

*Ecclesiastical Reform - Gregorian Reform*  
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Translated by W. L. North from "Riforma Ecclesiastica-Riforma Gregoriana," in *Studi Gregoriani* XIII (Rome, 1989). pp.167–178.

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In 1074 the Easter assembly of the Romano-German Empire took place in Bamberg, the famous episcopal see of Franconia. In the midst of a large gathering of royal dignitaries, and many priests and knights, Henry IV awaited the beginning of the religious celebrations for the night of the Lord's resurrection. The solemn liturgy had been entrusted to Liemar, archbishop of Bremen, a renowned priest of high reputation and an imperial champion of proven loyalty. Yet, in the presence of the king and so many illustrious persons, Liemar absolutely refused to begin the sacred rite and bless the Easter water. It was an unheard of event, a willful offense, and an act of public scorn: what had happened?<sup>1</sup>

Without doubt, the liturgical office before the royal court represented a demonstration of the king's deep respect towards the archbishop. The relations between the two men were friendly. There was no personal tension. One was dealing, however, with a form of concelebration. In his own cathedral, the bishop of Bamberg had, in fact, the right and the duty to participate in the religious service. But Hermann of Bamberg was a notorious simoniac:<sup>2</sup> it was stated publicly that he had received the episcopal see by means of a substantial monetary sum paid to the royal fisc. Consequently, in order to protest his disgraceful brother bishop and to avoid being indirectly soiled by the crime, Liemar refused the honor. The archbishop of Bremen burned fervently for the reform

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<sup>1</sup> G. Meyer von Knonau, *Jahrbücher des deutschen Reiches unter Heinrich IV. und Heinrich V.*, v.2, (Leipzig, 1984), pp.375ff.

<sup>2</sup> R. Schieffer, "*Spirituales latrones*. Zu den Hintergründen der Simonieprozeße in Deutschland zwischen 1069 und 1075," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 92 (1972).

of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

This great spiritual current of the 11th and 12th centuries — a necessary precondition and propitious foundation for the political and ecclesiastical revolution which generally, but in an imprecise and incomplete way, has come to be called the Investiture Controversy — essentially encompasses the renewal of the ancient prohibitions against simony and nicolaitism, meaning the marriage of priests, which had long been prohibited, and open concubinage, both of which should be distinguished from the lustful concupiscence and occasional violation of the celibate churchman.<sup>4</sup> Both prescriptions had already been formulated in Christian late antiquity, but in the reality of daily life, numerous violations occurred. In a completely unusual way, the great ecclesiastical reform of the 10th and 11th centuries took them seriously. To confirm this, one could cite many pieces of evidence; after the millennium the relevant texts become abundant and even more decisive.

Notwithstanding the fact that in the literature of the period the two words were usually found side by side,<sup>5</sup> there was a fundamental difference in importance between simony and nicolaitism. Nicolaitism represented the general formulation of a problem that was primarily individual, while simony was essentially linked to the structure of society and the State.<sup>6</sup> Priestly incontinence never placed the catholic church at risk.<sup>7</sup> We also know very little about the true

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<sup>3</sup> W. Goetz, "Das Erzbistum Hamburg-Bremen im Investiturstreit," *Jahrbuch der Wittheit zu Bremen* 27 (1983).

<sup>4</sup> A difference which is essential and not always recognized!

<sup>5</sup> For example, MGH LdL I, p.422, 594, 595, 598, 625/626.

<sup>6</sup> A.M. Stickler, "I presupposti storico-giuridici della riforma gregoriana e dell'azione personale di Gregorio VII," *Studi Gregoriani* XIII (1989): 1-15.

<sup>7</sup> G. Denzler, *Das Papsttum und der Amtszölibat*, v.1 (Stuttgart, 1973); but see cf. the critical review in *DA* 68 (1975).

dimensions of medieval nicolaitism.<sup>8</sup> From time to time it provoked a local scandal;<sup>9</sup> and in everyday life the question of the children's right of inheritance in particular created some thorny problems. As far as canonical jurisdiction, however, it posed no problem: in principle, the descendants of a priest were disinherited. In reality, especially in Provence, Languedoc, and some parts of Italy, we know of veritable priestly dynasties.<sup>10</sup> Because of the paucity of sources, one could assert that in Germany nicolaitism was never as widespread an abuse and that in this country the situation was never of great concern, but arguments *e silentio* always seem uncertain. Oddly, in Gregory VII's *Register*, the majority of references to the age-old prohibition relate precisely to Germany!

