

Jacques Fournier and the Poverty Controversy: New Evidence from a Neglected Gospel Commentary

by IRENE BUENO
University of Bologna
E-mail: irene.bueno@unibo.it

The Franciscan doctrine of absolute poverty became one of the most controversial matters under discussion in the 1320s. Even after John XXII's poverty decrees, it did not cease attracting the attention of prominent theorists. This article examines the so-far neglected contribution by the key theologian of the Avignon court and future pope, Jacques Fournier (c. 1285–1342). His monumental Matthew commentary contains a lengthy discussion of evangelical poverty. Comparing this text with various counsels drafted for the pope, this article brings to light Fournier's stance on poverty, placing it within the debates held at Avignon during the conflict between John XXII and Ludwig the Bavarian.

The Avignon papacy significantly intensified the involvement of theologians in the evaluation of controversial ideas. In the first half of the fourteenth century, the papal court became a fundamental centre of theological discussion, able to attract reputed learned men from all over Europe.¹ Not only did they come to take part in the debates, but also to enhance career opportunities, while benefitting from

BAV = Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City; BF = C. Eubel (ed.), *Bullarii Franciscani epitome et supplementum quattuor voluminum priorum olim a J. H. Sbaralea editorum*, Quaracchi 1908

I am grateful to John Arnold, Melanie Brunner and the anonymous reviewers for this JOURNAL for their helpful comments and suggestions. All translations are my own.

¹ On the role of Avignon as a key hub of intellectual and artistic promotion see J. Hamesse (ed.), *La Vie culturelle, intellectuelle et scientifique à la cour des papes d'Avignon*, Turnhout 2006; É. Anheim, *Clément VI au travail: lire, écrire, prêcher au XIVe siècle*, Paris 2014; and G. Wolf, E. Brill and L. Fenelli (eds), *Images and words in exile: Avignon and Italy in the first half of the 14th century (1310–1352)*, Florence 2015.

the pope's concession of benefices. Even as the Provençal seat became the new centre of gravity of Western theological debate, an increasing stiffness underpinned the attitude of the fourteenth-century popes toward religious dissidents and adversaries of the Holy See. Most notably, Pope John xxii instigated a number of consultations where issues such as black magic, evangelical poverty, the Beatific Vision and the ideas of prominent theorists of the time were addressed by the Curia's experts, occasionally resulting in new official demarcations of heresy. As Richard Southern pointed out, never before in history had such a great number of theological issues been addressed by the papacy, *via* the consultation of specific commissions, as during the pontificate of John xxii.²

The poverty of Christ and the Apostles soon became one of the most controversial matters under discussion in Avignon. If the gradual elaboration of a Franciscan doctrine of poverty accompanied the first century of the order's history, related quarrels emerged at various stages, notably in the context of the secular-mendicant controversy at the University of Paris and of the Spiritual crisis.³ But it was during the reign of John xxii that the Franciscan poverty ideal was most drastically called into question.⁴ In 1322–4, the pope gradually dismantled its theological and juridical foundations, orienting the related discussion on the systematisations offered by Nicholas iii's *Exiit qui seminavit* in 1279. A chief point of reference of the Franciscan apologetic tradition, this bull had defined the meritorious nature of the complete abdication

² R. Southern, 'The changing role of universities in medieval Europe', *Historical Research* lx (1987), 133–46. For a survey of John xxii's theological consultations see S. Piron, 'Avignon sous Jean xxii, l'Eldorado des théologiens', in *Jean XXII et le Midi*, Toulouse 2012, 357–91.

³ M. Lambert, *Franciscan poverty: the doctrine of the absolute poverty of Christ and the Apostles in the Franciscan order, 1210–1323*, London 1961; R. Lambertini, *Apologia e crescita dell'identità francescana (1255–1279)*, Rome 1990, and *La povertà pensata: evoluzione storica della definizione dell'identità minoritica da Bonaventura ad Ockham*, Modena 2000; J. Dawson, 'Richard FitzRalph and the fourteenth-century poverty controversies', this *JOURNAL* xxxiv (1983), 315–44; D. Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan poverty: the origins of the usus pauper controversy*, Philadelphia, PA 1989; Virpi Mäkinen, *Property rights in the late medieval discussion on Franciscan poverty*, Louvain 2001.

⁴ See Lambert, *Franciscan poverty*, 208–46, and 'The Franciscan crisis under John xxii', *Franciscan Studies* xxxii (1972), 123–43; A. Tabarroni, *Paupertas Christi et apostolorum, l'ideale francescano in discussione, 1322–1324*, Rome 1990; Th. Turley, 'John xxii and the Franciscans: a reappraisal', in J. R. Sweeney and S. Chodorow (eds), *Popes, teachers, and canon law in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, NY 1989, 74–88; D. Burr, *The Spiritual Franciscans: from protest to persecution in the century after Saint Francis*, University Park, PA 2001, 191–204; J. Miethke, 'Papst Johannes xxii. und der Armutstreit', in *Angelo Clareno Franciscano*, Spoleto 2007, 263–313; P. Nold, *Pope John XXII and his Franciscan cardinal: Bertrand de la Tour and the apostolic poverty controversy*, Oxford 2003, and 'John xxii, the Franciscans, and the Rule', in M. Robson (ed.) *The Cambridge companion to St Francis of Assisi*, Cambridge 2011, 258–72; and M. Brunner, 'Pope John xxii and the Franciscan ideal of absolute poverty', unpubl. PhD diss., Leeds 2006.

of property, in addition to asserting the full conformity between the Franciscan way of life and the evangelical poverty model.⁵ By lifting Nicholas's ban on further discussions of this decree and revoking the attribution to the papacy of the order's property rights, John prepared the ground for a new substantial attack on the Franciscan view of poverty, the orthodoxy of which was now being questioned.

The resulting consultation, started in 1322, involved over sixty prelates and masters of theology and law present at Avignon, charged by Pope John XXII to evaluate the doctrine that Christ and the Apostles had no possession, either individually or in common. The Vatican Library's ms Vat. lat. 3740 assembles their responses, carefully annotated by the pope in his own hand.⁶ Despite the absence of a comprehensive edition, important analyses of this body of evidence have shed light on the arguments and semantics displayed during the consultation and the way in which they variously served the pope's final resolution.⁷ A real watershed in the controversy, John's bull *Cum inter nonnullos* (1323) declared heretical any assertion that Christ and the Apostles had neither possessions nor property rights. It was an overt challenge to the core of the Franciscans' self-understanding, way of life and exclusive claim to Christian perfection.⁸

John's determinations did not end the on-going dispute, but rather exacerbated it, eliciting further responses on both fronts. Much of the poverty debate of the following years came to be polarised by the collision between the pope and the emperor Ludwig of Bavaria (d.1347), while also

⁵ Nicholas III, *Exiit qui seminat*, BF iii. 404–16, no. 127; Tabarroni, *Paupertas Christi*, 23–33; Lambert, *Franciscan poverty*, 141–8.

⁶ A partial edition from a later copy of this manuscript is given in F. Tocco, *La questione della povertà nel secolo 14. secondo nuovi documenti*, Naples 1910. See also A. Maier, 'Annotazioni autografe di Giovanni XXII in Codici Vaticani', *Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia* vi (1952), 317–32; K. E. Spiers, 'Four medieval manuscripts on evangelical poverty: "Vaticanus latinus" 3740 and its copies', *Collectanea Franciscana* lix (1989), 323–49; L. Duval-Arnould, 'Les Conseils remis à Jean XXII sur la pauvreté du Christ et des apôtres (ms Vat. lat. 3740)', in *Miscellanea Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae*, iii, Vatican City 1989, 121–201, and 'Elaboration d'un document pontifical: les travaux préparatoires à la constitution apostolique *Cum inter nonnullos* (12 novembre 1323)', in *Aux Origines de l'état moderne: le fonctionnement administratif de la papauté d'Avignon*, Rome 1990, 385–409; and Nold, *Pope John XXII*, 25–42.

⁷ See Tabarroni, *Paupertas Christi*; Nold, *Pope John XXII*; J. Miethke, 'Das Votum de paupertate Christi et apostolorum des Durandus von Sancto Porciano im theoretischen Armutstreit: eine dominikanische Position in der Diskussion um die franziskanische Armut (1322/3)', in *Vera Lex Historiae: Studien zu mittelalterlichen Quellen: Festschrift für Dietrich Kurze*, Köln 1993, 149–96.

⁸ John XXII, *Cum inter nonnullos*, in E. Friedberg (ed.), *Corpus iuris canonici*, Leipzig 1879–81, ii. 1229–30; L. Duval-Arnould, 'La Constitution *Cum inter nonnullos* de Jean XXII sur la pauvreté du Christ et des Apôtres: rédaction préparatoire et rédaction définitive', *Archivum franciscanum historicum* lxxvii (1984), 406–20; Lambert, *Franciscan poverty*, 235–6.

intersecting with the investigation into the work of the Franciscan theologian Peter John Olivi (c.1248–98).⁹ The complex juncture of these elements was notoriously exemplified by the appellation published by Ludwig in Sachsenhausen in 1324, which accused the pope of heresy for his attack on Franciscan poverty, mobilising elements from the thought of Olivi and Bonagrazia of Bergamo. The pope excommunicated Ludwig in turn for his involvement with the Lombard heretics and contumacy in ignoring a summons to Avignon, reasserting his positions in *Quia quorundam mentes*. Later on, John xxii became the target of a new wave of polemical attacks by Michael of Cesena, William of Ockham, Bonagrazia of Bergamo and others who fled Avignon to join Ludwig in 1328.¹⁰ The discussion of evangelical poverty in the second half of the 1320s was still far from over. It was only in 1329, largely in response to Michael of Cesena's criticism, that the pope included in the bull *Quia vir reprobus* his lengthiest discussion of the scriptural foundations of Franciscan poverty.¹¹

This paper examines the developments of the poverty quarrel at the court of Avignon in the aftermath of *Cum inter nonnullos*, by bringing to light the hitherto neglected contribution of Jacques Fournier (1285–1342). Much research has been devoted to this Cistercian abbot, bishop-inquisitor of Pamiers and Mirepoix renowned for his heresy campaigns, cardinal and celebrated theologian, who ascended to the papal throne in 1334 as Benedict xii.¹² Trained in theology at the Collège Saint-Bernard

⁹ On the relationships between the condemnation of Olivi's Apocalypse commentary and the poverty controversy see J. Koch, 'Der Prozess gegen die Postille Olivis zur Apokalypse', *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* v (1933), 302–15 at p. 308; D. Burr, *Olivi's peaceable kingdom: a reading of the Apocalypse commentary*, Philadelphia, PA 1993, 244–7; Th. Turley, 'John xxii and the Franciscans: a reappraisal', in Sweeney and Chodorow, *Popes, teachers, and canon law*, 80; and Lambert, *Franciscan poverty*, 223–4.

