not be saved from the embarrassment of kissing the papal feet and reasserting for everyone to observe the power relations inherent in pontifical courtly ceremony.

There were, however, crises that would prevent the observation of papal ceremony and the pontiff's political situation deteriorated during these difficult circumstances, or when, in the case of Julius II, pontifical ceremony was simply neglected by an indifferent pope. Clement VII's complaint to Roberto Boschetti, ambassador of the Duke of Ferrara, Alfonso d'Este, that everything in his possession had been stolen and he was reduced to borrowing a canopy, is illuminating.²¹¹ The remark was meant to illustrate the precarious situation in Orvieto, devoid of the normal pomp of the papal court. The absence of an adequate cloth of state was apparently important enough to be mentioned to an ambassador. Furthermore, it emphasized the virtual return to a situation not unlike that of the early church. Thus, this remark must also be regarded as a sign of humility and penance. Prostration and the putting off of ornamental clothes was the usual punishment for the sin of pride. But although this could placate the advocates of church reform, as we will observe later, the hierarchical Renaissance society simultaneously demanded sufficient visual assertion of rank. Inability to conform to one's rank indisputably led to social loss of face. The pope thus paradoxically had to display both material solemnity and generous splendor. The same is true for the church officials that surrounded him. When the Venetian patrician Alovio Lippomano accompanied Clement VII in Orvieto, he reported back to the Venetian Senate that,

"la corte è qual falita, senza un carlino. Li vescovì vanno a piedi con un capeleto in testa et mantellini frusti, et li cortesani biastemano Idio; sono come disperati. Li cardinali vanno con 4 servitori et su la sua mulla sicome andavano in primitiva ecclesia; pur a li soliti costumi dionesti, et per uno iulio si venderebbe Christo."²¹²

It is true that the cardinals present at that moment were the ones that had bought their red hat when Clement VII was in dire need of money and the rest of the College of Cardinals had all but abandoned the papal court.²¹³ But Lippomani, who would later be a hardliner during the Council of

²¹⁰ The letter is published in Julia Cartwright, *Isabelle d'Este: Marchioness of Mantua 1474-1539* (London 1903) vol. II, 297-301; see also Albèri, *Relazioni*, vol. III, 162-163; Clement's master of ceremonies noted down in his diary that he has written down the proceedings of the event somewhere else: "Clementis Bononiam versus Coronatio Caroli Imperatoris accreditus ad Urbem sensu habe explicant in alio libello." BAV Barb. Lat. 2799, f. 160^r. I have been able to track the manuscript of the proceedings down, which is Codices Borgiani Latini 420, but there only the genuflections are mentioned.

²¹¹ The letter is published in Pietro Balan, *Roberto Boschetti e gli avvenimenti italiani dei suoi tempi (1494-1529): Memorie e documenti* (Modena 1884) vol. II, appendix 41-42.

²¹² "the court is fallen, without a carlino [Roman coin of low value]. The bishops go by feet with skullcaps on their head and a ragged mantle, and the courtiers blaspheme against God; all are desperate. The cardinals go with four servants and their mule as they used to go in the primitive church; and yet they maintain their usual dishonest behavior, and for one iulio they would sell Christ." Sanuto, XLVI, 488.

²¹³ BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 119^v; Despite Clement VII his reluctance of creating cardinals for money, in the end he saw himself forced to do so. ASV Fondo Pio, 53, ff. 112^v-113^v; Arm. XLIV, 9, 481^r-481^v; BAV Barb. Lat. 2799, f. 127^r.

Trent,²¹⁴ paints the picture rather of a den of iniquity than a pious place of refuge, mostly because of the inability of the present cardinals and bishops to conform to the outward requirements that came with the office. And when Muscovite envoys arrived and presented the Pope with pearls worth up to 6000 *scudi*, the pontiff, to his own disgrace, was unable to return anything of value.²¹⁵ The failure to provide for the necessary ceremonial pomp certainly contributed to Lippomani's typical negative view.

Whereas Clement VII was simply unable to uphold papal ceremonial, Julius II chose to deliberately ignore it. The restless warrior-pope shunned neither foul language or worried about his appearance as a knight in shining armor.²¹⁶ Born of humble origins and sleeping in field beds during his military campaigns, he would have smirked at the remark of the aristocratic Clement VII on his lack of cloth of state. In return, his contemporaries, especially the Venetian patrician diarists Sanudo and Priuli, scorned Julius II for behaving in a manner wholly unsuitable to a successor of Saint Peter. On his campaign to oust the French of Italy he personally led the siege of Mirandola in 1511 to great consternation of many. He lodged in a monastery within range of the city canons. A cannonball even hit the kitchen of the monastery where he resided, killing two of his servants.²¹⁷ When the city walls were finally breached, Julius II in his shining armor climbed the walls himself, an image that would be used repeatedly by Protestant pamphleteers in their attacks on papal preeminence. Although there were precedents of a pope leading an army, most notably Pope Pius II Piccolomini wanting to lead a crusade in person, no pope had personally led an army against other Christians, perhaps since the time of Pope Leo IX and Robert Guiscard.²¹⁸ His refusal to maintain the correct ceremonial required of a pope made him a particularly vulnerable target for criticism. Guicciardini bluntly stated that Julius II "*non riteneva di pontefice altro che l'abito e il nome.*"²¹⁹ Julius II was reprimanded not only by Guicciardini, but appears in works of Desiderius Erasmus and François Rabelais as well. In the anonymous *Julius Exclusus*, generally attributed to Erasmus, Julius was depicted as a rogue pope, who after his death was refused access to heaven and subsequently even tried to besiege its gates with an army of ghosts as he had besieged Bologna during his lifetime.²²⁰ Nevertheless, even such preposterous deference of papal ceremony did not earn Julius universal condemnation. Although his military conduct was frowned upon, his efforts to secure the Papal States gained him some posthumous supporters. The Florentine diplomat Francesco Vettori argued that Julius II "*si riposo alla fine in pace, a fu tenuto un grande e buono papa.*"²²¹

Renaissance popes thus had at their disposal a wide variety of ceremonial practices and customs that enabled them to reestablish their superior status, especially when they were the ones who were in control of the ceremonial setting and proceeding. But, as I have argued, ceremonial rules were never seen as strictly determined. Deviations from ceremony could be employed as meaningful gestures that derived their meaning precisely because they defied expectation. Alexander VI and Paul III were both shrewd politicians that appreciated the limited freedom that ceremonial allowed for. Furthermore, Alexander was aware of the possibilities of altering the way

²¹⁴ ASV Carte Farnesiane, 9, ff. 308^r-308^v.

²¹⁵ Sanuto, XLVI, 488-489.

²¹⁶ Shaw, *Julius II*, 158-161.

²¹⁷ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 900.

²¹⁸ See for this episode Graham Loud, *The Age of Robert Guiscard: Southern Italy and the Norman Conquest* (Harlow 2000).

²¹⁹ "retains nothing of a pope except the costume and name." Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 899.

²²⁰ Anthony Levi (ed.), *Collected works of Erasmus* (Toronto 1986) vol. II, 197.

²²¹ "in the end found rest in peace, and maintained himself as a great and good pope." Milanese, *Sacco*, 459.

events were recorded and successfully influenced them with his fresco cycle in Castel Sant'Angelo, an example emulated by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese in his Villa Farnese at Caprarola. Failure to provide the necessary outward *magnificenza*, however, often led to a depreciation of the pontiff's status. Where Clement VII could turn the humiliation of his exiled and deplorable position into an asset, Julius II never fully shed his reputation of a rogue warrior-pope.

Penance

*"Questi fuor cherci, che non han coperchio
pilosì al capo, e papi e cardinali
in cui usa avarizia il suo soperchio"*²²²

Penance was one of the most important Catholic sacraments in medieval and early modern Europe.²²³ Tertullian had written in his *De penitentia* as early as around the year 200 that penance was one of two planks with which the sinner may be saved from shipwreck.²²⁴ And, at least according to Dante Alighieri, not even popes and cardinals could be saved from eternal punishment for their sinful behavior in the hereafter without having performed penance. Furthermore, because sins were almost as inevitable as death itself, every observant Christian would have done penance at least once in their life. Therefore the public act of penance was a useful propagandistic tool for the Renaissance popes precisely because it would strike a chord with many pious Christians. Furthermore, as Rome and its court were depicted as the new Sodom and Gomorra by the invading armies to legitimize their conduct, penance could work as a powerful propagandistic tool for subversion of that portrayal. Penance and prayer could function because they not only transformed the papal court into a pious place, but also because they were simultaneously a sign of repentance. True repentance could communicate that the pope and his court had not only changed their behavior, but that they also felt that their conduct before had been sinful and morally unjust. It therefore showed that they rejected that sinful behavior and were sincere in their wish to be readmitted into God's grace. If the sinful behavior was not only abandoned but rejected and repented for, then there would be no need any more for an independent scourge of God in the form of an army, thereby leaving the invading army devoid of its providential aspirations. That was the true power of a penitent pope.

Renaissance penance in general consisted of three different stages that were nevertheless closely interconnected. First there was contrition, the realization that one had sinned and was truly repentant. The second was confession, which consisted of admitting the sins to a cleric. The third aspect was satisfaction, which consisted of several penitential acts, which allowed the sinner to be cleansed spiritually and re-enter both God's eternal favor as well as his or her immediate social surroundings. As historian Anne Thayer argues:

²²² "These were clerics, who had no lid of hair upon their heads, and popes, and cardinals in whom avarice achieves its excess." Dante Alighieri, *Divina Commedia* (Inferno 7:46-48)(Digitalized by Princeton University, <http://etcweb.princeton.edu/dante/pdp/> Accessed on 29-12-2014).

²²³ For its importance in Counter-Reformation Spain, see Patrick O'Banion, *The Sacrament of Penance and Religious Life in Golden Age Spain* (University Park 2013).

²²⁴ Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, *De penitentia* (Bonn 1915) xii.

“[i]n the pursuit of eternal salvation, penitence was central to late medieval Catholicism. (...) The Church taught that sin needed to be acknowledged, forgiven and abandoned. God’s restoring grace was available in the sacrament of penance, the penitential process designed to discipline, forgive and console sinners, as well as to restore broken community, discourage repeated bad behavior and cultivate virtue.”²²⁵

During the Middle Ages the emphasis slowly shifted from outward satisfaction to upright contrition, a move further supported by the establishment of a common European tradition in the medieval cathedral schools and universities.²²⁶ The focus for true repentance of sin was therefore gradually moved from publicly conducting works of penance to an internal realization and rejection of sin. Similarly, because faith became regarded more as an internal spiritual struggle, the public nature of satisfaction became more limited, but was never fully removed from the penitential process. There was a shift in emphasis, not content, and the change was a very gradual process instead of sudden rupture. All three stages remained equally indispensable in obtaining absolution.

