Rethinking Reform 900-1150: The Languages of Reform

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Centre for Medieval Studies
King’s Manor
University of York

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9.15am-9.30am Katy Cubitt, University of York
Welcome and Introduction

9.30am-10.00am Anne-Marie Helvétius, Université Paris VIII
Reflections on the terminology of ‘reform’ in the papal letters addressed to the Franks, c. 600-c. 800

10.00am-10.30am Isabelle Rosé, Université Rennes 2
What was “simoniaca heresis” in the Carolingian age?

Abstract: Simony, a key concept for reforming the society has a long history which can help us understand how the Church conceived its reorganization and that of society, by defining the relation of its members with wealth and temporal goods. If pope Gregory the Great truly invented the “Simoniaca heresy”, at the turn of the 7th century to help think and enforce the Reform of the Church, the Carolingian age can be considered as a major moment for the meaning(s) of this notion. In order to study what simoniaca heresy was in the Carolingian age, I have led systematic investigations of occurrences of simoniac* in digitalized databases (76 occurrences, disseminated in 55 texts), but I focused on the normative documentation, that is capitularies and canons council.

This documentation attests important transformations of the concept of simoniaca heresis in the Carolingian Age. Indeed, this concept became wider (diapo), on different levels. First, Simoniacum describes either the entire process for choosing and putting a cleric in a see, or the fact of giving money for certain mediation rituals between the clerics and the laity. Second, the Simoniaca heresy involves more and more the laymen and underscores their intervention in the matter of the Church, especially in the Church property. Third, the Simoniaca heresy becomes a way to criticize any kinship influence from that moment on, which demonstrate that there were important power games for the episcopal sees. Two moments seem to have been really important for these changes. The first one is of course the council of Paris, because it conflated, in a broad way, two different traditions prohibiting the sale of episcopal offices. The second one happened in the second half of the 9th Century, when a few canons involved the laity in several practices called simoniac.

11.30am-12.00pm Carine Van Rhijn, Universiteit Utrecht
Abstract: Around 835, Florus of Lyon wrote a treatise setting out how bishops ought to be appointed. What he emphasised was that kings could be consulted in episcopal appointments, but should not – in fact could not – make those appointments themselves. Florus backed up his argument with references to hagiography, canon law, patristic authors and contemporary circumstances. In his work on Florus, Klaus Zechiel-Eckes argued that this was not really a work of ‘reform’ because it was written for polemical purposes. This paper discusses that interpretation, as well as exploring the reception of Florus’s treatise around the year 900.