¹⁰ On these events see G. Gál and D. Flood (eds), *Nicolaus Minorita: Chronica: Documentation on Pope John XXII, Michael of Cesena, and the poverty of Christ with summaries in English: a sourcebook*, St Bonaventure, NY 1996. Recent surveys include H.-J. Schmidt, 'Povertà e politica: i frati degli Ordini mendicanti alla corte imperiale nel xiv secolo', in G. Chittolini and K. Elm (eds), *Ordini religiosi e società politica in Italia e Germania nei secoli XIV e XV*, Bologna 2001, 373–517; J. Miethke, 'Der "theoretische Armutsstreit" im 14. Jahrhundert: Papst und Franziskanerorden im Konflikt um die Armut', in H.-D. Heimann, A. Hildebrand, B. Schmies and Ch. Stiegemann (eds), *Gelobte Armut: Armutskonzepte der franziskanischen Ordensfamilie vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Paderborn 2012, 243–83, and 'Ockham und Papst Johannes xxii: ein Konflikt mit Folgen', in *Giovanni XXII: cultura e politica di un papa avignonese*, Spoleto 2020, 177–205.

¹¹ M. Brunner, 'Pope John xxii and the Michaelists: the scriptural title of evangelical poverty in *Quia vir reprobus*', *Church History and Religious Culture* xciv (2014), 197–226.

¹² See C. Schmidt, *Un Pape réformateur et un défenseur de l'unité de l'Église: Benoît XII et l'ordre des Frères Mineurs (1334–1342)*, Quaracchi 1959; E. Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou, village occitan de 1294 à 1324*, Paris 1975; Ch. Trottmann, *La Vision béatifique des disputes scolastiques à sa définition par Benoît XII*, Rome 1995; J. Ballweg, *Konziliare oder päpstliche Ordensreform: Benedikt 12. und die Reformdiskussion im frühen 14. Jahrhundert*, Tübingen

in Paris, from 1319 on Fournier repeatedly offered John xxii his expertise on sensitive doctrinal matters, becoming official theologian of the Avignon Curia ('magister sacri palatii') upon his promotion to the cardinalate in 1327.¹³ Later on, as a pope, he engaged in difficult negotiations with the Bavarian, failing to obtain his reconciliation and becoming the addressee of harsh polemical writings by the Franciscans in Munich, such as William of Ockham's *Contra Benedictum*.¹⁴

Recent studies have demonstrated the significance of Fournier's theological output. Attention has been brought to his advice on magical practices, assessment of Olivi's commentary on the Apocalypse and contribution to the dogmatic definition of the Beatific Vision, in addition to his lengthy theorisations about the nature, causes and manifestations of heresy.¹⁵ Yet, due to the loss of crucial materials and to the unpublished nature of what remains, Fournier's role in the theoretical poverty controversy of the 1320s has so far received only cursory attention.¹⁶

In what follows I will consider the decisive contribution of a new text: Fournier's masterwork, the *Postilla super Matthaeum*, is a monumental and still unpublished commentary that contains a lengthy and elaborate discussion of the poverty of Christ and the Apostles. The exegesis of Matthew x.9–10 ('Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, no bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff'), among the more commonly cited evangelical passages exhorting to poverty, offers an unprecedented opportunity to grasp Fournier's views on one of the most contentious matters of his time, shedding new light on the meditations produced within the papal circles following John xxii's anti-Franciscan decrees. The place of this massive text within the theoretical poverty controversy has

2001; I. Bueno, *Defining heresy: inquisition, theology, and papal policy in the time of Jacques Fournier*, Leiden 2015; and I. Bueno (ed.), *Pope Benedict XII (1334–1342): the guardian of orthodoxy*, Amsterdam 2018.

¹³ On Fournier's writings see J.-M. Vidal, 'Notice sur les oeuvres du pape Benoît XII', *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* vi (1905), 564–5, and P. Fournier, 'Jacques Fournier', in *Histoire littéraire de la France*, Paris 1938, xxxvii. 196.

¹⁴ William of Ockham, *Opera politica*, ed. H. S. Offler, Manchester 1956. iii. 165–322. See Schmitt, *Un Pape réformateur*, 217–20, and Bueno, *Defining heresy*, 262–74.

¹⁵ *Le Pape et les sorciers: une consultation de Jean XXII sur la magie en 1320 (manuscrit B.A.V. Borghese 348)*, ed. A. Boureau, Rome 2004, 120–38; S. Piron, 'Un Avis retrouvé de Jacques Fournier', *Médiévales* liv (2008), 113–34, trans. as 'Recovering a theological advice by Jacques Fournier', in Bueno, *Benedict XII*, 57–80; Trottmann, *Vision béatifique*; I. Bueno, 'False prophets and ravening wolves: biblical exegesis as a tool against heretics in Jacques Fournier's *Postilla* on Matthew', *Speculum* lxxxix (2014), 35–65, and *Defining heresy*, 176–244.

¹⁶ J. Koch, 'Der Kardinal Jacques Fournier (Benedikt XII) als Gutachter in theologischen Prozessen', in W. Corsten (ed.), *Die Kirche und ihre Ämter und Stände: Festgabe für Joseph Kardinal Frings*, Köln 1960, 441–52 at pp. 445–7; Piron, 'Recovering a theological advice', 69–70. On Fournier's provisions towards the Franciscans, with cursory attention to his theological assessments see Schmitt, *Un Pape réformateur*, 158–67.

remained substantially unexplored.¹⁷ Profoundly embedded in the vast theological expertise of a Cistercian interpreter of the Bible trained in Paris, Fournier's *Postilla* intersects some of the principal nodes of the current discussion, while keeping silent on others. Its originality of approach and consonance with other contemporary voices contribute to illuminating not only the individual stance of a prominent theologian of the papal entourage, but also the enduring liveliness of the poverty debates held among papal circles after John xxii's pronouncements. These same debates, enhanced by the conflict with the Bavarian and the Michaelists, contributed to the preparation of John's late anti-Franciscan bull *Quia vir reprobus*. While the themes of papal authority and infallibility, power legitimacy and natural law increasingly came to the forefront of discussion,¹⁸ Fournier readdressed the scriptural foundations of Christian poverty from a decontextualised perspective, aiming to corroborate the pope's stance by looking beyond the main motifs of the ongoing political and religious crisis. Before analysing Fournier's hermeneutics of evangelical poverty in depth, a consideration of his contribution as an adviser of John xxii is in order: throughout the reconstruction of fragments of his counsels rendered to the pope in the mid-1320s, sparse references to the theoretical poverty controversy occasionally emerge.

Jacques Fournier, advisor of John xxii, and the evangelical poverty controversy

Jacques Fournier was not part of the large commission of prelates and masters consulted by the pope prior to the promulgation of *Cum inter non-nullos*. He would none the less speak out many times on the ensuing discussions in the subsequent years. Scattered clues shed light on his involvement, both as a theologian and an inquisitor, in the poverty controversy as well as in the repression of the Beguins' movement before his election to the Holy See.¹⁹ Preserving the memory of a few codices that have not survived, the ancient catalogues of the Avignon pontifical library offer important information on this activity. First, they describe a register

¹⁷ A brief mention appears in A. Maier, 'Der Kommentar Benedikts XII. zum Matthaeus-Evangelium', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* vi (1968), 398–405 at pp. 402–4.

¹⁸ See, among many other works, C. Dolcini, *Crisi di poteri e politologia in crisi: da Sinibaldo Fieschi a Guglielmo d'Ockham*, Bologna 1988; J. Heft, *John XXII and papal teaching authority*, Lewiston, NY 1986; B. Tierney, *Origins of papal infallibility, 1150–1350: a study on the concepts of infallibility, sovereignty and tradition in the Middle Ages*, Leiden 1972, and *The idea of natural rights: studies on natural rights, natural law and church law, 1150–1625*, Atlanta, GA 1997; and J. Canning, *Ideas of power in the late Middle Ages*, Cambridge 2011, 107–32.

¹⁹ Schmitt, *Un Pape réformateur*, 143–67 at pp. 168–249 for Fournier's later interventions as a pope; Bueno, *Defining heresy*, 252–61.

which collected the reports of the inquisitorial trials against ‘Beguins from the Third Order of St Francis’ that Fournier instructed while he was bishop of Pamiers.²⁰ Despite the codex’s loss, it appears that Fournier not only presided over the renowned trials against Cathars, Waldensians and other believers convicted of heresy in his diocese, whose copious records inspired Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie’s *Montaillou*;²¹ he also engaged against Beguins from the same area. As confirmed by Bernard Gui’s *Liber sententiarum*, he repeatedly flanked Dominican inquisitors of Languedoc in the pursuit of Beguins and their sympathisers, partaking in the broader campaign that from 1318 and throughout the 1320s sent over a hundred of the perceived heretics to the stake.²²

Cross-referencing of the ancient Avignon inventories also attests to several other codices once preserved in the pontifical library, which contained Fournier’s theological assessments written at the demand of John xxii.²³ Two extant volumes in the Vatican Library (ms Borghese 348 and ms Vat. lat. 4006) illustrate, respectively, Fournier’s early involvement in the pope’s consultation regarding practices of black magic and invocations of spirits (1320); and his successive contribution, as a cardinal, to the resolution of the Beatific Vision controversy (c. 1327).²⁴ Moreover, it is possible to trace the presence of another important volume, now lost, in the ancient papal collections: a large parchment codex bound in red leather, which gathered Fournier’s assessments of articles extrapolated from the writings of Meister Eckhart, William of Ockham, Peter John Olivi and Michael of Cesena. Two other paper copies containing, separately, Fournier’s opinions on Ockham and Eckhart were also part of the papal holdings.²⁵ It therefore appears that by the mid-1320s Jacques Fournier had steadily entered John xxii’s theological cohort, a role that was reinforced by his appointment as cardinal. After his precocious assessment of magical practices, he repeatedly partook in the pope’s theological commissions, contributing to the censuring of theological works, evaluating the ideas of prominent theologians and adversaries of the pontiff, and stating his view of the most heated debates of the period.

