

# The Influence of Early Life on Leo IX

Huan Shen

School of History, Wuhan University, Wuhan, Hubei, 430072, China

## Abstract

Leo IX started the papal reform in the eleventh century, which made great influence in the history of the Roman Catholic Church and even the whole western world. Leo IX was different from his predecessors, as he was the first pope from Deutschland and he lived in a monastery in his early life. This paper studies Leo IX's early life and would help to understand the origin of his reform, and it is found that Leo IX was deeply influenced by his monastic early life, and this work would help study the papal reform in the eleventh century.

## Keywords

Leo IX; Bruno; Saint.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Literature Review

The author of Leo IX's hagiography was Bruno from Segni, and Bruno was the bishop of Segni and the abbot of Monte Cassino. He was born in a illustrious family of the lords of Asti in Piedmont, and he was educated in the diocese of Asti. [1] In 1079, Bruno was appointed as the Bishop of Segni in 1079, and he became a sincere friend of Pope Gregory VII. In 1082 he was imprisoned by Aynulf of Segni, a partisan of Emperor Henry IV. He served a series of Popes Gregory VII, Victor III, Urban II and Paschalis II, and he was appointed as the bibliothecary of Roman church. [2] In 1103, Bruno entered the abbey of Monte Cassino and he was selected as the abbot 4 years later in 1107. [3] Finally he died at Segni in mid-1123, and his canonization was celebrated on 5 September 1181 in Segni, he is considered the patron saint for Segni.

### 1.2. Background

Leo IX was considered as the pioneer of the papal reform, and his reform measures were influenced by the idea from the earlier reforms advocated by the Cluny monastery. The Cluny Reforms were a series of changes within medieval monasticism of the Western Church focused on restoring the traditional monastic life, encouraging art, and caring for the poor. Meanwhile, the reforms demanded greater religious devotion, supported the Peace of God, and promoted pilgrimages to the Holy Lands. It is worth noting that before Cluny Reforms, many feudal lords tended to interfere with the operation of monasteries, so the reforms were attempts to remedy these practices in the hope that a more independent abbot would better enforce the Rule of Saint Benedict. During the reforms, the Cistercian Order was built by Robert de Molesme. [4] Before Leo IX went to Toul, he had also served the Emperor Conrad II of the Holy Roman Empire. Conrad II was a cousin of Leo IX 's father, and Leo IX had been staying in his court before he became the bishop of Toul. One thing worth noticing is that Conrad II preferred to appoint clerics over secular lords for important offices throughout the empire, and he proceeded to evolve the Proprietary church as a basis for imperial power. [5]

## 2. Leo IX's Life and Reform

### 2.1. Leo IX's Early Life

Leo IX's name is Bruno. He derived a noble lineage from his parents, his family had been pious and noble for generations. Specifically, his parents were Hugh, cousin of Emperor Conrad, and Heilwig, a French noble. They built the monastery of Woffenheim and lived a distinguished and honorable life, which was regarded as an example for various social estates from bishops to laymen. When Bruno was born, the whole of his small body was found to be marked with crosses, which was considered as signifying the choice of God. His mother nursed him herself, and sent him to Berthold, bishop of Toul for education. Bruno showed outstanding qualities from an early age, he was kind to everyone and kept himself away from pride, showing a humble and obedient attitude towards both his superiors and inferiors. He also had an admirable friendship with his kinsman Adalbero, son of Count Frederick of the Moselgau. They studied and grew up together. Adalbero accompanied him and gave him guidance through his early years.

When he became an adult, Bruno's mother had a dream in which she saw herself entering the basilica of Stephon and meeting Gerard of holy memory, who took his orarium from his neck and placed it on her sleeve. The dream was believed to signify that her son Bruno was destined by heaven to be the successor to his zeal for goodness, but also meant that Bruno would experience sufferings as Job and Paul did. The latter part of this prophecy soon became true. In a summer after Bruno finished school, he was attacked by a poisonous frog in the castle of Egisheim, and he was soon terribly and seriously ill and his death seemed unavoidable. But just at that time, the miracle happened and Bruno was saved by the Saint Benedict from heaven. As a result, he totally recovered safe and sound. Henceforth, from Bruno showed more religious zeal for the establishment and reform of the monastic life.

After the death of Berthold, his's mentor, Bruno served the successor Herman in the church of Toul. Later he went to his kinsman the Emperor Conrad's court and served in his chapel, and he quickly won people's love and esteem. Later he was called Bruno the Good. People strove to raise Bruno to a high honor and give him a bishopric, but Bruno thought he couldn't obtain any office without bodily fatigue or loss of family property. At the age of 23, he set out on an expedition of the Emperor to Lombardy and Milan in place of his bishop Herman, and he commanded and organized the knights from Toul well. In 1026, Herman died. The clergy and people in Toul sent a letter to the emperor to show their unanimous entreaty about the unanimous election of Bruno. Toul located on the borders of three kingdoms, suffering from plundering and strife. Bruno could get a more exalted office if he rejected their call, but he thought that if he did so, divine justice would intervene and punish him for his irreverence. The letter also afflicted Conrad II who wanted to keep Bruno in his court, Although the emperor tried hard to retain him even with an exaggeration about the danger and poverty of Toul, Bruno still felt the invitation unrefusable and decided to accept people's election. Finally, the emperor, agreed to his decision with copious lamentations.