Erasmus had a keen sense of the value of prayer and penance in Christian life as well as the way they could be used as an act of political theatre. In his *Julius Exclusus* it was not the pontiff, but the rival Council of Pisa that “made use of fasting, prayer and an extraordinary frugality in their lives.” Julius II exclaims to Saint Peter that “[t]heir aim, of course, was to burden us with holiness.”²²⁷ Later on in the work, Saint Peter, who has had enough of Julius’s jabber, asks the pontiff: “[t]ell me: while you were supreme shepherd of the church, did you never reflect upon the way in which the church began, grew and became established? (...) it was by suffering, the blood of martyrs (including mine), imprisonment, [and] scourges.”²²⁸ And although martyrdom at the hand of a persecuting government was unavailable to Christians living in Europe, self-induced suffering was part of the Christian culture of penance and sufficed to reach an exalted state similar to that of the early Christian martyrs. Erasmus therefore found the act of penance particularly befitting for the spiritual leader of Christendom. In his *Praise of Folly* (1511), Erasmus wrote that pontiffs should not spend their lives living in luxury, but “[i]n quorum locum inducet vigiliis, ieiunia, lacrimas, orationes, cantiones, studia, suspiria milleque id genus miseros labores.”²²⁹ Erasmus could yet not foresee how central vigils, fasting, cants and tears would become to Clement VII’s pontificate during and after the Sack of Rome less than two decades later.

Tears flowed richly at the papal court. True contrition, according to late medieval theorists was accompanied by the shedding of tears. There were biblical precedents that attested to the importance of tears as a sign of true repentance. Mary Magdalene washed Jesus’ feet with her tears, and was subsequently forgiven for her sins (Luke 7:38). Also, Saint Peter himself broke down and wept when he realized that he had denied knowing Jesus three times, precisely as was predicted (Marc 14:72). Moreover, in the late fifteenth century priests emphasized the importance of sincere regret, and the preacher Meffreth told his public that “tears are a sign of true penitence.”²³⁰ Of all

²²⁵ Thayer, *Penitence, preaching and the coming of the Reformation*, 4.

²²⁶ Joseph Goering, “The Scholastic Turn (1100-1500): Penitential Theology and Law at the Turn of the Fifteenth Century”, in Abigail Firey (ed.), *A New History of Penance* (Leiden 2008) 219-238.

²²⁷ Levi, *Collected works of Erasmus*, vol. II, 183.

²²⁸ Idem, 196.

²²⁹ “instead should include vigils, fasting, tears, prayers, preaching, study, sighs and lamenting and more of such miserliness.” Desiderius Erasmus, *Moriae encomium, dat is De lof der zotheid* (Utrecht 1992) 206-207.

²³⁰ Meffreth, *Sermones de tempore et de sanctis, sive hortulus reginae, de tempore pars estivalis* (Basel 1486) cited in: Thayer, *Penitence, preaching and the coming of Reformation*, 53.

popes of our period, Clement VII surely wept most. As mentioned above, Clement broke down crying when Emperor Charles V paid him reverence in Bologna.²³¹ Likewise, Clement, in despair, whimpered when the English ambassador, Peter Vannes, once again raised the prickly question of Henry VIII's divorce during his imprisonment in Castel Sant'Angelo, which he had entered *piangendo* sometime before.²³² Pope Alexander VI wept bitterly when the news of the death of the Duke of Gandia, his son Juan Borgia, reached him, which would lead to him instigating a time of fasting and penance for himself and the entire Roman court.²³³ We have little to doubt the sincerity of these spontaneous outbursts of emotions, and unlike most other propagandistic practices, the authenticity of the tears and emotions seems to have moved contemporaries to empathy. Thus, Henry VIII's ambassador urged his king to let the delicate divorce case rest for the moment.²³⁴ Yet, there is one significant occasion that testifies to the powerfulness of tears like no other.

When Clement's position became untenable after the atrocities and destruction of the Sack of Rome, the two great rivals of the Eternal City agreed to hold a meeting to discuss the terms of mutual accord, a *sine qua non* for their reconciliation. Pompeo Colonna, deprived of his cardinalate, approached his native hometown with a retinue on 10 May 1527, wishing to enter with the pomp deserving of a victor. The sight of the city, ravished and ruined, must have been agonizing to one of its most prominent scions. Abandoning all pomp immediately, the retinue rode through the remains of a once flourishing city center in silence. The city that had once subjected the entire known world was now subjected itself, and by people who Colonna himself certainly regarded as barbarians. By the time they reached the Ponte Sant'Angelo and the gates to the castle all initial intentions had left the mind of the powerful man that less than a year earlier would not have hesitated to have the Pope murdered in cold blood. The moment Pope Clement VII and Pompeo Colonna, the bitterest of adversaries, saw each other, they broke down, each embracing the other, while the tears ran down their faces.²³⁵ And in this moment of sincere regret their reconciliation was achieved and Colonna promised to do everything in his power to bring about the liberation and reinstallation of Clement in his former glory. Although his initial fervor for the papal cause seems to have cooled when his tears had dried, in the end, Pompeo Colonna would be readmitted to the College of Cardinals and Clement VII never took revenge on the other Colonna, and the family held on to their castles.²³⁶ The Colonna, in turn, remained obstinate, attempting to capture the Duchy of Camerino and possibly inciting the German squadrons of the imperial army to murder the Pope, according to Alarcón.²³⁷ According to others, however, Cardinal Colonna remained steadfast in his adherence to the Roman pontiff and worked diligently for his liberation.²³⁸ Later, in 1540, when the Colonna rebelled against and were

²³¹ Cartwright, *Isabelle d'Este*, vol. II, 297-301.

²³² Gouwens & Reiss, *The pontificate of Clement VII*, 157; See also, BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, ff. 127^r-127^v; Vettori writes that he found the pope *piangendo* (crying) in Castel Sant'Angelo. Similarly, Clement cried when he entered the fortress. Vettori in Milanese, *Sacco*, 505.

²³³ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 323-324; Hollingsworth, *The Borgias*, 222-226.

²³⁴ Gouwens & Reiss, *The pontificate of Clement VII*, 157.

²³⁵ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1895-1896; Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of our Time*, 213; see also the letters of Cardinal Pisani and Ascanio Parisano, Sanuto, XLVI, 205, 210; similarly Francisco de Salazar wept when he saw the pope and cardinals in their lamentable state. *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 228-245.

²³⁶ For some reason one of the bulls reinstating Pompeo Colonna, dated 8 October 1527, has ended up in ASV Carte Farnesiane, 18, 6^r-6^v; see also *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 228-245; Onofrio Panvinio, *Le Vite de' Pontefici di Bartolomeo Platina Cremonese: Dal Salvator Nostro fino a Clement XI* (Venice 1703) 506; BAV Ott. Lat. 1613, f. 100^v.

²³⁷ De Veyre to Charles V 30 September 1527, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 396-412.

²³⁸ Pérez to Charles V 30 November 1527, *idem*, 460-477.

humiliated by Clement's successor Paul III, the Pope shed no tears and turned out to be merciless towards them.²³⁹ Still, despite the attempts by his family to wrest local power from the Pope or their rivals such as the Orsini and Caetani, initially Cardinal Colonna made great efforts to pacify the imperial army. Clement in turn reinstated Colonna in the College of Cardinals and his other functions. Thus the tale attests to some extent the powerful effect tears – whether those of Clement or Colonna – could have even in the relentless heat of Roman political life.²⁴⁰

The second element of penitence, confession, is far more difficult to establish. Although initially this element had a distinct public character as well – the penitent kneeling in front of the confessor, whispering his committed sins entirely visible to all church attendants, or sometimes even publicly shouting them out – the disgrace of publicly confessing was something especially the nobility could hardly bear.²⁴¹ During the Middle Ages confession slowly although never fully developed into a private affair.²⁴² Popes, in their human guises, were equally prone to the temptations of sin as their less venerable flock of laymen, and a private confessor was an indispensable addition to the papal court. Yet, the intimate nature of the office has resulted in a secrecy that has left historians empty-handed. We do know more, however, about the third stage, because during our period the act of satisfaction was still highly public and not only served to be reconciled with God, but also to re-enter society as a cleansed man.

The shift from public flagellation to more private and less invasive means of penance is observable during the late Middle Ages. Nevertheless, fasting was still an important element of satisfaction,²⁴³ as was abstinence, because fornication was condemned but widely practiced. The practice of self-mutilation was, and sometimes still is, an intrinsic part of the Christian faith. Surely, this was an aspect that Christianity shared with many religions. As historian and philosopher Javier Moscoso argues:

“Sacrifice, renunciation, expiation, purification, catharsis, and salvation are practiced within an evaluative framework in which personal disposition is imposed upon mere physiology in such a way that it is not only possible to extract positive consequences from bodily torments, it is also possible to develop the idea that redemption or liberation depends on the mortification of the flesh.”²⁴⁴

And although the flagellant movements had already been largely condemned to the realm of history, public penitential processions and fasting were repeatedly used in Renaissance Italy in times of severe crisis. Thus, public satisfaction was an act that would resonate with contemporary cultural values.

The memory of Alexander VI was manipulated so well in the years following his pontificate by his enemies that it is hard to imagine that even the infamous Borgia Pope was at times a pious

²³⁹ Kenneth Gouwens, “Clement VII: prince at war”, in James Corkery & Thomas Worcester (eds.), *The Papacy since 1500: From Italian Prince to Universal Pastor* (Cambridge 2010) 29-46; Gamrath, *Farnese*, 49; see also the letters of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese to Pier Luigi Farnese of 8, 10 and 11 May 1541, ASV Carte Farnesiane, 2, ff. 139^r-145^r.

²⁴⁰ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 412-423.

²⁴¹ Robert Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600-1200* (Cambridge 2014) 34-36.

²⁴² Chloë Taylor, *The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the ‘confessing animal’* (New York 2009) 17; Mary Mansfield, *The Humiliation of Sinners: Public Penance in Thirteenth-Century France* (Ithaca 1995) 1-17.

²⁴³ Ken Albala, *Food & Faith in Christian Culture* (New York 2011) 134.

²⁴⁴ Javier Moscoso, *Pain: A Cultural History* (Basingstoke 2012) 44.

penitent. Verily, Alexander might not have succeeded very well in remaining abstinent.²⁴⁵ Yet his dietary habits were strict and after the brutal murder of his son Juan Borgia he imposed them on the entire court.²⁴⁶ In fact, Alexander seems to have often eschewed meat, which, together with his peculiar fondness of sardines, apparently ruined the appetite of all cardinals, including his relatives, who were used to dining luxuriously.²⁴⁷ Although dining alone was an old Byzantine imperial prerogative appropriated by the Roman popes in their elaborate ceremonial, it were mainly Alexander's unpalatable habits that left him eating solemnly but solitary. Still, Alexander's sober dining habits impressed some contemporaries and the Camaldulose Pietro Delphino who had received news that the pontiff had imposed fasting on the court wrote to a prior of his order that "[i]f, as you tell me the death of the Duke of Gandia has turned the mind of the Pontiff and of the cardinals to the reform of the Church, I shall believe the golden age to have returned."²⁴⁸ Thus, Alexander set an example and his successors would follow swift in the use of or stricter observance of fasting.

Pope Clement VII resorted to fasting as a penitential measure as well. Fasting, being the fitting penalty for the sin of gluttony, effectively enabled him to reestablish his court as a locus of piety, thus subverting the portrayal of his court as a decadent bacchanal by his adversaries. There was a measure of practicality involved as well, as supplies in the Castel Sant'Angelo were insufficient for the thousands of refugees within the walls and the inhabitants could only receive a meager ration.²⁴⁹ According to some, the dearth in the Castel Sant'Angelo became pressing enough for the cardinals to devour an ass with gusto.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, Clement remained steadfast in his dietary prohibitions throughout his imprisonment as well as during his subsequent exile in Orvieto and Viterbo.²⁵¹ There too, famine and shortage played a role according to Salviati. Yet the moral component outweighed the practical in Orvieto and Viterbo. After Clement's return to Rome with his position secured the need for penance was removed and, because a pope was expected to display *magnificenza* and liberality, papal dietary habits once again became sumptuous and opulent.