The incomplete nature of evidence, however, has prevented a detailed reconstruction of Fournier’s theological counsels. Citations by later authors and further textual recoveries have only partially compensated

²⁰ Piron, ‘Recovering a theological advice’, 76.

²¹ J. Duvernoy (ed.), *Le Registre d’inquisition de Jacques Fournier, évêque de Pamiers (1318–1325)*, Toulouse, 1965; Le Roy Ladurie, *Montaillou*.

²² Bernard Gui, *Liber sententiarum*, ed. and trans. A. Pales-Gobilliard, Paris 2002, 1308, 1314, 1340–58, 1370, 1396, 1416, 1632, 1636–7; L. A. Burnham, *So great a light, so great a smoke: the Beguin heretics of Languedoc*, Ithaca, NY–London 2008.

²³ On Fournier’s theological *consilia* see Koch, ‘Der Kardinal’.

²⁴ See references in n. 15 above.

²⁵ Koch, ‘Der Kardinal’; Bueno, *Defining heresy*, 154.

for the loss of his collection of assessments. As a result, the contribution to the poverty debates made by this distinguished theologian of the Avignon court, widely experienced in the judicial repression of Franciscan dissent and in practical matters of abbatial and episcopal governance, has remained scarcely known.

Various studies have shed light on fragments from Fournier's lost reports. First, evidence has been retrieved about his contribution to the last phase of the trial against Peter John Olivi's Apocalypse commentary. Completed in 1297, a few months before Olivi's death, the *Lectura super Apocalypsim* underwent a first investigation by a commission of eight masters in 1319; later on, in 1324–6, the pope submitted particular excerpts of this work to individual theologians before he condemned it in 1326.²⁶ Sylvain Piron has convincingly identified Jacques Fournier as the author of a lengthy anonymous opinion about the *Lectura*, rendered in 1325 to John xxii, demonstrating that the Cistercian theologian played a fundamental role in the preparation of the final censure of Olivi's commentary.²⁷ Later on, a copy of this opinion would be bound together with his other assessments in the lost codex of the pontifical library. As shown by Piron, the surviving parts of Fournier's advice address the second article extracted from the *Lectura*, dealing with Olivi's eschatological thinking and temporal division of the history of the Church. Conversely, the poverty of Christ and the Apostles is considered only in passing, for an in-depth discussion must have been originally included in the initial, now missing part of the report, which concerned the pope's first question.²⁸

²⁶ Peter John Olivi, *Lectura super Apocalypsim*, ed. W. Lewis, St Bonaventure, NY 2015. On the process against Olivi's Apocalypse commentary see Koch, 'Der Prozess gegen die Postille'; A. Maier, 'Per la storia del processo contro l'Olivi', in *Ausgehendes Mittelalters*, ii, 239–53; E. Pásztor, 'Le polemiche sulla *Lectura super Apocalypsim* di Pietro di Giovanni Olivi fino alla sua condanna', *Bullettino dell'Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo* lxx (1958), 365–424; D. Burr, *The persecution of Peter John Olivi*, Philadelphia, PA 1976, and *Olivi's peaceable kingdom*, 198–239; S. Piron, 'Bonagrazia de Bergame, auteur des *Allegationes* sur les articles extraits par Jean xxii de la *Lectura super Apocalypsim* d'Olivi', in A. Cacciotti and P. Sella (eds), *Revirescunt chartae, codices, documenta, textus: miscellanea investigationum medioevalium in honorem Caesaris Cenci OFM collecta*, Rome 2002, 1065–87; 'Censures et condamnation de Pierre de Jean Olivi : enquête dans les marges du Vatican', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome-Moyen Âge* cxvii/2 (2006), 313–73; and 'Recovering a theological advice'; and P. Nold, 'New annotations of Pope John xxii and the process against Peter of John Olivi's *Lectura super Apocalypsim*', *Oliviana* iv (2012), <<http://journals.openedition.org/oliviana/521>>.

²⁷ Bibliothèque municipale, Avignon, MS 1087, fos 220r–275v. For the attribution and analysis of this text see Piron, 'Recovering a theological advice'.

²⁸ Piron, 'Recovering a theological advice', 69–70.

Other textual fragments shed some light on Fournier's engagement with the theme of evangelical poverty. Numerous citations from Fournier's theological counsels survive within a dissertation in *Decem responsiones* compiled by the Augustinian theologian John Hiltalingen of Basel in the 1360s.²⁹ In order to strengthen his arguments, Hiltalingen often quotes Fournier's refutations of Olivi, Eckhart, Michael of Cesena and William of Ockham, demonstrating that he must have consulted a copy of the lost volume of reports. As pointed out by Josef Koch, Hiltalingen's third *Responsio* deals with the issue of voluntary poverty and quotes several times from Fournier's refutations of Peter John Olivi and Michael of Cesena.³⁰ It thus appears that Fournier commented upon evangelical poverty after John xxii's decrees, in 1325. Charged to examine the first article from Olivi's Apocalypse commentary, he undertook to assess whether it was orthodox to state that the pontificate of Christ entrusted to Peter involved an apostolic and evangelical life and that only later, for reasons of utility and rationality, it evolved to include ownership of temporal property.³¹

Via Hiltalingen, we thus apprehend Fournier's answer to this question. The Cistercian theologian examines the multiple ways in which the evangelical life can be understood in connection with the poverty ideal, drawing on the distinction between precepts and counsels. According to a first interpretation, the evangelical life does not necessarily imply the abdication of temporal goods, for this is a simple counsel instead of a fundamental precept. Hence, the very mutation, as surmised by Olivi's question, from the evangelical life into a state of owning temporal goods is not recognised. The second sense detected by Fournier is that if precepts and counsels are both retained, then the evangelical life entails the abandonment of individual, but not communal property. Finally, the third interpretation considers the evangelical life as the status of those who renounce both individual and communal property, 'as some friars Minor state of themselves'. Fournier is convinced that this was the underlying meaning of Olivi's question, and considers it heretical.³² In line with John xxii, he thus questions Olivi's orthodoxy, rejecting the doctrine of poverty

²⁹ Couvent des Cordeliers, Fribourg, MS 26. See D. Trapp, 'Augustinian theology of the fourteenth century: notes on editions, marginalia, opinions and book-lore', *Augustiniana* vi (1956), 242–50, and Koch, 'Der Kardinal'.

³⁰ The relevant section is in Couvent des Cordeliers, MS 26, fos 40rb–51rb. See Koch, 'Der Kardinal', 445–7, and Piron, 'Recovering a theological advice', 71–2.

³¹ The article is reported by Hiltalingen: Couvent des Cordeliers, MS 26, fo. 42va. For an English translation of the articles submitted for examination in 1324–6 see Burr, *Olivi's peaceable kingdom*, 223–6.

³² Couvent des Cordeliers, MS 26, fos 42rb–42vb, especially fo. 42va; edition in Koch, 'Der Kardinal', 446.

advanced in the *Lectura* on the ground of arguments none too dissimilar to those propounded in the pope's recent poverty decrees.

Having demonstrated that property is not incompatible with the evangelical life, Fournier discusses how the plenitude of the pontifical office was entrusted 'to Peter and the other apostles', claiming that it was not given to them 'equally as to order and jurisdiction', an interpretation which he considers heretical, but only as to order.³³ Despite the brevity of Hiltalingen's citations, it emerges that the *Lectura's* question on poverty oriented Fournier to discuss the foundation and transmission of pontifical power and defend Petrine supreme authority.³⁴

As reported by Hiltalingen, Fournier then turns to the second part of the question, discussing 'the way in which the pontificate of Christ was changed, whether in its essence or mode'. Inclining to the latter sense, he rejects the idea that Christ's pontificate was transformed only at a later stage into a condition which admitted property. His argument is that 'Christ laid the foundations of and ordered his pontificate in a rational and just manner, and therefore nobody could change it.'³⁵ Since ownership was allowed in the later Church, this means that it must have been permitted since the time of Christ. The subsequent institutional development of the Church proves that the possibility of owning temporal property was there since the very beginning.

The brief citations reported by Hiltalingen, complemented by the Avignon manuscript, thus provide important information as to the involvement of Fournier in the final assessment of Olivi's *Lectura*. Along with other extracts from this text that are not being considered here, the Cistercian theologian discusses the poverty question raised in the first article submitted for examination by the pope. First, he suggests that the abdication of ownership is not necessary to attain the evangelical life, regarding it as a counsel rather than a precept; second, he rejects as heresy the interpretation according to which the evangelical life is characterised by the renunciation of both individual and communal property; in addition, he maintains that the supposed transition, from Christ's pontificate to a condition which admitted ownership, did not actually take place.

The substance of this assessment proves to be in line with John xxii's pronouncements, echoing in particular *Cum inter nonnullos* when it labels as heresy the idea that Christ and the Apostles held neither individual, nor communal possession. Some of these inputs also reappear in a different extract from Fournier's assessments. The renowned *Directorium inquisitorum*

³³ Couvent des Cordeliers, MS 26, fos 42va–42vb; Koch, 'Der Kardinal', 446.

³⁴ On a similar discussion by the Franciscan theologian François de Meyronnes see Sylvain Piron, 'La Consultation demandée à François de Meyronnes sur la *Lectura super Apocalipsim*', *Oliviana* iii (2009), <<http://oliviana.revues.org/index330.html>>, para. 16.

