Introduction

The archbishop was wavering. Long a supporter of the reforming Pope Gregory VII, now, in the late spring of 1085, Archbishop Hartwig of Magdeburg seemed on the verge of joining forces with the bishops surrounding Gregory's greatest enemy, the excommunicated, but triumphant, Emperor Henry IV. Henry had recently ratcheted up pressure on those who opposed him. At a synod held in Mainz in April, he had deposed all the Gregorian bishops in Germany, including Hartwig. So the archbishop was thinking seriously of a reconciliation with the emperor, one that would allow him to retain his office. It was at this juncture that his mother stepped in. She warned Hartwig that he would offend his father and sin against herself if he joined the Henricians:[1] "O sweetest of sons, continue to do as you have been doing, continue to work as you have been working, continue to protect the maternal inheritance which you have received."[2]

But this was not Hartwig's biological mother speaking. In fact, these admonitions were composed by Bernhard, the learned master of the cathedral school at Hildesheim, who compiled and sent to Hartwig a collection of theological and legal texts soon after the synod of Mainz. Bernhard's *Book of Canons against Henry IV* was designed to prove how wrong it was to be in contact with excommunicated persons such as Henry, to demonstrate that Pope Gregory had justly cast Henry out of the Church, and to show that neither Henry's episcopal supporters nor the synod they had just held had any legitimacy. The texts included in the book were not unusual, although some of them may have been unknown to Hartwig. They came from the writings of Augustine of Hippo, Pope Gregory I, Bede, and others of the Church Fathers, as well

[1] Bernhard of Hildesheim, *Liber canonum contra Heinricum IV.*, Praefatio, MGH, LL 1: 473. Unless otherwise noted – either in the footnote or in the bibliography – all translations are my own. On Bernhard, see Mirbt (1894), pp. 33–35; Robinson (1978), pp. 107–8. On the political context of this work, see Robinson (1999), pp. 246–49; Althoff (2006), pp. 197–205.

[2] Bernhard, *Liber canonum contra Heinricum IV.*, Praefatio, MGH, LL 1: 472.

as from various early medieval compilations of church law – notably the ninth-century collection wrongly attributed to Isidore Mercator (on which more below). What is remarkable about the *Book of Canons* is its narrator. The Church, personified as the Bride of Christ and the Mother of the Faithful, addresses Archbishop Hartwig, urging him not to change sides in this moment of crisis. She reminds him that she was the one who gave birth to him, "with [divine] grace acting as a midwife." The "Father" who will be offended if the archbishop fails in his duty is, of course, God, while the "maternal inheritance" which he must protect is his own see of Magdeburg.[3]

Bernhard attempted an unusual rhetorical move in placing the declaration of church law in the mouth of Mother Church herself. To my knowledge, no other medieval canonist made the Church the *narrator* of a canon law collection. Presumably this move had a practical purpose, giving greater weight to Bernhard's work. Since he himself was no pope, archbishop, or bishop, but merely a scholar and teacher, attributing the statement of law to Mother Church confirmed its validity: "I, your Mother the Church, give you [Hartwig] this bulwark of invincible authority …".[4] But in treating the female personification of the Church as a central character in his work, Bernhard of Hildesheim was only doing what a great many other clerical authors in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries did. He was viewing ecclesiastical reform through the lens of gender and sexuality, as an attempt to protect and purify the Household of God.

Some seventy years ago, Gerd Tellenbach characterized the Investiture Conflict as a struggle for "right order in the world."[5] That characterization continues to shape our interpretations of the various movements to reform religious communities in western Europe during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, and our understanding of the complicated conflicts that surrounded and grew out of those movements. Since Tellenbach's time, much effort has been devoted to tracing the many visions of "right order" that prevailed and competed with one another in that period, including the theocratic visions of the Salian emperors and the hierocratic visions of the reforming popes; the rank- and tradition-conscious visions of monastic communities, cathedral chapters, noble families, and individual bishops; and the more utopian, sometimes revolutionary visions of itinerant preachers and participants in popular movements.[6] Many volumes have been