Although particularly difficult for Alexander VI to adhere to, abstinence seemed to have been more important to Clement VII his pontificate. He is one of the few popes of the period of whom no offspring was known at the time, although some modern scholars argue that Alessandro de' Medici, who was made Duke of Florence in 1530, was his illegitimate son.²⁵² Still, Alessandro would have been conceived before Clement's ordination and we have no evidence of later mistresses either. Nevertheless, Clement was fully aware that only few of his courtiers were faithful in their abstinence and that the widespread fornication of prelates was the cause of the many bastards who wandered the Eternal City. In their attempts to understand why Rome had been plundered and molested by the

²⁴⁵ De Roo, however, argues that one of the measures installed after the murder of Alexander's son was the banishment of women living in the Vatican Palace. *Material for a History of Pope Alexander VI*, vol. III, 177.

²⁴⁶ "Pontificem, quem ipsi suis studiis atque suffragiis extulerint repente fastidiant, aut odio prosequantur." Giovinio, *Historiarum sui temporis*, 23^v.

²⁴⁷ For dining habits at the courts of Rome, see Ken Albala (ed.), *A cultural history of food in the Renaissance* (London 2012); Beat Kümin (ed.), *A cultural history of food in the early Modern Age* (London 2012); Rietbergen, *Bij de paus aan tafel*; Valerie Taylor, "Banquet plate and Renaissance culture: a day in the life", *Renaissance studies: journal of the Society for Renaissance Studies* 19 (2005) 621-633.

²⁴⁸ Cited in: De Roo, *Material for a History of Pope Alexander VI*, vol. III, 173.

²⁴⁹ BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 106^v; BAV Barb. Lat. 2799, f. 128^r; Giovinio, *Notable Men and Women of our Time*, 114.

²⁵⁰ Buonaparte in Milanese, *Sacco*, 393.

²⁵¹ BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 199^v.

²⁵² George Williams, *Papal Genealogy: The Families and Descendants of the Popes* (Jefferson 1998) 74. Most contemporaries thought he was a bastard of Lorenzo de' Medici, Duke of Nemours.

imperial army the most obvious explanation was that the citizens had brought it upon themselves due to the many sins committed within Rome's walls. The sack was understood to be God's divine punishment for the "*Urbs quasi Sodoma*."²⁵³ To subvert the stigmatization of Rome as the new Sodom and Gomorra, or perhaps more genuine, to avert God's wrath for the sins committed, Clement had all women removed from his court. In the Bull of 1530, in which he compared himself to Alexander III Clement went even further and banished all "*fili Presbiterorú ex fornicatoe nati*" from performing any clerical duties within the Catholic Church.²⁵⁴ Had this measure been pursued more thoroughly, this would have initiated an unprecedented exodus of ecclesiasts of doubtful descent. Thus, by removing the women from his court, Clement first of all tried to lead by example, establishing his court as a place of piety thereby regaining the moral high ground, and then moved on to the reform of the wider Catholic Church. Or to use contemporary phrasing, Clement started the reform at the head of the body, appropriating precisely the role that the invading army had used in legitimizing their own conduct.

A personal and direct appeal to the Creator could be made in private in the form of prayer, but prayer and worship could be public and collective as well. In Florence, where in early 1527 it was feared that Bourbon and his imperial army would march on that city, "*facevano ogni venerdì processione col corpo di Cristo, e tutta la città andava dietro con grandissima devozione,*" according to the Venetian ambassador Marco Foscarini.²⁵⁵ In England and France prayers and fasts were instituted when the news of the capture of Clement VII was heard.²⁵⁶ Between the extremes of individual and intense domestic devotion and the collective communal invocation of God's mercy in processions there was a multitude of different practices of communication with a higher deity. Furthermore, with the internalization of penitence, prayer became regarded as the preeminent penitential act.²⁵⁷ It is therefore especially important to remind ourselves here that prayer, however genuine and spiritually motivated, could simultaneously function as an act of propaganda. Not only did it allow for individuals to reevaluate and reestablish their personal relationship with God in order to reenter His eternal grace, it also was an outward sign of satisfaction, signaling the spiritual cleansing one was attempting to achieve, thus ensuring readmission into society. The act of prayer therefore was highly significant to both Renaissance individuals and community. There are other ways of worship as well, such as cant and reading of bible verses, although strictly speaking they are different from prayers, as they focus on God's magnificence or examples set by biblical figures, and not so much on transmission of a certain wish. Then there is praise as well, intended to thank God for his deeds, which is slightly different from either worship or prayer. These intricacies of Catholic religion need not concern us too much here, as it is their public aspect that is relevant. And no matter how much prayer and worship might have achieved for the pontifical tranquility of mind, their public nature made them highly politically charged as well.

Johann Burchard, who as papal master of ceremonies was especially well-disposed to notice, had to exchange the *papa absente* more often for the *papa presente* during mass held in the papal chapel during 1494 when the French army invaded Italy.²⁵⁸ Also, concerning banquets organized by

²⁵³ BAV Ott. Lat. 1613, ff. 99^r-100^r.

²⁵⁴ "sons of Priests born from fornication" BAV Vat. Lat. 10253, ff. 19^v-20^v.

²⁵⁵ "they held a procession with the corpus of Christ every Friday, and the entire city followed with great devotion" Albèri, *Relazioni*, vol. I, 24.

²⁵⁶ *Letters and Papers*, vol. IV, part 2, 1557; *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 383-396.

²⁵⁷ Thayer, *Penitence, preaching and the coming of the Reformation*, 4.

²⁵⁸ Burchardi, *Diarium*, vol. II, 88-215.

cardinals, Alexander VI not only commissioned them to be sober, containing only one roasted and one boiled piece of meat, but also that during them Holy Scripture should be read.²⁵⁹ No Renaissance pope came as close to biblical austerity as the staunch Adrian VI, whose pontificate was a striking interval of sobriety and piety between the magnificence of two Medici.²⁶⁰ But, during their periods of crisis, Alexander VI and Clement VII certainly paid heed to criticism of papal consumption. Especially when Clement, in his lamentable position, was condemned to imprisonment and exile in conditions of hardship, his behavior became increasingly pious and austere. Furthermore, Clement cherished that situation with care. During the Sack of Rome, the Bible was read and psalms were sung during the entire day, and the liturgy observed strictly. According to Francesco Pesaro, the Castel Sant'Angelo reminded him of a monastery when he recalled the situation on the inside. He wrote to Venice that,

“[o]gni zorno se salmizava in castello, et se diceva litanie, et tutte le hore de di et la nocte continuamente doi legeva el psalmist, et non mancava mai. El papa celebrava spesso et concesse una indulgenza amplissima, la copia di la qual mando qui alligata. Et il sorno di l'Asenzione, il Papa celebrò et comunicò di sua mano tutti li cardinali et prelati et altri que volseno. Et invero, ancora che fusseno molta zente in castello, pareva però che fusse unce religione, et molti cardinali et prelati celebravano spesso.”²⁶¹

To add extra emphasis, Clement also contrasted his penitential position with that of the emperor's coterie. When asked about the affairs of a Spanish man named Cobos, in ill favor at the imperial court for having offended a Spanish bishop, Clement replied by saying that he seemed to be a good Christian, who was repenting for his offence. However, “those who offended me do none.”²⁶² Furthermore, Clement persevered in his penance. The subsequent liberation and Clement's escape to Orvieto and Viterbo did not drastically alter his determination. As aforementioned the abstinence observed, sobriety of dietary practices, and absence of an apt cloth of state were invoked as forms of penitence. Furthermore, on Palm Sunday 1528, during the celebrations, Clement VII preached and prompted the present cardinals and prelates once again to change their lives and atone for their sins.²⁶³ Thus prayer and preaching were perfectly suited and central to Clement's penitential propaganda. They certainly gave the papal court a touch of piety that it was in desperate need of during the severest crisis it had endured during the Italian Wars. Simultaneously, papal penance eroded the self-confidence of the Catholic army and its commanders in their self-proclaimed role, and moved them to pity and even defiance of orders, as I will show later on. But first I will address the most far-reaching of papal reactions to adversity: the willingness to sacrifice their lives.

²⁵⁹ De Roo, *Material for a History of Pope Alexander VI*, vol. III, 177.

²⁶⁰ Duffy, *Saints & Sinners*, 203-204; Hans Cools, Catrien Santing & Hans de Valk (eds.), *Adrian VI: A Dutch Pope in a Roman Context* (Turnhout 2012).

²⁶¹ “Every day they celebrated [mass] in the castle, and they performed the litany, and each hour of the day and the night two persons continuously read the psalms, and never missing any. The pope celebrated often and granting an elaborate indulgence, a copy of which is attached. And on Ascension Day the pope celebrated and all the cardinals and prelates and everyone who wanted received communion from his hands. And truly, there were many people in the castle, yet it seemed like a monastic order, and many cardinals and prelates celebrated often.” Sanuto, XLVI, 132.

²⁶² *CSPSPA*, vol. III, part 2, 245-261.

²⁶³ Sanuto, XLVII, 235.

Crusader and Martyrdom Rhetoric

The idea of martyrdom was given shape in early Christendom, when Christians were persecuted heavily under several Roman emperors. Christians had to invent a narrative that enabled them to make sense of the merciless persecutions, crucifixions and burnings. Martyrdom, according to Johan Leemans, became regarded as the *imitatio Christi* par excellence in early Christianity through the reenactment of Christ's death, which played a central role in thought on salvation.²⁶⁴ As Glen Bowersock has argued, Christian martyrdom was shaped in the Greco-Roman world and its customs: the phenomenon was decidedly urban, dependent on the application of Roman law, and preferably a public spectacle. Stories of sacrifice had long circulated in the Classical world, but never before had self-sacrifice "been absorbed into a conceptual system of posthumous recognition and anticipated reward."²⁶⁵ It is the coupling of self-sacrifice for the faith with reward in the hereafter that made martyrdom such a powerful and lasting element of Christian life. But even during the period of persecution of Christians the idea of martyrdom became problematic. Tertullian relates of a Roman proconsul Arrius Antonius who was harassed by a group of pious Christians. Without prior provocation or accusation the mob encouraged the governor to strictly apply the regulations against anyone unwilling to sacrifice to the emperor, namely themselves. Obliging the proconsul put to death several of the ringleaders, only prompting the remaining members of the group to beg for the same fate. In exasperation the governor shouted out that if they wanted to die, they should throw themselves off a cliff or hang themselves with a rope.²⁶⁶ Thus from an early era there was a tension inherent between martyrdom as an exalted acceptance of persecution and death by the hands of others and voluntary martyrdom bordering on suicide.

