

Popes and Antipopes: The Politics of Eleventh Century Church Reform

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Mary Stroll's latest contribution to the history of the medieval papacy is a brave endeavour to illuminate the political factors that undergirded the successes and failures of the papal reform movement in the 11th century. Stroll's previous research has concentrated primarily on the effects of these reforms in 12th-century ecclesiastical politics, and it is with an obvious sense of enthusiasm that she immerses herself in the 11th-century generative matrix of these later developments. The literature on the papal reform movement in the 11th century is extensive and is written in several languages, and analysis of the primary sources is hindered by the many layers of polemic contained therein. Any attempt to synthesise both the primary and secondary material is a monumental undertaking and Stroll's contribution is commendable for attempting to make a selection of this literature and debate accessible to a general English-reading audience.

At the outset Stroll explains that her study is to be differentiated from others by her efforts to emphasise the political positions of the various protagonists. Consequently her introduction explains that the book will examine various geopolitical as well as personal factors that may have influenced the course of the reform. More than an ideological investigation of the issues of simony and nicolaitism that lay at the heart of the reform, Stroll wishes to concentrate on the *Realpolitik* behind them. The structure of the book is hinted at by the title; it follows a chronological résumé of each pope and antipope from 1046 through to 1072.

Within the 15 chapters Stroll follows largely the same methodology. After a contextual introduction to the subject matter of the chapter, various subheadings are offered. These generally enunciate Stroll's reading of

the key primary sources, pointing out points of agreement and dissonance between the proponents and opponents of reform. These summaries helpfully explain the content of the texts, but one is occasionally left wanting more critical context and analysis of their authors' positions. For instance, in chapter one the relative reliability of the various sources is not discussed. Petrus Damiani's letters, for example, provide more or less eyewitness accounts of events, while Bonizo of Sutri's literary descriptions of the early reform movement were written in the heat of the Investiture Contest of the late 1080s. Likewise, in chapter three much of the re-creation of events relies on Amatus of Montecassino's *History of the Normans*, but the reader is not advised that the original text is lost and survives only in an Old French redaction.

Stroll's analysis opens with a discussion of title *Patricius Romanorum*, by which Emperor Henry III claimed his right of authority over papal elections, and which led to the inauguration of the Reform Papacy after the Synod of Sutri in 1046. This theme governs the remainder of the book. Stroll details the changing presentation of royal/imperial authority over the course of the reform. While in the 1040s the concept of a sacral king, anointed to participate in the affairs of the church, was relatively unchallenged, the expansion of the reform and the weakness of the German monarchy after the death of Henry III in 1056, caused this concept to fall into decline. The relationship between *Regnum* and *Sacerdotium* was altered dramatically, and a new paradigm in how the secular authority related to the ecclesiastical dignity needed to be articulated. Stroll suggests, however, that personal and political ambitions were also responsible for the shifting relationship between the 'two powers'.

Stroll suggests that the exercise of imperial prerogative in installing bishop Suidger of Bamberg as Pope Clement II at Sutri in 1046, inaugurated the papal reform movement. Interestingly the first major reforming council, held in January 1047, was jointly presided over by the pope and the emperor, representing the unity of empire and papacy. The second of the German popes, Damasus II, was also recruited from the imperial chapel. It was with Bruno of Toul, as Leo IX, that the reform movement began to develop impetus since Leo lasted in post from 1049 to 1054. Leo established much of the infrastructure of the later reform such as Lenten Councils and a chancery. Throughout his pontificate he continued as an imperial bishop and crossed the Alps on three occasions. These cordial relations were maintained under Victor II, Gebhard of Eichstätt, who was pope when, in 1056, Henry III died. The death plunged the political affairs of the empire into uncharted waters. Victor had been named as the protector of the boy-king Henry IV, but had also acquired substantial temporal duties as the guardian of the Duchy of Spoleto and March of Fermo. Thus, the pope was well placed to play a political as well as spiritual role. While under a strong emperor the papacy had relied on the empire for its survival, under the weak regency, through the notional headship of the Empress Agnes, the papacy was in control of the empire; the balance of power had been reversed. Although this occurred under Victor II, Stroll locates the pontificate of Stephen IX, born Frederick of Lorraine, as the moment of substantial change in direction, notably in the creation of new alliances for the papacy.

