

**Francesco D'Angelo: “*In extremo orbe terrarum*” le relazioni tra Santa Sede e Norvegia nei secoli XI–XIII. Roma: Edizioni Nuova Cultura, 2017. 381 pp.**

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“*In extremo orbe terrarum*” le relazioni tra Santa Sede e Norvegia nei secoli XI–XIII by Francesco D'Angelo is a revised and extended edition of his PhD-thesis from 2016. It is first necessary to point out that this book is written in Italian and is therefore primarily intended to an Italian-reading audience even though it will certainly reach a broader international one. This being said, D'Angelo's work is of great interest for a Norwegian reader, given that he or she can read Italian. The main reason for this lays on the book's twofold topic. First, *In extremo* aims to provide a complete overview over the development of the Church in Scandinavia, and in particular in Norway, from the first Christian missions in the tenth century to the end of the thirteenth century when the ecclesiastic organization was fully completed. As such, the book is nearly unique so far and deserves our interest. Second, the study entails Scandinavian ecclesiastic development within a centre/periphery perspective, which also is too often missing in the Norwegian scholarship. D'Angelo's original and most worthily approach with respect to earlier research is to address the development of the Church in Scandinavia from a Roman perspective. How did Christendom's centre, Rome, relate to the distant Scandinavian churches? Largely, the author bases his analysis on papal decretals, the already known letters between bishops and Rome, and on the narrative from the sagas. D'Angelo's approach is interesting since it links the Scandinavian ecclesiastic landscape far more closely than before to the popes' own political situation and ambitions, underscoring, if needs be, that the development of Scandinavian Churches was not only based on local foundation, but also largely depended on the curia's doctrinal and political decisions. In his book, D'Angelo addresses numerous aspects of the Churches' making throughout the Middle Ages: the conversion of populations, the progress of ecclesiastic organization and the relationship between *regnum* and *sacerdotium*.

The book is organized in five chapters. The first chapter deals with the conversion of Scandinavia from the end of the Viking age in the eleventh century to the end of the thirteenth century, and in this respect departs from the rest of the book, which

largely focuses on Norway. The meagre source situation most certainly compelled the author's broader focus, but it also illustrates that the conversion of Norway in historical time cannot be seen in isolation, but as part of wider North-European phenomenon. The presentation of Christianisation and of the early advent of ecclesiastic organisation in Scandinavia essentially confirms that this process was centralized and top-down managed. Missionary activities aimed primarily at the aristocratic elite, and D'Angelo strongly associates the conversion to the Christian faith to the establishing of stronger royal powers. In addition, the author strengthens this perspective in connecting the early development of church organization in Scandinavia to Rome's political agenda, in particular in relation to the Investiture Controversy from the end of the eleventh century.

The second chapter also covers a broad timespan, from the early twelfth century to the late thirteenth century and follows the construction of episcopal organization. If the first pages address the establishing of bishoprics in Scandinavia as a whole, D'Angelo quickly focuses on Norway alone. He rightly demonstrates how papal power was decisive in the consolidation of the Norwegian Church through the establishing of the archbishopric of Nidaros (1152/53). The Church Reform is also central in the analysis of the bishops' activities, in particular towards lay power. As expected, Archbishop Eystein's symbiotic collaboration with King Magnus Erlingsson (1161–1184), and King Sverre's (1179–1202) pretensions regarding episcopal elections dominate his examination of the twelfth century. The following century focuses on both the threefold relationship between King Hákon Hákonsson, the Norwegian bishops and the bishop of Rome and on the 1270s concordats. In keeping with his original approach, D'Angelo interprets the kings' relative ascendancy over episcopal elections and on the bishops' limited room for political manoeuvre as the result of Rome's conscious political choice to strengthen monarchic power in Norway rather than the clergy's independency, paradoxically undermining the principles of *libertas ecclesiae*. Remarkably, the author disregards the episcopal elections on Iceland (1237/39), which indeed conspicuously problematizes Rome's and the king's influence. The first election of two non-Icelandic bishops in decades has been the subject of debate as to the role of the king and the archbishop, raising important issues concerning ecclesiastic independency in a context of monarchic growth.

Chapter three slightly stands in contrast with the previous chapters as it comments the integration of Scandinavian countries, and in particular Norway, in the universal church. Here are discussed a wide range of topics, from the implementation of the tithe, pilgrimages and the impact of the crusades in the North to the emergence of religious orders like the Dominicans and the Franciscans from the late thirteenth

century. Based on papal documents, D'Angelo highlights the bishops of Saint Peter's systematic and decisive influence, sometimes in accordance with their personal religious sensibility.

The fourth chapter goes back on twelfth century tracks to deal with the making of sacred monarchy under King Magnus Erlingsson. The discussion on Archbishop Eystein's theocratic project centred on Saint Olaf rather provides few novelties with respect to earlier studies, but constitutes a good and clear summary. The final discussion, however, proves to be interesting and stimulating. There, the author set his heart on analysing the *ordo* of King Magnus Erlingsson's crowning (1163), the first of its kind in Scandinavia. The question is still puzzling scholars due to the scarcity of information in the source material. Earlier research has pointed to two possible *ordines coronationis*, which can have inspired the Norwegian crowning staging: A German, imperial, *ordo* and an English one. Based on the scarce pieces of information provided by the sagas, among others the *Sverris saga*, D'Angelo makes clear parallels between Magnus Erlingsson's crowning *ordo* and Rome's rules for episcopal unction in the twelfth century. D'Angelo goes as far as to suggest that Rome's legate, Stephen of Orvieto, may have come to Bergen to perform the crowning with particular instructions for how the ceremony should be staged. This hypothesis undermines previous theories that sustained a simple loan from pre-existing ordines and argues instead for the elaboration of an original Norwegian crowning *ordo*. It also reinforces our author's main approach that Rome's overall involvement and influence was conclusive in the forming of the province politics throughout the Middle Ages.

The book's last chapter examines the development of canon law in the Norwegian provincial laws until the 'national' law of 1274 and in particular, how the Norwegian church laws related to the compilation of *Decretum Gratiani*. D'Angelo's study concludes that, despite the geographical distance with Rome, the Scandinavian countries, and *a fortiori* Norway, had narrow connections with the papacy's doctrinal policies throughout the period. Even though the Scandinavian bishops enjoyed greater freedom of doctrinal action than their continental counterparts, the extent letters and the attested legates' visits do witness that Rome's will and guidance was effective in every aspects of the Nordic churches' life and not the least in the making of the Norwegian high medieval monarchy.

The book contains an appendix witnessing the author's concern to provide his readers access to the most significant sources. These are twelve documents, which are central in D'Angelo's analysis: some are Latin letters and Norse text, letters and others are excerpts from sagas, which the author translated. *In extremo* is a thorough scholarly work based on an exhaustive and updated literature. D'Angelo has indeed

an impressive knowledge over Scandinavian literature both when it comes to ‘classical’ works and new studies. This needs to be emphasized as too many non-Scandinavian studies on medieval Scandinavia much too often rely on ‘local’ or exclusively English-speaking scholars. The book, with its Rome centred perspective, constitutes a must read for everyone interested in high medieval Church in the peripheral Scandinavia as well as brings to a Norwegian audience a fresh and valuable approach to a central theme of Scandinavian medieval history. In addition, it works as a useful and clear synopsis to the development of the church in Scandinavia, which to my knowledge does not exist in neither English nor any Scandinavian language.