³⁵ Couvent des Cordeliers, MS 26, fo. 42vb; Koch, 'Der Kardinal', 446.

by Nicholas Eymerich contains brief refutations of sixteen theses of those ‘pseudo-friars minor’ who opposed John xxii, written by Fournier ‘while he was a cardinal’.³⁶ His aim was to resolve the apparent contradiction between *Exiit* and John xxii’s decrees, addressing two major themes that were not treated in any of his other texts: the distinction between simple use and dominion; and the revocation by a pope of what had been defined by another pope. While Jean-Marie Vidal and Paul Fournier considered the text reported by Eymerich as an independent polemical treatise directed by Fournier against the *fraticelli*, Clément Schmitt rightly placed it in the context of the Michaelist opposition against John xxii, but failed to relate it to the lost volume of Fournier’s theological reports.³⁷ More precisely, this was Fournier’s assessment of Michael of Cesena’s ideas.³⁸ Once again, Fournier engages in a firm defence of John xxii. He argues that the doctrine of absolute poverty has no scriptural ground and that it is not possible to separate use from dominion. In addition, historical and scriptural examples reveal that a pope is indeed entitled to revoke what had been established by another pope. Nicholas iii’s deliberations in *Exiit* could be ascribed to a ‘deficiency of human intelligence’, which ought to be rectified. To strengthen this argument, Fournier remarks that the Rule of Francis, approved before *Exiit*, did not stipulate that the friars did not possess anything, either individually or in common.³⁹

Fournier thus firmly rejects that radical interpretation of evangelical poverty which had been propounded not only by Olivi a few decades earlier, but also by the 1322 chapter general of Perugia led by Michael of Cesena,⁴⁰ becoming of crucial importance during the debates that raged in the 1320s. Although the content of the *Lectura*’s censuring remains unknown, Fournier’s assessments testify to the entanglement between the condemnation of Olivi’s Apocalypse commentary and the wider theological and political context of the poverty controversy after the decrees of John xxii and during his conflict with Ludwig the Bavarian. Addressing the nodal points of the Michaelists’ anti-Avignon polemics, the theologian also makes his point about the *Exiit*’s difficult legacy, often mobilised by the Franciscan polemicists in order to question the very legitimacy of John’s reign. Whilst overt references to *Exiit* do not

³⁶ Nicholas Eymerich, *Directorium inquisitorum*, ed. F. Peña, Rome 1587, 295–8.

³⁷ For a more detailed analysis of this extract see Schmitt, *Un Pape réformateur*, 161–7, and Bueno, *Defining heresy*, 158–60.

³⁸ The themes addressed in Fournier’s report appear in various works by Michael of Cesena, including the 1328 *Appellatio*, the *Littera excusatoria*, the *Appellatio minor* and the *Appellatio maior*: Gál and Flood, *Nicolaus Minorita: Chronica*, 182–9, 207–11, 227–456.

³⁹ Eymerich, *Directorium*, 298.

⁴⁰ A. Bartoli Langelì, ‘Il manifesto francescano di Perugia del 1322: all’origine dei Fraticelli all’opinione’, *Picenum Seraphicum* xi (1974), 204–61.

appear in any other text by Jacques Fournier, his criticism of the doctrine of absolute poverty, concisely reported by Hiltalingen and Eymerich, proves to be fully developed elsewhere. Undoubtedly, the Cistercian theologian's most comprehensive discussion of the poverty of Christ and the Apostles is offered within his monumental work of biblical exegesis.

Fournier's exegesis of Matthew and the interpretation of evangelical poverty

Conceived in the context of a general revival of biblical studies encouraged by the Avignon popes,⁴¹ Fournier's *Postilla super Matthaeum* offers the most comprehensive insight into his theological thinking. His *magnum opus*, this commentary was originally comprised of six massive volumes, subdivided in 132 treatises.⁴² Yet, the *Postilla's* structure reveals that the text was conceived to be much lengthier: when Fournier interrupted the composition in around 1334, he had only commented upon the first ten chapters of Matthew's Gospel, meticulously following the evangelical text, pericope by pericope, and even word by word. As attested by the account books of the Apostolic Chamber and the ancient catalogues of the pontifical library, upon his election to the Holy See, Fournier had six elegant parchment volumes of his commentary realised and decorated to enrich the papal collection, complemented by one further volume, which contained a refined and copious *tabula*.⁴³ According to the inventory of Gregory XI (1375), four other copies of the same work must have been part of the papal holdings.⁴⁴

It is now difficult to trace with certainty the correspondence between these library items and the fourteenth-century copies currently preserved in the Vatican Library: three elegant parchment codices (MSS Barb. lat. 600, 601, 602), and two volumes in paper, characterised by numerous marginal and interlinear annotations and corrections (MS Barb. lat. 751 and MS

⁴¹ W. J. Courtenay, 'The Bible in the fourteenth century: some observations', *Church History* liv (1985), 176–87; B. Smalley, 'Problems of exegesis in the fourteenth century', in P. Wilpert and W. P. Eckert (eds), *Antike und Orient im Mittelalter: Vorträge der Kölner Mediaevistentagungen, 1956–1959*, Berlin 1962, 266–74.

⁴² F. Stegmüller, *Repertorium biblicum Medii Aevi*, Madrid 1977, ix. 148–51, nos 3882.2, 5690; M. Faucon, *La Librairie des papes d'Avignon*, Paris 1886–7, ii. 48, no. 89.

⁴³ On the commentary, its manuscript tradition and location in the papal library holdings see Maier, 'Der Kommentar', and Bueno, *Defining heresy*, 164–72, and 'False prophets', 41–4. An edition of the second volume, mistakenly attributed to Pope Benedict IX, is given in *B. papae Undecimi in Evangelium D. Matthaei absolutissima commentaria*, ed. Giorgio Lazari, Venice 1603. On this text see also Ch. Trottmann, 'Vie active et vie contemplative dans le commentaire de Benolt XII sur l'Évangile de Matthieu', in Ch. Trottmann (ed.), *Vie active et vie contemplative au Moyen Âge et au seuil de la Renaissance*, Rome 2009, 291–316.

⁴⁴ F. Ehrle, *Historia bibliothecae romanorum pontificum, tum Bonifatianae tum Avenionensis*, Rome 1890, 507.

Borgh. 32).⁴⁵ Anneliese Maier convincingly attributed to Jacques Fournier the authorship of MS Borgh. 32, which contains an anonymous commentary on Matt. ix. 18–x.6. I shall refer below primarily to this manuscript, the only extant copy of the *Postilla*'s sixth volume, in which the issue of apostolic poverty is treated in depth.⁴⁶

Although the Franciscan vow of poverty is barely mentioned by the author, this dissertation cannot be separated from the wider context of the controversy that ignited in the 1320s. As rightly noted by Maier, a reference to *Cum inter nonnullos* or *Quia quorundam mentes* suggests that the relevant section of the *Postilla* was drafted at least from 1324–5, in the context of the polemics characterising the reception of John's decrees.⁴⁷ In line with Hiltalingen's reported excerpts, this confirms that Fournier entered the poverty controversy after John's determinations, during the tormented opposition between the pope and the Bavarian. The absence of mentions of John's *Quia vir reprobus* also suggests that the section of the commentary considered here was drafted before November 1329. Overall, dating Fournier's work proves especially challenging, for he usually avoids mentioning texts and interlocutors of his time, an attitude enhanced by the exegetical, rather than polemical or advisory frame of his work. Yet, his agenda is straightforward: writing after John's poverty consultation and anti-Franciscan bulls, he advocates for the curial positions, entering into dialogue with the pope's theological entourage. Albeit unsolicited by the pope, his hermeneutics of evangelical poverty contributes to illuminating the way in which the Avignon doctors endeavoured to corroborate the pope's repertoire of arguments and legitimise his course of action during this period of profound spiritual and institutional crisis.

Focusing on Matt. x.9–10, one of the momentous pro-Franciscan passages in which Christ instructs his disciples before their preaching mission to the Jews, Fournier aims to answer some crucial questions that had been raised for generations around the poverty ideal designed in the Gospels: did the Lord actually prevent the Apostles from having any possession? Was this instruction actually an order (*preceptum*) or rather an advice (*consilium*)? Was it directed to the Apostles only or to all believers? And did Christ refer to individual or collective property?⁴⁸

⁴⁵ BAV, MSS Barb. lat. 600, 601, 602 contain, respectively, the first, second and third volume of Fournier's Matthew commentary; they might correspond to the volumes realised at Benedict XII's initiative: Maier, 'Der Kommentar', 400–1.

⁴⁶ Written in a refined fourteenth-century script, BAV, MS Borgh. 32 had its origins in the Avignon pontifical library. It was subdivided into treatises and chapters. The fourth treatise, comprised of 62 chapters, is devoted to poverty and extends to fos 275va–351va: Maier, 'Der Kommentar', 400–1.

⁴⁷ Maier, 'Der Kommentar', 403.
⁴⁸ On the twelfth- and thirteenth-century exegesis of poverty see especially E. Bain, *Église, richesse et pauvreté dans l'Occident médiéval: l'exégèse des Évangiles aux 12.-13 siècles*, Turnhout 2014.

Fournier also addressed some of these questions in his theological opinions rendered to the pope. Yet, his *Postilla* offers much lengthier and more meditated arguments, based on a meticulous scriptural exegesis and supported by extensive quotations from the authorities, chiefly Augustine. The resulting commentary extends over more than seventy-five folios, representing an almost self-contained treatise about the poverty of Christ and the Apostles: a substantial contribution, comparable to the lengthiest of those collected by John xxii prior to *Cum inter nonnullos*.

Engaging in repeated comparisons between Matthew and the other Gospels, Fournier intends to evaluate whether the controversial proposition that Christ and the Apostles held no possession, either individually or in common, actually contradicted the Scriptures. He immediately remarks that the teaching warning against the possession of gold, silver or copper is given by Matthew only, whereas it is absent from the corresponding passages in Mark vi.8 and Luke x.4 and ix.3.⁴⁹ He argues that this teaching was chiefly aimed at shielding the Apostles from cupidity: 'Therefore, according to the gospel of Matthew, the Lord ordered [the Apostles] not to possess gold, nor silver, aiming to show that they ought to be stranger to the *cupidity* of gold and silver.'⁵⁰ This preamble suggests that possession is not negative in itself (*per se*), but rather indirectly (*per accidens*), as it might stimulate an excessive care for worldly things, thus becoming an 'occasion for evil'.⁵¹

These remarks have parallels in John xxii's argument, first formulated in *Ad conditorem canonum* (1322) and later in *Quia vir reprobus* (1329), that the anxiety about temporal goods, rather than dominium itself, was detrimental to the attainment of Christian charity. In this view, the solution of complete expropriation of property designed by *Exiit* was not deemed to have reduced, but rather increased, the solicitude for material goods among the friars Minor.⁵²

⁴⁹ 'Hanc autem sententiam solus Matheus ponit dicens *Nolite possidere aurum neque argentum*, cum alii de hoc non faciant mentionem nisi de pecunia in zonis habenda, vel de pecunia non portanda in via' ('However, only Matthew includes this sentence, saying *Take no gold, nor silver*, whereas the others only refer to having copper in belts, or taking no copper for the journey'): ms Borgh. 32, fo. 276va.

