Pope Eugenius III (1145-53): The First Cistercian Pope

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This volume – a collection of essays on the pontificate of Eugenius III (1145–53) – received a grant from the Thornley Bequest to help with the costs of production. Although the work – and indeed the life – of Isobel Thornley is little known today, the fund established upon her death has provided numerous fellowships, and books and articles on every topic from radical politics in 20th-century Turkey to village communities in early medieval Brittany and late medieval medical divination.⁽¹⁾ The bequest has been essential to the production of much excellent scholarship, and the book under review is no exception.

The other recipient of thanks (ignoring the contributors and editors) must be Amsterdam University Press. The series in which this book is published – *Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West* – has been peregrinating for the last few years. Fortunately, *CFCMW* seems now to have reached its own port of salvation with AUP.

Moving on from those who made the book possible (they are not under review), *Pope Eugenius III* begins with a useful introduction to the man and the pontificate by Andrew Jotischky, one of the two editors of the volume. Jotischky sets the scene nicely. The themes of the book which cut across the various chapters are sign-posted; most obviously the relationship between Pope Eugenius III and his spiritual mentor, St Bernard of Clairvaux. The influence of St Bernard over his one-time protégé has, in the past, been detected in several areas of Eugenius' pontificate: the Second Crusade, perhaps most famously, but also Eugenius' relationship with the Cistercian order and his handling of a dispute over the election to the archbishopric of York. These topics all receive a chapter (from Jonathan Phillips, Stuart Morgan and Emilia Jamroziak respectively). Pascal Montaubin, in his chapter on Eugenius and France, and Christoph Egger, on Eugenius' curia and theological controversy, also touch on the pope's relationship with St Bernard. The other contributions are Anne Duggan on Eugenius and the Law, and on Eugenius in exile; Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt on Eugenius and the northern Crusade; Damian Smith on Eugenius and Spain; John Doran on Eugenius and Rome; Brenda Bolton on Eugenius and the papal patrimony; Claire Oglesby on Eugenius' 1147 stay at Cîteaux and finally Jotischky on the pope and the Christian East.

Duggan's first chapter – on the pope and the Law – also allots a role to St Bernard. Bernard famously

complained that the pope's curia was following 'Justinian's Laws, not the lord's' – the quotation that gives the chapter its title. Duggan is at pains to show – as she has shown consistently in her other work – that the papal curia was more acted upon than acting. We see legal development across Italy (and, indeed, Europe) at this time, and it would have been remiss of the papal curia to fall behind the latest developments.

A trend to emphasise both a demand for formal law, and 'provincial agency' – the appropriation of law by those in the periphery – is also visible from scholarship on pre-Justinianic Roman law.⁽²⁾ There may prove to be considerable crossover in the use of formal (Roman) law in the first and second centuries, and the use of re-discovered Justinianic law in the 12th century. But perhaps this is simply how we should view pre-modern law generally?

Christoph Egger first recounts the increasingly prominent position of 'intellectuals' within Eugenius' curia, and examines some of the works dedicated to Eugenius, before moving on to the trials of Gilbert de la Porée. Here it is the conflict between Bernard of Clairvaux and his supporters, and the College of Cardinals which is of interest: Bernard sought to bounce the papacy into condemning Gilbert while the cardinals insisted on preserving their right to decide the matter. St Bernard did not always come off best in his dealings with the curia, and with 'his' pope, Eugenius.

Reading Egger's chapter, some fruitful avenues of further research spring to mind: might there be a link between some of the theological ideas in Cardinal Robert Pullen's Eight Books of Sentences and Eugenius' policies, for example? After all, John Baldwin famously showed how Innocent III's curia was influenced by Peter the Chanter. Brenda Bolton, in her chapter on Eugenius and the patrimony, draws attention to an overlooked inscription on the walls of Terracina which recounted that Eugenius banned his judges from receiving gifts from litigants before a case was decided. She suggests that 'Eugenius's (...) attempts to limit (...) corruption (...) follow closely John of Salisbury's (...) thoughts and arguments' (p. 303). But Salisbury studied under Pullen, and Pullen was Eugenius' first chancellor. In his seventh book of Sentences, Cardinal Pullen had advised rulers: 'so long as they [royal officials] desire money, they do not fear to sell justice'.⁽³⁾

The study of the disputed election to the archbishopric of York in 1140–7, by Emilia Jamroziak, has St Bernard and the Cistercians as its fulcrum too. Jamroziak emphasises the genuine commitment of the Cistercian 'side' to reform of the clergy: requiring clerics to possess good moral qualities and acting against simony and royal interference in elections. These values were, to the 12th-century Cistercians, linked: a free election would intrinsically produce a morally superior cleric. Although Bernard and the Cistercians may have changed the relative weight they accorded to these values in their letters, these value-based commitments were their genuine motivation, above local politics. This was not a political dispute, because reform *was* political.