On twenty-four occasions in the great pope's *Register* priestly incontinence is deplored and the re-establishment of the ecclesiastical order is enjoined.<sup>11</sup> Yet, although speaking generally about the norm of the canons, Gregory refers to actual cases only twice.<sup>12</sup> For Toul and Chiusi he had received detailed information; everywhere else, however, the situation was less worrisome. Among the clerical dignitaries of the period, there was evidently no one like Bishop Hildebrand of Florence from 50 years earlier, who came to the diocesan tribunal accompanied by domina episcopa Alberga,

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<sup>8</sup> J. Gaudemet, "Le célibat ecclésiastique. Le droit et la pratique du XIe au XIII siècle," *Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte* kan. Abt. 68 (1982).

<sup>9</sup> For example, in Milan. Cf. C. Violante, *La Pataria milanese e la riforma ecclesiastica* I (Rome, 1955).

<sup>10</sup> R. Davidsohn, *Geschichte der Florenz*, v.1 (Berlin, 1896); R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz*, v.1 (1896); H.E. Feine, "Kirchenreform und Niederkirchenwesen," *Studi Gregoriani* 2 (1947): pp.509ff.

<sup>11</sup> *Register* I,27; I,28; I,30; II,10; II,11; II,25; II,30; II,45; II,47; II,55; II,61; II,62; II,66; II,67; II,68; II,72; III,3; III,4; IV,10; IV,11; IV,20; V,18; VI,5b; IX,5. One may observe that after the outbreak of the Investiture Conflict, the reform of clerical behavior became a secondary issue.

<sup>12</sup> *Register* II,10 (Toul); II,47 (Chiusi).

who spoke publicly in difficult cases, while he remained in pensive silence.<sup>13</sup> In Tuscany and then in Lombardy, particular circumstances — in large part of a social nature — provoked a zealous and violent reforming reaction. In these centers of the battle against nicolaitism, the struggle, originally moral, for the sexual continence of the clergy had taken on a semi-dogmatic, though theologically mistaken, character. The eucharist of fornicators was vilified and despised as dogshit.<sup>14</sup> It was an attitude typical of the lay religious mentality, for which carnal sin has always had a special importance, although this had been overcome in the field of dogma for five centuries.<sup>15</sup> It is no accident that the Patarenes, the Holy See's most faithful allies at the beginning of the Investiture controversy, degenerated into heresy in the course of the 12th century.

In his Register, Gregory VII never uses the word nicolaitism. The language of the great pope is characterized by an apparent simplicity: he wished to be immediately understood.<sup>16</sup> Consequently, he normally spoke and wrote according to the rules of the so-called stilus medius, even if he was learned in the Latin rhetorical tradition. Perhaps he instinctively avoided the expression nicolaitismus to describe grave carnal sins. Instead, when attacking the vices of the age, he insists at least fifty times on the prohibition of simony.<sup>17</sup> Logically, too, this had a dimension of immorality, but on the whole the ecclesiological problem was more important there. In this respect, there was no difference between Gregory and Liemar of Bremen. Undoubtedly for the pious

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<sup>13</sup> *Vita anonyma S. Johannis Gualberti*, edited by Baethgen in MGH SS 30:2, pp.1105.

<sup>14</sup> Arnulfus, *Gesta archiepiscoporum Mediolanensium* III, 11, in MGH SS 8, p.19.

<sup>15</sup> It was overcome in the context of the dogmatic formulation of the *character indelebilis* of the priest.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. W. Goetz, "Zur Persönlichkeit Gregors VII," *Römische Quartalschrift* 73 (1978): 212ff.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the incomplete list at the end of the critical edition of the *Registrum* prepared by E. Caspar, MGH *Epistolae selectae* II.

archbishop, to avoid collaboration with a notorious fornicator was above all a matter of Christian good taste; the refusal to celebrate with Hermann of Bamberg, on the other hand, constituted a decision founded on dogma and hence severe and unavoidable. He was convinced that the sale of ecclesiastical offices represented not only a grave sin, but a true heresy. According to this view, which Liemar shared with the famous Lotharingian cardinal Humbert of Silva Candida, now dead for thirty years, the blessing received from a fornicator was tainted but valid, while the blessing received from a simoniac had lost from the outset any positive effect and was instead a curse heavy with terrible consequences for the soul's salvation.<sup>18</sup>

As is well known, the struggle against the *simoniaca heresis*<sup>19</sup> was the principal demand of the ecclesiastical reform. It had its origins in late antiquity. Already Gregory the Great had distinguished between *simonia a manu* — money —, *simonia a lingua* — recommendation —, and *simonia ab obsequio* — adulation and services. Some eleventh-century authors repeat this formulation, but a simplified version was more prevalent. Generally, in the age of the Gregorian reform, the word *simonia* was understood only in the sense of the sale of ecclesiastical offices by means of money. But in this context there arose a problem of broad implications: the determination of what were the things that were being bought and sold.