The power vacuum left by Henry III's death led to multiple power plays where various factions exploited the weakness of various institutions to maximise their own successes. The explorations of these geo-political factors are the most important elements of Stroll's study. Within Rome the traditional dominance of the old nobility like the Tusculani was threatened by the emergence of newer families such as the Pierleone and Frangiapani. The centrality of the bishopric of Rome for the reform movement was exploited by these fledgling dynasties that allied themselves with the reformers during the schisms of antipopes Benedict X and Honorius II. There was, however, resistance to the 'internationalisation' – if such an anachronism may be used – of the bishopric which had traditionally been dominated by local politics. Benedict IX is a case in point; the Tusculani pope occupied the See of Rome on three separate occasions. The first schism which Stroll examines in detail is that of Benedict X from 1058 to 1059. This context is described in chapter five as 'Romans versus reformers'. A faction of the Romans had acted swiftly to secure the election of their candidate before the reformers had a chance to elect Gerard of Florence as Nicholas II. The failure of the Romans to secure (even request) imperial sanction for their candidate may have contributed to the failure of Benedict, and they did not make the same mistake again in 1061 when they requested imperial support for Cadalus of Parma, the antipope Honorius II. In any event, the efforts of the reformers to alter the papal election protocols in 1059 took the papacy out of the local control of the Romans and placed it in the hands

of the cardinalate, which was a trans-regional network of churchman generally (but not always) sympathetic to reform.

The reformers' assertion of a Roman basis for their movement was not universally accepted. Stroll details the opposition of the Lombard episcopate to the attempted subjection of the Ambrosian Rite to Roman authority. The Lombard episcopate, she explains, felt a stronger identity as imperial bishops, rather than an allegiance to the bishop of Rome. The reformers' support of the populist Patarini movement in Milan and enforced subjugation of the See to the Roman church enraged the Lombard episcopate which threw its weight behind the antipope Cadalus of Parma who embodied the spirit of Lombard nationalism. Indeed, so strong was support for Cadalus that even after he was decisively defeated at the Council of Mantua in 1064 he refused to abandon his claims and continued to be recognised as pope in Parma and the surrounding area.

Another significant political network was the emergence of a strong Norman infrastructure in southern Italy. Having originally migrated to fight the Saracens, the Normans had taken root by the middle of the 11th century and shown themselves to be a permanent fixture and a force to be reckoned with. The expansion of their holdings, however, was at the expense of the patrimony of St Peter. Leo IX's effort to stop Norman expansion ended with his defeat and capture at the Battle of Civitate in 1053. Stroll notes that the papal objection to the Normans was largely influenced by the papal chancellor Frederick of Lotharingia, the future Stephen IX. Frederick's brother, Godfrey duke of Lotharingia and, by marriage, margrave of Tuscany, was the chief powerbroker in central Italy. The expansion of the Normans posed a direct threat to his House of Lotharingia/Canossa. In any event, *Realpolitik* dominated decision making under Nicholas II who, in 1059, made peace with the Normans and created them as papal vassals, thus legitimizing their presence. Stroll notes that this 'New Norman Policy' signalled a shift away from the traditional papal relationship with the empire. The Normans, however, were not always reliable vassals, such as during the schism of Cadalus when the House of Lotharingia/Canossa came to rescue the reformers while the Normans were pursuing their own preoccupations in the south.

The House of Lotharingia/Canossa provided a buffer zone between the empire to the north and the Normans to the south. The consolidation of these land holdings posed a threat to the empire. Stroll notes that the marriage of Godfrey to Beatrice of Canossa in 1054 led to Canossa holding 'Henry III in a pincer grip' (p. 55). Henry, in an effort to offset the growing influence of his rebellious vassal Godfrey, arranged the marriage of his son Henry IV to Bertha of Turin thus creating an alliance of Savoy and Turin. He then conferred on Victor II the Duchy of Spoleto and March of Fermo to prevent further expansion of Canossa. His plan, however, backfired when Godfrey's brother, Stephen IX, succeeded Victor II in 1057 and conferred the lands on Godfrey. Thus, the two brothers together controlled most of central Italy. The alliance with Canossa continued into the reign of Nicholas II, previously bishop of Florence in Tuscany. Godfrey proved a loyal advocate of the reformers during the schism of Cadalus, but Stroll points out that his stalwart support can be explained by political necessity rather than ideological support for reform. The developing relationship with the Normans from 1059 onwards threatened Godfrey's position in Italy, which had been safeguarded by the papacy. Godfrey's 'energetic' defence of Alexander II was an attempt to demonstrate that the papacy still needed him. His intervention reinforced his position in Italy. His efforts to secure his position in Germany during the reign of Henry IV, however, show that Godfrey was backing away from the reformers. In particular Stroll highlights how his association with Cadalus while on an imperial legation in 1068 testifies to the fragility of the alliance.