⁵⁰ 'Secundum ergo evangelium Mathei, Dominus precepit eis quod non possiderent aurum neque argentum, per hoc ostendere volens quod debebant esse a cupiditate auri et argenti extranei': *ibid.*

⁵¹ 'Sic ergo propter cupiditatem terrenorum ne nutriatur et augeatur in corde avarorum ad quam ut plurimum homines sunt affecti post peccatum primorum parentum, prohibetur possessio auri et argenti, non quia est per se mala, set quia est occasio mali' ('Hence, the possession of gold and silver is not prohibited as evil in itself, but rather as an occasion for evil, in order to prevent from nurturing and increasing the cupidity of earthly goods in the heart of the avaricious, which has especially affected men after the original sin'): *ibid.* fo. 278rb.

⁵² John xxii, *Ad conditorem canonum*, BF v. 1225–9, and *Quia vir reprobus*, in *Nicolaus Minorita: Chronica*, 563–8.

Having dismantled the negative assessment of dominion as such, Fournier then focuses on the question of when, and by whom, it was none the less expedient to abdicate from possession. Was the evangelical teaching meant to be put into practice always? And was it addressed to all the faithful or to the Apostles exclusively? Such questions had produced a great resonance over the course of the poverty debates and did not cease being asked after *Cum inter nonnullos*. As expected, Fournier explains that the teaching reported in Matt. x.9 ‘was not imposed on all the faithful, but only on the Apostles who preached the gospel during the early foundation of the Christian Church’.⁵³ Moreover, it was meant to be interpreted in different ways according to the changing circumstances, and even temporarily suspended when expedient.⁵⁴ The Apostles therefore could and did occasionally possess gold, silver and money ‘by reasons of necessity, convenience, or other rational causes’, as for example when the infidels to whom they were preaching did not provide them with the necessary sustenance.⁵⁵ In such circumstances, they ‘rationally interpreted’ the poverty precept.⁵⁶

Discussion hence turns to poverty and to the reasons why this was particularly suitable to the Apostles.⁵⁷ According to Fournier, *paupertas* best suited their preaching of the Gospel and provided the ideal condition in which to support their humility, detachment from earthly goods and search for eternal mercy. Not only was it the best way to show them ‘the path of humility against arrogance’,⁵⁸ but it also enabled them to demonstrate through their deeds what they were preaching;⁵⁹ to prove that their ambition was not to attain temporal goods, but rather eternal mercy;⁶⁰ and to be essentially committed to the preaching of the Gospel.⁶¹ In line with much anti-Franciscan criticism, the idea of evangelical poverty hence proves characterised by various fundamental limitations: it is a suitable, but not essential condition, embraced by a distinguished group – the

⁵³ ‘Hoc Domini preceptum *Nolite* ... non fuit impositum omnibus fidelibus christiani, set apostolis et maxime predicatoribus evangelii in principio foundationis ecclesie christiane’: MS Borgh. 32, fo. 279ra.

⁵⁴ ‘Unde licet non omnibus fidelibus Christi hoc preceptum ... sit impositum, convenienter tamen apostolis hoc fuit iniunctum ut communiter ab eis observandum nisi aliqua causa rationabile superveniret propter quam pro aliquo tempore non expedire quod dictum preceptum per eos observaretur’ (‘Therefore, although this precept ... is not imposed on all the faithful, but was rather conveniently imposed on the apostles to commonly observe it – unless another rational cause come up, for which it is temporarily inexpedient that they observe it’): *ibid.* fo. 278rb–va.

⁵⁵ ‘Quod preceptum apostoli observaverunt nisi necessitas aut utilitas aliud faciendum rationabiliter exigeret, sicut quando predicabant inter gentiles vel alios infideles’: *ibid.* fo. 279ra; ‘Et ita pro necessitates vel utilitate vel ex alia rationabili causa apostoli poterant habere, accipere et retinere aurum et argentum ac pecuniam necessaria’: fo. 280va. ⁵⁶ *Ibid.* fo. 280va. ⁵⁷ *Ibid.* fos 280va–293va.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* fo. 280vb. ⁵⁹ *Ibid.* fo. 282ra. ⁶⁰ *Ibid.* fo. 283ra. ⁶¹ *Ibid.* fo. 285ra.

Apostles – in a specific historical situation – the preaching of the Gospel in the time of nascent Christianity.

Fournier then tackles the old crucial question of whether the poverty teaching given in Matt. x.9–10 is a precept or a counsel, predictably inclining to the latter. The paramount importance of this problem, which entailed considerations as to which parts of the Gospels and of the Franciscan rule were actually binding, had emerged since the late thirteenth century, in the framework of the secular-mendicant controversy and the *usus pauper* debates.⁶² Before *Exiit*, which notoriously asserted the prescriptive value of Francis's rule and its full conformity with the evangelical model,⁶³ the issue was dealt with extensively by Thomas Aquinas. In the *Summa theologiae*, he argues that the New Law, as a 'law of perfect freedom', prescribes very few specific actions, leaving mankind free to act under the guidance of the holy spirit. Accordingly, what appears as a precept in Matt. x.9–10 is rather a 'concession' that allowed the disciples to accept food and other necessities, or a temporary ordination, that is however unessential to perfection. Fiercely opposing Aquinas, Olivi's exegesis conversely emphasises the prescriptive meaning of the same pericope, intended as a command of Christ that must be observed literally. Poverty thus appears as one of the few clear precepts of the Gospel and one of the most relevant for the attainment of evangelical perfection.⁶⁴

Against the backdrop of such discussions, Jacques Fournier acknowledges a general hesitation facing the characterisation of the *Nolite possidere* passage as a precept or a counsel ('dubium magnum est'), for the Church doctors have offered diverging interpretations of the subject matter.⁶⁵ Indeed, as shown by lengthy quotations, Jerome, Ambrose, Remigius 'and many other authorities' seem to regard the Lord's prohibitions as precepts. Conversely, others dismiss a strictly prohibitive reading of the poverty admonishment. So does Fournier. His argument is supported by reference to the classical scriptural examples of Christ and the Apostles holding property and money, such as Paul living from his hands' work, Judas carrying

⁶² See D. Burr, 'The *Correctorium* controversy and the origins of the *usus pauper* controversy', *Speculum* lx (1985), 331–42, and Brunner, *Pope John XXII and the Franciscan ideal*, 153–8.

⁶³ See Tabarroni, *Paupertas Christi*, 25–6.

⁶⁴ K. Madigan, 'Aquinas and Olivi on evangelical poverty: a medieval debate and its modern significance', *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* lxi/4 (1997), 567–86, and *Olivi and the interpretation of Matthew in the High Middle Ages*, Notre Dame, IN 2003, 105–13; Burr, *Olivi and Franciscan poverty*, in particular at pp. 56–7.

⁶⁵ 'Sed an ista ... sint precepta data apostolis vel consilia, dubium magnum est, propter dicta sanctorum qui aliquando videntur dicere quod hec fuerint precepta apostolis data a Domino, aliquando vero videntur dicere quod non fuerint precepta set consilia' ('But there is a great doubt on whether these ... are precepts given to the apostles or counsels, because the saints sometimes seem to say that these were precepts given to the apostles by the Lord, whereas other times they seem to say that they were not precepts, but counsels'): MS Borgh. 32, fo. 293va.

purses and the disciples receiving means of sustenance ‘not only for present, but also future necessities’.⁶⁶ Drawing from Augustine, Fournier contends that the abdication from property ‘was not *ordered*, but *permitted* by the Lord’,⁶⁷ and that it was therefore the Apostles’ right (*potestas*) to receive sustenance from those to whom they were preaching.⁶⁸

Similarly formulated arguments also appear in John xxii’s late poverty bull *Quia vir reprobus*. Based once again on Augustine, the pope argues in this document that poverty ‘was not *ordered*, that the Apostles were entrusted with the right (*potestas*) of receiving what was necessary from those to whom they were preaching, and that they were allowed to preserve it or not’.⁶⁹ The lexical and conceptual proximity of these two excerpts, both based on a close reading of Augustine (yet on different texts), testifies at the very least to the continuity of the arguments mobilised on poverty within the Avignon circles in the second half of the 1320s. Getting back to the distinction between counsels and precepts, Fournier aims to demonstrate, in line with John xxii, that the ideal of absolute poverty was neither compelling, nor rooted in the Gospel. He does so by remarking that the Apostles’ renunciation of temporal goods was only circumstantial and that, most importantly, it was advice rather than a command. To strengthen these arguments, a marginal note inserted at the side of the relevant discussion distinguishes the formula *nolite possidere* (literally, ‘Do not wish to possess’) of Matt. x.9 from the prohibitive *non possideatis* (‘Do not possess’).⁷⁰ This grammatical nuance further reveals that the renunciation of ownership was entrusted to the Apostles’ will (*voluntas*), rather than imposed upon

⁶⁶ ‘Alique vero sanctorum auctoritates videntur dicere quod hec non fuerint simpliciter precepta apostolis, quia tunc Paulus fuisset aliquid de istis Domini preceptis transgressus, quia ut frequenter non de evangelio vixit sed de labore manuum suarum ... Dominus etiam ut supra dicebatur loculos habuit et apostolus munera accepit et necessaria vite ab aliquibus ecclesiis et cetera. Illi de primitive ecclesia qui omnia propter Christum dimiserant acceperunt ab ecclesiis gentium procurante hoc eis apostolo peccunias non solum pro necessitate presenti sed etiam pro futura’: *ibid.* fo. 294ra.

⁶⁷ ‘Ex quibus verbis Augustini videtur quod illa que hic evangelista ponit, non fuerint per Dominum iussa vel imperata, sed permissa’ (‘From these words of Augustine, it appears that what the evangelist says here was not ordered or commanded by the Lord, but permitted’): *ibid.* fo. 295ra.