[3] Throughout this book, lower-case letters will be used for ordinary, earthly mothers and fathers, while capitals will be used to designate the Church as Mother or God as Father.
[4] Bernhard, *Liber canonum contra Heinricum IV.*, 48, MGH, LL 1: 516.
[5] Tellenbach (1936), p. 1.
[6] Excellent bibliographies may be found in Blumenthal (1982); for discussion of the scholarship on a variety of specific issues, see Hartmann (1993a).

written on the growing power of the papacy, the conflicts between *regnum* and *sacerdotium* (the so-called "Investiture Conflict"), and – especially in recent years – on local reforming efforts in the context of local politics.[7]

A vast scholarly literature exists on all these subjects, because in the central Middle Ages political theories as well as political practices were changing in important ways, with far-reaching consequences for the later history of Europe and, for that matter, America. However, from this very large body of scholarship, gender and sexuality have hitherto been almost entirely missing.[8] While historians have certainly recognized that the Church was often represented in this period as a Mother or as a Bride, and that bishops and popes were sometimes seen as fathers or husbands, no serious effort has yet been made to understand the role of these representations in political discourse during the central Middle Ages, the ways in which they evolved over time, or the emotions they evoked. While scholars have closely examined both efforts to reform the structures of Church and state and efforts to reform marriage in the central Middle ages, they have paid little attention to how "right order" in the world was related to "right order" within the household.

The reason for this is not hard to find. It lies in the impoverished modern notion of the political upon which many scholars continue to rely. From the eighteenth century to the twentieth, political activity was generally understood as something carried on by men in a "public sphere," viewed as distinct from the "private sphere" within which women had their place.[9] Admittedly, some women did appear in the public sphere and participate in public activities, but this was not their normal or expected arena. Moreover, while it was also recognized that "public" men had their "private" side, and engaged in sexual and other intimate behaviors within the family (and sometimes outside the family as well), these private activities were distinguished from politics, except in unusual cases where public scandal arose from them. Despite the efforts of feminist and postmodern scholars to complicate the meaning of "the political," many of those who study the political history of the modern era continue to base their studies on these traditional assumptions.[10]

[7] An important critique of the papacy's role was Laudage (1984). But in response to this recent emphasis on local studies, see now Cushing (2005).

[8] The only exceptions thus far have taken the form of brief articles: see McNamara (1994) and (1995); Leyser (1998); McLaughlin (1998) and (1999); Elliott (1999), pp. 81–126; Miller (2003); McLaughlin (2010).

[9] The principal twentieth-century theorists of the public sphere are, of course, Hannah Arendt (1958) and Jürgen Habermas (1962).

[10] Feminist critiques include Brennan and Pateman (1979); Elstain (1981); MacKinnon (1989); Pateman (1989); *Feminists Read Habermas*; Ackelsberg and Shanley (1996); *Feminism, the Public and the Private*. Among postmodern critiques, see especially Foucault (1975) and (1978–86); Lyotard (1984) and (1988).

Medieval politics, of course, operated very differently than do modern politics. There was certainly nothing akin to the "bourgeois public sphere" during the central Middle Ages.[11] "Public" and "private" were distinguished, but only in a very nebulous way – in both practice and theory they tended to flow into one another.[12] It has long been recognized that what we would today consider "public" business was conducted within the households of kings and nobles, while political authority was closely identified with the *mundium* a father exercised over his family. Yet while these peculiarities of medieval politics are well known, most historians of medieval politics and political thought continue to accept without question the modernist assumption that the realm of politics was both male and asexual.[13] Studies of the Investiture Conflict focus on the interactions of important men (and a few "exceptional" women like Agnes of Poitou or Matilda of Tuscany), which are seen as public and therefore political. Sexuality and gender are seen not as integral parts of the field of political action and thought, but rather as essentially private matters, perhaps affected by public politics – as in the campaign to reform Christian marriage and sexuality – but seldom affecting them.

