Cultures of Secrecy in the Early Modern Papal Conclave

If people know one thing about papal elections, it is probably that they are supposed to be secret. They take place behind the locked doors of the Sistine Chapel. All prying eyes are excluded until a new pontiff appears in front of them – as if by magic – on the balcony of St Peter's. When a new pope emerges he is not a quantitative victor of counted votes but a man chosen by God and a figure of consensus. Only thus does he possess the authority to execute his office. His legitimacy stems from the lack of transparency in his election – a state of affairs that invites others to believe in him as the true apostolic successor of Christ. Just as it is today, in the early modern period this mystery was highly public and, indeed, ostentatious. Obvious and often unsubtle ceremonies publicized it: a coronation in St Peter's and a procession (*possesso*) to St John Lateran to 'take possession' of his temporal lordship and episcopal see. Similarly, before the election the defunct pope was buried with as much pomp as circumstances would allow and surviving cardinals made great show of their entry into deliberations. It was as if the series of set-piece rituals, heavily freighted with symbolism, themselves conveyed the august nature of their task. The self-assurance of the pageantry and the uncertainty of the electoral outcome, then as now, proved a heady mix for gripping drama. How was the casual observer to know the cardinals' behaviour – or how the Spirit moved them – as they struggled with their consciences to award what was self-evidently Christendom's greatest prize?

The intriguing inscrutability of papal elections have often inspired historians, and understandably so. Many studies of what happened, when and to whom have been produced, especially between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Gregorio Leti's *Histoire des Conclaves depuis Clément V Jusqu'à Présent* (c.1667) and Ferdinando Petrucelli della Gattina's *Histoire diplomatique des conclaves* (1864-66) are outstanding examples.[1] Scholars mined diplomatic archives to tell us what cardinals did behind secrecy's veil and further studies, which draw on the constant discussions which took place about future conclaves, now supplement their efforts. Paradoxically, the effect of all this work is that we know far more about most pre-modern conclaves than we do about many twentieth-century ones and can use this wealth of information to describe the complex and shifting alliances of the papal court. In some of the most interesting recent work – notably that of Agostino Paravicini Bagliani and Maria Antonietta Visceglia – historians have extended their focus onto the cultural dimension of

[1] For a comprehensive list of histories of the conclave published before the mid nineteenth century, see E.M. Oettinger, *Historisches Archiv, enthaltend ein Systematisch-Chronologisch Geordnetes Verzeichniss 1700 der Brauchbarsten Quellen zum Studium der Staats- Kirchen- und Rechsgeschichte aller Zeiten una Nationen* (Karlsruhe: Christian Theodor Groos, 1841), 44, 414.

how papal power was projected.[2] Conclaves – and their attendant rituals – offered unique, if irregular, opportunities to express this power tangibly and visually, making them important markers of the gradual transformation of papal power itself. The tensions between how cardinals presented the papal office at a pope's funeral and how new popes sought to portray it through their own coronation ceremonies were substantial and dynamic. They offer in microcosm a glimpse of some of the papacy's most intimate constitutional debates. At the very least they disclose the fluidity of how successive generations interpreted concepts such as papal pastor and papal prince, the pope's absolutist credentials and the cardinals' senatorial ones. Shifts amongst these from the twelfth to the eighteenth century were crucial drivers in ecclesiastical – and Italian – history and therefore constitute vital knowledge for any student of these subjects.

This paper focuses on the theme of secrecy. This is an important subject for inquiry in its own right: what did the cardinals (and others) understand by it? How did that change over time? But here I also want to use it as a vehicle for engaging with the bigger issues surrounding conclaves and their role as barometers of papal history described above. Such analysis is not completely unprecedented (for little in papal history truly is), but I undertake it in a different way and in a different language from previous approaches, such as Frederic Baumgartner's 2003 essay and Günther Wassilowsky's recent study of Gregory XV's 'conclave reform' in 1621-22.[3] My preoccupation is not with the immediate culture of voting in the conclave – its symbols and the theology behind them – but the deeper currents: the incentives which acted upon the cardinals to shape their changing practices and how these related to the changing nature of the papacy itself as a whole. I look at how political and theological factors interacted to shape attitudes to secrecy in various forms over an extended period. I show how the culture of secrecy that developed reflected the strange hybrid constitution that gave rise to it: an elective monarchy with elements drawn from contemporary ideas about princes, older ecclesiastical strata and even the political practices of the ancient Roman Republic. the different meanings of secrecy themselves acquired new and altered significance

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[2] Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Morte e elezioni del papa: norme, riti, conflitti. 1. Il medioevo* (Rome: Viella, 2013). Maria Antonietta Visceglia, *Morte e elezioni del papa: norme, riti, conflitti. 2. l'Éta moderna* (Rome: Viella, 2013). Other recent publications in this area include Martine Boiteaux, 'La vacance du Siège pontificale de la mort et des funérailles à l'investitutre du papa: les rites de l'époque moderne', in José Paiva (ed.), Religious Ceremonials and Images: Power and Social Meaning (1400-1750) (Coimbra: Palimage, 2002), 103-41 and Florence Buttay, La mort du papa entre Renaissance et Contre-Réforme: les transofrmations de l'image du sourverain pontife et ses implications (fin XV^{e} – fin XVI^{e} siècle)', *Revue historique* 625 (2003), 67-94.

[3] See, in particular, Frederic Baumgartner, '"I will Observe Absolute and Perpetual Secrecy": The Historical Background of the Rigid Secrecy Found in Papal Elections', *Catholic Historical Review* 89 (2003), 165-81. Günther Wassilowsky, *Die Konklavereform Gregors XV. (1621/22)* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 2010).

to those who invested in them as the papacy's pretensions shifted. This paper shows how that played out in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the pomp and power of the papal monarchy was, arguably, at its zenith.

This chapter divides into three further sections. The first two briefly sketch the changing understanding of secrecy and their immediate impact, explaining how theology justified (or even mandated) them and how such considerations interacted with the political calculations that all cardinals individually or corporately had to make. I argue that what we often think of as secrecy in the context of these elections is actually a combination of two different things: the isolation of the participants from the rest of the world and the suppression of information about how they had, or were going to, cast their votes. Traditional emphasis on the former gradually lost out to a new emphasis on the later as the cardinals grappled with the problems of electing a man whose political authority perhaps now exceeded even his spiritual one as the direct representative of God. The final section explains some of the wider effects that this secret embrace had for the papacy's wider 'culture of voting': it considers how it impacted the ceremonies associated with the election, on-going papal administration during it, and the attitude of the Roman populace to what they saw taking place. Finally, it reflects on how the histories of isolation and anonymity intertwine and how the papacy's example in this regard compares to that of secular Italian states. It ends by suggesting that cultures of voting always developed in response to certain factors and that the papacy illustrates this as clearly as we could hope to see from any historical example.