⁶⁸ ‘Et sicut in potestate erat apostolorum accipiendi vite necessaria ab illis quibus evangelizabant, vel non accipiendi ea ab ipsis, set alio modo sibi providendi de vite necessariis sicut Paulus fecit’ (‘And just like it was in the apostles’ right to receive what is necessary for life from those whom they were evangelizing, or rather obtain life necessities in other ways, just like Paul did’): *ibid.* fo. 295rb.

⁶⁹ ‘Augustinus tamen dicit expresse in libro *De concordia evangelistarum*, quod illud non fuit preceptum, sed potestas data recipiendi necessaria ab iis, quibus evangelium predicabant, quam servare apostolis licuit vel etiam non servare’: *Nicolaus Minorita: Chronica*, 601.

⁷⁰ ms Borgh. 32, fo. 295rb.

them as necessary.⁷¹ Albeit usually silent about the Franciscans, the author ultimately intends to reject the Franciscan doctrine of absolute poverty and any claim for conformity between the poverty practised by the friars Minor and the Gospel.

To this aim, Fournier then focuses on the very nature of evangelical poverty, distinguishing between individual and communal goods. Once again, late thirteenth-century theorisations set the background to this discussion. Reprising Bonaventure's *Apologia pauperum* (1269), *Exiit* regarded the renunciation of both individual and communal property as 'meritorious and holy', for it was fully founded on the teaching and example of Christ.⁷² New objections against the Franciscan views of absolute poverty arose once John xxii revoked Nicholas III's prohibition on discussing the content of this decree. The nature of evangelical poverty thus became a real cornerstone of the controversy, requiring the many advisers consulted by John xxii to pronounce themselves as to whether the absolute renunciation of property by Christ and the Apostles could be established from the Scripture.

Tabarroni remarked that the anti-Franciscan detractors especially questioned the absolute poverty ideal drawing on the semantics of justice and perfection, as they contested that a complete renunciation of goods was in fact legitimate and conducive to Christian perfection.⁷³ This is only partially coincident with Lambert's observation that both biblical and juridical arguments were mobilised by anti-Franciscan polemicists: on the one hand, retrieving scriptural evidence that Christ and the Apostles did occasionally have things; on the other hand, demonstrating the inseparability of use and dominium in consumable goods.⁷⁴ These impulses were received in *Cum inter nonnullos*, which denied that Christ and the Apostles had any possession or property rights, without discussing the question at length. Later, in *Quia vir reprobus*, John xxii would analyse the matter more in detail on a scriptural ground, distinguishing various different phases of the Apostles' relationship with material goods. His point was that the Apostles did not have property in any form when they were preaching before the Jews, although this was not a precept, but were allowed to have goods in common once their preaching mission was concluded. Upon the death of Christ, the Jewish converts of the early Christian communities held all their goods in common, whereas the Gentile converts even maintained property of their own.⁷⁵

⁷¹ 'Non enim dixit simpliciter *Non possideatis aurum* et cetera, sed dixit *Nolite possidere*, dicendo autem *Nolite*, videtur hoc posuisse in eorum voluntate ... et non imponendo ut necessaria': *ibid.*

⁷² Nicholas III, *Exiit qui seminat*, at 293a; Lambert, *Franciscan poverty*, 141–8.

⁷³ Tabarroni, *Paupertas Christi*, 27–33.

⁷⁴ Lambert, *Franciscan poverty*, 143–5.

⁷⁵ Brunner, 'Pope John xxii and the Michaelists', 223–4; *Nicolaus Minorita: Chronica*, 601–3.

Once again, Fournier proves to be perfectly in line with the pope. Similarly referring to the different stages of the Apostle's ministry, he contends that they renounced all individual property while they were with Christ and when sent out preaching, but held goods in common before, during and after their preaching mission: living from Christ's *loculi* as long as they were with Him; receiving necessary sustenance from their audience when they were preaching; and participating in the common goods of the early Christian community once their mission was concluded.⁷⁶ Abundant scriptural references, patristic authorities and texts of canon law ranging from conciliar canons to papal decrees further sustain the argument that the Apostles were not prescribed to renounce all material goods upon their return, nor were their descendants and the successors of Christ's seventy-two disciples (including bishops, priests and other church ministers), who not only held movable and immovable things in common, but also maintained their own assets as their individual property.⁷⁷ In line with much anti-Franciscan elaboration, the Apostles' abdication of ownership thus proves only temporary and especially limited to individual, rather than collective property. If the renunciation of material goods had a scriptural ground, this was especially confined to the Apostles' preaching to the Jews, when they were none the less allowed to receive what

⁷⁶ 'Ex hoc tamen non videtur quod possit sequi nisi quod apostoli non debeant velle possidere aurum vel argentum vel pecuniam ut propriam licet illam possidere possent in communi, cum et quando cum Domino erant, de loculo eius viverent, et quando ad predicandum extra missi erant viverent de bonis illorum quibus predicabant, quia bona illorum ex ordinatione Domini quantum ad vite necessaria accipienda communia ipsis et auditoribus erant ... Post missionem vero Spiritus Sancti fideles qui in Christum crediderant bona sua toti congregationi fidelium inter quos et apostoli erant communia fecerunt': MS Borgh. 32, fo. 299va–vb.

⁷⁷ 'Licet autem ista que hic ponuntur ab evangelista modo supradicto precepta fuerint apostolis et ipsi illa observaverint quando missi fuerunt ad evangelium predicandum ipsis iudeis ante Christi passionem ..., tamen non propter hoc fuerunt precepta eis post Spiritus Sancti missionem nec eorum successoribus nec etiam successoribus lxxiiorum discipulorum Christi. Apostoli enim post Spiritus Sancti missionem, episcopi etiam et presbiteri successores apostolorum et lxxiiorum Christi discipulorum habuerunt bona ecclesiarum eis commissarum tam mobilia quam immobilia non in proprio sed in communi. Habuerunt etiam aliqui ex successoribus eorum bona patrimonialia et alia ut propria' ('What was defined by the evangelist above was not ordered to the apostles and they observed it when they were sent preaching the gospel to the Jews before the passion of Christ ...; however, it was not prescribed to them after the mission of the Holy Spirit, nor to their successors, nor to the successors of the seventy-two disciples of Christ. After the mission of the Holy Spirit, the apostles, bishops, and presbiters who succeeded the apostles and the seventy-two disciples of Christ had all movable and immovable goods of the churches entrusted to them not individually, but in common. Moreover, some of their successors had patrimonial and other goods as their own'): *ibid.* fo. 299vb.

was necessary for life: this was indeed ‘common to them and to their audience’.⁷⁸

The timeliness of such elaborations emerges clearly when Fournier overtly refers to ‘the opinion of some, which is now rejected by the Church’, that Christ and the Apostles had nothing, either individually or in common.⁷⁹ His analysis is complemented by the exegesis of Matt. xix.27 (‘Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee’), a passage that Franciscan apologists had often mobilised to prove the Apostles’ renunciation of property in any form. From Matthew’s reference to the disciples as having left everything behind, the former Cistercian abbot rather retrieves the foundation of the monastic model of corporate possession, drawing on the long hermeneutical tradition of this passage. As it cannot be proven from the Scripture that Christ and the Apostles committed to renounce communal possession, he argues that this acceptance is logically absent from the vow of voluntary poverty pronounced by most religious families, with the sole exception of the friars Minor.⁸⁰

Further lexical analysis underpins the argument that the teaching of Matt. x.9–10 can only refer to individual property. Citing Papias’s grammatical works, Fournier explains that the verb *possidere* (‘to hold’, ‘to take possession of’ and ‘to own’) designates a person’s possession of a thing, which nobody else can legitimately prohibit that person from using.⁸¹ Conversely, it cannot define a property relation over goods held in common, because ‘nobody is the owner of the communal goods of a church or a group

⁷⁸ Ibid. fo. 299va.

⁷⁹ ‘Si tamen vera esset aliquorum oppinio que nunc per ecclesiam est reprobata quod Christus et apostoli nichil in communi vel in proprio habuerunt’: ibid. fo. 302va.

⁸⁰ ‘Posito enim quod tunc emiserint votum paupertatis voluntarie, tamen hoc votum nisi aliter exprimatur non intelligitur quod sic vovens, omnia tam in proprio quam in communi dimiserit, cum omnes religiosi votum voluntarie paupertate emittant, et tamen non propter hoc est quin habeant aliqua in communi, exceptis ut dicitur fratribus minoribus qui dicunt se vovisse nichil omnino habere nec in proprio nec in communi’ (‘Indeed, even admitting that they made a voluntary poverty vow, nonetheless this vow, unless otherwise expressed, cannot be understood in the sense that the one who pronounced it abandoned everything individually and in common, for all the religious make a voluntary poverty vow, yet this does not imply that they do not have something in common—with the exception of the friars Minor, who declare they have vowed not to have anything at all, either individually or in common’): ibid. fo. 302va–b. On the interpretation of Matt. xix.16–29 as related to the monastic model of abandoning individual goods or bringing them in common see Bain, *Église, richesse et pauvreté*, 22–37.

⁸¹ ‘Secundum autem quod dicit Papias, possidere idem est quod tenere, potiri, in proprietate habere et tenere. Unde proprie ille dicitur aliquid possidere quod in sua proprietate tenet et utitur vel potitur illo prout vult, unde ille dicit *possidere aurum vel argentum* qui in sua proprietate illud habet et potitur vel utitur eo prout ei placet, sic quod alter nisi iniuste non potest aum prohibere quin eo iuste utatur’: ms Borgh. 32, fo. 307ra–b.