The removal of a persecuting government was a further impetus to adapt the notion of martyrdom to the changed political circumstances. Some historians have even argued that the notion of martyrdom completely vanished together with persecuting governments during the Middle Ages, only to reappear after the Reformation.²⁶⁷ Research therefore has focused largely on the resurfacing of martyrdom during the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.²⁶⁸ Nevertheless, the cult of the martyrs remained an intrinsic part of Catholic devotion during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, although there were very few canonized medieval martyrs, many of them were persecuted martyr-bishops such as Thomas Becket, who died at the hands of monarchical powers. As saints the martyrs played an indispensable role in mediating between God and his faithful flock of believers. Plays and items of devotion deeply embedded the idea of martyrdom in the Renaissance society and placed extra emphasis on the role suffering played in obtaining it. Marla Carlson argues that "[f]or the medieval Christians, compassion did not entail an obligation to alleviate the suffering of others; instead, it constituted an obligation to suffer with Christ and the

²⁶⁴ Johan Leemans, "Introduction", in Johan Leemans (ed.), *More than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity* (Leuven 2005) xi-xvi.

²⁶⁵ Glen Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge 1995) 5.

²⁶⁶ Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, *Ad Scapulam*, V (Turnhout 1954), cited in Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome*, 4.

²⁶⁷ Euan Cameron, *Interpreting Christian History: The Challenge of the Churches' Past* (Malden 2005) 75.

²⁶⁸ Peter Burschel, *Sterben und Unsterblichkeit: Zur Kultur des Martyriums in der frühen Neuzeit* (Munich 2004); Alice Daily, *The English Martyr from Reformation to Revolution* (Notre Dame 2012); Brad Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1999).

²⁶⁹ Gregory, *Salvation at Stake*, 31-50.

saints.²⁷⁰ In a context where death at the hand of a persecuting government was unavailable suffering could still function as an *imitatio Christi*. It is this context that enabled inexplicable medical phenomena such as stones in the kidney or bladder to become markers for holiness through the suffering they produced, rather than their miraculous occurrence.²⁷¹

Here the line between self-inflicted suffering through penitential acts and suffering induced by external factors is thin. It would seem that suffering induced by external factors was credited as being closer to the suffering of the martyrs than self-induced suffering. Thus Clement's penance did not raise as much dismay as tales of his suffering at the hands of the imperial army. The stories of the atrocities circulated quickly via the network of clerics throughout Europe. For example, Clement sent Gregory di Casale to France and England to explain his '*calamitas*.'²⁷² Clement himself also used rhetoric and painted a vivid picture of the atrocities he had to endure, thereby emphasizing his suffering and equating himself with Christian martyrs.²⁷³ In an intelligent move, the bull *Cum nos* of 15 July 1527 also placed the possibility of his death center-piece. The bull was devised as a solution for a potential vacancy, were Clement to die in prison, a possibility that could not be discarded when the outbreak of plague in Rome spread to Castel Sant'Angelo. Yet Clement was well aware that his death in prison would be widely regarded as an outrage and had the potential to create a martyr of him. The prospect had already stopped the imperial army from storming the castle walls and they also refrained from attempting to blast them, eschewing the possibility of "a pope and a flock of cardinals blown into the air by fire."²⁷⁴ A martyr-pope and a looming schism were serious threats to imperial authority and to the unity of Christendom. Thus, when rumors were spread that Lutheran *lanzknights* were planning on storming the castle and murdering the pope, the imperial commanders reacted swiftly by placing a Spanish Catholic guard to prevent disaster.²⁷⁵ Clement had obviously touched a sensitive nerve.

There was another way to obtain salvation in the Middle Ages: the Crusades. Historians now agree that the idea of crusade must not be limited to the fight against Muslims in the Middle East, but applied to a variety of different movements and events that took place on the periphery of Christendom but also in the very heart of it, resulting in violence against non-Christians, whether Jews, Saracens or Cathar heretics.²⁷⁶ To explain how violence could become a self-righteous religious act we have to go back to the eleventh century. During the eleventh century a connection was established that allowed warfare to function as penance and death in battle against the infidel as a way to martyrdom.²⁷⁷ Furthermore, papal dispensations were indispensable for participation in a crusade to function as a penitential pilgrimage.²⁷⁸ This gave the popes an enormous increase in

²⁷⁰ Marla Carlson, *Performing Bodies in Pain: Medieval and Post-Modern Martyrs, Mystics and Artists* (New York 2010) 43.

²⁷¹ Jetze Touber, "Stones in the Internal Organs as Liminal Phenomena between Medical and Religious Knowledge in Renaissance Italy", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 74 (2013) 23-44.

²⁷² *State Papers*, vol. IV, part 2, 1438.

²⁷³ For example, Clement VII to Charles V 11 January 1528, Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, 257; Clement VII to King João III of Portugal 28 October 1526, ASV Arm. XLIV, 9, ff. 477^v-478^r; Clement VII to Henry VIII, *Letters and Papers*, vol. IV, part 2, 404.

²⁷⁴ Cited in Hook, *The sack of Rome*, 186.

²⁷⁵ De Veyre to Charles V 30 September 1527, Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, 249; Sanuto, XLVI, 289.

²⁷⁶ Marcus Bull, "Crusade and Conquest", in Miri Rubin & Walter Simons (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity Volume 4: Christianity in Western Europe c.1100-c.1500* (Cambridge 2009) 340-352.

²⁷⁷ *Idem*, 343.

²⁷⁸ Anthony Perron, "The bishops of Rome, 1100-1300", in Rubin & Simons, *The Cambridge History of Christianity Volume 4*, 22-38.

power and standing during the period of the crusades, which contributed to their real or perceived primacy in Western Christendom. Although temporarily, crusades could stop the intermittent warfare between Christians and channel their military power against a common enemy. It is therefore easy to see how crusading rhetoric could be used to advantage by the Renaissance popes. First of all it showed their pious willingness to support an endeavor that would defend the interests of the Catholic faith. Secondly, it could stop inter-Christian warfare, in which, hypocritically, they were often involved themselves. And thirdly, because dispensations for a crusade could only be bestowed by the Holy See – as well as several taxes on clerical property such as the *crusada* in Spain – it allowed them to regain their position of power.²⁷⁹

Crusading rhetoric was therefore a well-used propaganda medium during the Renaissance papacy. The crusader idea was still very much alive during the second half of the fifteenth century. The endeavors for a new crusade dominated the pontificate of Pope Calixtus III de Borja, uncle of Alexander VI.²⁸⁰ His successor, Pope Pius II, even showed more zeal for the crusading enterprise, wishing to lead the crusade in person. Pius scorned the reluctant College of Cardinals, when asked how an old priest weighed down with a thousand ills would win a battle together with a flock of cardinals that could hardly endure the sound of drums and trumpets, and exhorted them:

“We must change to paths long disused. We must ask by what means our elders won for us this far-flung rule of the Church and employ those. For a principate is easily kept by the same means that won it in the beginning. Abstinence, purity, innocence, zeal for the Faith, religious fervor, scorn of death, eagerness for martyrdom, have set the Church of Rome over the whole world. Peter and Paul were the first to dedicate it by the glory of martyrdom. Then there followed one after another a long series of popes who were dragged off to heathen tribunals and while they accused false gods and openly confessed Christ as the true and supreme God met death by the most agonizing tortures.”²⁸¹

It is clear how penance, martyrdom and an appeal to papal predecessors were employed by Pius II to justify his desire to lead the crusade in person, interestingly during a period Pius was faced with great adversity and heavily criticized. In the end, however, he did not succeed in gaining support from the European princes and he died at Ancona on 14 August 1464 before being able to embark on the Venetian fleet that would sail him and his army to the Holy Land.²⁸²

Temporal leaders were equally inclined to use crusader rhetoric to their advantage. Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, intended to lead an army to the Holy Land in the fifteenth century and Emperor Charles V regarded his capture of Tunis as part of a holy war against the Turk.²⁸³ King Charles VIII of France tried to legitimize his capture of the Kingdom of Naples by arguing he would use his newly acquired lands in the fight against the Turks, for the exaltation and propagation of Christianity.²⁸⁴ The Turkish threat as well as the crusading ideal thus remained more than a dead

²⁷⁹ Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453-1505* (Oxford 2012) 71-72.

²⁸⁰ Pastor, I, 679-711; Hollingsworth, *The Borgias*, 52-59.

²⁸¹ Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, *Memoirs of a Renaissance Pope: The Commentaries of Pius II* (London 1960) 357-358.

²⁸² Pastor, II, 273-286.

²⁸³ Fernand Vanhemelryck, *Europa tegen de Turken: de kruistocht van Filips de Goede* (Leuven 2009) 23-52; James Tracy, *Emperor Charles V's Crusades against Tunis and Algiers: Appearance and Reality* (Minneapolis 2001) 1-32.

²⁸⁴ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 118; Philippe de Commines, *Mémoires* (Geneva 2007) vol. I, 543-544.

letter during our period and profoundly influenced politics and culture.²⁸⁵ The topic appeared not only in theater, but also in literature. The setting of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, a work started around 1506 and composed at the Este court of Ferrara, is the invasion of the Saracens in Europe and Charlemagne's attempts to stop them. Because the epic was written at a time when an Ottoman invasion of Italy or the Holy Roman Empire still seemed imminent it gained extra significance. In the first canto of *Orlando Furioso* the topic of courtly love is fused with the fight against the infidel:

*"Nata pochi dì inanzi era una gara
tra il conte Orlando e il suo cugin Rinaldo;
che ambi avean per la bellezza rara
d'amoroso disio l'animo caldo.
Carlo, che non avea tal lite cara,
che gli rendea l'aiuto lor men saldo,
questa donzella, che la causa n'era,
tolse, e diè in mano al duca di Bavera;*

*in premio promettendola a quel d'essi
ch'in quel conflitto, in quella gran giornata,
degli infideli più copia uccidessi,
e di sua man prestassi opra più grata.
Contrari ai voti poi furo i successi;
ch'in fuga andò la gente battezzata,
e con molti altri fu 'l duca prigionero,
e restò abbandonato il padiglione."*²⁸⁶

Likewise the crusades were a topic in Rabelais' *Gargantua et Pantagruel*, although the practice of indulgences was ridiculed by Cardinal du Bellay's physician.²⁸⁷ Crusading rhetoric therefore resonated with deeply embedded cultural ideas and could strengthen the idea that the pope was pious and willing to sacrifice his life for Church and religion. Simultaneously, crusader rhetoric could function as a means to reappropriate their leading role in a united Christendom.

Alexander VI grasped the power of crusader and martyrdom rhetoric and early in his pontificate staged a play *Fernandus Servatus* for the Spanish ambassadors in which Ferdinand of

²⁸⁵ Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City*, 153-192.

²⁸⁶ "A quarrel had arisen a few days earlier between Count Orlando and his cousin Rinaldo, for both of them were aflame with love for this ravishing beauty. Charles, who could not abide this conflict, which rendered them questionable allies, gave this damsel, the cause of the quarrel, into the keeping of Namo, Duke of Bavaria; and promised her as a prize to whichever of the two slaughtered the greater number of Infidels and wrought him the worthiest assistance in the vital conflict of that day. The outcome, however, was not in keeping with their prayers: the ranks of the baptized were put to flight, and among the many captives was the duke, whose tent was abandoned." Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso* (Brescia 1971) 48; Ludovico Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Guido Waldman (Oxford 1974) 2.

²⁸⁷ Rabelais, *Gargantua en Pantagruel*, 244-245, 329-330.