Two main lines of terminological development appear, which are mutually opposed to one another. Gradually, Gregory the Great's differentiation was lost. The meaning of *simonia* was tightened. Nuances disappeared. Now, for the most part, the expression *simonia* meant *simonia a*

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. A. Michel, "Die folgenschweren Ideen des Kardinals Humbert und ihr Einfluß auf Gregor VII," *Studi Gregoriani* 1 (1947): 79ff; G. Miccoli, "Il problema delle ordinazioni simoniache e le sinodi Lateranensi del 1060 e 1061," *Studi Gregoriani* 5 (1956).

<sup>19</sup> J. Leclercq, "*Simoniaca heresis*," *Studi Gregoriani* 1 (1947).

*manu*, the concreteness of the sale in cash.

At the same time, the precise meaning of the merchandise sold is extended and becomes less clear. According to the eighth chapter in the Acts of the Apostles — the point of departure for the eponymous heresy — the magician Simon wanted to buy the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, conferred by the apostles with the act of the imposition of the hands. Very quickly the imposition of the hands is understood as priestly ordination. Consequently, the word *simonia* acquired the meaning "a sacrament acquired for a price." Logically, the simoniac had to be either the priest who blessed or the person who requested the priestly blessing. But the further development of the term broadened the meaning even more.

It was the specific integrating tendency of the Middle Ages which favored a transformation in the application of the word *simonia*, an extension of meaning which put together — as we understand it — different things. Quite quickly one moved from the sale of priestly ordination to the paid conferral of any ecclesiastical office, meaning from the sacrament to the administration of the Church. Some authors also included what were clearly material additions and accessories, e.g. the cultivatable land associated with a parish, the fruit-bearing tree in the small garden of a chapel, the cow donated for the needs of the priest. Even for the usufruct of such things, a gratuity was required. With respect to bishops, abbots, and archdeacons, the material donation was valuable or quite abundant. Why did a counter-gift in money necessarily deserve condemnation?

Illustrious theologians, like Abbot Abbo of Fleury,<sup>20</sup> extended ecclesiastical competence without hesitation into every area, without considering the needs of the secular world. The sense of the word *simonia* was increased without measure. From then on the sacred contained many profane

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<sup>20</sup> P. Cousin, *Abbon de Fleury-sur-Loire*, (Paris, 1954); works: PL 139.

elements; but the profane also included ecclesiastical duties and institutions. It was a reciprocal relationship. Especially in the Germanic and Slavic world, there existed many so-called "proprietary churches" — in German *Eigenkirchen* — which made up part of the possessions of a rich lay noble or — especially — the kings.<sup>21</sup> If a priest paid a certain amount to the owner of one of these proprietary "churches" for sustenance and housing while he took on the duties of parish priest, would these people have committed the sin of simony?

A superimposition of spheres had come about, a confusion which was hardly definable and for this reason dangerous. Above all, the relations between kings and bishops became difficult. The Crown had enriched the dioceses, granting ecclesiastical institutions duties and *regalia*, political and economic rights, public administration, immunities, entire counties. Was it not fair to ask the bishop for an entrance fee? In feudal agreements, payments of this kind were known, e.g. the *relevium* or the *laudemium*. Without question, bishops were not longer exclusively servants of God, but also dignitaries of the king. For this reason, the majority of them followed a middle path, avoiding glaringly simoniacal excesses and extraordinarily scandalous proceedings and justifying themselves with the Lord's command: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's."<sup>22</sup> One participated in the affairs of the kingdom, one acted as the king's counsellor, one made a contribution to public expenses, and in part one also served in the feudal army.<sup>23</sup> Until the beginning of the Investiture Controversy, this behavior seemed absolutely natural, since the

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. A. M. Stickler, "I presupposti storico-giuridici della riforma gregoriana e dell'azione personale di Gregorio VII," *Studi Gregoriani* XIII (1989): 1-15.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 22:21.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. among many authors C. Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens*, (Stuttgart, 1935), p.68 and passim.

