



The Life and Times of Hildebrand, Pope Gregory VII, Vol. 1 (Classic Reprint)

Arnold Harris Mathew

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Pontificate of Gregory VII is important as having occurred at a very critical period in the history of the Papacy, and as having left an indelible impression upon its later aims and policy. A great revival of the Empire had slowly taken place (A.D. 950 1046). The German peoples within the empire of Charles the Great were united by the urgent necessity of protecting themselves against barbarous foes. They formed a strong elective monarchy, and shook themselves free from their Romanized brethren, the Western Franks, amongst whom the power of the Vassals was still to maintain disunion for centuries. The German kingdom was the inheritor of the ideas and policy of Charles the Great, and the restoration of the Imperial power was a natural and worthy object of the Saxon line of kings. The restoration of the Empire involved a restoration of the status of the Papacy. The great monastery of Cluny and the monastic reformers there became a centre of the revival of Christian feeling, and aimed at uniting Christendom under the headship of the Pope. The reformers aimed at a strict enforcement of the celibacy of the clergy and the suppression of simony to check, in fact, the secularization of the clerical office, to which many causes, especially the growing wealth of the Church, had contributed. The first desideratum was a reform of the Papacy, and the Emperor Henry III was called upon to effect this. The great Emperor, in whom the mediaeval empire touched its highest point, was not unnaturally hailed as a second David when, at the Synod of Sutri, he superintended the History of the Papacy, by Mandell Creighton.

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