Jonathan Phillips concentrates on showing that Eugenius was not a passive figure in the Second Crusade; not – as has often been suggested – playing second fiddle to Bernard of Clairvaux. In so doing, Phillips offers a detailed analysis of Eugenius' famous Crusading letter, *Quantum praedecessores*. Phillips also makes the important point that *Quantum praedecessores* 'had to survive the process of translation from Latin into the appropriate vernacular' (p. 132). But an act of translation is always also an act of interpretation. While there has been work done – in various contexts – on the reception of papal letters in the localities, such studies do not always take into account the importance of translation. The 1157 Besançon Incident – where the emperor's chancellor 'mis-interpreted' the word *beneficium* – was probably not the only time where translation offered the opportunity to change the message.

Finally, Phillips reminds us of Rudolf Hiestand's observation that, after the failure of the Second Crusade, demand for papal legitimation – in the form of privileges, letters etc issued by the papal chancery – seems to have dropped dramatically. The narrative for the 12th-century papacy is a steady increase in the number of surviving documents. The only comparable decline in the number of surviving papal letters to that identified after the Second Crusade, is the difference between Adrian IV (1154–9) and the first 18 years of Alexander III's pontificate – when there was a papal schism. Adrian's average of 17 documents a month dropped to 6

documents a month (1159–61), rose back to 17 (1162–5), stayed consistent at 16 (1166–77) then rocketed to 35 documents a month once the papal schism had been resolved in 1177.⁽⁴⁾ This reinforces the magnitude of the disillusion faced by Eugenius after the Crusade: the only comparable loss of faith in papal authority was a schism, when there were two popes.

Iben Fonnesberg-Schmidt looks specifically at Eugenius' role in the northern (or Baltic) Crusades. Both Eugenius and St Bernard are presented as fairly reactive figures although, interestingly, their particular approach to the northern Crusade differed, as Eugenius integrated it into his vision for a pan-European effort against non-Christians. Eugenius also, in granting approval for the military expedition in the north, came very close to allowing for forced conversions to Christianity.

Anne Duggan's second chapter is on 'the benefits of exile', that is, Eugenius' time in France. Here a series of eyewitness accounts of the ritual and spectacle that surrounded Eugenius' French visits are examined. While the accounts of Eugenius' Easter celebrations in Paris may be disappointingly meagre, the accounts Duggan produces from Châlons-sur-Marne, Verdun, Trier and Besançon are impressive: dancing in the street was apparently a common feature. Duggan also, usefully, includes an itinerary and map to illustrate Eugenius' journey.

Pascal Montaubin's chapter on the links between Eugenius and France illustrates a fundamental dynamic of the 12th- and 13th-century papacy: the manner in which papal authority was a store of legitimation for those external to the curia. Louis VII of France nominated Abbot Suger (and others) as regents while the king was on Crusade. During his regency, Suger was able to instrumentalize papal authority against troublemakers: he got Eugenius to threaten excommunication against anyone who disturbed the peace of the realm or ignored Suger's authority. This is vital: the king of France's 'real' power was limited to a small area of the Île-de-France. But through the instrumentalization of papal authority Suger was able to exercise power much more widely across *l'Hexagone* (modern-day France). This is an important corrective to some (currently rather popular) narratives which assume that supra-national bodies are necessarily in conflict with nation-states for sovereignty: in the 12th and 13th centuries, the papacy (a supra-national authority) was actually integral to the creation of what became modern nation-states, because rulers were able to use papal authority to secure themselves and even expand their effective power. Without the papacy, is France even conceivable?

Focusing on a geographical rather than political unit (Iberia), Damian Smith's chapter nonetheless identifies commonalities across Eugenius' relationships with the Spanish and Portuguese realms. On the military side, Smith points out that several of the most important Spanish campaigns of the mid-twelfth century were clearly not anticipated by the pope – Lisbon, Tortosa and Lleida most obviously. Equally, in the debate over the primacy of Spain, and in various episcopal disputes, the problems the pope faced were unvarying: first, the problem of knowing what was happening on the ground (as opposed to what the pope was told by whichever side was petitioning him); secondly the problem of getting papal rulings adhered to.

The late John Doran covers Eugenius and the Roman commune, beginning by offering a simple and convincing explanation for Eugenius' election in 1145: as attempt by the cardinals to move away from Innocent II, Celestine II and Lucius II's attitudes towards the commune, while still electing someone who was – basically – a curial insider. If Eugenius aimed at a new *modus vivendi* between papacy and commune then, as Doran tells it, he succeeded. The new agreement formed the basis for Roman-papal relations for next fifty years. Doran also points out how useful the annually-elected Roman senate would be to the popes. Such a body gave the pope the opportunity to dominate the city through pro-papal senators (in his paper in the *Celestine III* collection of essays, Doran suggested that a Roman *senator consiliarius* in 1151 might have been a cousin of Cardinal Hyacinth Bobone. It also seems very likely that the Peter Saracen who was a *senator consiliarius* in 1190–1 was the same person as the papal seneschal of that name). If the body were ever opposed to the pope, then all he had to do was wait until the next election.

