

The Medicean Succession: Monarchy and Sacral Politics in Duke Cosimo Dei Medici's Florence. Gregory Murry.

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In his book, Murry discusses the divine-right rulership that was claimed by Cosimo I. In recent scholarship on Cosimo, this claim is considered to have been controversial, but according to Murry, Florence's traditions made it quite easy for Cosimo to have it accepted. Cosimo's subjects, so Murry has it, were much helped in believing in Cosimo's sacred rulership by the ideas on the divinity of man that had recently been formed in Florentine Neoplatonic circles. Also, the widespread belief in Providence worked to Cosimo's advantage; his claim to sacral monarchy was accepted all the more easily since Providence showed itself to be multicausal: "The duke's power flowed from both God and from the consent of the republic" (53).

Still another reason for the easy acceptance of Cosimo's office as the rule of God was always, according to Murry, that in it the populace recognized traditional forms of patronage. The severe religious and social reforms that were put through by Cosimo as part of his sacral monarchy were embraced by subjects because they associated these with the program of reform that at the time Savonarola had planned to carry out. Cosimo's "practice of ruler sacrality" was accepted because he "planted this firmly in the ground of local tradition."

Foremost, however, Cosimo's subjects accepted his sacral monarchy because in it they found sincerity and honesty: Murry portrays the duke as an anti-Machiavellist, and though he gives some striking examples of Cosimo's sincerity, he does not succeed in exonerating the duke from Machiavellism. Tellingly, while discussing Cosimo's divine right of rulership, Murry more than once takes recurrence to the term *propaganda*. And indeed, as is clear from chapter 2, Cosimo's divine-right rulership had to be drummed into his subjects. This does not really suggest that what Cosimo had in mind, his subjects found self-evident. And is it really true that they recognized Savonarola's aims in Cosimo's program of religious and social reform? When Murry concludes that in his politics regarding church benefices, Cosimo "found a way to accommodate policy to popular feeling," I think this merely shows that the duke could wield his authority enough to make his divine-right rulership count here; and, apparently, the same was true for his policies regarding church holidays, indulgences, and miracles.

Crucial for Murry's thesis is his idea that there was no contrast between Cosimo's divine-right rulership and the republican convictions that were still strong in Florence. However, Murry's thought that Cosimo's divine-right rule was "uncontroversial" can only be fostered if one completely ignores the widespread and passionate republican strife and resistance against Cosimo that manifested itself in the first phase of the duke's reign. Murry dismisses without further ado the idea that his rule "posits a divine right absolutism that gave way in the 1560s to a republican citizen-prince model" (97). His alternative thesis, however, lacks serious underpinning. His suspicion that Cosimo would have liked to give Duke Alessandro a private instead of a state funeral does not gibe with Cosimo's evident self-propagation as Alessandro's legitimate successor. Murry erroneously assumes that in Vasari's tondo, "Florence crowns Cosimo with oakleaves" (1565), makes a *deo terrestre* out of the duke, and that as such the tondo was iconic for Cosimo's rulership. Actually, the tondo depicts Cosimo's inextricable ties to the Florentine republican body politic and could not possibly have been depicted in the first phase of Cosimo's rule. And these are not the only errors that the author makes.

The parts of his book where Murry discusses Cosimo's policies regarding the church are most insightful, but in his overall thesis the author does not convince. This is due to a great extent to his isolating the image of Cosimo's divine-right rulership from the much broader and much more layered picture that we are presented with when studying Cosimo's rule. It is also a serious omission that the book does not contain a list of consulted literature.

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