Such a reconstruction of political life in the central Middle Ages is, however, both anachronistic and misleading. Recent research has made it abundantly clear that public business was not only conducted within the household, but often within the most intimate spaces of that household, and in the presence of all its members, male and female, young and old, noble and servile. We know, for example, that matters of state were regularly discussed in the king's bedchamber.[14] A number of scholars have documented the regular and largely unquestioned participation of the wives of kings, nobles, and officials in the business of government and war.[15] And because many of the lower clergy and even a few of the

[11] Some scholars have recently argued for the existence of medieval "public spheres" or "spaces": Althoff (1993) and (2003); Masschaele (2002); *Formen und Funktionen*; Symes (2007); Melve (2007).

[12] On the public/private distinction in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, see the Conclusion, below.

[13] The most egregious example of this tendency may be found in the last works of the great medievalist Georges Duby: (1988), (1995), (1995–96).

[14] Examples of important meetings taking place in the king's bedchamber include: Thangmar, *Vita Bernwardi episcopi*, 19, MGH SS 4: 767; Wipo, *Gesta Chuonradi*, 16, MGH, SS 11: 265 (trans. Mommsen and Morrison, p. 79); Bruno of Magdeburg, *De bello Saxonico*, 62, MGH, SS 5: 350. In literature, this is represented in *Ruodlieb*, 5, pp. 90–91.

[15] Vogelsang (1954); Facinger (1968); Bernards (1971); McNamara and Wemple (1973); Verdon (1973); Leyser (1979), pp. 49–74; Stafford (1983); McLaughlin (1990); Jäschke (1991); Chibnall (1991); Stafford (1994); *Medieval Queenship*; Goez (1995); *Queens and Queenship*; Aurell (1997); Stafford (1997); *Aristocratic Women*; Fössel (2000); *Femmes, pouvoir et société*; Woll (2002); *Capetian Women*; Haluska-Rausch (2005), pp. 155–60 (and see n. 7 to p. 154); LoPrete (2007a) and (2007b).

upper clergy were still married at this time, women helped to conduct the business of the Church as well. This is not to say that women were in any way considered the equals of men; rather it is to recognize that because of the spatial organization of politics in this period, women had direct access to political life, and often exercised authority – if only as deputies for male relatives. Only very gradually, from the late eleventh century on, do we begin to see the emergence of what Jo Ann McNamara has called "woman-less" public spaces.[16]

The absence of a clear distinction between the public and the private does not, however, simply mean that women regularly participated in political life. It also means that in the central Middle Ages the "political" was understood to encompass much more than most modern historians have assumed. The subject of this book is the role of gender and sexuality not in political practice, but in political discourse, from the time when ecclesiastical reform movements were beginning to accelerate, just after the year 1000, to the moment when the most intense phase of conflict over reform (the Investiture Conflict proper) ended with the Concordat of Worms in 1122. The beginning and end points of my study are, of course, somewhat arbitrary, since the representations discussed here were based on earlier precedents and continued to be used for centuries thereafter. Nevertheless, I would argue that in the political writings of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, ideas about gender and sexuality had greater salience and deeper emotional resonance than ever before.

In those political writings, contestations of sexuality and gender constantly interact with contestations of authority and power. Polemicists in this period represented *Ecclesia*, the Church, in a number of ways – as a city, a dove, a ship, a sheepfold, and notably as the Body of Christ – but by far the dominant image was that of a woman – and a woman of "infinite variety," by turns pure and corrupt, resplendent and abject, commanding and oppressed. Around this central female figure revolved all the other characters in the drama of reform, the popes and emperors, bishops and princes, priests and street mobs – related to her as husbands, as guardians (or corruptors) of Christ's Bride, as faithful (or unfaithful) sons to Mother Church. Earthly women, too, had their roles to play, as wives, mothers, and daughters, although all too often they served merely as foils for the celestial Bride and Mother, with their actions contrasted unfavorably with hers.