When Bruno set out for Toul, the royal army was besieging the Milanese fortress of Orba, and the Lombard traitors took the chance to ambush Bruno. Bruno was warned of the plot by his friends to change his route, but he believed he was protected and he didn't change the route. Instead, he separated his companions and ordered a group of entourages to set off later. The ambush was designated to be carried out in Ivrea, and Bruno's companions were raided by attackers. However, Bruno, with his ability of presentiment, had gone to Carema, taking only one man with him. Finally, Bruno successfully arrived in Toul, and his kinsman Theoderic, bishop of Metz enthroned him as the bishop of Toul. Soon after his succession, Bruno deposed the abbots of the monasteries of Moyonoutier and Saint-Mansuy because they focused on the external affairs instead of the internal souls, while he commended the monasteries to Widrich,

the provost of the monastery of Saint Evre later. Bruno tried to increase monastic religion and brought it back to those places. He was highly praised by the emperor and this brought discontents from others, including the archbishop Poppo of Trier who desired to oppose the royal will. Once, Bruno returned to Gallia Belgica and humbly asked Poppo for the episcopal consecration. They agreed on the time but it was later deferred by Poppo. Additionally, Poppo rudely demanded that Bruno should obey him like a slave, which was certainly refused by Bruno, for he knew that a faithless and foolish promise would displease the God. Finally, through the mediation of the emperor in Worms, the archbishop only requested his authority in ecclesiastical business and the sacred ordination took place on 9 September, 1027. In Bruno's see, he offered resources to help Widrich to rebuild the monastery of Saint Evre, with which Widrich established a congregation of nuns in the monastery of Poussay and appointed Berenna as the mother.

Bruno was a remarkable and outstanding person as he had the innocence of the dove and the wisdom of the serpent. He was full of charity since he genuinely helped the poor and did the work of almsgiving. Bruno also had a contrite heart. He always bathed his face and chest with his own tears when practicing private prayer or the performance of the divine office. Besides, Bruno had immense knowledge of the divine and human arts especially in music, moreover, he was endowed with the good quality of humility and patience and he treated the insults with condolence.

## 2.2. Influence

Firstly, since Leo IX was considered as a saint, there are some related descriptions in this biography, which may help us to understand how a person can become a saint. The biography shows how Leo IX became a saint in its narrative of Leo IX's life, Leo IX was not only described as a perfect person with no defect, but also endowed a series of miraculous experiences. He was born with holy crosses as a symbol showing his destined glorious fate, and his mother had a dream, which came true before long, signifying that he would become a great cleric after his sufferings. He was then attacked by a poisonous frog and became dying, but in the nick of time Saint Benedict came from heaven to save him. Moreover, during the tour to Toul, he avoided the attack of the Lombards by the blessing of God. Through these descriptions, it is indicated that in the Middle Ages, people believed that those saints had miraculous power from God, and thus miracle was an important condition to become a saint. Also, moral standard was highlighted at that time, for it is constantly mentioned in the article that Leo IX was a very amicable, humble and pious person, therefore, he was considered the model who, was worth loving and venerating.

The author of this text is Bruno of Segni, bishop of Segni and abbot of the monastery of Monte Cassino, who is a relatively typical example of the clerics in the Middle Ages. Therefore, we can get some information about how a medieval cleric wrote. Primarily, he made his writing a very close connection with the Christianity, as when he mentioned the time, he used 'the year 10xx from the incarnation of the Son of God', which is a particular way of numbering the year, referring to the most important date in the Christianity. For his biography is a hagiography for Leo IX, he tried to make a close connection between saint's life and Christ's. This is embodied not only in the year, but also in some other aspects as the frequent quotations of Bible and the highlights of the emotion and morality. The author always quoted Bible in the sentences, and cited the tales in the Bible, because it made the narrative persuasive and reasonable on a religious level, and it shows that the life of Leo IX was in accordance with some period of Bible. Leo IX was praised because he always shed tears in private prayer or in the performance of the divine office, and it was claimed that tear is an indicator expressing that one is moved by God, for tears can replace blood in a metaphysical level. Also, in his writing, he represented a binary structure with Leo IX and other pious believers on the one side, and the God's enemies on the

other. When Leo IX went to Toul, his success was a blessing and miracle of God, defeating the evil Lombards, though Lombards actually went to attack Leo IX due to the realistic reason that Leo IX led the knights in the emperor's expedition of Lombardy earlier. However, in the author's narrative, there are many judgements and divisions that are religious and moral, not political. One's early experience can lay great influence on the whole life, and Leo IX's early life was very important to understand his reform. Leo IX was the first pope with the German ethnicity, and at that time in Toul, the monasteries were influenced by the Cluny reforms. Leo IX was sent to be educated by his mentor Berthold, bishop of Toul, who advocated monastic reforms. During that time, the Cluny reforms had influenced many monasteries, so it is reasonable to infer that Leo IX was influenced by the education in his childhood when he cultivated the ideas similar to the Cluny reforms, the most important one of which is to restore the traditional monastic life. Compared with his predecessors, who were Italian priests, he experienced a more religious life as a monk living in the monastery. As a result, when Leo IX became Pope, he started the reform to promote Cluny monks and prohibit secularists from taking control of religious property.

### 3. Conclusion

Leo IX spent his childhood in the monastery and lived a very religious life, and this life made him different from the previous pope that he had fanaticism to raise the significance of Christianity in the Christian world. Leo IX started the papal reform and use the order of monastery to rule the church, and he was canonized a saint decades of years after his death. It emphasizes the significance of the monastery in the papal reform from Leo IX's experience, and indicates the relevance between Cluny monastery reform and papal reform.

### References

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