

2003

## The Former Pope is Wrong

Lindsay Starkey  
*Denison University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/ephemeris>



Part of the [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), [History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#), and the [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Starkey, Lindsay (2003) "The Former Pope is Wrong," *Ephemeris*: Vol. 4 , Article 4.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/ephemeris/vol4/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Classical Studies at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ephemeris by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

*The Former Pope is Wrong*

By Lindsay Starkey

*Editor's Note: Emperor Henry IV, the Holy Roman Emperor (1084-1105) and German King (1056-1105), was a central figure in the opening stages of the struggle between the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy, particularly gaining opposition from Pope Gregory VII.*

Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, we are gathered here today to bring justice to my client Emperor Henry IV of East Francia. The false Pope Hildebrand has repeatedly leveled false accusations at my client, and it is time for the circulation of these false rumors to end. During the course of this trial, the accusations against my client about communicating with the excommunicated, practicing lay investiture, and failing to keep his word to Hildebrand will be proved false. My client in turn charges Hildebrand, false Pope, with trying to steal my client's God given rights, usurping the papal authority, and threatening my client's person, and he demands that Hildebrand stop masquerading as the Pope. The facts will speak for themselves, and, in the end, if I perform my duty and you perform yours, my client shall be cleared of all charges.

God has called my client to his station in life. If not God, then who gave King Henry IV his place on this Earth? Since God is omnipotent and therefore everything he does is the greatest possible goodness, would he call an unworthy man to take this most exalted position? Whereas my client received his throne by God's will, Hildebrand received the most holy office by treachery and deceit.

Hildebrand made a promise to my client's father concerning the office of the Pope. The promise can be seen in the official Renunciation of Gregory VII by the German Bishops.

In the time of the Emperor Henry  
III of good memory, you

[Hildebrand] bound yourself with a solemn oath that for the lifetime of that Emperor and for that of his son, our lord the glorious King who now presides at the summit of affairs, you would neither obtain the papacy yourself nor suffer another to obtain it, insofar as you were able, without the consent and approbation either of the father in his lifetime or of the son in his (Geary 598).

After giving this promise, as soon as the previous Pope had vacated the papal seat, Hildebrand proceeded to jump on it with all haste and without the consent of our most exalted Emperor Henry IV. While Hildebrand maintains that he received his office from God's good will, in actuality, he stole it with his treachery. First of all, the cardinals, the approbation of the people, and the consent of the king did not elect Hildebrand, as is now the proper way for a Pope to be elected. Instead, he was raised to the papacy by the cries of the common rabble. Also, Hildebrand is extremely intimate with another's wife, and he is even suspected in the murder of four Roman pontiffs. Would God choose a lustful murderer to perform in the sacred office of Saint Peter? Because Hildebrand was not elected correctly, and because God and God's law certainly do not permit his vile actions, he is therefore not a representative of God. Emperor Henry IV, God's chosen one, has the duty to defend the Church from the false monk Hildebrand.

My client has been accused of practicing lay investiture, which is forbidden in a proclamation made by the false Pope, Hildebrand. Lay investiture has been a time honored tradition that has been past down from generation to generation. In Germany, a monastery or church founded



by someone is considered a part of his property and this property is inheritable by future generations (Blumenthal 5). Can a man not choose the person who is to preside over his own piece of property? And who but the Emperor is the greatest property owner in all of Germany? Also, in the reforms initiated by Louis the Pious and Charlemagne, laymen gave up their right to ordain holy men unless the bishop of the diocese gave his permission. However, no bishop may refuse to ordain a holy man who has been nominated, provided the man has enough education and satisfactory morals (Blumenthal 5-6). As can be seen from this, ladies and gentlemen, lay investiture has been occurring with bishops' permission since the time of the great Charlemagne. Is a crazy man, who has stolen the office of Pope to condemn this ancient practice? Emperor Henry IV, when practicing lay investiture, was carrying on a tradition that had been going on for centuries. Lay investiture is a very important part of the government of my client. "To give up investitures would be to change the whole imperial system of government" (Tout 128). The decrees of a crazy usurper do not contradict centuries of tradition or the need for a smoothly run government. Henry IV is correct in not following the false decree about lay investiture.