(*collegium*), but they belong to the whole group'.⁸² The practical needs of any religious community – of which the abbot, then bishop, Fournier was perfectly aware – further suggest that the evangelical teaching, and hence monastic life, do not entail the renunciation of collective property: it is indeed 'difficult that a large group does not hold these things ... in common because of the many daily necessities that emerge among the different people of such a group'.⁸³

Fournier's exegesis of evangelical poverty is especially informed by his theological training and personal experience of abbatial and episcopal governance. Whilst he carefully scrutinises biblical evidence of ownership and comments on the evangelical foundation of religious vows, he does not engage with any mainstream legal argumentation, such as those concerning *usus* and *dominium* over consumables and inconsumable items. Along this line, he further addresses the rejection of the Franciscan poverty ideal on a spiritual terrain. Based on Augustine, he emphasises the spiritual, rather than material value of poverty: what is mentioned in the Gospels is therefore not an actual abdication of material goods, but rather an intimate poverty, a poverty of the spirit (Matt. v.3), which is the 'true humility'.⁸⁴ 'Perfect poverty' ('perfecta paupertas') is therefore entirely compatible with those communal properties that serve the necessities of any religious group.⁸⁵

Additional anti-Franciscan arguments emerge throughout Fournier's discussion of the place of poverty within Christian perfection. Since the time of the secular-mendicant controversy, this had been a fundamental node of the debate, which stimulated questions as to how to reach a higher degree of perfection and whether poverty was more conducive to it. In the fourteenth century, the idea that poverty was essential to observe the evangelical perfection was still central to the Franciscan discourse. It underpinned the Minors' consciousness of their own difference from the other religious communities, conferring upon them a

⁸² 'Unde quia bona communia ecclesie vel collegii non sunt in proprietate alicuius de collegio, set sunt bona totius collegii, idcirco talium bonorum nullus de collegio proprie possessor est quia nullus eorum potest facere de dictis rebus quod ei placet': *ibid.* fo. 307rb.

⁸³ 'Difficile autem esset valde quod unum magnum collegium non ut propria set ut communia talia non haberet ... propter multas necessitates quae cotidie emergunt personis diversis talis collegii': *ibid.* fo. 307va.

⁸⁴ 'Manifeste loquitur non de paupertate qua abdicantur omnia temporalia bona in proprio et communi, sed de paupertate spiritus que non est aliud quam vera cordis humilitas' ('It plainly speaks not of [that] poverty in which one abdicates all temporal goods individually and in common, but about the poverty of spirit, which is nothing but a true humility of heart'): *ibid.* fo. 303rb–va.

⁸⁵ 'Quia autem sine abdicatione omnium rerum in communi possit esse perfecta paupertas quam Dominus consulit': *ibid.* fo. 303va; Bain, *Église, richesse et pauvreté*, 45–51.

distinguished eschatological mission grounded on their full conformity with what Christ had taught and practised. Such views obviously contrasted with the Thomistic interpretation of poverty as the least of the three instruments of perfection and the related opinion that property did not constitute an obstacle to perfection.⁸⁶

Bearing these discussions in mind, several theologians consulted in Avignon by John XXII, like Bertrand de la Tour, Durand of Saint Pourçan and Herveus Natalis, maintained that the possession of temporal goods was not an obstacle to reaching perfection.⁸⁷ According to Herveus, general master of the Dominicans and staunch defender of Aquinas, poverty proves conducive to perfection if considered in its spiritual acceptance, as an inner disposition to the abdication of worldly goods. Not only is dominium compatible with perfection, but it even appears as a condition one cannot renounce, since use and property rights are not entirely separable.⁸⁸ Similarly, the Franciscan cardinal Bertrand de la Tour recognises different states of perfection within the Church, maintaining that the possession of goods by the clergy is not detrimental to perfection. Unlike Herveus, however, he considered Franciscans as the most perfect religious order for their dismissal of any solicitude for worldly goods.⁸⁹

Jacques Fournier also advocates for the argument that poverty is not necessary to reaching perfection. Taking into consideration a plurality of vows, he builds up a scale of perfection where poverty is clearly subordinated to chastity and obedience. Accordingly, those who profess obedience and chastity perfectly are more perfect than those who profess a higher form of poverty, renouncing individual and communal goods. Indeed, 'if one is more perfect as to voluntary poverty, this does not imply that he is simply more perfect'.⁹⁰ By ranking obedience and chastity as superior virtues to reaching perfection, Fournier echoes once again John XXII, whose *Quorundam exigit* (1317) notoriously defines obedience as a higher virtue than poverty.⁹¹ The Franciscan bond between poverty and perfection is therefore dismissed: even the Apostles, Fournier comments, never

⁸⁶ Brunner, *Pope John XXII and the Franciscan ideal*, 145–53; Madigan, 'Aquinas and Olivi'.

⁸⁷ Tabarroni, *Paupertas Christi*, 48–70. For Durand of Saint Pourçan see *Dicta episcopi Aniciensis*, in Odorico Rinaldi, *Annales ecclesiastici ab anno mcxcviii ubi desinit cardinalis Baronius*, Lucae 1750, v., *Ad ann. 1322*, 209–10, and Miethke, 'Das Votum de paupertate Christi'.

⁸⁸ Herveus Natalis, *Liber de paupertate Christi et apostolorum*, in J. G. Sikes (ed.), *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge xi* (1937–8), 209–97 at pp. 232–5; English translation in Herveus Natalis, *The poverty of Christ and the Apostles*, trans. J. D. Jones, Toronto 2000. For a detailed discussion see Tabarroni, *Paupertas Christi*, 56–62.

⁸⁹ Tocco, *La questione della povertà*, 67; Nold, *Pope John XXII*, 47–52.

⁹⁰ 'Non sequitur autem iste est perfectior in paupertate voluntaria quam alter, ergo est perfectior simpliciter': MS Borgh. 32, fo. 304rb. See also 24, fos 304rb–305rb.

⁹¹ *BF* v. 130b.

pronounced a poverty vow; it was rather because of their obedience to the Lord that they abandoned temporal goods in order to follow him.⁹²

While poverty stands at the lowest level of the hierarchy of vows, other paths are equally conducive to perfection, including charity and the other theological virtues.⁹³ Consequently, even laymen and those who are more involved with temporality can reach perfection: 'it also frequently happens that the conjugated and those who deal with and have worldly things are more perfect, as to simple perfection, than the religious who also observe the three vows mentioned above'.⁹⁴ The attack against the foundation of the Franciscan state of perfection is patent, for not only religious and clerics, but laymen too can attain perfection without embracing poverty. Despite their vow, the Franciscans do not prove to follow the evangelical example more closely than others, since the Apostles themselves only renounced individual ownership.⁹⁵ Any revindication of their superiority over the other religious families is hence invalidated by the Cistercian theologian.

Allegorical and anagogical readings further complement the exegetical endeavour that has been sketched so far. What follows is Fournier's attempt to decipher the multiple meanings of the figures of gold, silver, money, bags, tunics, sandals and staff (Matt. x.9–10). Gold and silver can be understood, respectively, as allegories of secular philosophy and rhetoric, as opposed to divine knowledge and eloquence. This interpretation illuminates the Apostles' integrity of faith, chastity of mind and use of a simple, straightforward and unornamented language for preaching the Gospel.⁹⁶ As for the subsequent evangelical prohibitions, the author distinguishes the ones concerned with the Apostles' supplies (money, bags), from those concerned with clothing (tunics, sandals), and supports (staff). Accordingly, he focuses on various empirical aspects of their

⁹² 'Apostoli autem, posito quod non voverint nec servaverint quod nichil haberent in communi, fuerunt tamen tante obediencie ad Christum quod ... omnia que habebant et eciam affectum carnalem et voluntatem habendi temporalia dimiserunt ut Christum vocantem sequerentur' ('Although the apostles never pronounced nor kept the vow not to have anything in common, they were so obedient to Christ that they abandoned all their goods and even their carnal affection and desire of having temporal goods in order to follow Him'): MS Borgh. 32, fo. 306ra.

⁹³ 'Potest enim esse quod ille qui minus perfectus est circa observantia istorum votorum perfectior sit in caritate et in aliis virtutibus theologicis et moralibus in quibus perfectio simpliciter consistit' ('Indeed, it can happen that the least perfect as to the observance of those vows is more perfect in charity and in the other theological and moral virtues which are the simple ingredients of perfection'): *ibid.* fo. 305rb.

⁹⁴ 'Cum eciam contingat frequenter quod coniugati et res mundi tractantes et habentes sint perfectiores perfectione simpliciter quam religiosi eciam observantes dicta tria vota': *ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* fo. 307ra.

⁹⁶ 'Per aurum enim intelligi solet doctrina philosophica, per argentum vero solet intelligi secularis sapientie eloquentia': *ibid.* fo. 308rb.

preaching mission, and hence turns to the mystical sense of the passages concerned.

As for the Apostles' supplies (*victum*), the evangelical teaching suggests that the burden of bags or money would prevent the disciples from proceeding swiftly when preaching to the Jews.⁹⁷ Moreover, their renunciation of money and bags would prove their trust in the divine providence, which will always enable them to receive what is necessary for life.⁹⁸ Not least, they would also appear more moderate and amicable to their audience, never refusing what they are offered.⁹⁹ Mystical interpretations of the precept to give up money and bags also follow through: the gospel preachers, Fournier explains, should be free from earthly preoccupations in order to contemplate the divine;¹⁰⁰ and should never renounce their mission because of envy or sluggishness, keeping the divine message closed in a bag instead of delivering it to their audiences.¹⁰¹

When turning to the Apostles' clothing (*indumenta*), Fournier explains in detail their origins, scope and meaning. Both tunics and sandals are a result of original sin, since only after the fall from Paradise did they become necessary to cover the members' turpitudes and protect the body.¹⁰² If the teaching reported by Matthew prohibits the possession of more than one tunic, Fournier allows for some degree of interpretation

⁹⁷ 'Ideo autem Dominus prohibuit suos discipulos quando eos ad predicandum iudeis suum evangelium misit, ne portarent saculi peram, panem vel pecuniam, primo ut magis expedite irent ad loca in quibus evangelium predicare debebant' ('When sent his disciples to preach the gospel to the Jews, He prohibited them to carry bags, bread or money, first for them to go more expeditiously where they had to preach the gospel'): *ibid.* fo. 312ra–b.

⁹⁸ 'Secundo hoc iniunxit eis ... ut ostenderet quod illi qui evangelium predicant tantam fiduciam debent habere in divina providentia quod etiam si nichil secum habeant ..., Deus eis de necessariis ... providebit' ('Secondly, [the Lord] ordered them this ... to show that those who preach the gospel must trust so much the divine providence, that even if they do not have anything, God will provide them with what is necessary'): *ibid.* fo. 313ra.

⁹⁹ 'Tertio immo Dominus prohibuit suis apostolis ... ne portarent saculum vel peram, panem vel pecuniam in via, ut eos temperatos et abstinentes esse debere ostenderet, et ut apud illos qui eos reciperent et eis de suis necessariis providerent magis amiables et honestos eos redderet' ('Third, the Lord prohibited his apostles ... from carrying bags or haversacks, bread, or copper for their journey, in order to show that they had to be moderate and to make them more amicable and honest among those who received them and provided them with their necessities'): *ibid.* fo. 314ra.

