

Abstract

The dissertation focuses on the problem of the legitimation of the authority of Pope Gregory VII. The content of the dissertation is divided into four main parts and is supplemented by the introduction and the conclusion. The introduction presents the state of research, that is, a review of the most important scholarly works concerning the pontificate of Gregory VII. The scholars discussed are grouped according to the languages and historiographical traditions they represent. Historians writing in German, English, French, Italian, and Polish are taken into account. The following part of the introduction justifies the choice of the topic and presents the aims and research questions of the dissertation. Considerable attention is also devoted to the source base of the research, above all the papal letters from the Register, the collection *Epistolae vagantes*, and the privileges issued during the pontificate of Gregory VII. The introduction also outlines the methodology of the research and the structure of the dissertation.

The first chapter addresses the problem of the legality of Gregory VII's accession to office. At the beginning of this part of the work, a concise history of the election to the Throne of St Peter is presented, from the earliest bishops of Rome up to the pontificate of Pope Nicholas II, who in 1059 issued the synodal decree *In nomine Domini*. This document defined the rules for the election of a new pope that were formally in force at the moment when Hildebrand ascended to the Roman see. However, he was elected in a manner quite different from what had been prescribed. The analysis of Gregory VII's own narrative concerning his election constitutes the central and most important part of the first chapter. Significantly, the manner in which the election took place recalls the circumstances of the elections of two Church Fathers who undoubtedly served as models of virtue for Hildebrand – St Ambrose of Milan and St Gregory the Great. Furthermore, Gregory VII's account of his election, preserved in his correspondence, is compared with descriptions of this event by two contemporary authors: Bonizo of Sutri and Berthold of Reichenau. The circumstances of Gregory VII's election cast a shadow over his entire pontificate and provided grounds for numerous attacks against him. Excellent examples of such criticism are the letters issued by the bishops of the Empire and by King Henry IV, in which Hildebrand was accused of the gravest sins and of unlawfully seizing the Throne of St Peter. These documents were connected with the synods of Worms (1076) and Brixen (1080). Gregory VII's response to these accusations took the form of two excommunications of Henry IV. The texts of the documents recording these anathemas contain strong declarations that Gregory had never desired the papal office and that he had accepted it

only out of obedience to the will of Saints Peter and Paul. In the dissertation, another source used to examine Gregory VII's discourse is the oath taken by Roman bishops (including Hildebrand himself) before receiving episcopal consecration. This oath declared, among other things, that the new pope would not violate the decisions of his predecessors. In Gregory VII's case this referred above all to the decree *In nomine Domini*. The chapter also raises the question of whether Gregory VII, had he believed that he had been elected illegally, would have included in his *Dictatus papae* a statement declaring the sanctity of the pope's person on the condition of a lawful election. Equally intriguing is the content of the *memorandum* of Gregory VII's last will, which records that on his deathbed he once again referred to the legality of his election to the office of bishop of Rome.

The second chapter seeks to identify the most prominent and frequently occurring motifs used to describe the primacy of the Roman Church. Gregory VII presented it primarily as the mother of all Churches, guiding the faithful on the path to salvation. For this reason, the Apostolic See was owed unconditional obedience and respect. Gregory VII justified his numerous interventions in the affairs of dioceses across Europe by claiming that, as the bishop of Rome, he was responsible for the fate of the faithful entrusted to him by Christians. At the same time, he asserted that on the Day of Judgment he would have to answer before God for the conduct of the faithful. The strengthening of papal authority was also supported by Gregory's particular devotion to St Peter. The Prince of the Apostles was believed to have protected Hildebrand from the beginning of his life. Gregory VII expressed his belief in a special bond between St Peter and his successors on the Roman see. The pope also willingly portrayed papal authority as a heavy burden rather than an honour. Several papal letters – particularly those addressed to Abbot Hugh of Cluny – have a very personal character. These writings raise the question of whether the burden of authority described by Gregory VII was merely a rhetorical or discursive strategy, or whether Hildebrand genuinely felt overwhelmed by his office and the gravity of his decisions.