What is the significance of such representations, which occur everywhere in political texts from this period? Some historians have referred

[16] McNamara (1995).

to them as mere models or metaphors for institutions and authority.[17] Clearly, though, their significance ran deeper. Jérôme Baschet, in his study of the Bosom of Abraham and medieval notions of paternity, has described representations of God as Father or of bishops as fathers as metaphors, but also as something more. He uses the phrase "fantasmes socialement consolidés" to call attention to the ways in which such representations were shaped not only by the traditions of Christian society and by the individual writer's rhetorical concerns, but also by the unconscious.[18] A few scholars have noted the elaborate development of these figures, and their extensive influence in the political and ecclesiological thought of the central Middle Ages. Thus I. S. Robinson argues that "these *allegoriae* are more than metaphors: they are fully developed ecclesiological ideas of great power and complexity."[19] And Tellenbach pointed out long ago that such representations were "more than symbols in our sense of the word," and attributed the highly emotional tone of reform arguments to the fact that "for medieval man there was more truth and clarity in [the image of the Bride] than in abstract expressions of the relation of Christ to the Church."[20]

Yet in treating representations of the Church as Bride or of the bishop as father as mere comparisons, however powerful and complex, even in allowing for the unconscious in their development, there is still something missing – something that Tellenbach and Robinson hint at, but never fully explain. I would argue that for clerical writers of the central Middle Ages, the Church did not just resemble a bride or mother. Rather, she *was* the true Bride and the true Mother – the supernatural prototype for these roles on earth. By the same token, not only was God the prototype of all fathers, but Christ was the truest of bridegrooms. The clerical authors discussed in this book understood the linkage between these human and spiritual relationships to be not arbitrary, not freely chosen by themselves or even by the earlier Fathers on whose works they drew; in short, not simply metaphorical, but truly allegorical in the theological sense – that is, ultimately designed by God, inscribed in Scripture, enacted in the liturgy, and thereby handed down to the faithful on earth.[21]

Medieval clerics, trained in the techniques of scriptural exegesis, believed events and institutions in the world to have hidden meanings, implanted in the world by divine providence as signposts to spiritual truths.[22] References to such hidden meanings occur not only in theology,

[17] E.g. Bosl (1975); Fichtenau (1984), pp. 120–32; Schreiner (1990).
[18] Baschet (2000), p. 34, and see p. 352, n. 7
[19] Robinson (1988), p. 252. [20] Tellenbach (1936), p. 131.
[21] For a modern iteration of this view, see Lubac (1971), p. 39.
[22] Lubac (1959–64).

but also in political polemics, in chronicles, and in many other literary forms. As the historian Raoul Glaber noted, "God, the author of all, distinguished the objects of his creation by many different shapes and forms, so that by means of what the eye sees and the mind perceives, He might raise the wise man to a direct view of God [*ad simplicem Deitatis intuitum*]."[23] After laying out the parallels between various "quaternities" (the four Gospels, four cardinal virtues, four senses, four elements, etc.), Raoul asserts, "God is proclaimed most plainly, beautifully, and silently by this patent chain of correspondences [*evidentissimis complexibus rerum*]; in frozen motion each thing indicates another, and they do not cease to proclaim the original source from which they derive, and to which they seek to return in order to find peace again."[24] Such "correspondences" could work in a variety of ways. Some were "figural," with one historical event foreshadowing another.[25] Others were "tropological," with events and institutions pointing to moral lessons. And still others were "allegorical," in which visible things pointed to invisible truths.[26] (The same word, "allegory," also served as the category encompassing all these types of correspondence.)

Many authors are considered in this book; all were steeped in a variety of textual traditions which authorized their representations of *Ecclesia* in female form, and the correspondences they saw between the life of the Church and the lives of earthly women. The Bride and the Mother both appear in Scripture, which automatically gave these figures a truth-value not granted to ordinary metaphors.[27] Ideas about a feminine Church were also developed to some extent by the Church Fathers, whose ideas about ecclesiastical institutions were essential to the thinking of eleventh- and early twelfth-century writers.[28] The influence of the liturgy, which all medieval clerics regularly performed, was also important, for ritualization – the reiterated re-presentation of *Sponsa Christi* and *Mater Ecclesia* within the context of sacred space and time – underlined the inherent reality of these images in particularly concrete ways.[29] And finally, a very direct source for many of the writers considered below was that peculiar work known today as the "Pseudo-Isidorian Decretals."