¹⁰⁰ 'Sic ergo cum Dominus prohibet apostolis ne peram in via portent mystice, significatur quod predicatorum sancti evangelii terrenis curis et sollicitudinibus non debent pergravari ut libere divina valeant contemplari': *ibid.* fo. 315vb.

¹⁰¹ 'Mystice autem per hoc quod Dominus prohibet apostolis ne pecuniam in zonis vel in saculis portarent significatur quod predicatorum sancti evangelii ob invidiam vel pigriciam non dimittant evangelii predicationem': *ibid.* fo. 314vb.

¹⁰² 'Datum etiam fuit vestimentum ad cooperiendam et celandam turpitudinem intemperatam membrorum genitalium' ('Vestments were given to cover and conceal

as to the typology of the vestments, which can change according to ‘seasons, regions, association, nutrition, and customs’.¹⁰³ The same passage also refers to the Apostles’ conversation and behaviour, symbolised by the one tunic: their language must be uniform, with no variety or duplicity, and they ought to behave accordingly, both in public and privately.¹⁰⁴ As for the sandals, which are made out of dead animals’ leather, they indicate that the preachers ‘ought not to imitate the words and deeds of deceased impious men, nor give up preaching for fear of death’.¹⁰⁵

Finally, Fournier analyses the Apostles’ support (*sustentamentum*) for preaching, symbolised by the staff. His main argument is that by giving up the staff the Apostles would appear less ‘weak and tired when they go preaching the gospel’.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, they ought not to use harsh corrections and punishments against the sinner, unless they are obstinate in their error.¹⁰⁷ Finally, the evangelical teaching also holds a mystical meaning: by renouncing the staff, the Apostles will demonstrate they do not rely on themselves or others, but on God alone.¹⁰⁸

the immoderate turpitude of the genitals’): *ibid.* 316rb. More extensive discussion at fo. 316ra–va.

¹⁰³ ‘Tunc per illa una tunica intelligitur totum genus vestimenti quod est necessarium homini attentis temporibus, regionibus, complexionibus, nutritionibus et consuetudinibus eius’: *ibid.* fo. 317ra.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Mistice autem per hoc quod Dominus prohibuit apostolis ne duas tunicas haberent vel portarent, significatur quod eorum conversatio ac sermones uniformes et sine varietate vel duplicitate esse debebant, ne alios se esse ostenderent in publico et aliud agerent in secreto’ (‘The mystical meaning of the Lord’s prohibition that the apostles have or carry two tunics is that their conduct and speech ought to be uniform, with no variety or duplicity, so that they do not appear in a way in public and behave differently in private’): *ibid.* fo. 320ra.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Mistice autem cum Dominus eis iniunxit ut non haberent calciamenta, significatur quod non vellent imitari dicta vel facta hominum impiorum qui mortui sunt ..., nec timore mortis desistant ab evangelii predicatione’: *ibid.* fos 322vb–323ra.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Dominus autem prohibuit apostolis ne virgam vel baculum itinerantes portarent, quia volebat quod se ostenderent non fessos, non debiles ad eundum predicare evangelium’: *ibid.* fo. 323vb.

¹⁰⁷ ‘Ipsi etiam virgam dure correptionis et punitionis non debent portare contra peccantes nisi necessitas sit vel utilitas, set mite et dulciter peccatores castigare et ad bonum inducere nisi appareant obstinati in malicia sua’ (‘They ought not carry against sinners the staff of harsh correction and punishment, unless necessary or useful, but should chastise sinners mildly and induce them to good, unless they appear obstinate in their malice’): *ibid.* fo. 330va.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Mistice autem per virgam quam portare apostoli prohibentur in via significatur quod in nullo homine nec in se nec in altero vel potestate humana vel angelica suam confidentiam vel spem ponant, set solum in Deo’ (‘The mystical meaning of the staff that the apostles are prohibited to carry for their journey is that they ought to place their confidence and hope in no man, either themselves or others, nor in human or angelic authority, but in God alone’): *ibid.* fo. 327vb.

Overall, Fournier's explanation of Matt. x.9–10 is only partially concerned with the issue of evangelical poverty. Whereas the first half of the commentary overtly engages with the principal nodes of the theoretical poverty controversy, the subsequent section examines the evangelical teachings from different perspectives. Along this line, the figures of gold, silver, money, tunics, sandals and staff also prove liable to allegorical and mystical interpretations, which no longer consider the renunciation of ownership, but reveal predominantly homiletic concerns. They are associated with the preachers' exterior conduct and communication, rather than poverty and spiritual perfection.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, Christ's teachings in the relevant pericopes are only related to 'those who preach the gospel', instead of the entire ecclesiastical community. Fournier remarks that many saints did not follow these admonitions literally and none the less nurtured the corresponding spiritual virtues: they did possess gold, silver and money, and yet were immune to cupidity; they used worldly things as if they did not; and bought as if they were not owners.¹¹⁰ By relating Christ's admonitions to the comportment and communication of those who preached the Gospel, Fournier dismisses even further the key hermeneutical role of the Franciscan doctrine of evangelical poverty. Not only does he demonstrate that the abdication of individual and communal ownership has no foundation in the Gospel, but he also points to a number of alternative readings of the same evangelical passage, which emphasise the exterior features of the Apostles' preaching activity whilst leaving the poverty issue aside.

Although he was not directly involved in the Avignon consultation started in 1322, Jacques Fournier was well aware of the debates that developed around the notion of absolute poverty before and after *Cum inter non-nullos*. The scope of his lengthy and composite work of exegesis is to examine in depth the nature of the poverty described in the Gospels, strengthening the theological arguments of the current debate so as to provide definitive and ever valid responses.

The exegesis of a traditional pro-Franciscan passage occasions a multi-layered discussion of some momentous themes which had undermined the poverty controversy since the thirteenth century, to be newly expanded in the frame of John's consultation: the difference between precepts and counsels; the distinction between individual and communal property; and the correlation between poverty and perfection. Fournier thus makes his point on a number of related issues, ultimately sharing John xxii's unease with the Franciscan poverty ideal. His rejection of absolute poverty is thus a radical one. A counsel rather than a precept, the

¹⁰⁹ 'Unde quia ista, scilicet non possidere aurum ac argentum ..., pertinent ad exteriorem homini conversationem et non ad virtutes interiores animi in quibus perfectio virtuosa consistit': *ibid.* fo. 330ra.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

abandonment of possessions proves limited to a specific time-period and to individual, rather than communal goods. Moreover, the interconnection between poverty and perfection is drastically downplayed: ownership and perfection appear compatible, while chastity and obedience are more conducive to perfection than poverty. In this, the Cistercian theologian stands beside many anti-Franciscan detractors of his time, but also complements their views by exegetical motifs that were in line with the monastic *propositum* for the importance ascribed to the religious vows, the daily requirements of a religious community and related matters of property administration. In the second part of the text, Fournier proposes an allegorical and mystical exegesis of the Gospel pericope, shifting the focus of the discussion to primarily homiletic concerns and thus diminishing the hermeneutical centrality of evangelical poverty.

The *Postilla* radically diverges both from the pope's poverty decrees of 1322–4 and from other opinions produced at the pope's demand. While the assessments solicited by the pope were meant to respond to a very specific interrogation, the *Postilla* offers a wide-ranging exegesis that explores the topic in a comprehensive and multisided manner, proving that the poverty debate went far beyond the confines of papal consultation. Fournier's ambition in this text is to confront the doctrine of absolute poverty on a chiefly theological and exegetical terrain, keeping entirely silent on those legal argumentations that had mostly attracted the attention of the pope and his numerous advisers, influencing in turn later responses by the Michaelists. Conversely, elements of convergence are traceable between the *Postilla* and John's late bull *Quia vir reprobus*, for they share an essentially scriptural concern. Throughout the exegesis of the *Nolite possidere* passage, the two texts present lexical and content-related similarities, which enhance the hypothesis of probable intellectual osmoses within the Avignon circles.

Unlike *Cum inter nonnullos* and its numerous preparatory counsels, Fournier's *Postilla* never involves the notion of heresy in relation to the doctrine of absolute poverty. In this, the commentary differs remarkably from Fournier's own advice texts to the papacy. The polemical genre of these works induced him to apply the heresy label to Olivi's understanding of the evangelical life as a state of absolute poverty. In addition, what survives of his assessments also prove that they addressed nodal points of the ongoing Michaelist polemics, such as the contradiction between *Exiit* and John's decrees, which inspired wider ecclesiological and political discussions of papal authority, heresy and infallibility. The *Postilla*, on the contrary, does not have a polemical scope. It addresses timely critical matters, yet gleaned from the Bible arguments that are meant to be disengaged from the historical context and hence always valid. Although profoundly embedded in the principal divisions of the contemporary Church and in the ongoing inquisitorial repression of southern French

Beguins, the commentary keeps its distance from them. The genre conventions and author's intention both concur in shaping a dehistoricised discussion of Christian poverty, which searches in the eternal truth of the Scriptures definitive responses to contemporary concerns.

Debates over poverty did not end with John xxii's formal definitions, but continued during the conflict that involved the papacy, Ludwig the Bavarian and those eminent friars who sought refuge at the court of Pisa, then Munich. In the framework of this opposition, the future Benedict xii denies the evangelical foundation of absolute poverty and reaffirms the centrality of obedience as a major virtue. His Matthew commentary does not engage in an exploration of the power of the keys and the infallibility of the pope, nor does it refer in any way to an eschatological hermeneutic of history, thus refraining from an overt challenge to the most obvious polemical targets of the time. None the less, it dismisses the biblical foundation of the poverty thesis defended by the opponents of John xxii in a phase of heated theological and political antagonism and it does so by relying on the Bible alone. Meditations of this kind were fuelled by that remarkable rise of theological and biblical studies which took place in the French Midi in the first decades of the fourteenth century, under the impulse of the Avignon popes. Compiled by one of the most distinguished advisors of the pope, this text perfectly illuminates the extent of this revival, exposing traces of cross-fertilisation within the papal circles, attesting to the ceaseless re-elaboration of old problems under new political circumstances and pointing to the variety of voices that took part in the curial debates. All polemical outburst removed, conclusive definitions of Christian poverty could simply arise through the unfolding of the divine word.