Roman king — in the mind of the age — was the "vicar of God."<sup>24</sup> It was he who elected and invested the bishops. In the eyes of contemporaries, he had a special responsibility both for the spread of Christianity in the pagan world and for the maintenance of the internal catholic order. Because of the royal and imperial anointing, he stood between the clergy and the people and was not considered a layman in the specific sense of the word.

As a result, kings appear repeatedly as advocates and pioneers of ecclesiastical reform. It is enough to recall Henry II and Henry III, who allowed the reform to triumph on the banks of the Tiber by eliminating the scandal of the three schismatic and simoniacal popes.<sup>25</sup> Rightly does one speak in modern historiography of "the imperial period of ecclesiastical reform." There is no doubt about the manifold outstanding successes of the decade-long collaboration between the emperor and the German popes. Particularly under Leo IX, the advances were extremely noteworthy. Yet the realization of the reform was not dependent solely on the good will of the imperial court nor even on the reborn activism of the papal court. In large measure, the bishops were the ones who carried the reform to victory.

Let's return to Liemar of Bremen: the judgment of contemporaries, friends, and — an observation which should be emphasized — enemies was unanimous on the archbishop's political and ecclesiastical attitudes: he was a more than usually informed theologian, a shrewd counsellor of the crown, and an exemplary pastor of his flock. Rightly did one of Liemar's opponents judge him to be "a person of great seriousness, dignity, and honor, an expert in canon law and Christian

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<sup>24</sup> Thietmari Merseburgensis episcopi Chronicon VI, 11, edited by R. Holtzmann, MGH SRG ns.9, p.288.

<sup>25</sup> That Gregory VII was a simoniac, has been decisively refuted by G.B. Borino, Archivio della Società Romana per la storia della Patria 39 (1916).

doctrine."<sup>26</sup> Within the German episcopate, the archbishop was at the forefront; yet he was in no way the only representative of the reform wing.

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<sup>26</sup> Wenricus Trevirensis, MGH LdL 1, p.297; Cf. Bonizo of Sutri, edited by Ph. Jaffé, *Bibliotheca rerum Germanicarum* 2 (Berlin, 1865), p.658 and 682.

A few days after Easter, again in 1074, the royal court went on to Nuremburg.<sup>27</sup> A papal legation led by two cardinals arrived. Hubert of Palestrina and Gerard of Ostia conveyed a personal message from Gregory VII to Henry IV. There was no lack of serious admonitions, but the king, deeply worried about an impending alliance between the pope and the German opposition, promised to eliminate the abuses, to obey the pope's orders, and to correct his own conduct.<sup>28</sup> It seemed to be a clear and unexpected success for the legates; but they also had still another task: they had to complete, officially, the pastoral visit of the dioceses in Germany and to hold a national council with themselves presiding. In order to push forward ecclesiastical reform, the entire German episcopate had to assemble in the presence of the king. Just as had already occurred in other nations, the legates were empowered to impose upon the German church new canonical rules; for nicolaitism and above all for simony, the [existing] prescriptions had to be rendered more severe.

The cardinals attempted to persuade the two archbishops to follow the king, but they did not succeed. Siegfried of Mainz raised some evasive objections, and his fellow bishop of Bremen gave a clear and outspoken response: he decisively rejected the papal mandate. According to Liemar, the pope's plan would be useless, dangerous, and contrary to canon law. Useless, because the moral condition of the German priest was better than that of those in Rome itself. The German Church had no need for correction from the outside nor for the pope's help. Dangerous, because the procedure envisioned would damage the confidence of the clergy and would open the door to unjust deferrals. And contrary to canon law because the presidency of a future national synod

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<sup>27</sup> Meyer von Knonau (op. cit. n.1), p.377.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Registrum I,85 and II,30; epp. coll.14; Meyer von Knonau (op. cit. n.1), p.379f.

belonged to the archbishop of Mainz, the pope's permanent legate in Germany.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Cf. Meyer von Knonau (*op. cit.* n.1), p.381 n.93.