Brenda Bolton's chapter, on Eugenius and the papal patrimony, is a wonderful study. Particularly interesting is the previously mentioned inscription on the walls of Terracina which announced that the pope banned

local judges from extorting fees and gifts from litigants, but allowed judges to receive freely-given gifts from litigants after the case was decided. As Bolton notes, this is not dissimilar to the rule that Innocent III enforced on his household fifty years later. One can go even further; this is not even a distinction limited to the Middle Ages: in 2013 a report by the auditor-general of New South Wales (Australia) noted that '[s]ome gifts say thank you, while others say please'.⁽⁵⁾ The distinction is between gifts after the business at hand is ended – which supposedly will not affect a judge or politician's decision – and between gifts given in the expectation of obtaining a favourable hearing.

One cannot escape the suspicion that these well-meaning guidelines would not survive contact with human ingenuity. Can one forget Thomas Cochrane, who – according to his own account – paid ten guineas (£10 10s) to everyone who voted for him after he lost a by-election in 1806. Cochrane was then successful in the next general election four months later. But when those who voted for him the second time turned up at his house in the expectation of reward, Cochrane paid them nothing.⁽⁶⁾ How would Eugenius' rules have dealt with gifts that say both 'please' and 'thank you'?

Bolton may well be correct in suggesting that Eugenius aimed at administrative improvement in the curia when he collected new lists of who owed taxes to the papacy.⁽⁷⁾ It is, however, most uncertain whether such collections had any real effect. Damian Smith, in his chapter, mentions Eugenius' 1150 letter to all papal tax-payers (*censuales*) throughout Spain, ordering them to pay their taxes to the bishop of Pamplona. But Eugenius' chancery did not even specify which churches or laymen might owe taxes, let alone how much they owed. The cartulary of Santa Cruz de Coimbra – which recorded this letter – also recited another papal letter on the same folio.⁽⁸⁾ In it, Pope Lucius III (1181–5) announced he was sending a tax-collector to the archdiocese of Braga. But even now (decades after Eugenius) the papacy had no confidence in its own lists of tax-payers: Lucius envisaged that ecclesiastical institutions would allow his collector to read their papal privileges, presumably because the privileges would note if an annual tax was owed ('through this the truth of the matter will be known to him'). How the collector would then work out the number of years' arrears each tax-payer owed was not specified; presumably either the institution would have kept a receipt for its last payment, or Lucius' collector – knowing that the institution would have paid its tax at the time it got its most recent privilege from the pope – would multiply the amount of tax specified in the privilege with the number of years since it was issued. Even thirty years after Eugenius, it is questionable whether central record keeping by the papal court was of much practical use.

Against Constance Berman's reinterpretation of the early history of the Cistercian Order, Stuart Morgan argues that the Cistercians did have a general exemption from tithes from the time of Innocent II. Morgan's point that a specific exemption from tithes for an individual Cistercian house was more powerful than appealing to the general exemption for all Cistercians (pp. 306–7) is an important one. In a different context, the same observation has been made by Francesco Renzi and others.⁽⁹⁾ Morgan also discusses the Cistercian right not to attend diocesan synods. Although, under Eugenius, the order had a *general* right of non-attendance, there are no surviving letters from his pontificate which grant this right to *particular* houses. This must be because Cistercians were willing to attend synods. Rights of exemption from episcopal authority are only important when they are needed; when they were not needed, they were not included in papal privileges.

Continuing with the Cistercian theme, Clare Oglesby turns her attention to Eugenius' presence at the Cîteaux 'General Chapter' in 1147. Beginning with a useful summary of recent debates over the 'chapter', Oglesby then pieces together what role Eugenius himself might have played in the appeals of three religious houses to be incorporated into the Cistercian order. It is worth noting that the two successful houses seem to have arranged matters with Eugenius and St Bernard beforehand, whereas Gilbert of Sempringham (the third) perhaps did not. However, Eugenius appears to have supported the Gilbertines, even if they were not accepted into the Cistercian order.

Andrew Jotischky looks at Eugenius' relationship with the Christian (not just the Latin) East, providing important context for the military expeditions to Outremer. Broadly speaking the churches in the Holy Land

faced the same sort of problems as churches in Europe: disputes over tithes, advowsons etc. Jotischky's account of the dispute between the abbey of Notre-Dame of Josaphat and the archbishop of Nazareth is particularly interesting, much of the detail coming from a petition sent by the abbot to Eugenius III. This includes the claim that, after Pope Innocent II's death, the archbishop's men taunted the monks: 'what do privileges of the Roman Church profit you? The pope is now dead!'

