

## A Sacred City. Consecrating Churches and Reforming Society in Eleventh-Century Italy

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**Author:**

Louis I. Hamilton

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Leidulf Melve

Hamilton's book is an important contribution to our understanding of church reform in the 11th century. Following the lead of a host of scholars, amongst them John Gilchrist and his diversified conception of church reform, the emphasis is not on the papacy as the instigator of reform, but rather on how reform issues were formed in the localities – in this case, by the means of church dedications. Whereas earlier scholarship has focused on a few dedications deemed particularly significant – that given to Cluny by Pope Urban II in 1095 for instance – Hamilton is much more concerned with practice and the extent to which the dedications reflect the entry of the crowd on the political stage. Or, as Hamilton puts it in the introduction: 'Church dedications often drew large crowds – crowds that were, in the eleventh century, becoming increasingly self-conscious participants in the life of the city' (p. 4).

Hamilton's investigation, then, contains a plea for dealing more in detail with the liturgical dimension – a dimension that 'has been overshadowed by the rivalry between emperor and pope' (p. 5). It is commendable that Hamilton not only goes to the other extreme and only investigates the crowd's concern with the liturgy, but rather accentuates the interrelationship between the understanding of the rites on the part of the learned culture and the reception of it by the crowd. Central to Hamilton's understanding is the fact that 'the activities of the crowd do not always reflect the ambitions of those leading the liturgy' (p. 7). Several factors explains, according to the author, the different understandings of the rite, including the actual appeal of the liturgy including its sanctified space, the rivalry between different authorities competing for loyalty in urban spaces, and the concern of local bishops and abbots.

The approach chosen, that accentuating practice, is demanding since it requires an investigation of how the rites were received amongst the largely illiterate crowd of the 11th century. As Hamilton admits, the variety of local custom, variety in the extant manuscripts as well as the difficulties in knowing which texts were used where, makes it 'impossible for us to assign any single meaning to the rite' (p. 6).

From this point of departure, the chapter 'turba concurrat': attending the ritual and its meanings' contains the fundamental investigation of the crowd's relationship to the rite. After having addressed Diana Webb's claim that the 11th-century crowd was undifferentiated and lacked agency, Hamilton criticises R. I. Moore for underplaying the symbiotic relationship between the emerging commune and episcopal power. In order to substantiate the criticism, two well-known examples of the early communal movement, those of Milan and Lucca, are analysed in some detail. Initially, Hamilton searches the liturgies for descriptions of the crowd, and concludes that the lack of simple generic description indicates that the liturgy attracted a large and varied group of people. The author also underlines that the crowds were not gathered in polar opposition to elites – whether ecclesiastical or lay. Nor is there evidence of a dichotomous relationship between urban and rural parts of the crowd. On account of this extensive and varied appeal of the liturgy, Hamilton then outlines the five functions of the liturgy – which account for its wide appeal: its moral significance, its reservoir of liturgical metaphors for promotion of (local) clerics, its aesthetics, the expectations followed from the liturgy, and its function in shaping the identity of the community (pp. 58–66).

Yet, the analysis is slightly problematic, largely as a result of the scarcity of sources denoting more in detail the reception of the rite – and hence its function. For once, the five outlined functions are of a general nature and could perhaps have been further differentiated. For instance, it is rather evident that the liturgy had a moral function; it would perhaps have been more informative to specify this moral function, for instance by comparing it with other (literary) expressions of the liturgy. Second, in a society so indebted to the visual and so soaked in religion, it is hardly surprising that the 'dedication exerted a kind of charisma [...] and fostered and took place in an emotional and communal atmosphere' (p. 77). A brief discussion of types of charisma would have strengthened Hamilton's thesis, namely that the rites attracted extensive crowds and that these crowds became conflicted in the later 11th and early 12th century. Third, Hamilton would at times have profited from discussing the claimed function of the rite up against other factors that may explain a given phenomenon – or even, a particular function allotted to the rite. For instance, in elaborating on the function of the rite in fostering communal identity, Hamilton contends that 'the liturgy called together a wide array of people and began to subtly suggest to them a variety of ways to think abstractly about the city around them and how they might live within it' (p. 78). These are strong claims, placing, in essence, the rite at the centre stage of the formation of communal civic-mindedness. At this point, in order to lend credence to the claims, Hamilton could perhaps have addressed the host of factors that previous scholarship have emphasized as important in the creation of communal identity in the 11th century. One in particular would be Diana Webb's emphasis on saints as important for the creation of civic identity. As such, several aspects of this particular function of the rite may have been clarified, for instance the extent to which the rite acts as a catalyst or whether the dedications basically strengthen processes which originated in different contexts, and consequently, were indebted to other factors.