Thus, the potential pastoral visit was blocked. The national council did not gather under the presidency of the cardinals. And there failed the curia's first attempt to subject the German episcopacy to the papal monarchy, which based itself on foundations many centuries old but was beginning precisely at this time to be realized in concrete terms. Indignant, the legates departed and back in Rome they complained about Siegfried's and Liemar's obstinacy. In vain was the archbishop of Bremen rebuked and summoned to Rome by Gregory VII; he remained in Germany. As a result, the pope suspended him, then dismissed him, and excommunicated him pro inobedientia nefanda.<sup>30</sup>

A strange situation: both men were leading lights of the reform, the great bishop and, in the same way, the greatest pope. Yet, between Liemar and Gregory's conceptions of reform there was an insuperable antagonism. There was also no lack of personal hostility. In a letter sent to one of his fellow bishops, the archbishop of Bremen angrily wrote the following words: "That most dangerous man (=Gregory VII) wants to give commands to the bishops as if they were his domestic servants."<sup>31</sup>

Why these bitter words? In the eleventh century, almost everywhere in Europe, the episcopate came from the high nobility. Especially in the Romano-germanic empire, the bishops were princes by birth and, for this reason, were powerful and proud. They knew their own value and their responsibilities. They did not forget the synod of Sutri in 1046, when they had removed the three popes who were contending over the Apostolic See nor the synod of Mantua in 1064, when they resolved the Roman schism. They recognized at a glance the moral level of the clergy in the different parts of Europe. For the most part, they approved of the reform without hesitation;

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<sup>30</sup> Registrum II,28 and II,53a.

<sup>31</sup>Hannoversche Briefsammlung, 15, in MGH Briefe der deutschen Kaiserzeit 5: Briefsammlung der Zeit Heinrichs IV, edited by C. Erdmann and N. Fickermann. p.34.

but they had a different conception of reform than the Gregorian one. For many bishops, undoubtedly serious and honorable men, reform essentially lay in the improvement of morals, especially those of the clergy. The Gregorian conception of reform, however, also included a juridical and administrative transformation of the catholic Church.

Non-Gregorian bishops did not have, in contrast, a very precise idea of the catholic Church. One can presume that unconsciously they were adherents or merely sympathetic to an ecclesiological vision based on the universitas episcopatus, a famous Cyprianic phrase.<sup>32</sup> It was a vague idea, but an effective one, because it was nourished by the proud awareness of class and by the undeniable effects of their diocesan or regional reforms. In truth, they were happy about the way things were. They wanted to improve conditions, not change the structures. They refused submission to Rome — a Rome which had just been reformed with the Empire's aid, that is to say with the help of the emperor and the bishops themselves. Episcopal ecclesiastical reform was a traditional reform, not a revolutionary force.

Yet it was, all the same, a true reform, an ethical movement, full of activity, enthusiasm, and sacrifices. In the Gregorian sources and also modern historiography, again and again the view is put forward that every adversary of Gregory VII must have been a simoniac and every adherent of the pope must have been connected with the ecclesiastical reform.<sup>33</sup> Often ecclesiastical reform and Gregorian reform are assimilated, frequently with reason, but just as frequently without reason.

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<sup>32</sup> E. Caspar, Geschichte des Papsttums, v.1 (Tübingen, 1930), pp.76ff; also cf.H.M. Klinkenberg, "Der römische Primat im 10. Jahrhundert," in Zeitschrift für Rechtsgeschichte kan. Abt. 41 (1955), though it is, methodologically, not without problems.

<sup>33</sup> A typical example of the Gregorian sources: Bonizo of Sutri; a typical example selected from modern historiography: A. Fliche, La réforme grégorienne, 3 vols. (Louvain-Paris, 1924-37).

This seems to me to be an observation of fundamental importance. We shall therefore offer some examples. In the plain of the Po was deployed the most ferocious opposition to Gregory VII, an opposition which was above all episcopal. Yet, aside from the fact that every society has its black sheep, the episcopacy of this region generally attained a very high intellectual, moral, and religious level of its own. Arderic of Vercelli reestablished the common life of his cathedral chapter.<sup>34</sup> Dionysius of Piacenza, implacable enemy of Gregory VII, protested against every form of simony; in his documents, still today only partially published, he condemns simoniacs with a curse of archaic dreadfulness.<sup>35</sup> The will of Gregory of Vercelli, Italian chancellor of Henry IV is marked by an impressive devotion.<sup>36</sup> Oppizo of Lodi in 1075 was praised by Gregory VII himself in an extraordinary way for his tireless struggle against simony and nicolaitism.<sup>37</sup> One year later he participated in a rebellion against the pope! One of Oppizzo's brothers was Guido, bishop of Acqui, who is venerated still today as a patron saint of his city and who was a tireless supporter of monasticism; in some of his documents he explicitly argues against simony.<sup>38</sup> And to conclude this naturally very incomplete listing, even Wibert of Ravenna enjoyed an excellent reputation because of his tireless commitment to the reform of clerical morals.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> F. Savio, Gli antichi vescovi d'Italia. Piemonte. (Torino, 1899), p.466.