Spain's struggle in the war against Islam played a central role.²⁸⁸ But it was especially during the French invasion of Italy that, in answer to the providential role appropriated by Charles and his army, the rhetoric played an important role in Alexander's attempts to secure his person and papacy. In April 1494 Alexander countered the crusader aspirations of Charles VIII by announcing he would personally participate, like Pope Pius II, in a crusade provided Charles, Emperor Maximilian and Ferdinand of Spain would all take part.²⁸⁹ When the army of Charles VIII approached Rome and Alexander was visited by Cardinal Ascanio Sforza on 2 November 1494 to convince him to give up his resistance, the Pope retorted back to martyrdom rhetoric and answered he would rather lose his crown, his principality, and his life than give up his alliance with Alfonso of Naples. When Pandolfo Collenuccio, envoy of the Duke of Ferrara, attempted the same, he too received the answer that Alexander would leave Rome or lose everything, even his life, rather than become the slave of the King of France.²⁹⁰ By showing his willingness to die in harness, Alexander burdened his adversary with a prospect that must have been very appalling. When his situation became even more perilous, Alexander, in an interesting but ineffective move, suddenly ordered Cardinal Peraudi to meet Charles VIII and propose a meeting *extramuros* to discuss the preparations for Charles's crusade. Although the French King refused, this move placed his aspirations for a crusade, and the possession of Cem, brother of Sultan Bajazet II, who was held in Rome as hostage, at the center of the negotiations.²⁹¹ Although the investiture of Naples remained equally intertwined with the idea of a new crusade, because the investiture of the kingdom was accompanied by a claim to the Kingdom of Jerusalem, the emphasis on Charles's crusading aspirations did provide an opening for mutual reconciliation. Alexander returned to his offer of leading a crusade in person in 1500 and 1502 as well, but the project never materialized.²⁹²

After Alexander's pontificate the crusader idea gradually lost its appeal. The internecine Italian Wars slowly eroded hopes for unified Christian action. Julius II did lead his army in person, but against fellow Christians rather than the infidel. Furthermore, the Renaissance papacy lacked the military prowess, the financial resources and the spiritual authority to play the role of instigator of a crusade effectively. Clement VII did use crusader rhetoric shortly before and after the Colonna raid and during his imprisonment in Castel Sant'Angelo, but he does not seem to have had the intention of participating himself.²⁹³ In fact, his rhetoric was most likely meant as an encouragement to achieve peace between the major Christian powers by emphasizing the danger of an external common enemy. Paul III's encounter with Charles V and his crusading army might have tempered his enthusiasm early on. Furthermore, Paul was more concerned with the deepening rift within Christendom, assisting Charles V in the Holy Roman Empire in his fight against the Schmalkadic League with a papal army led by his grandson Ottavio Farnese. The crusading ideal and the role of the papacy were played out and, although it shortly resurfaced during the naval preparations that would lead to the Battle of Lepanto of 1571, the victory was appropriated by the powers who

²⁸⁸ Hartmut Beyer, "Drama and Diplomacy in Papal Rome under Alexander VI", in Jan Bloemendal, Peter Eversmann & Elsa Strietman (eds.), *Drama, Performance and Debate: Theatre and Public Opinion in the Early Modern Period* (Leiden 2013) 35-56.

²⁸⁹ Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453-1505*, 99.

²⁹⁰ Pastor, III, 400.

²⁹¹ De Commynes, *Mémoires*, vol. I, 575.

²⁹² Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453-1505*, 99.

²⁹³ Clement VII to Francis I and Henry VIII 18 November 1526, ASV Arm. XXXIX, 56, ff. 30^r-30^v; Du Bellay, *Memoires*, f. 106^r; Clement VII to Charles V 30 July 1526, ASV Arm. XLIV, 8, ff. 117^r-119^r; Caracciolo to Charles V 3 November 1526, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 989-1002.

contributed most, Venice and Spain, further diminishing the role of the papacy as a unifying force.²⁹⁴ No pope after Alexander VI would suggest that he would personally lead a crusade and die a martyr's death at the hand of the infidel.

The effect and ineffectiveness of papal propaganda

It is particularly difficult to determine whether papal propaganda had any effect. It is hard to establish a causal relation between papal propaganda on one hand and the reactions of others. The evidence from source material is circumstantial, as historical processes are rarely guided by the inevitability of natural laws only to be rediscovered. There was a contingency in perception of the contemporaries, who not only differed in how they perceived the events, but also how they reacted. Nevertheless, their reaction, or, in fact, inactivity, can provide the historian with insight into the effectiveness of papal propaganda. But to complicate matters even further, two processes seem to have taken place. The effects of papal propaganda were often accompanied by an automatic reaction of indignation once the pope's position became perilous. Or in the words of King Ferdinand of Aragon and Queen Isabella of Castile when they wrote to King Henry VII of England in 1495 to form a league against King Charles VIII: "He [Alexander VI] had (...) only written to them, asking them to write to the other Christian Princes [for succour]. But even that was not necessary, as every good Christian would hasten to assist the Pope without being asked to do so, as soon as he knew that the Pope was in danger."²⁹⁵ This raises the question what had led the King and Queen of Spain to assist the Pope militarily. Alexander's call for help or merely his precarious situation?

One of the other peculiar effects that took place was that blame was hardly ever put on the persons in power. If an error was made, no matter how capital, automatic assumption was that it was bad council that was responsible. Thus, not Clement VII was to blame for pursuing a policy that would in the end lead to his military humiliation and its accompanying horrors, but the whisperings of his ministers and the Orsini were the reason he chose so unwisely a course – and bad council caused much trouble.²⁹⁶ Similarly, not Charles V was responsible for the Sack of Rome, or even his general the Duc de Bourbon, but it was the army's own idea to march onto Rome when payment was in arrears.²⁹⁷ That the responsibility of the payments made rested with the Emperor, who consciously kept his army underpaid before, during and even after the Sack of Rome, was mentioned mainly by his adversaries.²⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Alarcón wrote in a letter to Charles V that he had "to bear in mind that he owes it to God (*lo que se deve á Dios*) and to his own reputation and fame so to provide for the wants of the army that there be no excuses for the murders, violence, and plunder which have been committed by his soldiers, and are likely to continue and increase," were the situation of underpayment to last in Rome.²⁹⁹ Arguably, negation of responsibility was a tactic employed by early modern princes to some extent and accordingly Charles V even denied the responsibility of the Colonna raid to his family members, whereas in reality he had known and approved of the idea. The ministers were of course far easier to blame than either a pope or an emperor, and by shielding the

²⁹⁴ See the poems in Elizabeth Wright, Sarah Spence & Andrew Lemons (eds.), *The Battle of Lepanto* (Cambridge 2014).

²⁹⁵ Ferdinand & Isabella to Henry VII 20 July 1495, *CSPSpa*, vol. I, 57-66.

²⁹⁶ "un mal consejo causa muchos males." *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 228-245.

²⁹⁷ Idem, vol. III, part 2, 525-544.

²⁹⁸ Du Bellay, *Memoires*, f. 110^r.

²⁹⁹ Alarcón to Charles V 1 December 1527, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 477-494.

highest authorities from blame, openings for reconciliation remained present. It is in this regard that we must read Clement's letter of 11 January 1528 to Charles V, in which he states that "[i]t is now evident that it was owing to the Imperial ministers not placing that trust in him [Clement], which his friendly conduct towards the Emperor deserved, that matters took the wretched turn they did."³⁰⁰

To establish the effects or ineffectiveness of papal propaganda during moments of severe crisis we have to distinguish between different groups that were addressed. If we look at the reaction of the citizens of Rome, the Renaissance popes' pleas seem to have fallen largely on deaf ears. Just before the Sack of Rome, Pope Clement VII sent three cardinals – Farnese, Orsini and Cesarini, not coincidentally all of Roman origin – to the Campidoglio to ask for help and money.³⁰¹ There are some sources that claim that the populace of Rome came to the defense of its pontiff in great numbers during the Sack of Rome.³⁰² But Cellini's diary, for example, can hardly be regarded as a trustworthy source. In his diary he also claims to have been the person who killed the Charles III de Bourbon and wounded Philibert de Châlon, Prince d'Orange.³⁰³ It is therefore best to discard his claim that thirty thousand Roman took up arms in defense of His Holiness. According to other sources, few men actually responded to the call for help, and most of them were rather "*artigiani, servitori, e altre vilissime persone, non consuete a sentire, con le armi in mano, non dico le artigliere, ma i tamburi.*"³⁰⁴ The Roman populace was equally reluctant in rallying to the papal cause when the Colonna and Don Ugo invaded Rome scarcely a year before.³⁰⁵ Some even rallied to the imperial cause, screaming "*Imperiu, Imperiu, libertas, libertas, Coluna, coluna.*"³⁰⁶ In 1494 the reaction of most Romans seemed to be equally indifferent. Although Giovio argues that the Roman populace took up arms, it could very well be in self-defense, as the possibility of a deposed pope and a vacant see could not be entirely discarded yet.³⁰⁷ The periods of vacancy often were accompanied by a sudden rise in violence and often Rome was flooded by the armed retinues of its barons. Although prepared for violence, the populace was simultaneously reluctant to meddle in affairs politic. The reluctance of the general populace to interfere in high politics is understandable. Badly armed, untrained, and facing skilled and seasoned mercenaries, their chances of survival were low. With high chance of bodily mutilation or even death, readiness to die for a cause that was not theirs was low. After all, as some Romans argued in 1527, they were not the ones at war with the Emperor.³⁰⁸

The skilled and seasoned mercenaries seemed equally indifferent to the papal propaganda. It is possible that the intricacies of papal propaganda were not understood by the soldiers who lacked the education to understand the learned rhetoric. But it is more likely that the propaganda was not aimed at mercenaries who fought rather for money and survival, than for or against elated ideas on the papacy. Although there were many Lutherans in the imperial army who held desacralizing processions and Spanish troops had to be employed to safeguard the Pope against the Germans,

³⁰⁰ Clement VII to Charles V 11 January 1528, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 525-544.

³⁰¹ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 157-172; Cornelius de Fine writes that Clement himself went to the Capitol, BAV Ott. Lat. 1613, f. 95^r.

³⁰² Benvenuto Cellini, *Vita di Benvenuto Cellini* (Milan 1925) 33, 58; BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, ff. 100^v-104^r.

³⁰³ Cellini, *Vita di Benvenuto Cellini*, 59.

³⁰⁴ "artisans, servants and other vile persons, unused to hearing, with arms in hand, artillery, let alone the drums." Guicciardini in Milanese, *Sacco*, 172-173.

³⁰⁵ *Idem*, 66; *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 927-937; see also the letters by Domenego Venier and Marin Poggio, Sanuto, XLII, 700-704, 723, 727-728.

³⁰⁶ BAV Ott. Lat. 1613, f. 77^v.

³⁰⁷ "Romanoque populo arma capere" Giovio, *Historiarium sui temporis*, 23^r; Francesco Pesaro concludes the same for the Sack of Rome, Sanuto, XLVI, 129.

³⁰⁸ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 172-186.

there was no serious attempt to murder Clement. In fact, after the Sack of Rome, when the German and Spanish troops mutinied, they enforced the imprisonment of the Pope solely as a safeguard for their payment for a full eight months, against the will of their officers.³⁰⁹ The fact that they claimed hostages further proves it was mainly money that the soldiers were after, even after they had plundered the Eternal City and robbed Rome of its treasures. Curiously the providential aspirations of the armies seem to have been largely ascribed to it by contemporaries and adopted mainly by officials who possessed enough knowledge of politics and religion to effectively appropriate a divine role. Although this could merely indicate a lack of source material for the lower ranks of the army, it seems papal propaganda had to focus on the group that was both receptive to it, and who had the power to change the political landscape.