The next chapter, 'Peter Damian: from mystical to political allegory', returns initially to the question of the significance of the rite in the 11th century compared to its use in the Carolingian period. Arguing against the view that the rite reached a creative peak during the Carolingian reforms and remained largely static thereafter, Hamilton repeats the conclusion from the previous chapters – emphasizing the rite's capacity and fluidity – before introducing the theme of the present chapter by highlighting its importance in 11th century church reform. The main argument, meant to support the contention of the greater significance of the rite in the 11th century compared to the Carolingian period, is that 'the exegesis of the dedication moved from the personal moral significance to its broader political/ecclesiological significance' (p. 91). 'Political allegory' is one keyword here, denoting the political ramifications of allegorical interpretation. In order to specify Damian's use of this type of allegory, three of his sermons on the feast of St Mark are compared with Desiderius' dedication of the new basilica at Monte Cassino. In the face of pro-imperial reformers and their insistence on a literal reading of the Old Testament – basically to demonstrate that kings had authority over

priests – Damian opts for a mystical reading of scripture with the intention of defending church reform.

Hamilton's analysis is important, not so much for introducing new aspects to Damian's conception of church reform, but rather by showing its consistency. First, the importance of denouncing the 'old law' so as to defend the new order of the cardinals is elaborated in Damian's later treatise *Disceptatio synodalis*, but appears here in a different, and needless to say, more popular context. As such, it provides yet another indicator of the popular reception of church reform – at least in Northern Italy. Second, Damian's call for reform always had a strong personal note, whether it regarded the cardinalate as a new *ordo* which included himself or thematised his own experience with simony (in the *Liber gratissimus*), and Hamilton shows the extent to which Damian's dedications followed a structured path – from a call for personal reform to the establishment of the idealized church of the reformed. Third, and of even greater importance, is that Hamilton links this path with Damian's use of political allegory presenting, in essence, the close connection between Damian the rhetorician and Damian the reformer: '...Damian established a pattern of interpretive movement from the typological to the topological to the anagogical. From the Old Testament precedent, to a call for personal reform, and a hoped-for, idealized church of the reformed' (p. 100).

In the next two chapters, 'Anselm of Lucca, Urban II and the invention of orthodox dedication' and 'Bruno of Segni and Paschal II: from coordination to conflict', the author discusses different aspects of the papacy's appropriation of the liturgy for reforming purposes. If Damian was too much of an individualist and the reform strategies of the papacy was too rudimentary in the period prior to Pope Gregory VII, Anselm's papalist reform collection, *Collectio canonum* (c. 1081–6), displays, according to Hamilton, that the dedication had become an integral part of the governing structure of the reformed church. Yet, it is Bruno of Segni who 'marked the high point of the use of the dedication rite, in both its practice and its interpretation' (p. 162). By focusing in particular on two sermons, *De laudibus* (prior to 1100) and *De sacramentis ecclesiae* (after 1112), Hamilton traces characteristic features as well as the extent to which Bruno reinvigorates the ecclesiology according to changing practical circumstances. Whereas the *De laudibus* is concerned with bishops' authority and morality, puts emphasis on the future eschatological church, and is permeated by pro-papal interpretation, the *De sacramentis ecclesiae* offers different conceptions – reverberating, in essence, aspects of the papacy of Paschal II. It lacks a defence of papal prerogatives on the one hand, and focuses on episcopal investment on the other. These two points are read in the context of Bruno's disagreement with Paschal on the issue of lay investiture, accentuating the effort to undermine the pope by an exegesis of the rite of church dedication.

Hamilton may very well be correct in situating the *De sacramentis ecclesiae* in the context of the schism over lay investiture in 1112, although interest in sacramental and ecclesiological issues relating to the episcopate is evident in Bruno's earlier writings as well – notably in the *De symoniacos*. Yet, the real value of the analysis – and an important one indeed – is to widen our understanding of the discussion of investiture in the late phases of the Investiture Struggle as being the prerogative of a tiny group of learned churchmen to also being reverberated in other social groups and milieus.

Hamilton's *A Sacred City*, then, is a most welcome and important addition to our understanding of the range and dynamic of 11th-century reform. The strength of the analysis emerges fully when Hamilton investigates the importance as well as the development of the rite of dedication in the context of other aspects of the movement for church reform. As such, it not only highlights a subject – the liturgical dimension – which previously have been relatively overlooked, but the analysis adds to our knowledge of the practice of the reform movement as well as to prominent reformers such as Peter Damian, Anselm of Lucca, and Bruno of Segni. The overall claim – that the 11th century witnessed a renewed concern with church dedications that not the least affected the crowd – is convincingly argued for. If something is missing, it would be more systematic comparison with Carolingian reform on the one hand, and the liturgical dimension of the 12th century on the other – in order to put the 'emergence of the crowd' in proper perspective.

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