This collection of supposedly authoritative texts on church organization and discipline was attributed to the fictitious "Isidore Mercator," but

[23] Raoul Glaber, 1.2, pp. 3–4. [24] Raoul Glaber, 1.3, pp. 6–7.
[25] Auerbach (1938). [26] E.g. Raoul Glaber, 5.10, pp. 228–31.
[27] On the implications of Biblical exegesis for political thought, see Buc (1994).
[28] Chavasse (1940); Plumpe (1940); Rahner (1944); Bedard (1951), pp. 17–36; Delahaye (1958); Therel (1973).
[29] See below, Chapters Two and Four. On ritualization, see Bell (1992), especially p. 74. My thinking on this subject has also been influenced by Butler (1990) and (1993).

in fact was the creation of a workshop of highly educated clerics, working in northeastern France around the middle of the ninth century.[30] The collection combines authentic material with skillfully forged royal legislation and papal decrees, created in response to the tumultuous situation in the Frankish church during the preceding decades. Pseudo-Isidore was designed to insulate diocesan bishops from interference by archbishops or church councils; it thus emphasized the autonomy of individual bishops and the authority of the (conveniently distant) pope. These characteristics made it extremely useful to many reformers of the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, especially those who supported episcopal independence from lay control and papal claims to supreme authority within the Church. These reformers made extensive use of texts from Pseudo-Isidore in their arguments.[31] In Pseudo-Isidore, however, much more than in earlier texts, the role of bishops was described in terms of family relationships. The correspondences it lays out between the household of God, the household of Church, and earthly households of men and women shaped many of the texts from the central Middle Ages considered in this book.

While representations of the Church as Bride and Mother, or of bishops as husbands and fathers, had earlier precedents, they nevertheless reached a new stage of development in the central Middle Ages. Highly gendered and sexualized representations of the Church, of bishops and popes, of kings and of ordinary layfolk appear everywhere in the large body of polemical pamphlets and books composed to support the concerns of reformers and their opponents from the mid-eleventh century on. They serve as the framework for entire treatises (as in Bernhard's *Book of Canons against Henry IV* or Placidus of Nonantola's *On the Honor of the Church*) or as important recurring themes (as in Ranger of Lucca's *On the Ring and the Staff*[32]). They are elaborated at length and in great detail (as in Peter Damian's *The Debate at the Synod*[33]). The correspondences between earthly, institutional, and heavenly households have their own history, which is intertwined with the histories of theology, canon law, and political thought, and which can be traced by considering how particular formulations are picked up and developed from one author to another.

This book explores the use and development of a specific group of images – it is, in short, essentially, a study of iconography. But in

[30] The work has traditionally been dated to around 850: Fournier and Le Bras (1931–32), vol. 1: 183–85; Fuhrmann (1972–73), vol. 1: 191–94. However, Zechiel-Eckes (2001) has suggested a date in the 830s. The collection will be cited below from Projekt Pseudoisidor, available at: http://www.pseudoisidor.mgh.de/.

[31] Fuhrmann (1972–73), vol. 2: 411–62, 586–624.

[32] See below, Chapter 2 . [33] See below, Chapter 4 .

approaching such a subject, I cannot do better than to follow the lead of art historian Hélène Toubert, who emphasizes how important it is to examine the relationships between images – the commonalities and differences that make it possible to place a particular representation within the "sometimes very lengthy genealogy" of its subject, as well as within the "iconographic repertoire" as a whole. Specific details, Toubert points out, may help to identify an image's immediate source, or clarify the conditions under which it was created.[34] Such techniques, long employed in the study of visual images, can usefully be applied to verbal images as well. Examining the intertextual development of Gregory VII's famous description of the Church as "free, catholic, and chaste," or the story of Noah and his three sons, not only makes the centrality of gendered and sexualized correspondences to political argument in this period clear, but also helps to clarify the relationships among writers, as well as the impact of particular political conditions or religious affiliations on their thought.