Thus Alexander VI focused his efforts on the King of France and his closest advisers. In the end, they were the ones who would decide on his fate. Due to the slander that has obscured the reputation of the Borgia Pope and his family, it is difficult to determine whether his acts of penance had much effect on contemporaries. What we can establish is that he used papal ceremonial to his benefit during King Charles VIII his stay in Rome. By constantly switching between showing favor by deviating from official ceremonial and rigidly applying it to buttress his authority Alexander achieved that his authority was maintained and office secured. Alexander VI maintained his position as universal pontiff, and managed during the subsequent discussions to divert his business with the French King from the pressing and dangerous issue of the investiture of Naples to relatively less important chatter on the Duchy of Ferrara and the status of its county Mirandola.³¹⁰ According to the French nobleman Philippe de Commines it was hardly surprising that Alexander managed to exert control over Charles VIII, "*car il estoit jeune et mal acompaigné pour conduire une si grand oeuvre que de reformer l'Eglise, dont il avoit bien le pouvoir, mais qu'il l'eust sceu bien faire.*"³¹¹

The foremost person Clement VII wanted to persuade in the imperial camp was of course the Emperor himself. Nevertheless, Charles V seemed hardly impressed by the several attempts made by Clement VII to convince him of the injustice done. In fact, Charles V equally tried to steer the perception of events by writing letters to the Roman populace, his fellow European princes and the cardinals. In these letters he placed blame entirely on Clement and his advisors, negated any responsibility, and argued the horrors were a just punishment of God, and the tales of the horrors perpetrated highly exaggerated. Many of his courtiers agreed. This is quite understandable as the courtiers surrounding the Emperor would risk their position by agreeing with the papal point of view. But many of the imperial adherents were sincere in their benevolence towards the imperial point of view of events. The adherence to their lord and patron of medieval and early modern courtiers could stretch principles and opinions to the extent of hypocrisy. Secretary Pérez, one of Charles's spokesmen in Rome argued in 1526, when Clement VII wanted to create cardinals for money, that it was justified to condemn this outrage by punishing the Pope before a general council.³¹² One year later, however, he seemed to have adhered to the idea that creating cardinals for money was a perfect solution for the papal lack of funds, as long as the money was intended for the imperial army

³⁰⁹ Idem, vol. III, part 2, 474-494.

³¹⁰ Cardinal San Severino to the Duke of Milan 17 January 1495 in ASV Carte Farnesiane 18, f. 5r.

³¹¹ "because he was [too] young and [too] badly accompanied to conduct such a large edifice as reforming the Church, for which he very well had the power, but did not know how to bring it about." De Commines, *Mémoires*, 574.

³¹² *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 1, 870-892.

and the cardinals created were Spanish or Neapolitan.³¹³ Furthermore, Pérez advocated that were peace made, “the Emperor may turn his victorious arms against the Infidel, and conquer their country until he reaches the holy shrine of Jerusalem, as is said in the prophecies.”³¹⁴ These prophecies were certainly recurrent at the imperial court.³¹⁵ The prophecies ensured that the Emperor’s actions received a spiritual significance and moral righteousness that could hardly be contested. Thus, most Spaniards agreed with their French and Italian counterparts that the Sack of Rome was God’s meddling in worldly affairs. Lope de Soria argued that

“[t]he sack of Rome must be looked upon as a visitation from God. He permitted that the Emperor – who is his most devoted servant and true Catholic Prince – should become the instrument of his vengeance, to teach his Vicar on Earth and the rest of the Christian Princes that their wicked purposes shall be defeated.”³¹⁶

The abbot of Najera, present in Rome, thought “[i]t was the sentence of God” and Charles was “to be Lord of Italy, as seems ordained by God.”³¹⁷ Thus, the men in the imperial camp could hardly condemn the events, just as adherents of the papal cause could hardly be antipathetic towards the papal point of view. In fact, both sides were caught up in a worldview that differed so much that it only seems to have collided at sword-point during the battles waged.³¹⁸ This resulted in a situation where promises made were simultaneously regarded as made under duress and therefore invalid by one side and their renouncement as an act of treachery by the other.³¹⁹ The enormous differences between the papal, imperial, French, and English points of view still merit more research.

Nevertheless, Clement’s propaganda does not seem to have been in vain entirely in the imperial camp. Some of the imperial officers seem to have been touched by Clement’s piety and the severity of his penitential conduct. Viceroy Charles de Lannoy worked on behalf of both Pope and Emperor to establish an armistice, but failed to convince either Bourbon, or his army, of the necessity. After the Sack he advised Charles V to take the Pope to the safety of Naples, out of the reach of the German Lutheran army, but Lannoy died of illness on 23 September 1527.³²⁰ His successor as viceroy of Naples, Ugo de Moncada also expressed his feelings of pity for the Pope and, ironically, also died soon afterwards in a naval battle near Naples on 28 May 1528.³²¹ A change of perception seems to have taken a hold slowly, especially in the Spanish camp of the imperial army.

³¹³ Idem, vol. III, part 2, 460-477.

³¹⁴ Idem, vol. III, part 2, 228-245

³¹⁵ J.M. Headley, “Rhetoric and Reality: Messianic, Humanist, and Civilian Themes in the Imperial Ethos of Gattinara”, in Marjorie Reeves (ed.), *Prophetic Rome in the High Renaissance Period* (Oxford 1992) 241-269; Francesca Cantù, “Profezia o designo politico? La circolazione di alcuni testi sull’Europa (1535-1542)” in Cantù & Visceglia, *L’Italia di Carlo V*, 41-62; Robert Finlay, “Prophecy and Politics in Istanbul: Charles V, Sultan Süleyman, and the Habsburg Embassy of 1533-1534”, *Journal of Early Modern History: Contacts, Comparisons, Contrasts* 2 (1998) 1-31.

³¹⁶ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 204-211.

³¹⁷ Idem, vol. III, part 2, 212-228.

³¹⁸ For a lengthy overview of Emperor Charles V’s political thought on his and the papacy’s role in Christianity at the start of the troubles, see his letters to Clement VII of 17 and 18 September 1526, *CSPSpa*, vol III, part 1, 892-900; for Clement VII’s justification of papal politics during the events, after his release from Castel Sant’Angelo, see his dispatch to Cardinal Farnese, *legatus a latere* to Charles V, idem, part 2, 508-525.

³¹⁹ Sanga wrote that in France and England general opinion was that the Pope could easily refute the *dishonesta capitulatione* that was enforced on him, and Gambara agreed. ASV Fondo Pio, 53, ff. 128^v-129^r.

³²⁰ Lannoy to Charles V 18 August 1527, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 323-338.

³²¹ Mallett & Shaw, *The Italian Wars*, 167.

Papal penance invalidated the idea that the army had been God's just scourge. In a letter of the abbot of Najera, who conducted negotiations with Clement, to Charles V we can see the first signs of doubt appearing. Although the abbot thought the army played a role in God's providential plan, he added "may those that executed it be counted not unworthy before Him."³²² To the abbot it seemed sure that it was God's wrath which had produced the sack, but he was not so sure whether the army could be regarded as God's just *flagellum*, and not as a bunch of bloodthirsty blasphemers. Francisco de Salazar was even less convinced. He wrote to Mercurino di Gattinara that the Sack of Rome "can no longer be ascribed to a miracle, unless it be that God permitted such a destruction as a punishment for the sins of these people."³²³ Furthermore, when Salazar entered Castel Sant'Angelo and saw Clement VII, he could not help crying at the lamentable sight of the pope's situation.³²⁴

Hernando de Alarcón, one of the imperial generals in Rome, likewise started to doubt the providential nature of the sack. He started to question the Christian morals of his henchmen and rebuked the Spaniards for their un-catholic behavior towards Pope and populace.³²⁵ According to Jacopo Buonaparte this had some effect on the Spaniards, who recognized that the Romans were fellow Christians.³²⁶ Nevertheless, it was Alarcón who became burdened, to his great consternation, with being the papal prison guard, despite having urged Emperor Charles V, contrary to Lannoy's advice, to set the Pope free.³²⁷ Alarcón received support from the Marquis de Astorga, but for the moment Clement remained in captivity in Rome. Also, Alarcón refused to take Clement to Gaeta, Naples or Spain, exclaiming "God forbid that I should be the man to take the Vicar of Christ to prison," according to Pierre de Veyre, who himself was convinced of "[l]e plus grant bien que je crois qui nous resulterat de la liberte du pape."³²⁸ Alarcón's statements, actions and prayers for the release of the Pope, which he regarded as rightful heir to the throne of Saint Peter, seem to hint that Clement's conduct worked on the man, who, as his custodian, observed the pontiff's penitential and pious actions daily.³²⁹ In the end, after eight long months of captivity, it was Alarcón who, without explicit orders from Charles V and against the wishes of the imperial army, arranged Clement's escape from Castel Sant'Angelo early in December. By night, and with connivance of only a few officers, Alarcón set in motion his plan and the disguised pontiff escaped from the mausoleum that had served him both as protection and as prison on 6 December 1527, eight months after he had entered.³³⁰ Escorted by Luigi Gonzaga, it remained unclear for several days where the Pope would flee to, but after a couple of days news was received that Clement chose Orvieto as his place of exile.³³¹ Still, to many it was clear that "*la liberation fusse in nome ma non in effecto.*"³³²

³²² *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 211-228.

³²³ *Idem*, vol. III, part 2, 186-204.

³²⁴ *Idem*, vol. III, part 2, 228-245.

³²⁵ "il signor Alarcone heri gli fece un bellissimo parlamento, nel quale gli raccordi che, essendo christiani, quanto de ignominia li era a tenir un Papa pregione." Sanuto, XLVI, 296; ASV Fondo Pio, 53, f. 123^v-124^r.

³²⁶ Buonaparte in Milanese, *Sacco*, 361; see also Marquis de Astorga to Charles V 26 September 1527, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 396-412.

³²⁷ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 323-338.

³²⁸ "que dieu pardoint, a Alarcon, que il lament; mes james ne nast voulu prendre la charge, disant que j'adieu ne plust que il amendst le corps de dieu en prison." De Veyre to Charles V 30 September 1527, Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, 251; see also *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 396-412.

³²⁹ Sanuto XLV, 416; Clement VII also provided his relative Lupo de Alarcón with benefices on 1 July 1527, ASV Arm. XL, 17, f. 142^r.

³³⁰ *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2, 508-525; Buonaparte in Milanese, *Sacco*, 404-405; Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 307-309, 333-334.

³³¹ Clement VII to Francis I 28 January 1528, BAV Barb. Lat. 2059, ff. 1^r-2^r.

Another group at which papal propaganda was aimed were military or potential allies. Alexander VI managed to create the Holy League of 1495, officially to fight the Ottomans, but in practice to oust the French from Italy.³³² But the reasons Spain, the Emperor, Venice, Milan and England joined the league were not always a direct result of Alexander's effective propaganda. The gist of the matter was that all its members feared French military strength. They were thus united rather by animosity towards a common enemy than by the desire to strengthen the papacy. And those members who did intend to provide succor to Pope Alexander might have done so out of principle rather than as an effect of papal propaganda. The same fear of French domination of Italy united Pope Julius with Venice, Spain, the Emperor and England in the Holy League of 1511. Although his beard might have symbolized his determination, it is doubtful whether it contributed much to the military assistance he received.