Isolation

By one means or another, papal elections have been going on for around the last two thousand years (a sixteenth-century observer of the practice counted sixteen different modes by then, including selection by the clergy, by the laity and, initially, by Jesus himself). We know little about elections' exact mechanics in the first Christian millennium, but we can say with some certainty that they were essentially public affairs. Secrecy, in any guise, played no decisive role. Cyprian of Carthage recalled how at Fabian's election in 236 'the people...with one united and eager voice cried out that he was worthy, and immediately set him on the episcopal seat'. Two rival factions of the Roman faithful each publically acclaimed their own successor to him fifteen years later.[4] The congregation clearly subscribed to a principle of majoritarianism (whoever had the best organized supporters was able to proclaim himself pope) and such contests had to take place in public so that there could be no doubt about how many followers each candidate had.[5] By the seventh century elections took place in the Lateran Basilica – the clergy's domain – but the public nature of the

[4] *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage*, translated and annotated by G.W. Clarke (New York, 1986), letter 55, 3:38.
[5] Baumgartner, '"I will Observe Absolute and Perpetual Secrecy"', 166.

contest hardly changed at all. The clergy now dominated the decision-making, yet the laity still retained a role in ratifying their choice: the *vita* of Leo III, for example, records his election 'by divine inspiration with one and the same will and concord, by all the priests and officials of the whole clergy, indeed by the nobility and the whole Roman people'.[6] We might argue that the clergy's nomination of Leo was secret (in the sense that the laity were excluded from participating in it), but the laity's ability to reject Leo nevertheless undermines such a reading. Leo and his biographer were firm that the decision had been made collectively and therefore publically – with the *vox populi* still necessary to legitimate the choice. Neither isolation nor anonymity were yet integral to the process at this stage and nor did either seem likely to be – so long as they papacy continued on its current course.

This situation changed with the Gregorian Reform of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. Popes began to assert their monarchic authority and that led directly to the rise of isolation of the electors as an inexorable electoral principle. The key tenet of Gregory VII's reform was that popes, as Vicars of Christ, reigned supreme with authority exceeding that of all other earthly princes. Under such circumstances, popes could hardly accept either the Roman laity or any other secular agent to be implicated in their election. Notwithstanding past precedent or political realities, to have done so would have fatally undermined their position for their authority could only be legitimate if it was seem to come not from Man but from God. In 1059 Nicholas II published a bull reserving the right to participate in the election exclusively to 'the clergy of Rome'; subsequent popes clarified exactly who was included in this group.[7] In order to enforce that, the designated clergy had to find some way to segregate themselves from external pressures that might be seen to have a bearing on their choice. Eventually in 1122, even the emperor himself formally renounced his right to intervene in the election, though by then his role had been restricted to one of mere 'confirmation'.[8] Isolation thus became a constitutional requirement and, wherever the pope died, the cardinals gathered alone to decide his successor, usually in a major ecclesiastical building: Cluny Abbey as well as cathedrals Verona, Ferrara, Naples, Perugia, Arezzo, Viterbo and, of course, Rome all hosted these proto-conclaves.[9] Wherever they went, the cardinals insisted upon

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[6] Thomas Noble, *The Republic of Saint Peter: The Birth of the Papal State, 680-825* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 199.

[7] Detlev Jasper, *Das Papstwahldekret von 1059. Überlieferung und Textgestalt*, Beiträge zue Geschichte und Quellen des Mittelalters 12 (Sigmaringen, 1986). Hans Erich Feine, 'Zum Papstwahldekret Nikolaus' II. *In nomine Domini* von 1059', in Hans Erich Feine and Friedrich Merzbacher, *Reich und Kirche. Ausgewählte Abhandlungen zue deutschen und kirchlichen Rechtgeschichte* (Aalen, 1966), 19-29.

[8] 'Pax Wormatiensis cum Calixto II', in Ludwig Weiland (ed.), *Constitutiones et acta publica imperatorum et regum*, vol 1 (Hannover: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1893), 159-61.

[9] Frederic Baumgartner, *Behind Locked Doors: A History of the Papal Elections* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 27-32.

segregation as a necessary precondition for establishing the independence and, indeed, the virtue of their choice.

Isolation also had a desirable practical benefit: it enabled the cardinals to pass their choice off as unanimous. Claims of unanimity (*unanimitas*) obscured the cardinals' actual deliberations and thus concealed divisions from prying eyes outside; they also legitimated the chosen candidate by providing a sign that his election was the will of God. Public elections had always tried to demonstrate *unanimitas*, doing so through a process of acclamation.[10] However, once the pope was elected by the cardinals alone in an internal vote that was no longer an option. The cardinals, under those circumstances, could only sustain a fiction of unanimity by isolating themselves and so suppressing what they did and said. Moreover, Nicholas II's bull amplified this general incentive towards isolation in another way: Nicholas had not specified what the voting threshold for election of a new pope was and, with genuine unanimity not a practical possibility, there was disagreement over what it should be. Some said agreement amongst all the ranks of cardinals was required, others a majority of individual votes. The cardinal bishops, whom other definitions disadvantaged, claimed that it involved consent by both the *maior* (greater) and *sanior pars* (healthier or, in effect, senior part). Disagreement flourished and the twelfth-century papacy suffered a spate of schisms and antipopes in consequence.[11] Only in 1179 did Alexander III rule definitively that a simple two-thirds majority of all votes achieved victory. That put an end to the confusion, yet the need to protect the fiction of unanimity still remained.[12] Pressure for the cardinals to take themselves away from secular influences therefore continued to grow.

Of course, neither the constitutional nor the practical reasons for enforcing isolation necessarily required that it be institutionalized in the form of the conclave. Unsurprisingly, the impetus for that came not from the cardinals themselves but from elsewhere: the poor disenfranchised laity which was often desperate that the cardinals reach a decision. The problem in this regard grew especially acute after 1179, because Alexander's the two-thirds majority rule made it very hard for anyone to be elected. In 1241, Gregory IX died in the

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[10] Paolo Grossi, 'Unanimitas. Alle origini del concetto di persona giuridica nel diritto canonico', in *Annali di storia del diritto* 2 (1958), 229-331.

[11] Adhemer Esmein, 'L'unanimité et al majorité dans les élections canoniques', Mélanges Fitting 2 (Montpellier, 1907), 356-82. Klaus Ganzer, 'Das Mehrheitsprinzip bei den kirchlichen Wahlen des Mittelalters', in *Theologische Quartalschrift* 147 (1967), 60-87. Werner Maleczek, 'Wie kommt man zu einem vernünftigen Wahlergebnis?', in Reinhard Schneider and Harald Zimmermann (eds), *Wahlen und Wählen im Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1990) 79-134. Leo Moulin, 'Sanior et maior pars. Studio sull'evoluzione delle tecniche elettorali negli ordini religiosi dal VI al XIII secolo', *Studi Politici* 6 (1959), 48-75.

[12] Alexander III, 'Licet de vitanda' (1179), in Sidney Ehler and John Morrall (eds), *Church and State through the Centuries: A Collection of Historic Documents* (London: Burns & Oates, 1967), 63-4.

middle of a serious conflict with the emperor Frederick II and the Romans urgently needed a new pope to negotiate terms for an imperial siege of their city to be lifted. Frustrated by the cardinals' intransigence, the Senator of Rome eventually locked them in a dilapidated building, even threatening to exhume Gregory's corpse and put it on public display if they could not find a replacement quickly enough.[13] An interregnum from 1268-1271 set new records for the papal vacancy and afterwards the new pope Gregory X, who tellingly had not been a cardinal, formalized the conditions of isolation that the laity had already in practice imposed.[14] Influenced by measures already established in the Dominican constitution of 1228, he mandated that the cardinals be confined in a single room behind doors locked by key (in Latin, 'cum clave') until they were all agreed on who had been elected as pope. Under his rules, the cardinals could not communicate with the outside world and they lived under a regime of increasing austerity intended to motivate them to feel inspired: limited food and comforts from the outset and after nine days just bread, wine and water. The conclave now existed as a formal institution and had consolidated isolation's legal basis to ensure that it remained central to the process of election henceforth.[15]

Gregory's rules remained the basis for all conclaves during the rest of the Middle Ages and Early Modern period. The cardinals did not like his proscriptions about austerity – and more than once persuaded popes to relax them – but they did not challenge his premise that they should isolate themselves.[16] The conclave thus institutionalized, developing its own rhythms and rituals in the process. Accounts of how it was supposed to proceed survive from the mid fourteenth century onwards and document this in increasing detail (a testament to the growing importance of papal ceremonial at this time).[17] The cardinals may have resisted Gregory's sumptuary restrictions, but they seem generally to have

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[13] Walter Ullmann, *A Short History of the Papacy in the Middle Ages* (2nd edition, London: Routledge, 2003) 260.

[14] On the 'conclave' of 1268-71, Paolo Brezzi (ed.), *VII Centenario del 1º Conclave (1268-1271): Atti di convegno di studio* (Viterbo: Agnesotti, 1975), Andreas Fischer, *Kardinäle im Konklave : die lange Sedisvakanz der Jahre 1268 bis 1271* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2008).

[15] Gregory X, 'Ubi Periculum', in Norman Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (2 vols, Washington, 1990), 1:314-15.

[16] *Ubi Periculum* was first suspended by Adrian V in 1276, see the confirmation by John XXI, 'Licet felicis', 30th September 1276, in Luigi Tomassetti (ed.), *Bullarum Diplomatum et Privilegiorum Sanctorum Romanorum Pontificum Taurinensis editio* (24 vols, Turin, 1857-72), 4:37-38, but Celestine V reinstated it,'Quia in futurum' 28th September 1294. Boniface VIII finally incorporated it into canon law in the Liber Sextus, see Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1:303-08. Clement VI later relaxed its terms substantially, 'Licet in constitutione' 6th December 1351, Tomassetti, *Bullarum Romanum*, 4:501.

[17] Marc Dykmans, *Le cérémonial papal de la fin du Moyen Age à la Renaissance* (4 vols, Brussels and Rome: Bibliothèque de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome, 1977-85). The earliest is by cardinal Giacomo Gaetani degli Stefaneschi, probably written at some point around 1352.

adhered to those relating to communication. Of course, this may have been mere happenstance – few conclaves at this time lasted long enough to tempt cardinals to communicate with the outside – yet it probably also reflects the electors' circumstances: they were few in number and most lacked particular reasons to take orders from or send accounts to third parties in the secular world beyond. During the fourteenth century the influence of the French Crown was strong but manifested itself through the pope's place of residence and his choice of cardinals rather than through instructions to the cardinals during the conclave about who should be elected. The only time this changed was in 1378 when the cardinals, recently returned to Rome, succumbed to pressure from the populace to choose a new Italian pontiff. The result of their unfortunate decision was, of course, the Great Schism (1378-1417) – a painful reminder to future electors of how important isolation had become in guaranteeing the integrity and success of their choice.[18]

Yet, whatever lessons the Schism may have provided, by the late fifteenth century the cardinals had already begun to erode the principle of isolation in practice. The big change from 1378 was that the papacy had consolidated its territorial state significantly and, as it broadened and deepened its involvement in secular government, many other parties developed vested interests in the conclave's outcome as well.[19] Those who held title as papal vicars, whose families had purchased papal office or whose political aspirations needed a sympathetic pontiff to succeed could hardly afford not to be involved in the pope's election and to register their voice in some way.[20] Some won cardinals as their clients, others became a cardinal's clients; many ended up inside the conclave amongst the cardinals' 'conclavists', servants whom Gregory had allowed them to help them with their daily routine on the inside. Some even became cardinals themselves and the overall size of the College swelled: from around twenty-four in the decades after the Schism to a high of over seventy in the 1570s.[21] Rivalry between France and Spain exacerbated this effect

[18] Joëlle Rollo-Koster, 'Civil Violence and the Initiation of the Schism', in Joëlle Rollo-Koster and Thomas Izbicki (eds), *A Companion to the Great Western Schism (1378-1417)* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 9-66. Marc Dykmans, 'La troisième élection du pape Urbain VI', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 15 (1977), 217-64.

[19] On this process, see Paolo Prodi, *The Papal Prince. One Body and Two Souls: The Papal Monarchy in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Susan Haskins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-16. Peter Partner, *The Papal State under Martin V: The Administration and Government of the Temporal Power in the Early Fifteenth Century* (London: British School at Rome, 1958).

[20] Giuseppe de Vergottini, 'Ricerche sulle origini del vicariato apostolico' and 'Note per la storia del vicariato apostolico durante il secolo XIV', in Guido Rossi (ed.), *Scritti di storia del diritto italiano* (2 vols, Milan: Giuffrè, 1977), 2:535-84 and 2:585-612.

[21] John Broderick, 'The Sacred College of Cardinals: Size and Geographical Composition (1099-1986),' *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 25 (1987), 7-71. Jennifer DeSilva, 'Red Hat Strategies: Elevating Cardinals, 1471-1549', in Portia Prebys (ed.), Early Modern Rome, 1341-1667 (Ferrara: Edisai, 2011), 729-41.

throughout the sixteenth century. Both crowns were determined to influence the election to prevent a pope who might be sympathetic to their rival; both bought cardinals and did their best to instruct them as to how best to proceed.[22] By the conclave of 1549-50 the idea of the cardinals as isolated and thus beyond outside influence was undermined by the fact that they cohabited inside the conclave with around three hundred and fifty other people (including, of course, both French and Spanish agents).[23] Yet, even normal conclaves now regularly had over two hundred attendees: up to seventy cardinals plus two or three conclavists each and sundry other officials to take care of their needs. Adhering to Gregory X's rules was now in practice impossible and several Masters of Ceremonies, whose job it was to maintain protocol, lamented as such.[24]

Sixteenth-century conclaves soon became hugely porous. There were so many people on the inside with so much reason to make contact with the outside that they employed ever more exotic means to exchanging information. Temporary permission to leave the conclave was granted often and those who obtained it could leave with their boots filled with missives. A conclavist of Cardinal Madruzzo was said to have taken so many he forgot his original instruction in 1549.[25] Other conclavists, stuck inside, carved holes into walls to hold illicit conversations.[26] Curial officials found they had to take hours to check all the dishes and baskets of food for concealed messages that might be attached to plates or even baked into pastries and loaves of bread.[27] In 1549 Cardinal

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Christoph Weber, *Senatus divinus. Verborgene Strukturen im Kardinalskollegium der frühen Neuzeit (1500-1800)* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996).

[22] On the development of French and Spanish factions within the Sacred College, see Maria Antonietta Visceglia, 'Factions in the Sacred College in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in Gianvittorio Signorotto and Maria Antonietta Visceglia (eds), *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 99-131; and Miles Pattenden, 'Rome as a 'Spanish Avignon'? The Spanish Faction and the Monarchy of Philip II', in Piers Baker-Bates and Miles Pattenden (eds), *The Spanish Presence in Sixteenth-Century Italy: Images of Iberia* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 65-84.

[23] Matteo Dandolo to the Senate, 15th January 1550, in Rawdon Brown (ed.), *Calendar of State Papers and Manuscripts, relating to English affairs existing in the archives and collections of Venice*, (38 vols, London: Longman, Trübner & Co, 1864-90), 5:298-99 (n. 627).

[24] For example, Ludovico Branca de Firmani, 'Diarium', in Sebastien Merkle (ed.), *Concilii Tridentini Diariorum* (3 vols, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1901-84), 2:526. Giovanni Paolo Mucanzio, 'Gl'abusi et convenienti che is fanno nelle rote del conclave come per essempio si e' veduto o sono gl'infatti', BAV, *Vat. Lat. 12316*, 492r-501r.

[25] Sebastiano Gualtieri, 'Diarium' in Merkle, *Concilium Tridentinum*, 2:81.

[26] Francisco Vargas to Philip II of Spain, 30th November 1559, Döllinger, *Beiträge*, 1:300.

[27] A.H Mathew, *The Diary of John Burchard of Strasburg* (2 vols, London: Francis Griffiths, 1910), 1:44. Gian Paolo Mucanzio, 'Diario', Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Vat. Lat. 12316*, 493v-494r.

Farnese complained to Henry II of France that 'the place that should be secret is public and all that is done here is published'.[28] Henry's ambassador meanwhile boasted of the ease with which he could communicate with the head of the French faction and one of Farnese's agents warned sarcastically that Emperor Charles V even knew by now when the cardinals went to piss.[29] Unsurprisingly, this easy exchange of new spurred on a huge market in betting on the conclave's outcome: brokers gathered the city's main *piazze* to shout out their odds at passers-by, even presenting those willing to bet with printed chits that could be redeemed or exchanged with other clients. Sixtus V later tried to regulate this gambling – and Gregory XIV to ban it – but they likely did not succeed. Romans found the excitement and the unpredictability too great to ignore and sought out whatever scraps of information they could find to follow the action as it unfurled.[30]

The failure to enforce isolation was never without its critics, both amongst the population at large and the elite. Just as Cardinal Farnese lamented the conclave's openness in 1550, reports that the cardinals had made 'wagers of amber rosaries, perfumed gloves… mules, chains and even money' shocked the ordinary citizens of Rome.[31] In 1559, a group of women from the district of Sant' Eustachio went further, mocking the cardinals by holding their own ersatz 'election', dressed in their wedding attire.[32] Occasionally such scandals jolted the cardinals into action: in 1550, for example, they agreed to set up a committee with a remit to assist officials to remove all extraneous personnel and ensure conclave rules were enforced.[33] Following the problems of 1559 Pius IV legislated to prohibit various undesirable practices – yet as they were already illegal, his censure was nothing more than a reminder to future participants of

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[28] Frederic Baumgartner, 'Henry II and the Papal Conclave of 1549', *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16 (1985), 310.

[29] Ibid. Anonymous to Cardinal Farnese, 8th January 1550, Brown, *Calendar of State Papers: Venice*, 5:293 (n.617).

[30] Renaud Villard, 'Le conclave des parieurs: Paris, opinion publique et continuité du pouvoir pontifical à Rome au XVI[e] siècle', *Annales. Histoire Sciences Sociales* 64 (2009), 375-403. John Hunt, *Violence and Disorder in the* Sede Vacante *of Early Modern Rome, 1559-1655*, PhD Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2009, 275-337.

[31] Matteo Dandolo to the Senate, 15 January 1550, in Brown, *Calendar of State Papers: Venice*, 5:298-99 (n. 627). Other accounts of this conclave focus on the cardinals' excessive gluttony and their penchant for extending their living quarters, Massarelli, 'Diarium', in Merkle, *Concilium Tridentinum*, 2:118.

[32] Antonio Guido Mantuano, 'Obitus Pauli IV et conclave cum electione Pii IV', in Merkle, *Concilium Tridentinum*, 2:631.

[33] Massarelli, 'Diarium', in Merkle, *Concilium Tridentinum*, 107. The tense political atmosphere in which this conclave took place meant that Carafa's fear was not unfounded. Henry II of France had already moved to suggest that a Council could undertake the election instead of the College, Renard to Charles V, 5 February 1550, in August von Druffel, *Briefe und Akten zur Geschichte des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts* (4 vols, Munich: Rieger, 1873-80) 1:350.

the strictures they were obliged to obey.[34] Individual cardinals had also begun to pressure for stricter enforcement of their segregation in the conclave as early as the 1530s. Pius IV's reform bull 'In elegendis' may be viewed as a nod in the direction of some of their demands. As the century wore on their voices became more numerous and significant: Roberto Bellarmine, Federico Borromeo and Benedetto Giustiniani, Cesare Baronio and, even before his election, Alessandro Ludovisi all agreed that restoring the conclave's seclusion was a necessary precondition for the greater goal that popes should be above the vicissitudes of Italian politics and fulfill their traditional role as pastoral leaders of the whole of Christendom.[35] In 1621 Ludovisi was elected as pope Gregory XV and, in his new role, produced a sweeping codification of how the conclave worked, reiterating and reinforcing Gregory X's rules.[36] This may have been no more successful than Pius IV's legislation sixty years earlier but it reasserted the importance of isolation in principle: without it the conclave's victor could never be quite sure that everyone would accept his claim as legitimate.