Hildebrand has accused my client of making promises to him and then not following through with what he has promised. If my client promised anything to the mad monk Hildebrand, it was promised in hopes that Hildebrand and my client could get along with each other. As can be seen in one of my client's letters, he wanted nothing more than for the Emperor and the Pope to exist peacefully together just as God willed.

He [God] was teaching that every man is constrained by the priestly sword to obey the

king as the representative of God but by the kingly sword both to repel enemies of the Christ outside and to obey the priesthood within (Geary 600).

It was my client's fondest wish that he and Hildebrand could behave in the way that God ordained, and it was in this spirit of brotherhood that he may have made these promises. However, when Emperor Henry IV saw that Hildebrand was hell bent on ruining the Church, which Henry is sworn to defend due to the promise made by Otto I to Pope John XII, he realized that any promises that he had made to Hildebrand as Pope must be revoked in order to purge the papal office of the mad monk (LaDue 92). When my client went to Canossa to ask for the Pope's forgiveness, he was not admitting his faults, but instead, was trying his utmost to mend the terrible breach that had developed between the papacy and the emperor. When my client realized that Hildebrand was going to persist in his crazy ways, it was then my client's duty to defend the Church with all his power.

As for the charge of communicating with the excommunicated, I must ask you but one question. Who excommunicated these people that my client was communicating with? They were stricken with this most severe punishment by none other than the false monk Hildebrand. Therefore, these people were excommunicated only in name. They were the tragic victims of Hildebrand's treachery, made to bear the cross of papal excommunication without sufficient grounds. My poor client was also a victim of this most malicious treachery. He was called excommunicated by a man, Hildebrand, who had no right to pass such judgment since he is not Pope. This false excommunication caused the Emperor, my client, great hardship.

As Saint Peter proclaimed, "Fear God, honor the king" (Benson 151).

Hildebrand, the man who stole the office of Pope, does not honor the Emperor or even fear God. By claiming that Henry IV is excommunicated and demanding that he be replaced, Hildebrand is stealing my client's God given rights. Not only is Hildebrand undermining my client's position with his subjects, but also this false monk even called for the death of my most exalted client. Is a man who is presumed Pope to be demanding the death of an emperor, and should he be supporting the people who are trying to dethrone him? The answer to this, ladies and gentlemen, is an emphatic no! Hildebrand has no right, God-given or temporal, to demand the life of one of God's elected people. God gave my client his authority, and with that authority comes the right to control his lands. Hildebrand has undermined this control with his false excommunication, and he has undermined God by demanding Emperor Henry IV's life.

Hildebrand is guilty of trying to ruin the Church with his stolen authority. Not only is he going against tradition by proclaiming himself above the king when in fact God has declared that they must be equals, but he is also overstepping his stolen authority by meddling in local affairs. The Church is a marvelous place filled with many different types of people all trying to serve God's will. The Pope, as the head of the Church, is only one man, and therefore, he cannot be in all places at one time. Realizing this, bishops are given areas of land to look after in order to keep the Church running smoothly. God sanctions the authority given to bishops by the most holy Church. Hildebrand used his stolen authority to intrude upon the authority of the bishops. By sending papal spies to all areas, and refusing to allow bishops to do what must be done for their dioceses themselves, he is overstepping his bounds. Hildebrand, by using his stolen

authority to crush the position of the bishops, is ruining the Church as we know it. We all have the responsibility to defend the Church.

Hildebrand, also known as Pope Gregory VII, has accused my client of many things. In the course of this trial, the innocence of my client, Emperor Henry IV, and the horrible guilt of the crazy monk Hildebrand will finally be established. Because the Church must be preserved, the false Pope Hildebrand must be truly stricken down. As my client proclaimed in one of his letters, "Descend! Descend!" (Geary 599). Hildebrand is a menace to our Church, and, therefore, to all we hold dear. It is now your responsibility to make this man pay for what he has done, and to free my client from these scandalous rumors.

Works Cited

- Benson, Robert L., ed. Imperial Lives and Letters of the Eleventh Century. Trans. Theodore E. Mommsen, and Karl F. Morrison. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.
- Blumenthal, Uta-Renate. The Investiture Controversy. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988.
- Geary, Patrick J. Readings in Medieval History. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Canada: Broadview Press, 1997.
- LaDue, William J. The Chair of Saint Peter: A History of the Papacy. New York: Orbis Books, 1999.
- Tout, T. F. The Empire and the Papacy. London: Rivingstons, 1899.