Clement VII was more successful in his appeals to fellow monarchs. His lamentations seem to have effected indignation throughout Europe. After he was captured in Castel Sant'Angelo and news of his perilous situation and of the atrocities that he had to observe and endure had reached France, Francis I send a large army into Italy to rescue the Pope under the command of Odet de Foix, Comte de Lautrec.³³⁴ Simultaneously King Henry VIII of England declared war on Charles V, expressly mentioning the liberation of the Pope.³³⁵ Both monarchs had other reasons too such as fear for imperial control of the papacy. Especially Henry VIII, who desperately wanted to divorce his wife, Catherine of Aragon, aunt of Charles V, feared rightly that a rapprochement between Clement and Charles would inevitably thwart his divorce plans. Francis certainly had dynastic interests of his own as well. Lautrec's army could, after having liberated Clement in Rome, march into the Kingdom of Naples virtually unopposed, while Charles's other army was pinned down in besieged Milan. But the sudden sense of urgency for military action seems to have been largely the result of Clement's situation, although it is again difficult to differentiate between the effects of papal propaganda and an automatic reaction of indignation. In any case, Anglo-French military actions put pressure on Emperor Charles V to release Clement, and Clement gained an invaluable asset for the ongoing delicate negotiations in Rome. In fact, shortly after Clement had set up his court at Orvieto, Francis sent Cardinal Cybo to Lautrec, ordering him to march from the Romagna toward Orvieto.³³⁶ But Charles V was not only pressurized militarily.

The clergy in Europe seems to have sympathized with the imprisoned Pope. The channels through which the clergy received news from the situation in Rome might have been severely influenced by papal propaganda, but it is also possible that clerics more than laymen felt that violence had been inflicted unto the body of the Church, of which they were part. The receptiveness to papal propaganda was also higher than that of their lay brethren. Penance and biblical allegations must have evoked a different reaction with clerics than with laymen as they were important elements in the daily life of the former. Thus, the clergy in France and England showed their support

³³² "it was a liberation only in name, not reality." Cardinal Pisani to Alvise Pisani, Sanuto, XLVI, 368; see also Gasparo Contarini to Senate 18 May 1528, Alberi, *Relazioni*, vol. III, 260-261.

³³³ Reinhardt, *Alexander VI. Borgia*, 116-117.

³³⁴ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1876; BAV Barb. Lat. 2799, f. 130^r; Sanga to Clement VII June 1527, ASV Fondo Pio 53, ff. 119^r-121^r; Sanuto, XLVI, 178-179, 193; Doge and Senate to Pisani and Vitturi 13 June 1527, *Calendar of State Papers, Venice*, vol. IV, 66-69. (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/search/series/cal-state-papers--venice> Accessed on 21-6-2015)(Henceforth: *CSPVen*).

³³⁵ Iñigo de Mendoza to Charles V 15 November 1527, *CSPSpa*, vol. III, part 2,

³³⁶ Du Bellay, *Memoires*, 109^r.

for Clement VII by instigating a period of fasting and prayer.³³⁷ Also, the clergy of England wrote a letter to Charles V pressing for the pope's release.³³⁸ But Charles's own clergy in Spain was equally relentless in their support for the Pope, requesting the Emperor to liberate God's Vicar on Earth.³³⁹ Although letters in name of the entire clergy of a kingdom not necessarily imply unanimity amongst them, they do show that strong support for the papal cause was present even in countries formally ruled by Charles V. Furthermore, resentment of Charles's policy was widespread in Spain. Francesco Guicciardini wrote that not just Francis and Henry wanted the liberation of Clement, but also "*tutti i regni di Spagna, i quali, e principalmente i prelati e i signori, detestavano molto che dallo imperadore romano, protettore e avvocato della Chiesa, fusse, con tanta ignominia di tutta la cristianità, tenuto in carcere quello che rappresentava la persona di Cristo in terra.*"³⁴⁰ Even someone as critical of the papacy as Marcello Alberini wrote of Charles V that "*non è più crudele, più empio, più iniquo, più scelerato, più heretico, più perfido, et più infidele.*"³⁴¹ Clement, however, seems to have saved at least part of his reputation. Although he was criticized for his meddling in worldly affairs and his notorious indecision, papal propaganda succeeded in portraying him as a pious pope. Vettori argued that Clement "*è vissuto sempre religiosamente e prudente quanto un altro uomo. Non vende li benefizj, dice ogni giorno il suo officio con devozione; alieno da ogni peccato carnale, sobrio nel bere e mangiare, dà ottimo esempio di sè.*"³⁴² Vettori had close connections to the Medici and cannot be regarded as a truly neutral author, but as Clement's piety impressed Venetian and Spanish observers as well, his actions were far from ineffective.

There is one final group on which papal propaganda seems to have had some effect. Although Francesco Maria della Rovere was unmoved by the downfall of the dynasty that had not much earlier wanted to wrest him from his Duchy of Urbino,³⁴³ many of his generals were discontented with his inactivity. Although it is difficult to establish to what extent Clement's conduct played a role, we do know that some communication existed between Castel Sant'Angelo and the military camp of the League.³⁴⁴ Luigi Guicciardini and Paolo Giovio relate of a daring escape attempt that was probably arranged by letters that were secretly smuggled to and from Castel Sant'Angelo. Federico Gonzaga da Bozzolo and Michele Antonio del Vasto, Marchese di Saluzzo, and some 150 lances reached the outer walls of the Borgo, but faced heavy resistance and had to retreat.³⁴⁵ Likewise, Pier Maria de' Rossi and Alessandro Vitello attempted to rescue the Pope from his incarceration by night, again with the same result.³⁴⁶ These attempts seem to have inspired and more generals urged Della Rovere to pursue the efforts to liberate Clement VII. Marcello Alberini and

³³⁷ Cardinals Wolsey, Bourbon, Salviati, Lorraine and Duprat to Clement VII, *State Papers*, vol. IV, part 2, 1557.

³³⁸ *Idem*, vol. IV, part 2, 1558.

³³⁹ Pastor, V, 310-311.

³⁴⁰ "all the kingdoms of Spain, which, and principally the prelates and lords, much detested that because of the Roman Emperor, protector and defender of the Church, he who represented the person of Christ in the world was held in jail, to great disgrace to all of Christianity." Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1876; see also BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, ff. 114^v-115^r; Andrea Navagero to Senate 17 June 1527, *CSPVen*, vol. IV, 66-69.

³⁴¹ "no-one is more cruel, more impious, more iniquitous, more guilty, more heretical, more perfidious, and more infidelious." Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 320.

³⁴² "lived more religious and prudent than any other man. He did not sell benefices, said his offices every day with devotion, was a stranger to all carnal sins, sober in drink and food, the ultimate example to all." Vettori in Milanese, *Sacco*, 459-460.

³⁴³ Cecil Clough, "Clement VII and Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino", in Gouwens & Reiss, *The pontificate of Clement VII*, 75-108.

³⁴⁴ Hook, *The Sack of Rome*, 186-187.

³⁴⁵ Guicciardini in Milanese, *Sacco*, 213-214 Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of our Time*, 145-147.

³⁴⁶ Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1865.

Patrizio de' Rossi explicitly mention Guido Rangoni, who attempted to overtake the imperial army shortly before the Sack of Rome with 500 horsemen and save Clement, and Luigi Guicciardini also mentions that Orazio Baglione, who was inside Castel Sant'Angelo's walls, and Gentile Baglioni pressed for military action.³⁴⁷ Despite all pressure from his military commanders, Della Rovere remained adamant in his refusal to attack Rome, despite the fact that the pillaging army there would not have stood a chance if they were suddenly surprised. Thus, although Clement's propaganda might have affected some officers, it did not produce an effect with the man in command of the army of the League. Thus papal propaganda had its limitations. It was unable to effectively reach all desired groups nor did it always produce the desired effects.

Conclusion

In general we can conclude that throughout the late fifteenth and first half of the sixteenth century the position of the popes was often precarious. Their powerbase in Rome was notoriously unstable due to the presence of powerful noble clans and the Papal States still largely controlled by local rulers impervious to pontifical authority. In that regard the conclusions in this thesis agree with the latest scholarship on the Papal States. In the unstable political context of the Italian Wars these local conflicts became entangled with larger European politics. The appearance of French, Spanish and imperial armies on the stage transformed the Italian Wars into a flux of unpredictable events that gave rise to the papacy's largest crises. But these crises were not solely military in nature. Exposed to the threat of conciliarism, which recurred throughout the period, the papacy's spiritual standing was equally prone to subversion. Military adversity often went hand in hand with prophecies and providential aspirations that were seditious and potentially dangerous to both pope and pontifical office. This was the case during the French invasion of 1494 during the papacy of Alexander VI Borgia, and to some extent also during the French invasions during the papacy of Julius II Della Rovere. But the epitome of papal crisis was the Sack of Rome and its precursor a year earlier when the Colonna attacked Rome during the papacy of Clement VII de' Medici. Although all popes had reason to fear during their crises, they had at their disposal several propagandistic measures.

Historical and biblical precedents could be appropriated and utilized by the Renaissance popes as propaganda. Historical precedents, especially those of papal predecessors, could demarcate who was right and who was wrong. Framing events as a repetition of earlier ones enabled the popes to steer the mnemonics of the events in the preferred direction. Also, references to biblical precedents carried strong moral connotations and by referring to them the Renaissance popes could gain to moral high ground. The Renaissance reading of the Bible provided ample opportunity to appropriate its narratives and attach new meaning to them. By appropriating biblical tales and comparing their precarious situation and their pious conduct to these tales the popes could attempt to influence the widespread discussion on their conduct and situation and improve their reputation.

Ceremony could function as a means to reestablish and reaffirm papal authority by adhering to ceremonial precedents that had secured the precedence of the popes above their fellow monarchs. But deviations from ceremony often acquired a distinctive meaning precisely because they disobeyed expectations and were employed as an act of personal favor. Ceremony could therefore be rigidly applied or deviated from according to the requirements of the circumstances. This politico-religious theater thus reinforced the papal authority. The same goal could be obtained

³⁴⁷ Alberini, *Il Sacco di Roma*, 266; BAV Urb. Lat. 1678, f. 107r; Guicciardini in Milanese, *Sacco*, 215.

by doing penance. Throughout the Middle Ages penance had had a public nature and was therefore especially suited as political theater. Furthermore, the importance of the sacrament of penance had only increased in Christian thought. Penance consisted of three different stages: contrition, confession and penitential acts. Tears as a sign of true contrition were shed a lot at the papal court. And although it is difficult to establish how papal confession functioned, we do know that several popes utilized penitential acts such as fasting, abstinence and prayer to establish their court as a locus of piety. By doing so, the popes were able to subvert the providential narrative that the invading armies were God's tools to chastise Rome and its bishop. After all, if the papal court was suddenly transformed into an exemplary place of piety, there was no need for a just chastiser and the invading armies would lose its self-righteousness. Clement VII managed to save his reputation by using penance and historians nowadays acknowledge that even Alexander VI was at times a pious and penitent pope.