Anonymity

We know less about the culture of anonymity in conclaves before the sixteenth century than we do about the culture of isolation. Until Alexander III's intervention in 1179 the cardinals seem usually to have tried to delegate nomination of a candidate to a subcommittee – a process hardly conducive to anonymous voting, which suggests that it was not a high priority at that time. *Ubi Periculum*, though it laid out strict conditions for isolation said nothing about the form that ballots should take. Practice likely varied from one conclave to the next. The cardinals sometimes used written ballots (*per scrutinium*) but at others deliberating collectively and voting orally in public (*per inspirationem*), depending on what seemed expedient at the time.[37] The first record of a burning of ballots dates from 1417, but that election – which ended the Great Schism –

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[34] Pius IV, 'In eligendis' (1562), in Tomassetti, *Bullarum Romanum*, 7: 230-36. An earlier reform bull was drafted but not published by Julius III, Hubert Jedin, 'Analekten zur Reformatätigkeit der Päpste Julius III. und Paul IV', in *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 43 (1935), 87-156.

[35] For Bellarmine's views see Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Barb. Lat. 2032*, 246r-247v and 358r-265v. For Borromeo, 'Della precedenza che deve usarsi in conclave per eleggere il sommo pontefice', Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, *G.21 Inf.*, and for Giustiniani, *Vat. Lat. 6329* (32r-97r). Wassilowsky's *Konklavereform* contains a detailed summary of their principal arguments and those of other *'zealanti'* reformers, 165-215. (there's a Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana memo from Ludovisi on this subject – I need to return to the Vatican for the reference).

[36] Gregory XV, 'Aeterni Patri Filius' (1621), and 'Decet Romanum Pontificem (1622), in Tomasetti, *Bullarum Romanum*, 12:619-26, 662-73.

[37] Wassilowsky, *Konklavereform*, 48-51.

was unusual in many different respects.[38] The cardinals used written ballots in both elections of 1503, but read and counted votes publically. In the first each cardinal's name was already prepared on his voting slips; in the second it may not have been. However, accusations of simony tainted that election and in the short term discredited further attempts to anonymize the voting process.[39] Thereafter, throughout the sixteenth century, the old variety of practices continued in use: oral votes, written votes, spontaneous adorations of the new pope, or combinations of all three.[40] The pressure for anonymity grew during this period but slowly, only becoming strong enough to overturn existing practice in the early seventeenth century. The cardinals' default position seems to have been akin to that Hilary Bernstein once described in the context of early modern French municipal elections. Today we see ballots as fostering integrity and as oral votes breeding collusion, but then the assumption 'that only mutual influence among electors could produce a unanimous decision that would be the true expression of the public good' reigned supreme.[41] It only fractured in Rome when several disparate groups within the Sacred College, all motivated by self-interest, united to bring about radical change.

In the early sixteenth century the cardinals who agitated strongest for anonymity were generally opponents of the current pope or of one or more of his likely successors. In 1513, for example, the Florentine cardinal Francesco Soderini proposed, but failed to secure, a secret ballot (memories of 1503 were no doubt too raw) – his reason, so far as we can gather, a simple fear of that his arch-rival Giovanni de' Medici would win an open contest.[42] Eight years later, after Medici had reigned and died as Leo X, Soderini tried to introduce a secret ballot again, this time in order to hinder the Medici's nephew. Sufficient other cardinals now wanted the same thing that his proposal passed easily, by twenty-four votes to thirteen – notwithstanding that it stood against 'ancient custom', as the papal master of ceremonies dutifully noted.[43] The general strength of the papal office and the capacity it gave popes to bully cardinals ensured that a number of later sixteenth-century cardinals shared Soderini's sentiments. All cardinals must have looked apprehensively at the executions of Alfonso Petrucci in 1517 and Carlo Carafa in 1561 (and the attempted execution of Benedetto Accolti in 1535),

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[38] 'Diary of Cardinal Fillastre', in Louise Ropes Loomis, *The Council of Constance: The Unification of the Church*, John Hine Mundy and Kennerly H. Woody (eds) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 424.

[39] Wassilowsky, *Konklavereform*, 83-85.

[40] Wassilowsky produces a useful table of how the voting took place in each sixteenth-century conclave, *Konklavereform*, 103-04.

[41] Hilary Bernstein, 'The Benefit of the Ballot? Elections and Influence in Sixteenth-Century Poitiers', *French Historical Studies* 24 (2001), 621-52, quotation 621.

[42] K.J.P. Lowe, *Church and Politics in Renaissance Italy: The Life and Career of Cardinal Francesco Soderini, 14632-1524* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 90.

[43] Blasio de Martinelli, 'Diarium', in Giambattista Gattico, *Acta Selecta Caeremonialia Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae* (Rome, 1753), 1:318.

no doubt wondering if the same fate might befall them should they fall foul of the new pope. At the end of the century Sixtus V (1585-1590) and Clement VIII (1592-1605) made an art form of picking off cardinals one by one to force them into accepting the policies that he favoured. Indeed, it is probably no accident that anonymous voting was finally implemented after Clement's long pontificate and then the still longer one of Paul V (1605-21). Many cardinals proably disliked how a long reign concentrated power in the hands of the pope, his family and their associates and looked for ways to mitigate this in the electoral process. Electing old men was one such technique, but anonymous voting – to make themselves less accountable for how they voted – was perhaps another.

An act of Paul IV (1555-59) gave the cardinals a second tangible reason for championing anonymous voting which interacted with the longer-standing incentives for doing so. In 1557, Paul ordered the arrest of Giovanni Morone on suspicion of heresy, putting all other cardinals on their guard in the process.[44] For all that previous popes had bullied cardinals, Paul's attack on Morone was theological rather than political and for that reason also affected the many cardinals who had voted for Morone in previous conclaves. Were they now also to fall under suspicion for having endorsed a suspected heretic? Perhaps unwittingly, Paul heightened the risk of an open election by arresting Morone, because he converted the threat to individual cardinals to a collective one to entire factions. In his desperation to destroy Morone, Paul upped the stakes further in 1559 when he promulgated a bull forbidding the cardinals from even considering candidates for the tiara who had been suspected of heresy.[45] That was a clear attack on the cardinals' freedom of choice, which Paul specifically intended to stop them choosing Morone as his successor, but it also laid the ground for something even more sinister: it created a legal proscription which turned voting for the wrong candidate into a potentially heretical act in itself. Under those circumstances, no cardinal could truly feel confident of expressing himself openly in the conclave unless he knew that he was supporting the winning candidate. Yet, even if his candidate did win, the danger did not end there. A future pope might still decide that his predecessor had been heretical and might condemn those who had voted for him.[46] In 1564, Pius IV declared that it would now be held to be heresy for anyone to believe that the pope was obligated to give account of any matter to the cardinals, which potentially placed

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[44] On the circumstances of Morone's arrest, see Adam Patrick Robinson, *The Career of Cardinal Giovanni Morone (1509-1580): Between Council and Inquisition* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 87-109.

[45] Paul IV 'Cum ex apostolatus' (1559), *Bullarum Romanum*, 6:551-56.

[46] On the problem of the Inquisition and its impact on elections in this period, see Agostino Borromeo, 'Il dissento religioso tra il clero italiano e la prima attività del Sant'Ufficio Romano', in Adriano Prosperi and Maurizio Sangalli (eds), *Per il Cinquecento religioso italiano: clero cultura società* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 2003), 455-85. See also, Massimo Firpo, *La presa di potere dell'inquizione romana, 1550-1553* (Rome: Laterza, 2014).

the cardinals in a further degree of jeopardy.[47] Perhaps tellingly, the cardinals great increasingly reluctant to consider Inquisitors as potential pontiffs.

These two reasons for anonymity might themselves have provided enough pressure for change own their own. However, a third and perhaps more visible one soon manifested in the final decades of the century, in the process creating what was to prove a decisive coalition for reform. A substantial minority of cardinals had always been uneasy at the influence of secular powers over the papacy, but as the rivalry between pro-French and pro-Spanish factions within the College had grown their alarm no doubt seemed more justified, the more so in the new intellectual currents of the Counter-Reformation. Something of a crunch point was reached in the early 1590s, when Philip II of Spain ordered his clients within the College to veto any candidate who was not on a pre-approved list of seven names he had circulated; even pro-Spanish cardinals were uneasy at such a blatant intrusion into their independence and in the end could not quite bring themselves to give Philip his way. Clement VIII, the eventual victor of this messy sequence of four conclaves, was especially keen in their aftermath to re-assert the papacy's operational independence. Articulating new plans to assert voter independence should surely have been part of this – though, as Maria Teresa Fattori has documented, he was not necessarily well-disposed towards reforms strongest advocates within the College.[48] Yet, whatever the curia's internal tensions at this time, the push for isolation soon also linked it with voter anonymity and an old argument against it had been turned on its head. What had once seemed a practice that supported simony now seemed essential to guarantee papal liberty: princes might still instruct their loyal cardinals as to how to vote, but in a secret ballot how could they ever really know whether their orders had been obeyed? The culture of voting in the conclave moved decisively away from that Bernstein described France and towards another model. Filippo de' Vivo has shown how in Venice 'secrecy was tantamount to serenity'. In Rome, as in the Serenissima, it now became the principle means of maintaining the image of unanimity in spite of everything else.[49]

When Gregory XV codified the conclave's rules it probably seemed natural to him to incorporate anonymity into them, on a seemingly unequivocal basis. Where previously the rules had required cardinals to vote to agree to have secret ballots he now made them compulsory and declared them the only canonical form of vote.[50] Adoring the new pope, without a formal ballot taking place first, was now

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[47] BAV, *Barb. Lat. 2870*, 95v. Gustave Constant, *Concession à l'Allemagne de la communion sous les deux espèces. Étude sur le débuts de la réforme catholique en Allemagne (1548-1621)* (2 vols, Paris, 1923), 1:504.

[48] Maria Teresa Fattori, *Clemente VIII e il sacro collegio 1592-1605. Meccanismi istituzionali ed accentramento di governo* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann 2004), 215-40.

[49] Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 40-46, quotation 46.

[50] Gregory XV, 'Decet Romanum Pontificem (1622), in Tomasetti, *Bullarum Romanum*, 12:665.

strictly prohibited. Each cardinal could even protect his identity by using a unique combination of motto, number and ensign on the voting slip – instead of his name – discouraging fraud yet rendering it impossible in theory for anyone to reconstruct the vote.[51] Officials produced – and preserved – tally sheets of how many votes each cardinal received in each scrutiny, perhaps for the first time. As a further proof of valid election, the insignia of each voter was reproduced after the final tally together with the record of how they had voted in this decisive ballot.[52] The aim of this was probably two-fold: on the one hand it satisfied the contemporary zeitgeist for written documentary evidence but it simultaneously appeared to protect the voters themselves from posterity. The requirements of all parties within the conclave were thus by and large satisfied, the main losers being those on the outside who wished to influence what was going on.

Seventeenth-century conclaves were thus models of voter anonymity in theory. But how far were they actually so in practice? Insofar as we can infer an answer to that question it would surely be: not as much as at first it might seem. Factions persisted with the College, isolation was still not properly enforced (in the conclave after Gregory's death, Venetian ambassadors produced a detailed letter recounting what they had learnt from visiting the conclave – and they hardly seem to have been alone in having done so).[53] Those who so wanted could no doubt have used the information provided about the final ballot to guess the identities behind the numbers, mottos and ensigns – if the pope was elected via *accessus*, a technical procedure that allowed cardinals to cast a second vote in each scrutiny, then the record revealed whom their first vote had been for and someone who wanted to could have combined that with contextual knowledge to work out who had not voted for the new pope in the end. What Gregory's reform gave cardinals, if anything, was thus merely plausible deniability. Just as they could deny to their princely patron that they had abandoned his interests, so too they had grounds to refute accusations that they had ever voted for any particular candidate (or had not voted for the man who won). This may partly explain why seventeenth-century popes were in general less successful at bullying the cardinals than their sixteenth-century predecessors had been – at any rate, how cardinals voted in elections ceased to be a flashpoint for such tensions. Cardinals may not have had complete secrecy, but they certainly had more safety; in the world of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, many surely thought this no bad thing.

The effect of anonymity on how cardinals approached the conclave was similarly muted. Gregory's rules may have entirely reformed the process of voting, but

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[51] Gregory XV, 'Decet Romanum Pontificem' explained this in detail, Tomasetti's edition provides illustrated ballots, *Bullarum Romanum*, 12:666-67.

[52] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Barb. Lat. 4435-4449* (most conclaves between 1623 and 1730). A further tally for the 1623 conclave survives, but without this appendix, Archivo General de Simancas, *Estado 1870*, n.278.

[53] See, for example, Girolamo Soranzo and Renier Zen to the Senate, 22nd July 1623, Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Dispacci al Senato (Roma), filza 88*, 504r-505r.

many within the College still adopted the kinds of tactics and strategies in the election that previous generations of cardinals had done before them. Not only did cardinals still split into factions but they often wasted their votes by voting for candidates whom they knew could not succeed (or, perhaps a novelty, occasionally failing to vote at all). Factions leaders and others who coordinated candidacies within the College also still played their devious games – holding back their preferred choices until late on and trying to dupe their rivals with false manoeuvres or rumours designed to throw them off their guard. As part of his reform, Gregory had restricted each cardinal to voting for one candidate in the main ballot, which ought to have occasioned change (because previously a cardinal could have cast an unlimited number of votes in the scrutiny). Yet, in practice the effect of this was slight, not least because sixteenth-century cardinals had rarely done anything different. If the imposition of anonymity affected these practices it was only to strengthen existing trends – for cardinals now found it even harder to inform themselves about their colleagues' preferences (information they would need if they wished to formulate a decisive strategy). Most seventeenth-century conclaves endured long periods of drift and stasis until suddenly something happened enabling them to end with in a bang.