One consistent element in all of the texts examined, however, is the unquestioned *reality* attributed to these figures – which brings us back to the distinction made above, between metaphor and allegory. In the political writings of the central Middle Ages, the household of God, the household of the Church, and earthly households are constantly juxtaposed. Sometimes, the authors of these texts made their awareness of the differences between these households clear. They say that they are "comparing earthly to heavenly things," or they state that the Roman Church is "like" a mother, or a bishop is acting "like" a father. Yet even in these cases, the comparisons are nothing like those involved in modern metaphors. Modern metaphors describe the similarities between things, but it is always easy to see where those similarities stop, for the differences are almost as evident as the similarities, and indeed give piquancy to the comparison. In medieval theological allegory (which was ultimately shaped by Christian Neoplatonism, although by the central Middle Ages it had become habitual for most writers), there was an essential unity between the things compared; the difference between them was simply one of degree or dignity. The essence of the earthly household was the same as that of the heavenly household, the two were related as shadow to reality. And this had significant implications for the use of these correspondences in political argument. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the polemical writings of the central Middle Ages is the way in which the *laws* governing gender, sexuality, and familial bonds are applied directly and unapologetically to ecclesiastical relationships. It

[34] Toubert (1990), p. 9.

was easy for medieval clerics to apply the same laws to human families and to the family of the institutional church, for they believed that both were rooted in archetypal relationships among the members of the divine *familia*: God the Father, Christ, and the Church.

While the writers considered in this book came from all over Europe, and had diverse social and intellectual backgrounds, they also had many things in common. Any reasonably well-educated cleric, regardless of geographical, social, or political position, whether English or Italian, monastic or secular, radical or conservative, would have been familiar not only with the doctrine of correspondences, but also with most of the specific gendered or sexualized correspondences discussed below. These ideas were part of the common intellectual currency of the central Middle Ages. Nevertheless, as we shall see, writers strongly committed to church reform – and especially those radical reformers associated with the circle of Pope Gregory VII in Rome – employed these images more frequently, and developed them more elaborately, than anyone else.[35] As rhetorical devices, the characterization of simony (the buying and selling of holy things, especially church office) as prostitution, and of disobedience to Rome as defiance of one's mother, suited the Gregorians' polemical goals, underlining the heinous nature of those sins. It would be a mistake, however, to understand their deployment of these devices as simply rhetorical. The violent language of rape, incest, and betrayal, the tender language of embraces, kisses, and love, also served to express the reformers' emotional reactions to what was right and wrong in the church of their day. There can be no doubt that they truly recoiled with horror when a church was defiled by the adultery of its bishop, and rejoiced when the faithful supported their rightful spiritual father. At the same time, a careful reading of their works reveals how understanding a bishop as the bridegroom of his church, or a king as the pope's son, helped these thinkers construct their own, often novel, visions of "right order" in the world. If more conservative thinkers sometimes had difficulty refuting the reformers' claims, it was in part because they, too, assumed that such correspondences were real.

The new prominence accorded to images of the Church as Bride or the pope as father in the central Middle Ages can probably be attributed

[35] In the past, scholars have sometimes used the term "reformer" in such a way as to imply membership in, or affiliation with, the Roman reformers. Recent scholarship, however, has emphasized how autonomous the various reform movements in different parts of Europe generally were – even if they eventually came to ally themselves with the reforming papacy. In this book, therefore, "reformer" simply denotes anyone engaged in criticism of, or an attempt to change, traditional practices, while "conservative" refers to anyone interested in defending the status quo. Those associated with Gregory VII or his successors are referred to as "Roman reformers" or "Gregorians."