Finally, the Renaissance popes could appeal to crusader and martyrdom rhetoric. The implications of a martyred pope were unforeseeable and the prospect of schism provided a strong deterrent for temporal princes to rid themselves of the pontiff. Because the cult of the martyrs was still very much alive during the Renaissance the willingness to die in harness could be effectively employed by Alexander VI and Clement VII and certainly struck a chord with contemporaries. Because the emphasis in the cult of the martyrs had slowly changed from their death to their suffering, suffering in itself became an *imitatio martyris*. By emphasizing the suffering inflicted by others either in his own letters or by means of legates or other channels within the Church Clement VII thus invoked pity and indignation, but also admiration from, for example, Vettori and Giovio and gained or regained respect with several imperial commanders and diplomats. Crusader rhetoric could also be used as a way of showing preparedness to suffer or even be murdered at the hand of the infidel. Simultaneously it functioned as call for peace between the Christian powers. But hopes for an end to the internecine war in Europe and concerted action against the Turk vanished as the Italian Wars continued to plague the peninsula and Christian unity was shattered by the Reformation. And all too often had crusader rhetoric been employed by a pope to end a war in which he himself was a participant.

What is especially striking is how much papal propaganda during times of crisis differed from papal cultural politics during times of prosperity. Claims of papal supremacy and temporal authority that normally formed an important part of papal propaganda had to be abandoned altogether in the face of military adversity and blatant papal weakness. Even papal ceremonial, albeit guided by strict rules of precedence that normally functioned to buttress papal authority, could be temporarily abandoned in favor for deviations. But these deviations obtained their meaning precisely because they suspended the formal rules of ceremony and therefore functioned as a means to placate rulers dangerous to the papacy. Growing a beard functioned in a similar manner. Although not shaving was a contemporary practice to indicate mourning, a papal beard obtained extra significance because it was in clear violation of canon law. More theatrical were the papal acts of penitence and the use of martyrdom and crusader rhetoric. Crusader rhetoric had been employed by virtually all pontiffs during the second half of the fifteenth century and it is best to regard Alexander VI and Clement VII as the last proponents of this sudden upsurge of crusader rhetoric at the papal court following the Fall of Constantinople in 1453.³⁴⁸ Penitence and martyrdom rhetoric, however, were elements of papal political theater that were unique to periods of crisis. During times of prosperity the prospect

³⁴⁸ Norman Housley, *Crusading and the Ottoman Threat, 1453-1505*.

of facing death at the hand of others was simply absent, thus it makes sense that the rhetoric of martyrdom only appeared at moments of imminent danger when the possibility of shedding blood for the faith could be plausibly raised. Penitential acts seem to have been a specific reaction to the providential narratives adopted by or ascribed to invading armies. Conspicuously lacking during times of prosperity, hence the criticism by contemporaries such as Erasmus, the adoption of penance during times of severe crisis was an answer to the attacks on the pontiff's religious authority and piety. It showed the Renaissance popes were willing to avoid God's wrath, repent for their sins and abandon their morally unjust behavior. By compelling their courtiers to follow their example the popes were also able to establish the court as a locus of piety, a necessity normally absent.

Comparisons to papal and biblical precedents were tools used effectively and often by Renaissance popes during times of crisis and of good fortune. Allusions to Saint Peter featured regularly in papal propaganda, but the story of Saint Peter's escape from Herod's prison suddenly gained extra significance during the imprisonment of Clement VII. Likewise, King David had always figured as an example of a righteous monarch in papal propaganda. But only during a period of dearth, unusual at the papal court, combined with a show of abstinence and prayer, equally unusual according to critics of the papacy, did the meaning of the story of David, Ahimelek and the showbread become accessible for an appropriate allusion. Comparisons to papal predecessors also had to be made carefully according to the situation. Normally speaking Boniface VIII would not be an example to emulate, nor a predecessor well-suited for comparison. But during the attack of the Colonna on Rome in 1526 the act of sitting on a throne in full pontifical garment could have been a theatrical repetition of the *Schiaffo di Anagni* in 1304. Although Clement did not persevere, the act was included in the histories of Jacopo Buonaparte, who writes that he was captured with the Pope in Castel Sant'Angelo and possibly observed the spectacle, as well as of Clement's lieutenant, Francesco Guicciardini. The comparison had its limitations as well, as the victory of the Colonna brought Clement VII infamy and the story of Boniface would resonate differently at the French court. Much of the anger conveyed in letters therefore seems to have been a reaction merely to the outrage of repeated Colonna rebelliousness rather than the comparison with the Outrage of Anagni.

Although it is impossible to ascribe all reactions to the events engulfing the Renaissance papacy to papal propaganda, it is sufficiently clear that papal propaganda was not entirely in vain either. Alexander VI, Julius II, Clement VII and Paul III all retained their office as the only acknowledged Vicar of Christ on earth. Especially the Sack of Rome was, in the words of Francesco Guicciardini,

*"[e]sempio certamente molto considerabile e forse non mai, da poi che la Chiesa fu grande, accaduto; uno pontefice, caduto di tanta potenza e riverenza, essere custodito prigioniero, perduta Roma, e tutto lo stato ridotto in potestà d'altri: il medesimo, in spazio di pochi mesi, restituito alla libertà, rilasciatogli lo stato occupato, e in brevissimo tempo poi ritornato alla pristina grandezza. Tanta è appreso a' principi christiani l'autorità del pontificato, e il rispetto che da tutti gli è avuto."*³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ "certainly a very considerable example and that had perhaps never happened since the Church was grand; a pontiff, fallen from great power and reverence, being held in prison, Rome lost, and all of his state reduced to the power of others: the same, in the period of a few months, reinstated in his liberty, the occupied state released to him, and in a very short time returned to his pristine grandeur. Such is the authority of the pontificate which the Christian princes hold in high esteem, and the respect that they had for it." Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1897

Papal propaganda and political theater played a vital role in re-establishing the papacy's authority during times of severe crisis and in gaining or regaining authority. Adherence to and deviation from ceremony were used as a political language. Furthermore, on several occasions Alexander VI and Clement VII managed to steer the perception of events in the direction desired, thereby influencing how events would be recorded for posterity. Therefore, there is some truth in Judith Hook's dictum that a pope is never as powerful as in captivity.³⁵⁰ Albeit far from powerful, popes in perilous times had at their disposal a variety of propagandistic media – some more effective than others – that enabled them to recuperate their position of authority. And all popes of the period actually succeeded in reestablishing their position of eminence. Francesco Guicciardini wrote his history about most of our period and was often very critical about priests, prelates and the conduct at the papal court. But even he had to admit that the events surrounding the Sack of Rome, like the other events discussed in this thesis, remain "*destinato a essere esempio delle calamità che possono sopravvenire a' pontefice e anco quanto sia difficile a estinguere l'autorità e maestà loro.*"³⁵¹

³⁵⁰ Hook, *The sack of Rome*, 195.

³⁵¹ "destined to be an example of the calamities that may befall the pope, and also of how difficult it is to extinguish their authority and majesty." Guicciardini, *Storia d'Italia*, 1857.

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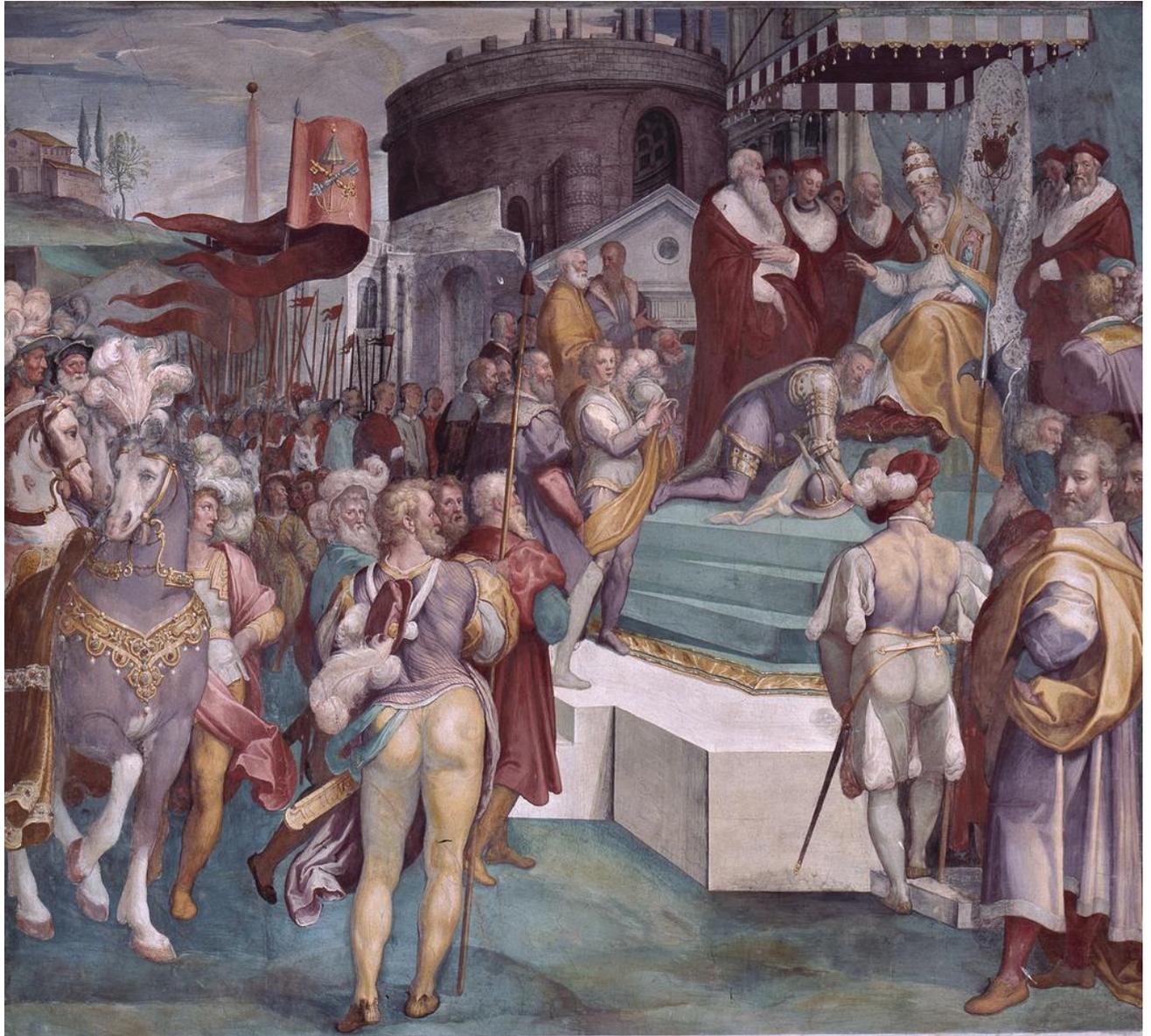
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Appendix



Workshop of Raphael, *The Donatino of Constantine*, c.1520-1524 (Palazzo Apostolico, Vatican City)



Taddeo Zuccari, *Pope Paul III and Emperor Charles V* (Palazzo Farnese, Caprarola)



Raphael, *Julius II with beard*, c. 1511 (Städel Museum, Frankfurt)



Sebastiano del Piombo, *Clement VII without beard*, c. 1526 (Museo di Capodimonte, Naples)



Sebastiano del Piombo, *Clement VII with beard*, c. 1531 (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles)