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The Reformes of Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085): Some Canonical Considerations

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Abstract

Pope Gregory VII marked deeply the history of popes, having among other obvious qualities, that of the canonical organization of the church administration. The main Western canonical collections originate from the Gregorian law, which, although not entirely his own work, bears the mark of his ideas and orders. Although for centuries the famous *Dictatus papae* was said to be a creation of pope Gregory, it proved to be a later work of his followers, who wanted to offer him a *monumentum aere perennius*. What is for sure is that the Gregorian reform carried up as a landmark in the popes' history and the western canon law, as most of the canonists and decretists of the XII-XVth centuries, beginning with Gratian of Bologna found it as a starting point in their works.

Keywords

Pope, Gregory VII, canonist, *Dictatus papae*, Gregorian reform, Cardinal Deusdedit, Church organization.

The late XIth century in the Western Europe is marked by the personality of Pope Gregory VII and his struggle for the liberation of the Church from the tutelage of the laity and, simultaneously, the affirmation of the papacy

in the medieval Christendom.¹ In this regard, the renowned French historian Augustin Fliche opines that the so-called “Gregorian reform” is actually the result of the effort and initiative almost exclusively of a single person, Pope Gregory VII, who would have succeeded, jointly and severally, to release the pontifical institution and the entire Western Church from the tutelage of the temporal power, returning them, thereby, the leading role of the whole Christian society.² Hildebrand, the future Pope Gregory VII³, was born in Soana, Tuscany, between 1020 and 1030.⁴ He entered the mon-

¹ Regarding the exceptional personality of the one who was Saint Pope Gregory VII for the Western Church, see especially: Alphonse Muzarelli, *Grégoire VII*, Roma, 1807, 72 p.; Sir Roger Gresley, *The life and pontificate of Gregory the seventh*, Ed. Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green&Longman, Londra, 1832, 372 p.; Johannes Voigt, Jean-Nicholas Jager, *Histoire du Pape Grégoire VII et de son siècle: d'après les monuments originaux*, Ed. A. Vatou, Paris, 1838, 443 p.; Gabriel-Désiré Laverdant, *Grégoire VII ou Le pape et l'empereur au moyen âge: drame*, Ed. Vrayet de Suray, Paris, 1860, 424 p.; Vincent Davin, *Saint Grégoire VII*, Ed. H. Casterman, Paris, 1861, 511 p.; Augustin Fliche, *Saint Grégoire VII*, Ed. V. Lecoffre, Paris, 1920, 190 p.; Allan John Macdonald, *Hildebrand: A Life of Gregory VII*, Ed. Methuen&Company, 1932, 254 p.; Jacques van Wijnendaele, „Une curieuse Vie de saint. La Vie de Grégoire VII de Paul de Bernried”, in: *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, tome 85, fasc. 3-4/2007, p. 639-662; Abel François Villeman, *Histoire de Grégoire VII précédée d'un discours sur l'histoire de la papauté jusqu'au XIe siècle*, reed., Ed. Nabu Press, Charleston, USA, 2010, 470 p.; Arnold Harris Mathew, *The Life and Times of Hildebrand, Pope Gregory VII*, reed., Forgotten Books, USA, 2012, 342 p. etc.

² The bibliography of the so-called “Gregorian reform” is, as one can easily imagine, huge. For the following information, we make references to Augustin Fliche, *La réforme grégorienne: La formation des idées grégoriennes. Spicilegium sacrum lovanense*, Paris, 1924, 889 p.; Guy Devailly, *Le Berry du Xe siècle au milieu du XIIIe siècle; étude politique, religieuse, sociale et économique*, Ed. Walter de Gruyter, Paris, 1973, pp. 111-127; Marcel Pacaut, *Histoire de la papauté. Des origines au Concile de Trente*, Ed. Fayard, Paris, 1976, pp. 123-162; Philippe Levillain (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, Ed. Fayard, Paris, 1994 (reed. 2004), pp. 1432-1441; Yves-Marie Hilaire (ed.), *Histoire de la papauté. 2000 ans de mission et de tribulations*, Ed. Tallandier, Paris, 2003, pp. 173-190; I. S. Robinson, *Reform and the Church, 1073-1122*, in *** *“The New Cambridge Medieval History”*, vol. IV, part I, Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 268-334 etc.

³ For a brief bibliography see: H. Jedin, *Storia della Chiesa*, vol. IV, Ed. Jaca Book, Milano 1983, pp. 479-487. We should note that the complete secular name of Pope Gregory was Ildebrando Aldobrandeschi of Soana; therefore, he is, as the name suggests, a descendant of the Aldobrandeschi ancient Italian noble family, owner of the Tuscan domain, family which had its origins in Lombardy.

⁴ The French historian Pierre Milza proposes as Gregory’s date of birth the year 1020,

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astery “Saint Mary” on Aventine (Rome) when he was young, where one of his grandfathers was an abbot. After receiving the minor orders, he is called to the papal court of Gregory VI (1045-1046), whom he accompanies later in exile in Germany. After his death (1047), he enters a clunyan convent, or even at Cluny, where he doesn’t stay too long since Pope Leo IX (1049-1054) calls him to Rome, entrusting him with the administration of the monastery “Saint Paul Outside the Walls” (“S. Paulo Fuori le Mura”). Because of his personality and knowledge, he is sent to various diplomatic missions in France (1054 and 1056) and Germany (1057). Appointed archdeacon (1059), he becomes one of the main advisers of Nicholas II (1058-1061) and under Alexander II (1061-1073) he will become the most influential character in the papal Lateran Palace.

On April 11, 1073, Alexander II dies, and the cardinals immediately choose Hildebrand, a monk, as successor. Short of stature and not very attractive in appearance, the new Pope will impose himself from the first days of his pontificate by his extraordinary personality. He has never revealed his feelings. In his writings we find few metaphors. Two of the few existing ones were the “mother” and “son”, to him, the Church being the “mother” (probably inspired by the writings of Saint Cyprian of Carthage). In writing, he uses his own style, called “rusticus”, a name he himself gives to his correspondence. He used to never enter a dispute, being sure of his position; more often, he considered himself inspired from God, like a prophet.

Many consider him to be the protagonist of the freedom of the Church, but this word is rarely found in his writings, only 30 times; instead, the word “obedience” is repeated 300 times. He demanded obedience from his servants, but he also had a profound sense of obedience towards God.

After achieving the papal throne, he continued to wear monastic clothes, feeling himself a true successor of Peter and, in his eyes, his every follower must be a saint. In contrast with the contemporary devotion, which was worshipping many saints, Gregory VII had a Christocentric and Mariological prevalent piety, but he didn’t lack devotion towards Saint Peter either.

Regarding the content and orientation of his leadership, the newly elected was from the beginning a convinced follower of the political Au-

cf. *Histoire de l’Italie*, Ed. Fayard, Paris, 2005, p. 209. But most of the historians propose as date of his birth the interval between 1020 and 1030, which we also opt for.

gustinianism.⁵ The entire world is the battlefield between the universal kingdom of Christ and the devil. This battle must be waged under the leadership of the Pope. Although Gregory VII was influenced by this Augustinianism, we must however mention that he was not a good connoisseur of the Holy Fathers, with the exception, perhaps, of Gregory the Great (c. 540-604).

In his work, *Der Papst und das Concil*, the German historian Ignaz von Döllinger states that this centralization of the entire power in the hands of Gregory was based on his selfish ambition, accompanied by a disregard of the other prelates, especially of the College of Cardinals.⁶ The fact is that he will manifest this ambition throughout his entire pontificate, reaching its culmination in the conflict with Henry IV (1056-1106) at Canossa, in January, 1077.⁷

Regarding the Augustinian conception concerning the Church and State, Pope Gregory was not original, he inspired himself mostly from the royalty conception of Charlemagne (800-814). In this sense,

“without Charlemagne - mentioned H. X. Arquillière - Gregory VII would have been impossible (...). The strong state concept, invented by the Romans, founded on the natural law, seems to dilute and absorb into the high religious functions exercised by Charlemagne (...). Even worse, Charlemagne unconsciously achieves the political Augustinianism, to which he gives strength and consistency; consecrates the removal of the old independent and distinct from the Church state notion, withdraws from this ancient idea any effective role in the doctrinal ground and in the actions' ground for several centuries”.⁸

For Gregory, the Church is the hierarchically organized body of Christ and the Eucharist feeds this body which has to live in holiness, this de-

⁵ H. X. Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique. Essais sur la formation des théories politiques au Moyen Age*, Ed. J. Vrin, Paris, 1955, 206 p.; see also: Gustave Combès, *La doctrine politique de Saint Augustin*, Ed. Edouard Privat, Paris, 1927, 482 p.

⁶ See also: Félix Rocquain, *La papauté au moyen âge: Nicolas Ier, Grégoire VII, Innocent III, Boniface VIII: études sur le pouvoir pontifical*, Ed. Librairie Académique, Paris, 1881, pp. 101-102.

⁷ Back then, Henry IV had to wait for three days in a row, barefoot, during an extremely cold weather, to be received by Pope Gregory in the castle of Canossa in order for his excommunication to be lifted; But on this subject we will talk later.

⁸ H. X. Arquillière, *L'Augustinisme politique...*, p. 164.

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pending on the life and work of the clergy; so, its reform should be based on the papacy.

In order for the priests to serve this reform, their emancipation from the laity tutelage is absolutely necessary, idea which the newly elected proclaims with extreme clarity in the Roman Council of the February of 1074.⁹ The church and its clergy, said the Pope, have a personal right and independent of any secular power, this right depending directly on the Pope.¹⁰ This way, the whole Church depends directly on the papal monarchy. It should be noted that this legal guidance, trenchant and uncompromising towards any compromise with the temporal power, was the hub of the Catholic ecclesiology for the centuries to come. Now the transition from one world to another begins: from the patristic, mysterious world, to the first advertisements of the modern world. The Pope wanted total submission to the will of God and achievement of the order He desires. And to achieve this plan, He established the priesthood and not the royalty, priesthood which received power to bind and loose, to close or open access to heaven (Mt. 16, 19). Doing God's Will, which means obedience to the Roman discipline, leads to the realization of justice, a key concept in the thinking of this Pope. But in order for that to happen, the Church needs freedom, which means this suitable place It deserves before God and men. God's justice and the freedom of the Church can be accomplished through total obedience and submission to the order headed by the papal authority. For the Pope and those who think like him, faith tends to identify with obedience to the papacy, just as the reform of the Church depends essentially of it; for example, the Pope approves or denies the validity of those priestly ordinations which were or not submitted to all the pontifical directives, especially regarding simony, the buying of the sacred offices with money or by compromises with the secular power, evil that Gregory VII combats with absolute firmness.¹¹

The centralization of the papal power had also been the care of the predecessor Alexander II (1061-1073), through the codification of the ex-

⁹ Paul Fargues, *Histoire du Christianisme. Le Moyen Age (De Charlemagne à la Renaissance. De Grégoire VII au Concordat de Worms)*, Ed. Fischbacher, Paris, 1934, pp. 117-123.

¹⁰ J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima colectione*, vol. XX, Venetiis, 1775, col. 431-432.

¹¹ A. Fliche, *La réforme grégorienne et la reconquête chrétienne: 1057-1123*, Ed. Bloud&Gay, Paris, 1946, pp. 119-125.

emptions right, the liturgical unification (the elimination of the Greek rite in southern Italy, of the Spanish - Visigoth one in Spain, the prohibition of using the national language in Bohemia), the obligation of the archbishops to come to Rome in order to receive the pallium; with this occasion, they will also swear an oath, the expansion of the monasteries' exemption, which no longer depend on the local bishops, but directly on Rome, the development of the pontifical legates' institution, who will exercise their authority in territories directly on behalf of the Pope over the authority of the metropolitans, an obvious sign of the jurisdictional's progress over the sacramental element in the Church.¹²

In his thinking, Gregory VII was therefore not original; original was his intention to promote and establish justice and order. In fact, the Pope didn't considered himself an innovator, but a defender of the law, of some ecclesial realities that had to be put into practice and defended. In this regard, he instructs the scholars Umberto de Silva Candida, Anselm of Lucca and Peter Damian with the mission to collect the old decrees of the Church.¹³ Among these decrees collected by these scholars there were also found the *Pseudo-Isidoriens* of the IXth century, a falsification which has not brought any lasting service to the Western Church.¹⁴

Relying on these decrees, elaborated afterwards in a summary form (not systematic), as on the whole theocratic thinking and surpassing the earlier thinking and the canonical texts, Gregory VII gave birth, in the March of 1075, to the famous *Dictatus Papae*,¹⁵ a register of ideas synthe-

¹² A. Fliche *La réforme grégorienne: La formation des idées grégoriennes*, pp. 350-355.

¹³ For a pertinent analysis concerning the role and importance of these compilers in developing the Gregorian ideas, see: A. Fliche, *Études sur la polémique religieuse à l'époque de Grégoire VII: Les prégrégoriens*, Ed. Société Française d'Imprimerie et de Librairie, Paris, 1916, 342 p.

¹⁴ Regarding this subject, see especially: P. Fournier și G. Le Bras, *Histoire des collections canoniques en Occident*, tome 1, Ed. Sirey, Paris, 1931, pp. 196-200; Wilfried Hartmann und Gerhard Schmitz (eds.), *Fortschritt durch Fälschungen. Ursprung, Gestalt und Wirkungen der pseudoisidorischen Fälschungen* (Beiträge zum gleichnamigen Symposium an der Universität Tübingen vom 27 und 28 Juni 2001), Hahn, 2002, 298 p.

¹⁵ *Dictatus Papae* (from *dictation* = composing a text by dictation) does not constitute a "document" in itself, which is entitled this way. In fact, this it is the name of a short list of 27 sentences, transcribed in the correspondence register of Pope Gregory VII, between the letters of March 3 and 4, 1075 (which suggests their approximate dating). Of course, these sentences seem to have been collected by the one who has collated

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sized into 27 sentences, that states the prerogatives of the Roman Church (founded by Christ, and infallible), of the papacy (the infallibility of the Roman pontiff and the right to submit the royalty), the Pope's authority over the clergy and over the believers.¹⁶

Opposition to these sentences was seen as a sign of disobedience or, worse, of rebellion against the head of the Church. The Pope is the one from whom any ecclesiastical power flows, being the sole legislator, the source and the rule of the law, the universal and supreme judge, that can not be judged by anyone. Over the Church he has an episcopal jurisdiction power, but superior to that of a local bishop.¹⁷

According to these sentences, the whole Church is a great diocese whose bishop is he, the Pope, *vicarius Christi*, and all the other bishops are his vicars, taking part in his jurisdiction, but without having its full-

them from many different places and placed under a common title by virtue of having been "dictated" by the Pope. According to another hypothesis, which is based on the fact that the same title (*Dictatus Papae*) appears in the register, near other copies, the author of their transcription would have been Gregory VII himself. The assertions unified by that name are not original. They resume the main themes which are found both in the Pope's correspondence and in the writings of some of his predecessors (Gelasius I, Gregory I, Nicholas I) and also in some canonical sources, such as the Pseudoisidorien Decrees. The originality of the text lies in the unanswerable tone of the formulations and their grouping together, which suggests that they have been subsumed to a very consistently followed up conduct program. The text was considered to be a kind of *aide-memoire* of a speech delivered by Gregory VII during the February-March 1075 Roman Synod, or - this being the most seductive hypothesis - a precursor stage in the composition of a new canonical collection, the sentences of the *Dictatus Papae* being considered a table of contents for this important document (for this information, see Philippe Levillain (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, pp. 563-564; also, J. N. Kelly, *The Oxford Dictionary of Popes*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1988, pp. 154-156). Regarding the authorship question of this *Dictatus* see Félix Rocquain, *Quelques mots sur les «Dictatus papæ»*, in "Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes", vol. 33, Paris, 1872, pp. 378-385.

¹⁶ The text of the *Dictatus* can be consulted at Mansi, XX, 495-496, or in english at Ernest F. Henderson (ed.), *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*, Ed. George Bell and Sons, London, 1910, pp. 366-367 and romanian at Alexandru-Florin Platon, Laurențiu Rădvan (ed.), *De la Cetatea lui Dumnezeu la Edictul de la Nantes. Izvoare de istorie medievală (secolele V – XVI)*, Polirom, Iasi, 2005, pp. 145-146.

¹⁷ Pierre C. F. Daunou, *Essai historique sur la puissance temporelle des papes, sur l'abus qu'il ont fait, de leur ministère spirituel et sur les guerres qu'ils ont déclarées aux souverains*, Ed. Le Normand, Paris, 1810, p. 110

ness (sentences two and three: *Quod solus Romanus pontifex iure dicatur universalis – Quod ille solus possit deponere episcopos vel reconciliare*).¹⁸

Drawing inspiration from the writings of his contemporary, Anselm of Canterbury (1033 - 1109), the Pope, as vicar of Christ, is the principal responsible for the order that God wants to accomplish in the world through the Church, “the bride of Christ”, which He wants free and not a servant led by lay people.¹⁹ This church forms a Christian society, a “Christianitas”, a Christianity or a Christian people. There is, thus, a Christian world that should be free, independent and this independence means, in the first place, the independence of the clergy, that has an own right, independent of any interference of the laity.

Because it is very important for the foundation of the Gregorian ideas, we need to make a brief overview of the disputes that have arisen regarding the authorship of the *Gregorian Dictatus*. The papal dictate, discovered in the Vatican’s archives among other documents related to Pope Gregory VII, shows him as the author, although it was written on his initiative by his close ones. However, this document could be a text later added to the documents related to the pontificate of Gregory, in order to influence the protagonists of the Gregorian reform, assigning to the *Dictatus papae* the authority of the Pope that has initiated it.

In 1087, the Cardinal Deusdedit, who collaborated earlier with Gregory, published a collection of legal decrees, entitled *Canonium collectio*, which he dedicated to Pope Victor III (1086-1087).²⁰ The relatively weak correlation between the content of the *Dictatus Papae* and the one of the *Canonium* reminds us that the text attributed to Gregory VII was worded after Deusdedit’s document in 1087, hence the assumption that the *Dictatus Papae* would have no place in a collection of writings by Gregory VII, dating from 1075. In 1891, the German medievalist Ernst Sackur hy-

¹⁸ Ernest F. Henderson (ed.), *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*, p. 366. A similar role was owned by the identity established between the Pope and Rome, as center of the Western Christian world, under the expression *ubi papa, ibi Roma*, used more and more frequently since XII-XIII centuries, cf. Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Le corps du Pape*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1997, pp. 79-81.

¹⁹ Élie Voosen, *Papauté et pouvoir civil à l’époque de Grégoire VII: contribution à l’histoire du droit public*, Ed. J. Duculot, Paris, 1927, p. 255.

²⁰ Léopold Delisle, *Deusdedit presbyteri cardinalis tituli apostolorum in Eudoxia collectio canonum*, in “Bibliothèque de l’école des chartes”, vol. 33, part 1, Paris, 1872, p. 307.

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pothesized that the *Dictatus Papae* would belong to Deusdedit and not to Gregory VII.²¹

But nearly two decades before, in 1872, the French historian Félix Rocquain estimated pretty surely that the *Dictatus Papae* was written at the initiative of Pope Gregory. However, he does not believe that the document is the result of a personal and original reflection of this Pope.

The German lawyer Paul Hinschius established in 1863 that, among the sources used throughout the XIth century to study the canonic law, were included several fakes, dating from the IXth century, known today as the *Pseudo-Isidorian Decrees*. Based on the research of Hinschius, Félix Rocquain shows that the *Dictatus Papae* is essentially a work of notes from the previous papal decrees, including here the *Pseudo-Isidorian Decrees*. Thus, Gregory VII and his friend, Cardinal Deusdedit, have both used these sources, which explains the similarities between the *Dictatus Papae* from around 1075 and the *Canonium collectio* from 1087, but also the quite new nature of these statements, that find their origin partly in the IXth century's forgeries.²²

In another train of thoughts, the First Letter to Hermann, bishop of Metz between 1073 and 1090, is the most complete manifest of the Gregorian thinking, which states, inter alia, that the priests are superior to kings because holiness – as the historical science proves it – it's more the privilege of priests than of kings.²³ Grigorie wrote to the bishop of Metz two letters, the first in 1076, when the excommunication of Henry IV and the restoration of the relationships with Matilda of Canossa took place, the second, in 1081, which is a summary of the first.²⁴ The most important

²¹ Ernst Sackur, *Der Dictatus papae und die Canonsammlung des Deusdedit*, in "Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde", vol. 18, Hannover und Leipzig, 1893, pp. 135-153.

²² Félix Rocquain, *La papauté au moyen âge...*, pp. 378-385.

²³ Geoffrey Koziol, *England, France and the Problem of Sacraity in Twelfth-Century Ritual*, in Thomas N. Bisson (ed.), "Cultures of Power", University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995, p. 126.

²⁴ Jean Louis Kupper, *Liège et l'église impériale: XIe – XIIe siècles*, Société d'édition „De Belles Lettres”, Paris, 1981, p. 398; see also: A. Fliche, *La réforme gregorienne*, tom II, pp. 309 – 316; the text of the epistles in: Ephraim Emerton (ed.), *The correspondence of Pope Gregory VII: selected letters from the Registrum*, Columbia University Press, 1932, pp. 102-103; 166-167 ("Quis nesciat: reges et duces ab iis habuisse principium, qui, Deus ignorantes, superbia, rapinis, perfidia, homicidiis postremo universis pene sceleribus, mundi principe diabolo videlicet agitante, super

theorist of pontifical theocracy is Petru Damiani (1007-1072), who voiced his opinions either in letters, either in *Disceptatio synodalis* (*Conciliar Debates*). But we will talk about this in another place.

A privileged instrument in imposing the papal primacy was the canon law, developed (starting with the XIth century) after a vast work of collecting, sorting and systematization of the most important documents issued over the course of time in the Church.²⁵ In this way, the ecclesiastical institution not only has created an own regulatory system, depending on which it could, afterwards, judge and legislate all the causes, but it also gave the papacy the quality of highest court of appeal, which resulted in shorting the intermediate link of the local episcopate, undermining its traditional autonomy and, eventually, compromising the actual term of gradual hierarchy on which had relied the organization and operation of the Western Church until then.

In order to support the pontifical primacy, many of the Pope's close loyals (like Burchard of Worms, Anselm of Lucca, Yves de Chartres, etc.) have drafted treaties and compilations of official documents, thus preparing the great legal work realised by Gratian in the XIIth century (*Decretum* or *Concordia discordantium canonum*); in the same century, Gregory VII imposed the rule which stated that no writing or piece of writing could become canonical without his consent.²⁶ If the time or circumstances demanded, he might even created new laws or canons (*pro temporis necessitate novas leges condere*). The measure was important, as it foreshadowed the establishment of the pontifical monarchy at the end of the XIIth century, but didn't authorize, however, the Pope to deviate, in the act of legislating, from the evangelical and canonical tradition, from the writings of the Fathers of the Church and from the dispositions adopted by his predecessors.²⁷

pares, ccilicet homines, dominari caeca cupidine et intolerabili praesumptione affectaverunt...”).

²⁵ Philippe Levillain (ed.), *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, pp. 583-590.

²⁶ “Quod nullum capitulum nullusque liber canonicus habeatur absque illius auctoritate” (sentence 17 of the *Dictatus*).

²⁷ Pope Gregory VII decided also that no council can be called general without the express consent of the supreme pontiff, which, subordinating the assembly to the papal authority, dropped to annihilation its legislative independence (sentence 16 of the *Dictatus* – “Quod nulla synodus absque praecepto eius debet generalis vocari”, cf. Joseph Canning, *A History of Medieval Political Thought, 300 – 1450*, Routledge, London

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The attention of Gregory VII was also drawn to the need of adopting a moral reform (and not only) of the clergy. In this regard, the Roman Synods of 1074 and 1075 will take drastic measures against the clergy's simony and nicholaism,²⁸ measures also taken by other earlier councils. But, what is new now, is precisely the Pope's decision to uproot these sins and scandals from among the clergy. The 1078 Synod commands to all the bishops under penalty of dismissal, not to tolerate anymore the clerics who lived with women or had relationships with them. The following year, in Rome, a synod was held, where all the priestly ordinations celebrated by the excommunicated bishops were declared invalid. In the autumn of 1080, another synod declares invalid the consecrations celebrated for money, in exchange for services, or without the approval of the clergy, of the people (in 1059, the people is invited to boycott the simonic or immoral clergy) and of the legitimate superiors.²⁹

But the toughest fight of the Pope and his supporters is the one against the investiture.³⁰ Although the historians' views on his and his predecessors' position against the investiture are divided, what is certain is that, once triggered the conflict with Henry IV, Pope Gregory becomes radical and inflexible. Starting with Germany and France, and then with the whole Church, during the Roman Synod in the autumn of 1078, the pope declares, under penalty of excommunication and annulment of the committed act,

and New York, 1996, p. 96).

²⁸ The term "nicholaism" apparently comes from the Deacon Nicholas, one of the seven deacons, being used in the specialty Catholic literature to denounce the heretical nature of the clergy who refused to respect the traditional celibacy, cf. Claude Gauvard, Alain de Libera, Michel Zink (eds.), *Dictionnaire du Moyen Age*, Ed. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 2004, pp. 981-982.

²⁹ It must be said that these radical measures were based on the canonical ideas of the Cardinal Deusdedit (†1097-1100), a friend and close collaborator of Pope Gregory. He was the compiler of the canonical arguments from Scripture and from the writings of the Holy Fathers in favor of the Gregorian ideas, which he later, under Pope Urban II (1088-1099) published in a work called *Libellus contra invasores et symoniacos et reliquos schismaticos* (Ed. Mai, Nova Bibliotheca Patrum, tome VII, pars III, pp. 77-114; ed. Sackur, *Mon. Germ. Hist. Libelli de lite*, tome II, pp. 300-365); for other details, see also: Victor Wolf von Glanvell (eds.), *Die Kanonessammlung des Kardinals Deusdedit*, Druck und Verlag von Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 1905, 732 p.

³⁰ By far the most important work on this subject remains that of Henri Xavier Arquillière, *Saint Grégoire VII: essai sur sa conception du pouvoir pontifical*, Ed. J. Vrin, Paris, 1934, 601 p.; see also: Gabriel-Désiré Laverdant, *Grégoire VII ou Le pape et l'empereur au moyen âge: drame*, Ed. Vrayet de Suray, Paris, 1860, 424 p.

that any dioceses investment of the clergy from laity, abbeys or churches is invalid.³¹ During the Quadragesimal Council of 1080, he prohibits the investiture of minor ecclesiastical offices, and the laity who practice such investitures, including, of course, the earlier ones, are declared excommunicated.³² It should be noted that his decisions have echoed all the Western Christian countries.

The Pope's drastic attitude in this matter was not motivated nor by his character, nor by economic or other nature aspects; at stake was, in all its extent and seriousness, the reform of the Church, and the investiture of the laity represented the greatest obstacle. Many clerics couldn't live in dignity, in line with their vocation, as long as their consecration depended on economic or political interests of the princes. The Pope intended to update the old rules of the Church, through which the bishop decided the election and the consecration of the clergy. If a choice that does not respect the canonical norms, the laity no longer has the power of investiture, this one passing directly to the bishop or to the Pope (the right of devolution, unknown until then in the West). Regarding the election of bishops, in the same Synod, in 1080, it is established that the ultimate decision does not belong to the lay prince, but to the religious authority.³³

Another problem to be solved was that of the private churches belonging to the laity.³⁴ During the 1078 Synod, the laity are reminded the dangers

³¹ When the 1075 Council of Carema takes place not only the simon priests and those cohabiting are threatened with excommunication, but some bishops are also condemned (eg. in Germany: Liémar, Werder Strasbourg, Henri de Spire, Hermann of Bamberg): "if anyone from now on will receive from you, a lay, a bishopric or a monastery, he should not consider himself a bishop. If an emperor, a king, a duke, a marquis, a count, an influential man or a lay claims to invest bishops or any other ecclesiastical dignity, he is to be excommunicated", cf. C. J. Hefele et H. Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux*, tom V, part 1, Ed. Letouzey et Ané, Paris, 1912, p. 129.

³² Hefele et Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles*, tom V, part 1, p. 262-264.

³³ Mansi, XX, pp.531-532.

³⁴ A private church becomes a legal institution under the close connection between the altar and the land on which it was built. The building of the church, the priest's house and the cemetery, the fields and the peasants that work on them and which were tied to the church, the entries coming from the Decima, the Stolar offers and rights, in a word, everything that exists around the altar is considered to be a property of the master's land. He is responsible to care for the church. The priest was not elected by a bishop, but by these masters, who often took them from among their servants or slaves, or from other areas clergy, and the conditions imposed to the shepherd of souls were quite often humiliating. The rights of these churches could pass from a person to

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that owning churches and tithes represent for their souls and salvation. In another Synod in the same year (Gerona, Spain), it is established that the laity, in general, may not have their own churches, and where this is impossible, they are forbidden to collect tithes or other charges.³⁵

In updating his reform plans, the Pope will serve himself of the delegates, in their work and powers, introducing some very important news. Those whom he sent only for a specified period of time were intrusted with specific, well defined tasks. Instead, for the general reform of a country, he chose stable delegates, natives of that country, usually bishops. In their countries, they convened numerous synods, where they would try to apply the reformist line of Rome.³⁶

As the Pope reserved himself the last word in the difficult issues such as the punishment, suspension, deposition or excommunication of the recalcitrant clerics, calls to Rome are becoming increasingly frequent. However, the Pope granted enough and great powers to local church authorities, also because his conflict with Henry IV took him a lot of time.

The concentration of many attributions in his hands does not mean that Gregory VII had deliberately intended a weakening of the power and prerogatives of the bishops and metropolitans. Convinced that every Christian must remain closely united with the successor of Peter, unity which means living the message of the Gospel and its demands (in the now specific case, the release from the nefarious power of the lay investors), the Pope can not conceive, nor find another way to reform the Church than that of obedience to him, just as he, with all the conviction and accuracy, was following the spirit of the Gospel and the Church's canonical norms.

To achieve his goals, the Pope asks the collaboration of the laity (sometimes armed).³⁷ He even creates a *S. Petri militia*, which, during difficult times, he tries to turn into a regular army corps. This army, often temporary, is part of his plans and thinking, which, as already mentioned, sees in this world a battleground between the kingdom of God and "corpus

another through rent, heritage, selling, donations or other means. Since no one should take anything from the ecclesiastical heritage and should pass it intact to our followers, greed often led landowners to acquire at least in part the higher profits of this heritage.

³⁵ Hefele et Leclercq, *Histoire des conciles*, tom V, part 1, pp. 245-246.

³⁶ Kriston R. Rennie, *The Foundations of Medieval Papal Legation*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 2-3.

³⁷ Andre Vauchez, *Spiritualitatea Evului Mediu occidental (secolele VIII-XII)*, trans. by Doina Marian and Daniel Barbu, Meridiane, Bucharest, 1994, pp. 98-99.

diaboli”. In order to win the battle, the Pope asked from all the faithful, laity or clergy of any rank, *obedientia and fidelitas* to the successor of Peter.³⁸ Because this obedience and fidelity were not yet detailed in forms and clear and precise legal terms, the Pope tried to find the most various ways and, at the same time, the most appropriate, to strengthen this link with the supreme authority of the Church.³⁹ Thus, he asks from the faithful obedience promises, paying the taxes and decimates, ensuring military aid and other forms of dependence, typically feudal. In all these, he does not plan to create a determined political-religious system. What represents an interest to him is only the Church’s reform, reform in which, as a result of the means, methods and persons involved, enters both the political and the purely religious aspects.⁴⁰

Pope Gregory VII was a great spirit, a strong character, sometimes authoritarian, who managed to raise in his century the Western Church’s prestige. Therefore, Pope Gregory XII (1572 - 1585) proclaimed him “blessed” in 1584 and Pope Benedict XIII (1724-1730), “holy” in 1728.

However, the remark addressed by Bernard of Clairvaux (+ 1153) to the temporal power of the Pope Eugenius III, the one who continued the superiority papal politics begun by Pope Gregory VII and, implicitly, against Gregory, shortly after his death, echoes like a sentence :

“Praesit ut prosit, ne ut imperes ...” (“You are put in the lead to serve, not to order ... if you’re a prophet, you should need a hoe to remove the weeds of sin and not a scepter to dominate. About Peter it is not known to have been adorned with precious stones or to have walked in silk clothes, on a white parade horse, accompanied by knights ... but, in such finery, Holy Father, you are a descendant of Constantine, not of Peter. You should not be a master over bishops, but one of them”).⁴¹

³⁸ Thomas Greenwood, *Cathedra Petri: a political history of the great Latin patriarchate*, vol. 4, Ed. J. Stewart, London, 1861, pp. 513-547.

³⁹ Cf. P. Zerbi, “Il termine «fidelitas» nelle lettere di Gregorio VII”, in “Studi Gregoriani” 3, 1948, pp. 129-148.

⁴⁰ This overall exposure of the Church’s reform led by Gregory VII may be supplemented with examples taken from the Western Christian countries; in this regard, see: H. Jedin, *Storia della Chiesa*, vol. 4, pp. 487-500.

⁴¹ Sancti Bernardi Abbatis Clarae-Vallensis, *Opera omnia. De Consideratione Libri Quinque ad Eugenium Tertium*, PL 182, 407, *Caput primum* (“Pontificis esse, non tam ut omnes suo dominio subiciat, sed ut omnes, quantum fieri potest, ad Ecclesiae gremium perducatur”), cf. <http://www.binetti.ru/bernardus/10.shtml> (14.04.2016).