The third chapter attempts to understand Gregory VII's views on royal and imperial authority and its relationship to spiritual power. The most important sources that allow insight into this issue are papal letters and the document *Dictatus papae*. Both this text and the two letters addressed to Bishop Herman of Metz (from 1076 and 1081) present secular authority in a very negative light. According to the pope, secular power was inherently tainted by sin and could not equal spiritual authority in its power. The letters to Herman also offer a kind of interpretation of the history of relations between the bishops of Rome and emperors and

kings. Gregory VII referred to those moments in the history of the Church when *sacerdotium* proved more powerful than *regnum*. In their fundamental assumptions, the writings addressed to the bishop of Metz correspond closely with the theses contained in the *Dictatus papae*.

In other writings by Gregory VII one can also find references to the ideological foundations of the authority of emperors and kings, although the pope's position is not always as unequivocal and radical as in the aforementioned texts. Gregory VII was aware that without cooperation with monarchs in individual kingdoms he would not be able to introduce reforms in various ecclesiastical environments. For this reason, the bishop of Rome had to restrain his bold views and attempt, at least outwardly, to maintain correct relations with secular rulers. When the entire spectrum of Gregory VII's letters is analysed, it becomes clear that his views on secular authority were complex and could undergo certain changes.

The fourth and final chapter of the dissertation is devoted to the papal authority of Gregory VII in a broadly understood secular dimension. In the eleventh century, the papacy began to assume certain competences that had previously been reserved primarily for secular power. The most significant undertaking of the Apostolic See during Gregory VII's pontificate was the planned organization of a military expedition intended to defeat the Saracens threatening Byzantium and to recover Jerusalem from their hands. Although the crusade ultimately did not take place, the very fact that the pope placed himself in the role of calling Christians to fight for the faith demonstrated the strengthening of the Apostolic See in an area that had previously belonged to the sphere of secular power. Gregory VII also believed that not every act of disobedience toward the Apostolic See constituted a grave sin and a break with Christ. The papacy treated as its prerogative the authority to decide against whom armed force could be used – whether they were unbelievers or baptized Christians who rebelled against the Apostolic See.

Gregory VII also conceived of the Roman Church as exercising lordship over various lands. The pope believed that the Apostolic See possessed special rights to maintain supremacy over Spain. He referred to Hungary as the property of the Roman Church. Gregory VII also believed that he had the right to grant authority over Kievan Rus' to whomever he considered worthy of it. Corsica was regarded as fully dependent on the decisions of the papacy, while Gregory VII perceived a special bond between Brittany and Rome. Southern Italy, in turn, was treated by the pope as a fief. The descriptions of the dependence of particular countries on the Apostolic See are diverse and are based on tradition, history, and legal acts recognized by the pope as authentic.

Gregory VII was also convinced of the existence of a special bond between the Apostolic See and certain dioceses. The examples of such a bond include the bishoprics of Ravenna and Bamberg. The former was founded by St Apollinaris, who had been sent to the city by St Peter. The latter was founded by Emperor Henry II, whose will was that the diocese of Bamberg should be dependent exclusively on the Apostolic See.

The conclusion of the dissertation presents the most important findings and reflections. According to the results of the study, the discourse of Pope Gregory VII was largely a response to the crisis of the legitimation of his authority. In constructing the narratives contained in his letters, Gregory VII had to demonstrate that he had been elected lawfully and that the papacy possessed the right to intervene in the affairs of local dioceses throughout the Christian world. According to Gregory VII, secular authority not only had no right to dominate spiritual authority, but should in fact be subordinate to it. In Gregory VII's conception, the authority of the Roman Church also operated in the temporal sphere: the bishop of the Eternal City had the right to call for war against the unbelievers and those who were disobedient. Rome also exercised supremacy over certain countries, while dioceses maintained a special bond with it.