

THE SHE-POPE

Did an English woman disguised as a man become ordained into the priesthood and end up becoming Pope John VII in the ninth century?

This is an examination of Peter Stanford's book on the legend of Pope Joan. The book is called *The She-Pope*.

There was a chair with a hole in the seat where the new pope could sit to be examined by a man reaching under the chair to make sure he was a real male (page 11). The strange angle of the seat shows it can't be a commode. And who would have a commode with marble legs? Stanford found that the back of the chair goes back too far for it to have been an ordinary commode. This chair is evidence that one of the popes must have been a woman. Such a silly precaution would only be taken if a woman had managed to hoodwink the Church. Stanford states that the fact that Alexander VI and Innocent VII were examined to make sure they were males (page 33).

A priest, Adam of Usk, stated that a statue of Joan and her baby son was near a spot called St Clements and that it was because of her deception that Innocent VII had to be examined to check his gender (page 33).

John Huss, a forerunner of Protestantism, talked about Joan before the Council of Constance in 1413 and it never told him anything he said was wrong (page 132).

About 500 historians from early medieval ones to the seventeenth century ones chronicled the story of Pope Joan (page 16). They were satisfied she existed so they speak from the dust to tell us that they had evidence that is lost now that she was a real person and not a legend. "Among the phalanx of authors who testify unambiguously to her existence are papal servants, several bishops and some of the most distinguished and respected medieval chroniclers, writers whose accounts are the bedrock of current historical and church orthodoxy about their period" (page 16). The Church likes to suppose that these documents were altered after the reformation. The stories about Joan originated with Martin Polonus who wrote about her in 1265. He was a sober and sane writer (page 18). The oldest copy of his work on the popes dates from the fourteenth century (page 19). It says that Joan who was English or of English descent came from Mainz dressed as a man. She became a transvestite in Athens and was famous for her learning and she had a lover. After she became pope, she was travelling from St Peter's to the Lateran and give birth to a baby and then she died in childbirth. A page, produced by another writer who was writing letter, beside this one says that she was not put to death after what happened but exiled to a convent. Her baby was a boy and grew up to be Bishop of Ostia.

Was Martin's version authentic?

The cautious German Protestant, Frederick Spanheim wrote a book that gave five hundred evidences from books that Joan had existed. He published it in 1691. He examined everything he wrote twice and referenced it carefully so he was no fraud (page 20). He preserved the names of the first people to write about Joan. One of them was Anastasius who ran the papal library in Joan's time. But we don't know for sure if he really did speak of her. He was bad news and this later became the excuse for holding that history cannot prove that Joan existed (page 22). The Church would have wanted that covered up if people were falling away from it because of the truth about Joan. Though the Church was more than lax at the time it would not have benefited from an event that undermined papal authority.

Stanford read a copy of Martin's book that pre-dated the reformation in Duke Humfrey. Examination of the writing and pictures led to that time scale being determined (page 31). Thus the Catholic belief that Protestant forgers inserted the Joan story into books is untenable. Also if the forgers had the chance to make changes and not be found out – which is unlikely for the Catholic Church was bigger and there original unaltered copies would still mostly be in its possession so an altered version could not be passed off as authentic – why didn't they put in tales of the Devil miraculously working behind the popes and other things that would do worse damage than a female pope?

Joan Morris read a papal document from the eleventh century and found a gap that forger had filled in. An unnamed male pope is in it and the description fits Joan. Pope Benedict was inseparable from this future pope (page 39) making it likely that it could have been a woman pretending to be a man for he might have been having a relationship with her. Joan succeeded Leo but the text could be confused. There is no proof that Joan was non-existent in the official records (page 41).

The records were a mess in the ninth century and so there could have been a pope or two of whom we know nothing (page 94).

There was a statue of the female pope and her boy near the Colosseum (page 104). The papal documents state that Innocent VIII incurred some criticism for using the street where the She-Pope's statue was (page 105).

In 1413, a papal secretary recorded that there was a statue of Joan where she gave birth and it was set up by Benedict to make people disgusted by her and her deception (page 106).

We are not given a number for this Benedict. Though Joan was supposed to have been succeeded by Benedict III, Benedict XI or Benedict XII are more likely candidates. The statue was destroyed or disposed of after the reformation.

Joan's bust was in the Cathedral of Siena at the start of the fifteenth century (page 111).

Stanford looked at the images on the baldacchino created by Bernini in St Peter's. He saw the happy face of a woman whose head is just a bit below the tiara with which peoples are crowned. Then he saw the face turned unhappy and she seemed to be in pain. Next a baby's face appears. There are folds that look like a vagina. The design dares not place the papal crown on her head so it dares not make it too obvious that the subject was a woman pope who had a baby. A pregnant belly is shown. Stanford says that the woman does not symbolise the Church under the guise of Mother Earth for the Church would not want Mother Earth represented by a demon which is also done in the design (page 122). The woman is Joan.

Joan could have been thin and was likely to have been malnourished so her body would not have looked like a modern woman's body. Joan's breasts would have been flat for breasts are made up of fat (page 81). She could have had a lot of facial hair which can be brought on by malnutrition (page 81). Priests were not compelled to have beards in her day. Church robes and monk's habits would have covered the small wrists and hands (page 81).

Pope Fiction denies that Joan was a fabrication by Protestants for there was too much about her stating that she existed going around at the time of the Reformation for it all to have been mere Protestant deception (page 173). We read that the writings of Jean de Mailly, Stephen de Bourbon, and Martin Polonus who were Catholic writers were discussing Joan before the Reformation even happened (page 174). This book says that Joan wouldn't reflect badly on the papacy if she existed for all would happen on the election of a woman disguised as a man would be an invalid election and invalid papacy. But the fact of the matter is she would have been accepted by the Church as pope, she would be teaching and governing as pope, she would still have been believed to have been pope if she had never been caught out. What is the point of having a pope if an impostor can become pope? That means the Church is then built on a false rock and ceases to be the true Church.