The weakness of the regency provided ample space for exploiting personal interests. Stroll details the effect of the abduction of the boy king Henry IV at Kaiserswerth in 1062. She convincingly argues that the transfer of influence in the regency to archbishop Anno of Cologne changed the direction of the schism of Cadalus. Anno's eventual support of Alexander II at Mantua realigned the two powers and paved the way for an imperial coronation by the hands of the pope. However, when Henry reached his majority at Easter 1065 he sidelined Anno in favour of archbishop Adalbert of Bremen. Adalbert's opposition to the papal reform movement is offered as the explanation for the German court's abandoning its plans for an expedition to Rome for an imperial coronation. Stroll suggests that by consenting to receive the imperial crown Henry would implicitly recognise Alexander's claims. She argues that these events highlight continued instability

after Mantua. It also illustrates a shift in the political landscape: in 1046 Henry III needed a pope to legitimate his imperial authority, in 1066 the pope needed a king to legitimate his papal authority. The relationship between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* was not just ideological but was influenced by political contingencies. Stroll's comprehensive overview of this complex web of fragile alliances emphasises the various parties' political motivations.

Stroll provides an analysis of the sources describing papal elections from Sutri to 1072. She describes the method of election, highlighting how Henry III was presented with the *Patricius Romanorum* by the Roman families in 1046 and that this title governed his involvement in subsequent elections. She outlines how delegations of Romans requested an appointment from the empire in the cases of Damasus II, Leo IX and, possibly, Victor II. The imperial mandate appears to have been of critical importance, as the case of antipope Benedict X demonstrated. The reliance on primary sources could be seen as problematic to this assessment as one must attempt to sift through the many layers of polemic that colour them. Nevertheless the exegesis of papal elections helps to illustrate the operation of the *regnum* – *sacerdotium* relationship in the early reform papacy.

Stroll explains how matters changed in 1059 with the introduction a new canonical system governing papal elections. The weakness of the regency necessitated new canonical procedures since the strong empire had played such a significant part in recent elections. While the ostensible purpose was to prevent the domination of elections by local interests, Stroll's analyses of the role that Hildebrand, the future Gregory VII, played in the election of both Nicholas II and Alexander II shows that the archdeacon came to be a dominant influence on elections.

She offers an unusual take on the debate concerning the two texts of the decree. The scholarly consensus is that the papal version, which asserts the priority of the cardinal bishops and offers a more ambiguous degree of involvement to the king, is the authentic decree and the imperial version, which ascribes a greater role to the king and less to the cardinal bishops, is a later edition. This consensus has existed since before Detlev Jasper produced an exhaustive study of the decree in 1986. Stroll argues against this consensus by demonstrating a minor hole in Jasper's thesis, but her subsequent argument that the scholarship of the 16th-century Augustinian Panvinius demonstrates the priority of the imperial version could be accused of throwing out the baby with the bath water. Stroll notes that some scholars disagree with Jasper but nonetheless accept the priority of the papal version, but, with the exception of a brief treatment of H. E. J. Cowdrey, she does not elaborate on the other arguments that support its priority. Although Stroll clearly believes the imperial version is earlier she does admit that 'questions continue' (p. 106). Her account of the decree is likely to be one of the more controversial elements of the book. The debate is quite complex, and it would have been helpful to have the two texts reproduced for ease of comparison.

Overall Stroll's book will be a useful textbook to students of the period. There are, however, two notable omissions which, from the title, one would expect to be addressed. There is almost no discussion of 11th-century church reform before 1046. The role of the papacy in promoting reform in Cluny was surely influenced by political factors but it is not addressed. Neither is there any substantial discussion of Clement III, who was elected antipope in 1080 and displaced Gregory VII from Rome. As such the book is less than the definitive study of the politics of 11th-century church reform. Nevertheless, in the topics it does discuss, it manages to bring to life divergent opinions and political standpoints while maintaining an exciting narrative.

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