The most noticeable change ushered in by anonymous conclaves was that they became longer. Gregory's new rules limited the number of votes cast but still affirmed that the College should hold a maximum of two ballots per day – a sure recipe for extending the whole process, especially when combined with further incentives on the cardinals to adopt caution in their voting strategies. Fifteenth-century conclaves, as a rule had lasted only a few days (partly because there were far fewer cardinals and partly because, so shortly after the Great Schism, most of them greatly feared the consequences of not making a quick election); the sixteenth-century ones were longer, for more cardinals took part and there were more divisions amongst them. Yet, the longest still peaked at 50 days in 1523, 72 in 1549-50, 113 in 1559, 61 in 1590, these being the occasions when the politics of the election were most complex and the cardinals most divided; at other times elections could be much quicker, with that of Gregory XIII in 1572 requiring just one ballot. By contrast the worst conclaves after Gregory XV's reign were almost twice as long: 130 days in 1669-70, 151 in 1691, 130 in 1730, 180 in 1740. The average length of all others increased substantially too – there were no more quick agreements like that of 1572.[54] Of course, in itself this had big effects on the wider administration of Rome and on the political culture that developed there. Secrecy had as much impact outside as within a conclave – and is to the external effects that the final section of this chapter turns.

Effects

[54] Wassilowsky has produced a helpful chart comparing all conclave lengths against the long-term trend, *Konklavereform*, 337.

The impact of either isolation or anonymity outside the conclave is inherently hard to measure. We cannot easily separate it from other factors: the political culture of central Italy, the idiosyncrasies thrown up by an ecclesiastical state, and a broader desire to project papal power. All we can do is consider the areas in which the conclave's culture of secrecy appears to have had influence, showing the contribution of isolation or anonymity or both. Such an approach gives a sense of centrality of the conclave – and, by extension, the papal election – to Rome's political culture, and gives some idea not only of the collections between isolation and anonymity and that culture, but how strongly they impacted on that culture. This final section of the chapter describes in turn the public ceremonies associated with the papal election, the government of Rome in the *Sede Vacante* and the attitude of ordinary Romans during a papal vacancy. It argues that, the drive to secrecy in one of its two forms shaped aspects of wider political culture in ways that would not otherwise not have happened. The final part of the section considers what this reveals about the conclave's contribution to Roman politics and develops comparison between the conclave's culture of secrecy and those found in elsewhere. It suggests that the papacy's interest in secrecy was not so far removed from that of republics like Florence or Venice, yet remained refracted through an ecclesiastical prism, producing its own unique formation in the process.

Secrecy's immediate impact on the public side was, of course, to relegate the decision to a secondary role in the great spectacle of a papal election. Where once the election had itself been a public ritual, now only select ceremonies associated with it were. Yet, over the early modern period those select ceremonies came to reflect the value cardinals placed on secrecy and to serve as a key opportunity for broadcasting them to the Roman laity outside. It was no accident that the cardinals entered conclave with the antiphon '*Veni Creator Spiritus*' (Come Holy Ghost) – a text which blatantly reminded listeners that the election was divine and would be unanimous.[55] Ordinary Romans, replete with their betting slips, may well have been skeptical. However, by watching the cardinals process, the ceremony affirmed the ideology the antiphon represented – thus helping legitimate the election which then took place, whether it was really divinely-inspired or not. The ceremonies of the coronation and *possesso*, a procession through Rome by which the pope claimed the city, developed in a similar fashion. New popes, who had the greatest say in their organization, likewise used them to heal – or, more accurately, to ignore – the divisions the election had laid bare, promoting the polity's order and unity once again – as if the preceding weeks had been a mere blip. The pomp of these ceremonies increased throughout the period that anonymity became more important – correlation not causation perhaps, but still related phenomenon. The pope's increased majesty was, of course, a major reason why cardinals wanted their votes to be anonymous – but the fiction of the pope at the head of a united order

[55] 'Ordo Servandus in Processionibus Quotidie Facendis Tempore Sedie Vacantis durante Conclavi. Pro Electione Summi Pontificis' (1669), Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Barb. Lat. 4440*, 554r-559v.

was also only possible because no one could see how the final vote had been reached.

At the same time, secrecy greatly strengthened the need for alternative arrangements for governing Rome during the conclave. The period of the election itself was a liminal time in Rome and the Church: in theory all papal officials ought to have lost their authority of office on the pope's death, in practice the cardinals worked to create the legal means to carry on. However, those legal means were only of limited use when cardinals were trapped inside the Vatican and unable to communicate with those who would take their orders. In parallel to the general growth of papal government in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries a second shadow system had to be generated to provide a political hierarchy during times of conclave and interregnum. The cardinals themselves of course still played a part in this – a further reason why sixteenth-century conclaves were never as isolated as the rules demanded. This secondary political order, which was far less robust than the normal one, gave Romans a unique kind of moment in their political calendar when laws and norms were effectively suspended. Romans themselves often saw this as an opportunity to act with far greater licence was otherwise possible. As conclaves lengthened through the sixteenth century, and especially through the seventeenth, the effects of that became more marked as the famous account in Giacinto Gigli's diary chronicles.[56] Of course, by Gigli's time the cardinals' isolation was ritual rather than practical and they were fully involved in managing the *Sede Vacante* from inside the conclave. Yet, they still preserved a veil of secrecy to camouflage their actions – a sure sign that secrecy still mattered to them even if no one believed it accurately reflected what was going on.

The Roman populace had always taken an interest in conclaves. However, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries longer conclaves and more ceremonies helped to make the conclave even more prominent in public consciousness – with public attitudes shifting correspondingly to match. Romans took part in the election's public ceremonies – when Urban VIII acceded in 1623 even petitioning for more prominent roles. They also produced commemorative pamphlets circulated (the earliest I have found is from 1572); in the seventeenth century they seem to have circulated widely, holding value both as souvenirs and also explanatory texts that described the order of events and their meaning, in theological or ritual terms.[57] Romans continued to engage with the election even between conclaves. Betting markets are harder to trace in the seventeenth century, because popes cracked down on them hard after 1591, but the extraordinary interest in prophesies about when the pope would die or who the

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[56] Giacinto Gigli, *Diario Romano (1608-1670)*, ed. Giuseppe Ricciotti (Rome: Tumminelli, 1958). See also, Laurie Nussdorfer, *Civic Politics in the Rome of Urban VIII* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 228-53 and Visceglia, *Morte e elezione del papa*, 61-90.

[57] Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Vat. Lat. 9156,* Archivio di Stato di Mantua, *Archivio Gonzaga 1062* and *1063*.

new pope would be suggests that much of the impetus for them carried on and, indeed, that the practice itself simply went underground.[58] As John Hunt has recently observed, such media not only gave ordinary Romans 'access to forbidden knowledge of politics' but also allowed them to comment on important political events. 'This was a major accomplishment in an age of absolutist government when most people were barred from the "mysteries of the state".'[59] Indeed.

The histories of isolation and anonymity in the conclave may at first seem quite different: these two facets of secrecy served different purposes, they had different chronologies and different groups within the papal polity pushed for implementing them (or undermining the extent to which they were enforced). Their value varied with the changing balance of the pope's own identities. When he was primarily a universal pastor an independent election was paramount; when he was a temporal prince it was not. Yet, the two histories were also still highly connected – not just in how they affected the conclave's wider culture but in how they impacted each other. Committing heresy in the conclave became far more dangerous when the papacy itself became politicized, otherwise what power did the Inquisition have? Cardinals who acted on their fear of it did so in reaction to the same forces that had already caused their ideal of isolation to break down. We could even argue that the advent of anonymous ballots altered the theology on which the conclave was based, because the Holy Spirit no long inspired the cardinals to spontaneous action but to careful and considered written calculation. That in turn impacted isolation's value: if the vote was now secret and intellectualized then was it really so important that the cardinals separated themselves absolutely from everyone else?

This intertwined history was also not so different to that of secrecy's place in the secular Italian republics that flourished at the end of the Middle Ages. The need to conceal divisions in order to retain legitimacy drove civic elections in Florence and Venice, as Maartje van Gelder and Mark Jurdjevic (amongst others) have

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[58] See the various reports on the 'Prophecies of St Malachy' in the 1590s and the 1660s, Pastor, *History of the Popes*, 22:349 and Agostino Favoriti to Mgr de Rossi, 8th Jul 1667, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, *Barb. Lat. 4436*, 46v-47v. For another example, from 1623, see the 'Discorso politico astrologico sopra il futuro pontefice', Archivio segreto vaticano, *Conclavi*, 916r-919r. Predictions for the death of popes were just as common. In 1630 Orazio Morandi was condemned as a witch for undertaking such an enterprise, Brendan Dooley, *Morandi's last prophecy and the end of Renaissance politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 154-61. See also Monica Azzolini, 'The political uses of astrology: predicting the illness and death of princes, kings and popes in the Italian Renaissance', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 41 (2010), 135-45.

[59] John Hunt, 'The Conclave from the "Outside In": Rumor, Speculation, and Disorder in Rome during Early Modern Papal Elections', *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012), 382.

shown.[60] Jurdjevic has drawn attention to the central role of mistrust in such republican settings – a situation which has clear parallels with the process of anonymizing votes in the papal scrutiny. The forms in which participants expressed their mistrust may have been different, but the mistrust had similar causes – and in both cases the deepening of the state was likely an important trigger. Overt political calculation may not have seemed to dominate papal politics as it did republican-oligarchic politics elsewhere, but that was a matter of language and presentation rather than intention. Yet, even there, more commonalities exist than might initially be supposed: the discourse of the *Serenissima*, for example, combined a sacred vocabulary with a republican one and, like that in Rome, blended different strands into a cultural whole. It makes sense, therefore, to think of the conclave's development within this wider context – as a prominent example of a much wider movement. After all, many cardinals themselves arrived in Rome from elsewhere in Italy replete with ideas and life experience.

Yet, those who participated in the papacy's culture of voting still always had to mediate any similarities with other states through the papacy's unique structures and specific practices. For example, the legacy of Latin Church – in this case traditions rather than texts – left them no opportunity to use selection by lot as a mechanism of choice as electors in oligarchic republics did at this time. In contrast, other branches of Christianity did use lot and still do: the final stage of election for the Coptic pope is still undertaken by a blindfolded boy who chooses between three candidates.[61] The cardinals thus lost from their electoral arsenal a key tool which both Florentine and Venetian patricians used to tame faction in their electoral politics. Indeed, it may in part explain why conclaves had factions. Their reason d'être was very different from elsewhere: they offered a means by which cardinals could conceal their voting patterns and were thus a guarantor of liberty – the very opposite of how Florentines or Venetians would have interpreted the presence of factions. Ecclesiastical traditions also made the papacy's elite much more open than that of Renaissance republics: clerics had to be celibate and therefore found it harder to close ranks into an impenetrable elite.[62] The constant injections of fresh blood into the papal oligarchy made it

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[60] Mark Jurdjevic, 'Turst in Renaissance Electoral Politics', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 34 (2004), 601-15. Maartje van Gelder, 'The People's Prince: Popular Protests and Patrician Politics in Early Modern Venice', forthcoming.

[61] Otto Meinardus, 'Procedures of Election of Coptic Patriarchs', in *Christian Egypt: Faith and Life* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1970), 90–141.

[62] Wolfgang Reinhard, 'Le carriere papali e cardinalizie. Contributo alla storia sociale del papato', in Luigi Fiorani and Adriano Prosperi (eds), *Storia d'Italia, annali 16: Roma, la città del papa* (Turin: Einaudi, 2000), 271-88. Barbara McLung Hallman, *Italian Cardinals, Reform, and the Church as Property, 1492-1563* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985),1-16. Peter Partner, *The Pope's Men: The Papal Civil Service in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). In contrast, John Najemy's remarks in his *A History of Florence, 1200-1575*

unfeasible to manipulate elections by setting conditions of eligibility, another important technique in Florence and Venice. In fact, the only way to control the election was to control the cardinals – a task that proved impossible, even for those who had already been elected pope.

The history of secrecy in the conclave itself ultimately underlines the papacy's essentially amorphous nature as an institution. Far from being the rock of stability in European history – as is still sometimes claimed – it was the product of individual human agents who, in this case, came together in their thousands to shape its course over centuries. Like that of every other institution in human history, the papacy's history is the story of the collective interaction of their individual actions. Its electoral culture was, likewise, a fluid and changing product – a vehicle for conveying meanings and agenda not an end in itself; we should only compare it to others on those terms. In the end, the changing meaning of secrecy in conclaves also speaks to a wider truth: a culture of voting is inherently syncretic and part of a wider continuum of political ideas. It constantly absorbs influences from outside and displays that in every moment the voters – and, indeed, non-voters – interact. The papal election is unique in being able to show us that in such detail over such a long period of time, but not in the dynamic it reveals. Secrecy figured large in papal voting for similar reasons to those found elsewhere; even the Holy Spirit could not change that.

(Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 5-34 or Donald Queller, *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1986).