- A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, Thomas Bokenkotter, Image Books, New York, 1979
- A HANDBOOK ON THE PAPACY, William Shaw Kerr, Marshall Morgan & Scott, London, 1962
- A WOMAN RIDES THE BEAST, Dave Hunt Harvest House Eugene Oregon 1994
- ALL ONE BODY – WHY DON'T WE AGREE? Erwin W Lutzer, Tyndale, Illinois, 1989
- ANTICHRIST IS HE HERE OR IS HE TO COME? Protestant Truth Society, London
- APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA, John Henry Newman (Cardinal), Everyman's Library, London/New York, 1955
- BELIEVING IN GOD, PJ McGrath, Millington Books in Association with Wolfhound, Dublin, 1995
- BURNING TRUTHS, Basil Morahan, Western People Printing, Ballina, 1993
- CATHOLICISM AND CHRISTIANITY, Cecil John Cadoux, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1928
- CATHOLICISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM, Karl Keating, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1988
- DAWN OR TWILIGHT? HM Carson, IVP, Leicester, 1976
- DIFFICULTIES, Mgr Ronald Knox and Sir Arnold Lunn, Eyre & Spottiswoode, London, 1958
- ENCOUNTERS OF THE FOURTH KIND, Dr RJ Hymers, Bible Voice, Inc, Van Nuys, CA, 1976
- FROM ROME TO CHRIST, J Ward, Irish Church Missions, Dublin
- FUTURIST OR HISTORICIST? Basil C Mowll, Protestant Truth Society, London
- GOD'S WORD, FINAL, INFALLIBLE AND FOREVER, Floyd McElveen, Gospel Truth Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI, 1985
- HANDBOOK TO THE CONTROVERSY WITH ROME, Karl Von Hase, Vols 1 and 2, The Religious Tract Society, London, 1906
- HANS KUNG HIS WORK AND HIS WAY, Hermann Haring and Karl-Josef Kuschel, Fount-Collins, London, 1979
- HITLER'S POPE, THE SECRET HISTORY OF PIUS XII, John Cornwell, Viking, London, LONDON 1999
- HOW SURE ARE THE FOUNDATIONS? Colin Badger, Wayside Press, Canada
- HOW DOES GOD LOVE ME? Martin R De Haan II, Radio Bible Class, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986
- INFALLIBILITY IN THE CHURCH, Patrick Crowley, CTS, London, 1982
- INFALLIBLE? Hans Kung, Collins, London, 1980
- IS THE PAPACY PREDICTED BY ST PAUL? Bishop Christopher Wordsworth, The Harrison Trust, Kent, 1985

LECTURES AND REPLIES, Thomas Carr, Archbishop of Melbourne, Melbourne, 1907
NO LIONS IN THE HIERARCHY, Fr Joseph Dunn, Columba Press, Dublin, 1994
PAPAL SIN, STRUCTURES OF DECEIT, Garry Wills, Darton Longman and Todd, London, 2000
PETER AND THE OTHERS, Rev FH Kinch MA, Nelson & Knox Ltd, Townhall Street, Belfast
POPE FICTION, Patrick Madrid, Basilica Press, San Diego California 1999
PUTTING AWAY CHILDISH THINGS, Uta Ranke-Heinemann, HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1994
REASON AND BELIEF, Brand Blanshard, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1974
REASONS FOR HOPE, Editor Jeffrey A Mirus, Christendom College Press, Virginia, 1982
ROMAN CATHOLIC CLAIMS, Charles Gore MA, Longmans, London, 1894
ROMAN CATHOLIC OBJECTIONS ANSWERED, Rev H O Lindsay, John T Drought Ltd, Dublin
ROMAN CATHOLICISM, Lorraine Boettner, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Phillipsburg, NJ, 1962
SECRETS OF ROMANISM, Joseph Zacchello, Loizeaux Brothers, New Jersey, 1984
ST PETER AND ROME, J B S, Irish Church Missions, Dublin
THE CHURCH AND INFALLIBILITY, B C Butler, The Catholic Book Club, London, undated
THE EARLY CHURCH, Henry Chadwick, Pelican, Middlesex, 1987
THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY, LION BOOKS, Herts, 1977
THE LATE GREAT PLANET EARTH, Hal Lindsay, Lakeland, London, 1974
THE PAPACY IN PROPHECY! Christadelphian Press, West Beach S A, 1986
THE PAPACY ITS HISTORY AND DOGMAS, Leopold D E Smith, Protestant Truth Society, London
THE PETRINE CLAIMS OF ROME, Canon JE Oulton DD, John T Drought Ltd, Dublin
THE PRIMITIVE FAITH AND ROMAN CATHOLIC DEVELOPMENTS, Rev John A Gregg, BD, APCK, Dublin, 1928
THE SHE-POPE, Peter Stanford, William Hienemann, Random House, London, 1998
THE VATICAN PAPERS, Nino Lo Bello, New English Library, Sevenoaks, Kent, 1982
TRADITIONAL DOCTRINES OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH EXAMINED, Rev CCJ Butlin, Protestant Truth Society, London
VICARS OF CHRIST, Peter de Rosa, Corgi, London, 1993
WAS PETER THE FIRST POPE? J Bredin, Evangelical Protestant Society, Belfast
WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HEAVEN?, Dave Hunt, Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon, 1988