<sup>35</sup> P.M. Campi, Dell'istoria ecclesiastica di Piacenza 3 vols. (Piacenza, 1651-62) with documents; cf. W. Goetz, Gestalten des Hochmittelalters, (Darmstadt, 1983), pp.132-49.

<sup>36</sup> Campi, (op. cit. n.35) I, p.520.

<sup>37</sup> Registrum II, 55.

<sup>38</sup> Savio (op. cit. n.34), p.30-33; G.B. Moriondo, Monumenta Acquensia (Torino, 1790), I, pp.28-37; II, pp.89-114.

<sup>39</sup> J. Ziese, Wibert von Ravenna, der Gegenpapst Clemens III., (Stuttgart, 1982).

Many times the figure of Gregory VII's principal adversary has been, and still is, judged incorrectly, in my opinion. Aside from the fact that Wibert was a most faithful follower of Henry IV and, for different reasons, opposed to the pope, he acted throughout his life in accordance with the demands of ecclesiastical reform. (One should note that the difference of opinions and the open dissension between the archbishop of Ravenna and the pope long preceded the conflict between Gregory VII and Henry IV, which means that one cannot interpret Wibert's opposition to the Holy See as a secondary result of the disagreement of 1076 between kingship and papacy.) In his conduct, Wibert, in a manner worth noting, was independent of the royal court. Denigrated and stigmatized by history, and also by Gregory himself for understandable reasons,<sup>40</sup> the most important antipope that has ever lived "maior erat cunctis ... doctus, sapiens et nobilis ortus..." as the panegyrist Donizo of Canossa asserted in verses about Mathilda of Canossa.<sup>41</sup>

Episcopal opposition to Gregory and to his conception of catholicism was not the result of an aversion on the part of these prelates to ecclesiastical reform. To the contrary! On the one hand, there was personal antipathy, because the zealous character of the pope did not allow easy compromises. On the other, it stemmed from a different conception of the catholic Church, that is to say from a different ecclesiology. And while in this period it was never completely developed with all its consequences, a vision of the Church nevertheless existed very clearly in the imagination of the great pope; the ecclesiological ideas of the episcopal opposition, on the other hand, were vague, less clear, and not homogeneous. In this respect, the Gregorian idea of reform was broader, more complete, and more exacting. It included the monarchical position of the Holy See, a

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<sup>40</sup> Registrum V,14a; VI,10;VIII,5; VIII,12; VIII,13; VIII,14;IX,36.

<sup>41</sup> Vita Mathildis, in RIS, n.s. 5:2, p.60.

requirement which until that time had never been realized and hence was suspect, annoying, or even hateful to many bishops — like Liemar of Bremen or Dionysius of Piacenza — or some kings.

Necessarily and essentially, the Gregorian reform also encompassed the struggle against simony, nicolaitism, and the other vices of the age. Gregory VII's entire Register is full of advice, admonitions, reproofs, and prohibitions regarding these matters. Pope Gregory was a resolute proponent of the improvement of ethical-moral behavior. Yet his reform was not exhausted in provisions against immorality, whether that of clerics or lay people. Perhaps — and methodologically speaking not without its problems — one could explain the pope's reformist intentions with a phrase from the Milanese chronicler Arnulf, a person truly dedicated to Ariald, the first leader of the Pataria and martyr of the popular Lombard movement: ... accusaret ... omnes nicolaitos et symoniacos ac prorsus inobedientes Romanae ecclesiae."<sup>42</sup> According to the pope, every true reform was necessarily of a universal, unitary, and obligatory character. In contrast to many particular reforms — monastic, episcopal, regional, royal — the pope insisted on the unity and coherence of ecclesiastical reform, a reform which — according to his unshakable conviction — had to be pushed forward, controlled, and coordinated by the see of Rome.

For the whole of Gregorian thought the concept of unity is of fundamental importance. There is only one catholic Church, and there must also be only one reform. In its use of the singular,<sup>43</sup> the following phrase from the letter of August 1074 to the Breton episcopate seems to me to be very instructive.