There has always seemed to be a disjunction between papal privileges, which have eternal validity (*In perpetuum*), and the tendency for ecclesiastical institutions to get their privileges renewed by each new pope. This is especially strange since no pope would explicitly cancel their predecessors' privileges unless someone else appealed for them to do so. This little snippet from the Holy Land – some clerics assuming that the pope's death robbed his privileges of either validity or usefulness – confirms that, despite privileges being explicitly perennial, there was an assumption (or hope?) that a privilege from a pope might lapse on his death.

This is another excellent contribution to *CFCMW*'s series on 12th-/13th-century popes. Collectively, these volumes now stand as a vital resource for the history of the High Medieval papacy. With success, however, comes opportunity. Considering the number of monographs in *CFCMW*'s series on individual popes, and considering the consistency of some contributors and their topics, is it reasonable to hope that eventually some of the same authors' contributions from different books will be made available together? For example, Brenda Bolton's studies on the popes and the papal patrimony (Eugenius III [1145–53], Adrian IV [1154–9], Alexander III [1159–81], Celestine III [1191–8] and the 'Grey Popes' [1181–91]) would, if collected together, stand alongside Peter Partner's *Lands of St Peter*, Waley's *The Papal State in the Thirteenth Century* and Toubert's *Les structures du Latium médiéval* as essential works on the topic. The same is true of Smith's chapters on the popes and Iberia (an essential accompaniment to Peter Linehan's classic *The Spanish Kingdoms and the Papacy in the Thirteenth Century*), Duggan's on papal law and several others. Perhaps, considering the current priorities of much academic publishing, this is a pipe-dream, but one can hope.

Notes

1. S. McSheffrey, 'Isobel and me: medieval sanctuary and Whig History', <<https://blog.oup.com/2018/07/isobel-d-thornley-medieval-sanctuary-whig-h...> [2] [accessed 7 November 2018]. In the interests of transparency, the present reviewer should probably declare that he was the Thornley Doctoral Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research in 2016–17. [Back to \(1\)](#)
2. And, in fact, in studies of law in the later Empire too. See, most recently and for a summary of the scholarship: K. Czajkowski, B. Eckhardt, 'Law, status and agency in the Roman provinces', *Past & Present*, 241 (2018), 3–31. [Back to \(2\)](#)
3. *Patrologia Latina*, 186, col. 921. [Back to \(3\)](#)
4. R. Hiestand, 'Die Leistungsfähigkeit der päpstlichen Kanzlei im 12. Jahrhundert mit einem Blick auf den lateinischen Osten' in *Papsttutkunde und europäisches Urkundenwesen: Studien zu ihrer formalen und rechtlichen Kohärenz vom 11. bis 15. Jahrhundert*, ed. P. Herde, H. Jakobs (Cologne/Weimar/Vienna, 1999), pp. 1–26, at 23. The rate for Alexander's opponent (Victor IV) is fractionally above one document a month (1.135), but this is obviously affected by the fact that Victor lost the 1159–77 schism. [Back to \(4\)](#)
5. C. Gregory, 'Unequal egalitarianism: reflections on Forge's paradox', *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, 15 (2014), 197–217, at 206. [Back to \(5\)](#)
6. D. R. Fisher, 'Thomas, Lord Cochrane (1775–1860)' in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1790–1820*, ed. R. Thorne, online: <<https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/cochra...> [3] [accessed 16 September 2018]. [Back to \(6\)](#)
7. The untraced 1163/4 letter 'mentioning a book of taxes stating that the church of Lagny-sur-Marne owed the Lateran palace an ounce of gold' (p. 286, 82n), was two near identical letters of 1163/4 and 1164/5: *Epistolae Pontificum Romanorum Ineditae*, ed. S. Loewenfeld (Leipzig, 1885), no. 242, pp.

134–5 and *Patrologia Latina*, 200, cols. 333–4.[Back to \(7\)](#)

8. Portugal, Arquivo Nacional, Livro Santo: <<https://digitalq.arquivos.pt/viewer?id=4614123>> [4] Image ID: no. 249; [accessed 6 November 2018]. Edited: *Papsturkunden in Portugal*, ed. C. Erdmann (Berlin, 1927), no. 93, pp. 283–4.[Back to \(8\)](#)
9. F. Renzi, ‘The bone of the contention: Cistercians, bishops and papal exemption. The case of the archdiocese of Santiago de Compostela (1150–1250)’, *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies*, 5 (2013), 47–68, at 49–50.[Back to \(9\)](#)

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