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Bauer, Stefan: *The Invention of Papal History*. Onofrio Panvinio between Renaissance and Catholic Reform. – Oxford: Oxford University Press 2020. (VIII) 262 S. (Oxford-Warburg Studies), geb. £ 70,00 ISBN: 978-0198807001

Stefan Bauer has provided us with another very important contribution to the history of papal historiography, after his 2007 book, *The Censorship and Fortuna of Platina's Lives of the Popes in the Sixteenth Century*. In that previous book, B. focused on Bartolomeo Platina (1421–1481), humanist, political theorist, and papal official under the humanist Pope Pius II, who composed his most famous work, a biographical compendium of the Roman popes from St. Peter down to his own time. In this most recent book, B.'s attention turns to Onofrio Panvinio (1530–1568) and his contribution to the birth of papal history as a historical-critical enterprise.

In the introduction the author points out the earlier recognitions of Panvinio's work and explains his attempt to write "a study of history-writing at a key moment in early modern history as seen through the lens of an individual author and in the context of his time" (11). In chap. one: "The Cloud's Roar: Panvinio's Early Career" (16–61), B. reconstructs the biography of a member of the Augustinian order, Onofrio Panvinio, born to an honest but not noble Veronese family in 1530, between the start of the Protestant Reformation and the beginning of the Council of Trent. His socio-economic background was at the root of a fixture in Panvinio's work: the continuous need to secure patrons able to fund his research. The transition to a new kind of history-writing method, based on archival primary sources (in Rome and in various parts of Italy, "Panvinio started exploring source material under 'great physical strain' and even peril", 37), meant the need to fund travel but also to maintain a staff of copyists (and at times also a cook). His early work on the history of prominent families was also directed at creating connections. The very unstable Roman politics of family alliances made the search for patrons a complicated business, constantly in need of reviews, as for example when his main patron, cardinal Alessandro Farnese, fell under suspicion during the pontificate of Paul IV (1555–1559).

In chap. two, "Between Church and Empire: Panvinio's Final Decade" (62–88), B. describes Panvinio's need to reconsider his patrons in light of the pontificate of Paul IV and the conclave of 1559 (the longest conclave of the sixteenth century, more than three and half months) which elected Pius IV and where cardinal Farnese played an important role (on which Panvinio wrote an autobiographical report, *Creatio Pii IV*). It was the highest moment in Panvinio's attempt to become an insider of the Roman court – in order not to become a courtier but to secure patrons and funding for his research. The 1559 conclave was a pivotal moment for his relationship with Rome, but that did not stop him from looking for new patrons in Germany (especially Hans Jakob Fugger and the cardinal prince-

bishop of Augsburg, Otto Truchsess von Waldburg) beginning in 1562. Panvinio died in 1568 in Sicily during a trip to Palermo with cardinal Farnese, who was archbishop of the city. His death sealed also the fate of his works: in May 1568 Pius V instructed cardinal Sirleto to review Panvinio's manuscripts, but in January 1569 the pope issued a ban on all his works: "this all-out prohibition concerned both reprints and hitherto-unpublished manuscripts" (83). Roman and curial politics was key during his life as well as after his death: B. attributes the ban on his works to "lack of protection of Panvinio's memory by superiors in the Augustinian Order or a lack of influence of the order at the papal court" (83).

The second part of the book is a study of Panvinio's works. In chap. three, "Panvinio's History of Papal Elections" (89–145), B. analyzes the original contribution of the Augustinians to the tradition of church history through a massive undertaking, the history of papal elections, *De varia creatione Romani pontifices* (full version in ten books, dated 1563): "Writing the history of the papacy through the history of the papal elections gave Panvinio the opportunity to trace changes in the distribution of power inside the church over the course of the centuries. [...] In the middle of the sixteenth century a history of this subject had not yet been written; Onofrio Panvinio was the first to write it." (89) Panvinio's interpretation of the role of the emperors in the designation of the popes became controversial and it was part of his difficulties with church politics especially after his death. Panvinio's historiographical effort aimed also at identifying different modes of papal elections, which helped him draft a bull for reform of the conclave prepared by Pius IV between 1561 and 1562, with a very sensitive section on the relationship between the council and the conclave: not only given the recent memory of conciliarism, but also because Trent ended only in 1563.

Panvinio's early method of historical criticism (142–145) was telling of his dynamic idea of church history, but also of his vision of the history of the church as something inconceivable as separated from political history – in his case the history of imperial elections which he wrote in 1558. Chap. four, "Church History, Censorship, and Confessionalization" (146–206), puts Panvinio's life and work in the context of different concepts of church history between Catholics and Protestants in the early stages of the Reformation and the particular role played by the genre of papal biography in Catholic reform and counter-reformation. The story of Panvinio's work is also a story of censorship which can take different forms in the Catholic Church. For Panvinio it was not only a ban on the publication of his works after his death, but also the preference for the most important official historian of the Catholic Church in the age of confessionalization: "the rise of Baronio as the Church's new preferred historian compromised Panvinio's posthumous success" (178).

In the epilogue, B. assesses Panvinio's legacy in the tradition of the historiography on the institutional church and the papacy, pointing out something that makes the 16th century look like the 21st century, at least in some countries where church history is academically in the no man's land between secular history and post-modernist theology: "History-writing was an endeavor that was not yet tied to professional institutions such as universities but relied on financial resources made available by patrons." (212) In the appendix, "The Papal Election Decree of 1059" (213–220), there is a brief excursus on the different versions of that decree that reshaped fundamentally the way the bishop of Rome is elected.

B.'s book is not just an extremely well researched study and the definitive work on Panvinio. It is also a much needed contribution on the roots of a tradition of studies, in order to understand also the standing and the status of church history and papal history today. In Panvinio's method and vision of church history there are many *traits d'union* from pagan history to topography to history of

emperors, and from the history of Roman emperors to papal history to church history (e.g. *Reipublicae Romanae commentariorum libri tres*, 1558). This says something about the contemporary crisis of institutional church history which faces the rise of a more anthropological and ethnological approach to the history of the church. It is also very instructing and somehow comforting for historians today to know the intricacies of writing church history navigating between ecclesiastical and imperial patronage. The explanation of the various forms of censorship (including the ones *post mortem*) that church historians had to go through is an important reminder of the perception of church history as dangerous especially when it touches on the relations between the papacy and the empire (for Panvinio, his interpretation of the role of Gregory VII). This was particularly evident for a historian who intended writing church history as part of a plan for church reform aiming for a breakthrough at a conclave. The book casts a light on a case of the change of fortunes for historians from one pontificate to another: for Panvinio, the election of Paul IV (1555–1559) put Alessandro Farnese under suspicion, and in December 1558 the *Index of Prohibited Books* came into force. Lastly, Panvinio's life and work demonstrates the deep connections between the historiography of imperial history and of the papacy, from Romulus to Constantine: one more evidence that writing church history has always been directly or indirectly shaped by a certain way of looking at the secular political institutions.

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