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<sup>42</sup> Arnulfus, *Gesta archiepiscoporum Mediolanensium* III, 13, in MGH SS 8, p.20: "...he accused them all of being nicolaites, simoniacs, and completely disobedient to the Roman Church..."

<sup>43</sup> Cf. also A. Nitschke, "Die Wirksamkeit Gottes in der Welt Gregors VII," *Studi Gregoriani* 5 (1956).

Videtur enim, quod in maligno iam mundus est positus et communis nostra mater ecclesia tanto ardentius contra antiquum hostem nos invitat surgere...<sup>44</sup>

Throughout the letter, one recognizes the well-known Augustinian idea developed in the twenty-second book of *De civitate Dei*. The war is one, and the entire world is the field of battle against the devil. In isolation, one can defend neither the salvation of the individual nor the salvation of all. One finds no quarter amidst the continual war between God and the devil. The only hope for everyone — and also for all reforms — depends on the Lord's promise to the first bishop of Rome: "Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam, et portae inferi non praevalent adversus eam."

On four occasions this verse appears cited in the documents collected in the Register. For Gregory VII, the Petrine foundation of the Roman Church was also the point of departure for every true reform of the Church: namely, a reform which was not just partial and fragmented. The pope insisted on catholic unity and on the unity of the reform founded on it. He felt himself responsible for the entire Christian people in every part of the world, because the Lord Himself had said to St. Peter, "*Ego rogavi pro te ut non deficiat fides tua*,"<sup>45</sup> continuing on with the unopposable command of reinforcement and reform, "*et tu confirma fratres tuos*." This verse recurs on three occasions. The

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<sup>44</sup> Registrum II, 1. "For you see that the world is now placed in wickedness and our common mother church summons us to rise up all the more ardently against the ancient enemy..."

*Registrum* I,64; III,6; VIII,21; IX,35.

M. Maccarrone, "La teologia del primato romano del secolo XI," in *Le istituzioni ecclesiastiche della «societas christiana» dei secoli XI-XII* (= Atti della V settimana internazionale di studio, Mendola 1971), (Milano, 1974); and his article "I fondamenti "petrini" del primato romano in Gregorio VII," *Studi Gregoriani* 13 (1989).

<sup>45</sup>

Luke 22:32.

*Registrum* II,31; III,18; VIII,1.

apostle's charge binds his successor in the same way: "Pasce oves meas," a verse which is cited five times in the *Register*.

The Lord requires obedience. In the Gregorian vocabulary, obedience and disobedience are the most important words, recurring in the *Register* more than 300 times. In their most exacting sense, they apply to everyone: the pope himself, the bishops, the priests, the kings, the princes, the laypeople. The pope bears upon his own shoulders the full responsibility, but also the full powers of the *princeps apostolorum*. Gregory considered himself an unworthy instrument, but one who was chosen by God Himself. He expected and asked for help on the part of the bishops, but often he did not receive it. For Gregory, the church of Rome was *caput omnium ecclesiarum, mater, magistra, domina*. Nonetheless, many particular churches did not want to live according to the norms, prescriptions, and liturgical forms of their common mother. By nature, Gregory was zealous; he was angered by the presumption and self-satisfaction of many bishops, who, by dedicating themselves to their own particular reforms, had, in his opinion, forgotten God's commandments and the hierarchical structure of the catholic Church. On seventeen occasions, the great pope compares, indeed identifies, episcopal disobedience with the biblical *crimen idolatriae*.

Many bishops did not heed the voice of the pope. They did not want iste periculosus homo to destroy their liberty (a word which rarely appears in Gregory VII's *Register*). Even in the early period of his pontificate, the relationship between the papacy and the episcopate was the most controversial, thorny, and important issue. Not by accident were the bishops the ones who, in

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John 21:15-17; cf. *Register* I,15; III,10; IV,2; VIII,21; IX,35.

Cf. *Registrum*, with its list of names and words.

I Kings 15:23; *Registrum* II,45; II,66; II,75; IV,1; IV,2; IV,11; IV,23; IV,24; VI,10; VI,11; VII,14a; VII,16; VII,24; VIII,15; VIII,21; IX,20; IX,35.

January of 1076, threw down the gauntlet before Gregory. The dissension between the pope and the episcopacy blossomed into a horrible war between the kingship and priesthood which destroyed the unitary and integrated world of the early Middle Ages.